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THE FORMATION OF HUMILITY TODAY

Lessons from the *Rule* of St. Benedict and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius

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Humility stands out as one of the foremost virtues in Christian spirituality. It counters a foundational vice, pride, and a strong psychological tendency, narcissism. It is an essential disposition for the Christian imperative of service and compassion for others. It is considered a foundational virtue since it builds other virtues like patience, obedience, and faith. It helps build mature and healthy interpersonal relationships. Humble individuals are almost always admired and respected.

Despite its fundamental character as a virtue, there is still much to understand about humility especially in the context of today's world. Many still understand it negatively, confusing it with low self-esteem and self-denigration. Many still wonder how humility is possible amid a world dominated by proud and arrogant behavior. Still, for many, humility is hardly noticed due to its quiet and unobtrusive character.

Christian tradition has much to contribute to this need for greater understanding and appropriation of humility. The centrality of humility in Christian ethics is embedded in the Gospels, the very life of Jesus Christ, and His proclamation of the Kingdom of God. It is also contained in the teachings of Paul, the apostles, and the Fathers of the Church. The lives of the saints witness to humility and their works

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propagate its practice. In the history of the Church, two such saints and their respective works have emerged as classics in spiritual life—the *Rule* of St. Benedict of Nursia and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. They were written in two different epochs of Church history, by two leaders espousing two different ways of living the Christian vocation. Yet both the *Rule* and the *Exercises* teach humility. The *Rule* contains the so-called "Twelve Ladders to Humility," while the *Exercises* include "The Three Kinds of Humility."

This article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of humility by reflecting on the *Rule* and the *Exercises* particularly in the context of today's world. First, it will ask how humility is understood today, and how it could be understood more properly with the help of the social sciences and Christian spirituality. Second, it will look into how humility is understood in the *Rule* and the *Exercises*, how their writers envision the formation of this virtue, and how the two works converge given their different perspectives and contextual origins. Lastly, this article will show that these two classics of Christian literature still remain relevant to the challenge of forming humility in today's world.

Humility in Contrast to Low Self-esteem, Pride, and Narcissism

A way of understanding humility may entail two things: one, distinguishing it from low self-esteem and weakness of character, and two, setting it in contrast to pride and narcissism. Regarding the first point, humility is often misconstrued as possessing a low sense of self-worth resulting in weakness of character, passivity, and a tendency toward humiliation, shame, and self-disparagement.[1] These character traits give humility a negative connotation, hence the term "false humility," and psychologists are quick to contend that humility

[1]C. Peterson & M. E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association / NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2004), 463.

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is simply the opposite. To be humble is to possess a healthy acceptance of one's self, both one's strengths and limitations. It is not a negative view of the self that tends to dwell on and magnify weaknesses and imperfections, whether real or imagined. Rather, a humble person has a perspective on the self that is grounded in reality and reason, and hence has a capacity for more accurate and honest self-estimation.[2]

The realistic and honest self-estimation of humility counters the other tendency: overestimation and inflation of the self that characterize pride and narcissism. Hence, as humility is often described as "antagonistic to and restrictive of pride,"[3] a deeper understanding of humility necessitates a deeper understanding of pride as well. French spiritual writer Canon Beaudenon[4] characterizes pride as

> a sense of superiority, a desire for pre-eminence …. Nothing is more deceptive and misleading than pride; it can disguise itself, grow and extend itself imperceptibly; when it has gained a footing, one is scarcely aware of it; by the time one glimpses it, one is ready to excuse it …. It does not inspire disgust; its unsightliness and malice are less obvious than that of other vices …. None the less, so harmful is its influence, that the saints call it the father of all vices.[5]

Pride is thus the spiritual malaise that is the antithesis of humility, and it manifests itself in self-seeking and self-entitled behavior, "in thought or speech that presents the individual's conviction that he or she is extraordinary."[6] Psychologists label this behavior as "narcissistic personality disorder" or narcissism, and they describe humility in juxtaposition to it. Varying degrees of narcissism are found in many

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[2]S. J. Sandage & T. W. Wiens, "Contextualizing Models of Humility and Forgiveness: A Reply to Gasin," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 29:3 (2001): 207.

[3]C. Beaudenon, *Formation to Humility* (Cork, Ireland: The Mercier Press, 1958), 3.

[4]Beaudenon, *Formation to Humility*.

[5]Beaudenon, *Formation to Humility*, 9.

