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## Ignatian Spirituality and The Three-Fold Model of Organizational Life

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*“All For the Greater Glory of God!”*

St. Ignatius

### Introduction

**H**ARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PROFESSOR EMERITUS Abraham Zaleznik once observed that “leaders are ‘twice born’ individuals who endure major events that lead to a sense of separateness, or perhaps estrangement, from their environments. As a result, they turn inward in order to reemerge with a created rather than an inherited sense of identity”

This “created” identity is the critical work of the spiritual journey. Through the Exercises of St. Ignatius a person is provided with a process to dive deeply into their own

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lives and to experience God in their inner terrain. As they come to know themselves as loved sinners, they find the world around them afire with God. Finding the courage to take their shoes off and live out of this love is where The Three-Fold Model meets Ignatian Spirituality. The Exercises till the soil and help plant the seeds of a healthy, clear center while The Three-Fold Model help them imagine how to live this experience of God in the daily life of an organization.

In this paper I will provide the history of St. Ignatius, the basic outline of the Exercises, and then approach the integration of the elements of Ignatian Spirituality with the Three-Fold Model.

### **History** **The first Jesuit: Saint Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556)**

Ignatius was born into a world where the predominant words were *revolution* and *change*. Within a year of his birth in Azpeitia, a tiny Basque village, Columbus reached the Western Hemisphere and the Moors were driven from Spain by the Catholic Kings. They imposed harsh terms on the vanquished: Moors had to choose between baptism, emigrations and severe punishment. The Crown instituted the Inquisition to root out heresy among converted Jews, Moors, and suspect Christians. Religious orthodoxy became a test of loyalty to the Spanish monarchy and a way to bring people into line.

Twenty five years later, the Protestant Reformation brought with it a wave of change. While these revolutions shattered the unity of the church and nations, new lands were being claimed, explored, and exploited by European powers. The Reformation and the new worlds in which to proclaim the Reign of God would both prove major influences on Ignatius.<sup>1</sup>

Ignatius dreamt of his gallant and chivalrous life as a soldier. In 1517, during a battle, a cannonball shattered his right leg and badly injured his left. During his long recuperation, he spent many hours reading the lives of the saints and Christ. This was the beginning of his conversion. While he healed externally, he was experiencing a deep inner change. Ignatius noticed that when he fantasized about romance and the glorious deeds he would do as a soldier, he felt momentarily happy followed by a movement of unhappiness. Conversely,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Bergan and M. Schwan, Ignatius of Loyola (St. Mary' press, 1991). Pg. 14

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when he fantasized about serving Christ, his emotional state turned and remained peaceful. He redirected his service to the greater glory of God.

Ignatius turned his life towards God with the same vigor he spent on being a soldier. During a long pilgrimage he spent several months in the caves around Manresa, Spain where he totally surrendered his life to God. He wrote of his self-offering to Christ and the step-by-step process of contemplating the Incarnation and Christ's public life, passion and resurrection. These meditative experiences served as the foundation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which outline a process of prayer and contemplation and guide a person to conversion to Christ and love of God.

Ignatius went on to form the Jesuits and the Exercises are recognized as an ancient yet contemporary path for conversion and living in the love of God.

### **Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius**

The Exercises have been in use for 450 years and prove as practical and valuable today as in the sixteenth century. The Exercises are given by trained and experienced spiritual directors in two formats; a thirty day retreat and a nine-month retreat in daily life. They are characterized by four primary movements:

Week One: The Principle and Foundation

Sin and Salvation

Week Two: The Life of Christ

Discernment

Week Three: Suffering with Jesus Christ

The Passion

Week Four: Joy with Jesus Christ Risen

Living the resurrected life

A key word Ignatius gives to those directing the exercises is adaptation. Adaptation and flexibility are seen as signs of authentic spirituality and the guide is instructed to keep in the forefront the premise that God is already at work in the life of the individual.

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### **Week One: Principle and Foundation; Contemplation on Sin and Salvation**

As one begins the Exercises they are invited to ground themselves in praying with their graced history. As they contemplate their lives, one is looking for the footprints and influence of God's grace. The Principle and Foundation is a ultimate point of orientation: "Human beings are created to praise, reverence and serve God. (Spiritual Exercises 23)<sup>2</sup>. From this ultimate orientation of one's life they are invited to reflect on how much God has loved them. Scriptures are used as a source for contemplation of this love. From this ground of love, they are invited to consider sin, their personal sin and the sin of the world. Through the lens of love they begin to recognize the presence of God throughout their life. The grace of this first week is a desire to re-orient one's life with the will of God. As a result of the realization of the many gifts they have be given, gratitude allows for an honest confession of falling short before an abundantly merciful God.

### **Week Two: The Life of Christ: Discernment**

The second movement of the Exercises is to move into the Gospels and pray with the Life of Jesus. Careful instruction is given in two areas: Asking for what we desire and the use of the Imagination. Asking for what we desire is essential for intimacy. As one becomes more authentic in their prayer, they gain new freedom and move closer to themselves and to God. The retreatant is encouraged to ask for the desire to know, love and follow Jesus. If they are not able to do that, Ignatius suggests we ask for the desire, to have the desire, to have the desire . . . . . and so forth. The experience of fear, sadness and resistance are acknowledged and carefully tended. Ultimately the Spirit is the one helping the person to enter into relationship with Jesus.

The use of the imagination is a key element in the exercises. Just as our intellect and emotions are an avenue of God's communication, imagination is a central place for contact with God. The imaginative prayer of contemplation invites one to see the scene, such as the birth of Jesus, and enter into it through the imagination allowing all the senses to become engaged. As they see, hear, smell and feel the experience they often find themselves in the story. Through encountering Jesus in this manner the scriptures are enlivened and become revelatory. Having made the exercises in 1996 and leading several others through them as a

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<sup>2</sup> Louis J. Puhl, S.J. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Loyola Press, Chicago, 1951)

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spiritual director, I am continually amazed at how God speaks to each person so uniquely. As a result of encountering Jesus and walking with him in his life, one falls' in love with him and desires to be more like him. As a natural movement, the values embodied in our Christian faith such as love, mercy, forgiveness, justice, peace and hope become explored and embraced as one's own.

### **Week Three: Suffering with Jesus Christ: The Passion**

The third movement in the Exercises leads the retreatant into Jerusalem with Jesus and the disciples. They encounter the suffering of the humanity of Jesus and take into their hearts the sorrow in the garden, the fear of the disciples, Mary's grief and loss, the fury of the crowds, the surrender of Jesus and his experience of abandonment by God the Father. Knowing Jesus as someone they have come to love and desire to follow takes on a new awareness of the cost of discipleship. The question of "what does it matter that Jesus died for us?" takes on a paramount proportion. Entering the Passion from the gateway of love for Jesus and his for us, changes the nature of the importance of our values. Living our faith from this lived experience and awareness puts much more at stake in how we live, work, love and die.

### **Week Four: Joy with Jesus Christ Risen: Living the resurrected life**

As the retreatant waits with the women at the tomb they are invited to experience the emptiness of life without Christ. A longing for the companionship that they have encountered during the Exercises is heightened as they wait during the long Holy Saturday. As they contemplate the scenes of Jesus meeting Mary at the tomb, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, doubting Thomas putting his hand into Jesus side, they also meet Jesus again after his death on the cross. The question for them at this point is "how can I live my life, trusting in a God who turns death into life?" This final movement gives way to the rest of life where one seeks to live with the Risen Christ through glorifying God. In order to live in the light of God's love one must reach outward to those around them and participate in God's gift of salvation. (A world made whole)

A quote from a 2<sup>nd</sup> century theologian, St. Ireneus sums this up, "The way we give glory to God is by being human beings fully alive!"