[6]P. Zagano, "Spiritual Wisdom, Narcissism, and 'Healthy Humility'," *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 39 (2004): 23.

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people. A hallmark of narcissism is an inflated, highly positive conception of the self, which includes the following: a belief that one is better than other people, fantasies about fame and success, high-competitiveness, compulsion to seek admiration from others, and a strong feeling of entitlement.[7] In their research on narcissism, Peterson and Seligman[8] further characterize narcissists as possessing high tendencies toward dominance, hostility, anger, and aggression, especially when their superiority is questioned. Because of their high sense of entitlement, they believe that they deserve special treatments and overestimate the benefits that they expect to receive. This toxic self-importance is also called "hubris."

Humility as a Way of Seeing and Relating

To see humility in contrast to low self-esteem and passivity on one hand, and to pride and narcissism on the other, allows us to define what it is. First of all, humility is not the wrong understanding of the self that low self-esteem and pride have. It is neither self-deflation nor self-inflation. Nor is it an underestimation or an overestimation of one's worth. Humility is putting the self in perspective, realistically and truthfully, allowing one to gain a proper, accurate estimation of one's self, with one's strengths and weaknesses. Humility is "honest self-evaluation."[9] Humility is thus a way of seeing. It counters a wrong way of seeing that is self-deceptive, lending itself to ignorance, denial, and delusion.

Second, and on a deeper level, humility can be understood as a way of relating. It is, as discussed above, a way of seeing the self, and this self is seen in relation or in reference to another. The accurate, truthful self-estimation of the humble person is grounded in a sense of self that relates to other persons, to the world, and to God. The self

[7]Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 467.

[8]Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 467.

[9]E. L. Worthington, "Humility: The Quiet Virtue," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 27:3 (2008): 273.

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is thus not understood in isolation. Seeing one's self in reference to another and to God broadens one's perspective of the self and creates the attitude of dependence and interdependence, as opposed to the self-reliant, self-sufficient disposition of the narcissist.[10] Humility is "to assume an inferior position before others due to one's natural moral condition and the greatness of God."[11]

This religious dimension of the self relating to a higher, greater, more powerful being—God—naturally instills a sense of need for, and dependence on, God, and this cultivates humility. The self is seen as a creature ever dependent on the Creator for everything. The person credits God, not themselves, for their natural gifts, which they use in God's service.[12] This sense of creaturely dependence on, submission to, and service of God is fundamental to humility such that "when we fail to appreciate the creatureliness of life we also inevitably fail in our understanding of humility."[13]

From this fundamental way of seeing and relating, the humble person acquires certain capacities like the following as identified by Tangney:[14] an accurate sense of abilities and achievements; acknowledgment of one's mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge, and limitations; openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice; keeping one's abilities and accomplishments in perspective; low focus on the self or to view the self from a broader perspective; appreciation of the value of all things, as well as the many different ways that people and things can contribute to the world.[15]

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[10]Zagano, "Spiritual Wisdom, Narcissism, and 'Healthy Humility'," 22–23.

[11]J. S. Spiegel, "The Moral Irony of Humility," *Logos* 6:1 (2003): 141.

[12]P. Yancey, "Humility's Many Faces," *Christianity Today* (December 4, 2000): 96.

[13]N. Wirzba, "The Touch of Humility: An Invitation to Creatureliness," *Modern Theology* 24:2 (2008): 229.

[14]Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*.

[15]Peterson & Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 462–464.

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Furthermore, humility fosters a decision to serve others rather than to be served, since humility increases one's capacity for compassion, patience, and forgiveness.[16] A writer believes that Christianity has made a difference in history "by surrounding the use of power with humility."[17] This is seen whenever those who are strong due to "wealth, education, political power, superior culture, or favored location—have reached out to the despised, the forsaken, the abandoned, the lost, the insignificant, or the powerless."[18] As it helps build other virtues, it curbs the development of vices like vanity, boastfulness, conceit, and arrogance, and other ego-centered dispositions. At the cosmic level, humility is essentially a "profound deference" toward God and creation, for "when we contemplate the vastness of creation, coupled with an eagerness to learn, we also accept the limits of human knowledge" and our search for truth. This is the stance of humility rendered upon nature and science.[19]

Humility can thus be understood today as a way of seeing one's self and a way of relating with others, with the world, and with God. It enables one to have an accurate estimation of self, thus countering two tendencies: the self-inflation of pride and narcissism, and the self-deflation of self-abasement and low self-esteem. It is seen as a fundamental virtue that builds other virtues and capacities, and restrains the self-centeredness of vices.