### **Three – Fold Model: working from a deep, spiritual center**

**The Three – Fold Model is a process that assists organizations to imagine what “living fully alive” might look like!** Leaders who value “becoming fully alive” have an expanded imagination as to God’s dream for the world. The Exercises result in a desire to help bring about the kingdom of God in every part of life. The gifts of the Exercises increase interior awareness, spiritual sensitivity (awareness of God in all things), tools for discernment and strengthen one’s capacity to live a life which reflects deeply discerned values. Ignatian Spirituality provides a means for one to grow in their ability to live and engage life from the “center”. A leader who has journeyed deeply into their own center will undoubtedly be capable of greater freedom in guiding an organization towards the values they articulate within the Three-Fold model. As leaders experience moral dilemmas, their inner capacity to reflect will be more fully formed as will their ability to hold the tension that exists at the core of human (organizational) life. Having an identity firmly rooted in God’s love and ongoing Presence, allows for distance from the shifting winds of the daily challenges they face. The leader who knows themselves well, has an increased capacity to be present to others in a way that frees others to be themselves. The Exercises lead one along the path of enlightenment and carries within them some basic elements that are critical to an authentic, lived faith. These elements of *spiritual freedom, ordered desires, awareness of God’s action in one’s life and a process for discernment* increase the effectiveness and the depth to which the process of the Three-Fold Model can achieve.

### **Spiritual Freedom**

“The purpose of the Exercises is to bring us into a position of freedom with respect to ourselves, other human beings, and God. It is in this context that the Holy Spirit becomes known. Our inability to know God’s desire is not the most troubling problem. The hardest problem to overcome is our lack of freedom . . . freedom from everything that is not God. Freedom is one of the fundamental graces of the Spiritual Exercises.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the first realization of the importance of spiritual freedom, comes when we encounter and see the

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<sup>3</sup> John English S.J. *Spiritual Freedom* (Loyola Press, Chicago, 1995) pg 21

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degree to which “unfreedom” riddles our lives. The needs of the ego run unrestrained until one examines their motives and beliefs underlying their actions. When we invite the Holy Spirit into every experience, we are exposed to a new way of seeing the world and each person in it. We can no longer make decisions based on our own desire for worldly esteem or gain. Freedom allows us to see and wrestle with the paradoxes of our lives while we listen to the Spirit for guidance. Because our identity is grounded in God, we are free to remove the masks of self sufficiency, the chains of depending on others for approval and the need to control outcomes. Finding the courage to name our unfreedoms is the important first step of the spiritual life; recognizing that we exist because God has created us through love, of love and for love. Our choices then become important in that our actions align themselves with our beliefs, leading us to wholeness.

### Ordered Desires

In Ignatian spirituality desire play a significant role in that our deepest, most authentic desires are the already present God leading us towards God. God uses our desires to lead us on the path which is most life giving. Fredrick Buechner states that “The will of God is the place where are deepest desires meets the worlds greatest needs”. In the context of this understanding of the will of God, desires are central in leading us where we can more fully use our God given gifts.

An experience of this I encountered in spiritual direction was with a man who desired to be an influential leader. He spoke of how he wrestled to know if his desire came from God or from his ego’s needs for being admired. In examining this question he found the need to heal wounds to his self esteem. The journey of healing brought the gift of being able to trust his desire. Ultimately, in staying with the question, he discerned to the best of his ability, that he was called to be a leader. He was able to let go of his confusion and experienced the freedom to use his gifts of leadership.

As in the words of Margaret Silf from her book, *Inner Compass*, “When we act from a true reference point of our God center, a new source of energy emerges within us and we are freed to do the true thing from a place of power because this is the one place where our own desire is aligned with God’s desire for us.”