The next question to ask is "What has Christian tradition said about this virtue?" Two perspectives can represent how Christian tradition sees humility as a central tenet of Christian spirituality, and how its formation is to proceed. These two perspectives are derived

[16]Spiegel, "The Moral Irony of Humility."

[17]M. Noll, "The Gift of Humility," *Christianity Today* (December 6, 1999): 56–57.

[18]Noll, "The Gift of Humility," 56–57.

[19]R. L. Hermann, ed., *God, Science and Humility* (Philadelphia & London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000), 72.

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from two classics in Christian literature, the *Rule* of St. Benedict and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius.

The *Rule* of St. Benedict

The sixth through tenth centuries in the Church are considered the "Benedictine centuries" due to the pervasive influence of monasticism, the spirituality enshrined in the *Rule* of St. Benedict.[20] The *Rule* is a product of several other rules followed by different monasteries all over Europe, foremost of which is the anonymously-written "Rule of the Master." A systematic study of the *Rule* traces its roots and inspiration from the teachings and ideas of many Church Fathers, like Basil, Origen, Pachomius, Cassian, and Augustine, originating from Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, North Africa, and Southern Gaul.[21] The work thus became a synthesis of Eastern and Western spiritualities in a still undivided Christendom. It is considered the most important document of monastic life in the West,[22] teaching people the virtues of prayer and work, obedience to the superior, asceticism, living in community, moral behavior, and basic dispositions in the following and imitation of Jesus Christ.

The *Rule* was composed by Benedict "to sum up his experiences as monk and abbot," and also to serve as instruction to abbots who ran monasteries which he founded.[23] From his birth place in Nursia in Italy, Benedict pursued a hermit's life in Subiaco in his search for God and inner purification. He drew followers and later established monasteries in Subiaco. He moved to Montecassino, where he founded

[20]K. Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2002), 171.

[21]G. Holzherr, comm., *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Guide to Christian Living* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1994), 1–19.

[22]Holzherr, *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Guide to Christian Living*, 8; T. Kardong, *The Benedictines* (Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1988), 11.

[23]Holzherr, *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Guide to Christian Living*, 13.

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a monastery, the place where he wrote the *Rule* between the years 530 and 550 AD.[24] The diffusion of the *Rule* throughout Christian empires started in the late sixth century through monks travelling across Europe, gaining widespread acceptance and giving Benedict recognition as the "patriarch of Western monasticism."[25]

Humility in the *Rule*

The *Rule* is composed of seventy-three chapters of varying length and style of organization. The themes of these chapters touch on the spiritual and practical dimensions of monastic life: types of monks, the abbot and his role, prayer, liturgy, the penal code in the monastery, the officials and their authority, obedience of monks to their superiors, meals, relations with the outside world, common goods, times and seasons, communal relations.[26] The seventh chapter is the one on humility, and it is organized in terms of the twelve rungs of a ladder that need to be climbed in order to attain humility. Each rung of humility describes proper Christian attitude and behavior, but the main theme of each rung can be discerned as follows:

1. Fear of the Lord, mindfulness of His omnipresence, and desire to follow His will
2. Following God's will and not one's self-will
3. Submission and obedience to the superior
4. Patience and endurance in obedience and in following the Lord
5. Self-revelation and confession to the Lord and abbot
6. Contentment with one's poor, unworthy, and marginal state

[24]Kardong, *The Benedictines*, 11.

[25]R. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 3rd ed. (Mumbai, India: St. Paul India, 1994), 1024.

[26]Kardong, *The Benedictines*, 11–29.

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7. Conviction of one's lowliness
8. Conformity to monastery rule and example of superiors
9. Restraint of speech
10. Control of laughter
11. Gentle and prudent speech
12. Humble body postures and presence

The chapter ends with a conclusion that after ascending all the twelve rungs, the monk attains love of God, a definitive love that enables him to follow more naturally and without fear the directives of humility.

For Sebastian Carlson,[27] the twelve rungs of Benedict's ladder of humility correspond to degrees moving from interior dispositions toward exterior signs in "words, deeds, and gestures, which manifest that which is hidden within."[28] It culminates in seeing oneself in reference to God, and the necessary fear or reverence that this demands. The *exterior signs* of humility include those in terms of deeds (8th rung: that one does not depart from common practices), words (9th and 11th rungs: restraint and prudence in speech), and gestures (10th rung: repression of unreasonable mirth, and 12th rung: repression of lifting up of the eyes). The *interior signs* refer to the *thoughts* which help recognize one's deficiencies, which include the 5th rung (recognition and confession of one's defects), 6th rung (consideration of one's self as incapable of greater things), and 7th rung (preference of others over one's self).

The next degree considers the *appetite*, "lest it tend inordinately to its own excellence,"[29] and encompasses the 2nd to 4th steps which speak of denying one's own will in order to follow the will of God

[27]S. Carlson, *The Virtue of Humility* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1952).

[28]Carlson, *The Virtue of Humility*, 76.

[29]Carlson, *The Virtue of Humility*, 77.

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and the superior who represents the Lord, and the necessary embrace of hardship that accompanies this obedience. The ultimate degree, or root source, of humility is the *fear of God and mindfulness of His commands*, which is the 1st step in the ladder.

In Michael Casey's[30] contemporary reflection on the *Rule*'s teachings on humility, he summarizes the emerging basic qualities of a humble monk according to Benedict as follows:

> serious in his commitment, free enough of inner conflicts to be able to follow the way of Christ, able to endure the reverses and sufferings that are part of every human life, honest about himself, not ambitious or boastful, does not hide behind a wall of talking and laughing, and transparent in his goodness.[31]

He sees the steps of the ladder of humility as a progressive movement of greater integration and transformation toward the heart and mind of Christ, such that humility becomes a habit, a grace that flows naturally and instinctively in one's body and soul.

The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius

Ten centuries after Benedict, in another era of Church history, another classic in Christian spirituality emerged, one that also contains a major section on humility. This is the *Spiritual Exercises*, written sometime in the sixteenth century by Íñigo of Loyola, later called Ignatius, a Spanish soldier and courtier turned pilgrim and mystic. Ignatius started composing the *Exercises* in Manresa during an intense period of personal spiritual illumination after a radical conversion experience while fighting French forces in a battle in Pamplona. The *Exercises* was developed and finalized in the course of his journey "to do great things for God," a journey that led him and his companions to travel across Europe, "saving souls" by teaching the faith and giving the *Exercises* to people from all walks of life. They counseled secular and

[30]M. Casey, *A Guide to Living in the Truth: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 1999).

[31]Casey, *A Guide to Living in the Truth: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility*, 193.

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Church leaders like kings, queens, dukes, bishops, and popes, attracting opposition in the process from different quarters like the Inquisition.

Ignatius and his companions eventually formed a new male religious order, the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, which was to play a leadership role in defending the Catholic faith and the Church against the challenges of the Protestant Reformation. The *Exercises* and the works of the Jesuits eventually defined a new spiritual tradition that is more "apostolic" or mission-directed rather than enclosed and "monastic." This new spirituality integrated—rather than separated—prayer and action, contemplation and engagement in secular affairs, and mysticism and service, expressing itself through the increasingly diverse ministries of both lay and religious in the post-medieval Church.[32]

Like the *Rule* of St. Benedict, the *Spiritual Exercises* is a product of preceding spiritual traditions. In his historiographical study of the *Exercises*, Javier Melloni[33] traces how Ignatius inherited these traditions and how several features made their way to the structure and content of the *Exercises*. The books that facilitated Ignatius's conversion in Loyola during his convalescence after the Battle of Pamplona directly influenced him: *Vita Christi* of Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony and the *Flos Sanctorum* of Dominican James of Voragine. During his stay at Montserrat and Manresa, Ignatius was influenced by *Imitation of Christ*, now attributed to Thomas à Kempis of the *Devotio Moderna* tradition, and the writings of Garcia de Cisneros, the Benedictine Abbot of the monastery of Montserrat. Melloni believes that Cisneros's *Compendio*, a resume of many of his spiritual writings, heavily influenced the writing of the *Exercises*. The *Compendio* contains

> a synthesis of the best of the spiritual tradition of the West: the Benedictine tradition with its liturgical ordering of time; the Carthusian tradition, source of the ascending sequence *lectio, meditation, oratio,* and *contemplatio*; the Franciscan tradition with its devotion to the humanity

[32]McBrien, *Catholicism*; T. M. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983).

[33]J. Melloni, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2000).