### **Awareness of God's action in one's life**

An unshakable belief that Ignatius lived by was that God could be found in our experiences. A relationship with God requires that we spend time with God. One tool of Ignatian Spirituality that facilitates recognizing God is the Examen. The Examen provides a process to reflect on our daily experiences of God. Although it has taken on many complicated forms, the most basic resides in gratitude. At the end of each day we are to ask the questions, “For what in my day am I most grateful? And For what in my day am I least grateful?” Noticing what rises from these questions forms the context for giving thanks to God for what we enjoyed and asking God to give us patience, insights or wisdom from that which we were most challenged. The daily noticing of God in the mundane places of our lives, forms the bedrock for increasing our sensitivity towards God. The practice of becoming aware helps us to move from considering God only in explicitly spiritual or religious places to experiencing God in everyplace and person we meet. The conflict at work becomes infused with potential for spiritual work, the walk in the park becomes a time to encounter the gift of creation, a failure in our day becomes something of value that God can help us make meaning out of in time.

As we become more sensitive towards God, our awareness of the subtle infringements on our values will increase. Our awareness of our impact on others and the world around us becomes more insistent as we grow in recognizing God's Presence.

### **Discernment**

Spiritual freedom, awareness of God, ordered desires are all a part of discernment. The Exercises offer rich insights into processes that help us choose well – choose life. A component of the Exercises is a spiritual pedagogy for helping people in discernment.

Every human being clings to certain things while rejecting others. Our predisposition to certain things over others can give us insights as we look at the choices before us. Ignatius refers to the “movements” of the soul: affection and preferences as well as aversions, fears, and defensive reactions. Ignatius teaches us to become “indifferent” when we come face to

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face with a decision. Indifference allows us to pay attention and gain broader perspective as we carefully notice the “movements” of the soul. This does not mean I pretend to not have a preference, only that I become *aware* of my preference so I can move to a certain degree of inner freedom. Inner freedom is absolutely critical in making good decisions.

Ignatius speaks of three ways of making choices; direct intuition, noticing the primary affections and discernment of spirits and weighted reasoning. These three ways are often used in combination with one another and seek to engage both the mind and the heart. Ignatian discernment reflects a process for how organizations would engage the tensions they experience in the Three-Fold model.

Application of this process might follow the following steps:

- Identify the conflict with as much degree of clarity around values as possible
- Determine best possible actions
- Name the attachments to each outcome that the organization holds
- Once the inclinations have been determined make an effort to keep them from determining their actions
- Reflect on the consequence of each action – and ask the question “What will bring more?” (More life, more fulfillment, greatest good for all) Ignatius refers to the Magis, latin for more.
- Differentiate between goals and means. Goals are content-based values. Means are the way we move toward the goal
- First Criterion: Which alternative produces better results, i.e. more fruit? Quality vs Quantity; Depth more than abundance. Seeking God’s glory vs ego flattering
- Second Criterion: Greater Spiritual Consolation: Which of the alternatives offers more joy, peace, and fulfillment? Which one gives the organization an opportunity to grow in all three dimensions? Which brings a sense of “rightness”  
Spiritual consolation is a lasting joy rooted in values.
- Which alternative will continue to offer more consolation throughout the life of the organization for the greatest number of stakeholders?

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- How well are we serving others in our decision as well as tending to our own needs. Discernment involves staying with the tension point between the two.<sup>4</sup>

### Summary

This brief overview of the elements of Ignatian Spirituality only begins to frame the possibilities of how this spiritual process can help us find and create a clear center from which to lead and work. The effectiveness of the Three-Fold Model is directly affected by the organizations ability to reflect on their experiences, determine the depth out of which they live their values, engage in honest accounting of their limitations and brokenness while maintaining an openness to God.

That being said, I believe that much is impacted by one thing: falling in love with God

**Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.**

*“It will decide what will get you out of the bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, what amazes you with joy and gratitude.*

*“Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.” Pedro Arupe, SJ*

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<sup>4</sup> Stefan Kiechle, *The art of discernment* (Ave Maria Press, 2005)