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> of Christ; the *Devotio Moderna* with its methods of interiorizing prayer; and as a patrimony common to all these, the mystical tradition of the *three ways* (purgative, illuminative, unitive), which goes back to Denys the Aeropagite.[34]

The *Spiritual Exercises* is like a modern-day manual written for those who are to guide or direct people (the "exercitants") in the ways and methods of what is now called the "retreat." The book contains introductory explanations for both director and exercitant, followed by prayer points organized into four "Weeks," or groups, which may be understood as corresponding to the three ways of the spiritual life. According to George Ganss,[35] the First Week corresponds to the purgative way, where the soul is purified and freed as it advances toward God. The Second Week contains exercises proper to the illuminative way, in terms of more intimate knowledge, love, and following of Christ. The Third and Fourth Weeks facilitate the unitive way through contemplation on the sufferings and joy of Christ through His passion and resurrection, and through a deeper love for God who labors in creation.

Humility in the *Spiritual Exercises*

Ignatius's explicit points on humility are found in the Second Week. They are located in a section called "Three Ways of Being Humble"[36] or "Three Kinds of Humility."[37] This section prepares the exercitant in making the "election," the process of making a choice or decision on one's state of life or any important spiritual matter[38] like those related

[34]Melloni, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*, 11, italics author's.

[35]G. E. Ganss, trans. & comm., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 5–8.

[36]Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*.

[37]M. Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary: A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 1998).

[38]Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 176–177.

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to vocation, career, and relationships. The election is central to the *Spiritual Exercises*, and Ignatius suggests several rules and guidelines in making decisions in the light of one's maturing faith and commitment to God, a process called "discernment." In the Second Week, the election is preceded by three successive meditations and considerations which are meant to allow the exercitant to reflect on his or her values and dispositions, and see how they converge—or diverge—with the ways of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

The first moment is knowing the basic way or value system of Christ vis-à-vis that of the enemy, Lucifer, through the "Meditation on the Two Standards." It juxtaposes the two worldviews: riches, honor, and pride on one hand, and poverty, humiliation, and humility on the other. The second moment consists in developing a commitment to follow the way of Christ through "indifference" or spiritual freedom, and a desire to discard "inordinate attachments" that hinder this commitment. This is done through the "Meditation on the Three Classes of Persons." The third moment is the section on humility, and it can be considered as a fuller development of this commitment to the way of Christ. Three ways, manners, or kinds of being humble are presented, and these ways are also interpreted as "three kinds and degrees of love of God and desire to obey and imitate and serve His Divine Majesty," as written in the notes of a papal ambassador who made the *Exercises* under Ignatius in 1538.

The first kind of humility is characterized by obedience and fidelity to the law of God. The second kind of humility is non-attachment to wealth, honor, and long life, and choosing the opposite: poverty, dishonor, and short life. More than obedience to the law of God, the second kind consists in actively choosing the values of the Kingdom of God, and carrying a positive attitude of "indifference" for the sake of serving the Kingdom and saving one's soul. The third kind of humility is described as "the most perfect." It contains the basic desire to "want and choose" not just the values of the Kingdom but Christ himself, poor and humiliated. It further desires "to be thought worthless and a fool for Christ" rather than be regarded as "wise and prudent in this world."

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The third kind of humility includes everything specified in the first two modes—obedience to the law and choosing the service of the Kingdom. Its difference lies in its desire to imitate Christ to the point of poverty, foolishness, and humiliation. This desire can only be made by a person deeply in love with Christ. The attitude is one of loving Christ and wanting "to be as like to him as possible, no matter what the cost."[39] The third kind of humility is essentially the love of Jesus, an affective loving that leads to imitation of Him, including an embrace of suffering which this love entails.[40] This humility is not the "false humility" that induces a shrunken soul; rather, it elicits "great-souledness," or magnanimity.[41] Hence, in the Ignatian *Exercises*, the three kinds of humility follow a three-fold movement: from obedience to the law to cognitive commitment to the way of Christ, and then to affective love for the person of Jesus. They can thus be understood, as stated above, not just as modes of being humble, but more deeply as degrees of loving, serving, and imitating Jesus.

The *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises*: Different Accents in the Formation of Humility

The *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises* provide perspectives in the formation of humility in three ways: first, the need for integration of different elements of one's life; second, the need for self-transcendence; third, the need for a spirituality, or a way of following Jesus Christ. Discussing these dimensions will surface similarities and differences in the *Rule* and the *Exercises* in the formation or cultivation of humility. They offer different accents in the challenge of forming the humble person. The following table summarizes the main points of this comparative reflection.

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[39]Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 175.

[40]Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 175–176; Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 126–127.

[41]D. Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004).

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Dimension in the Formation of Humility	The *Rule*	The *Spiritual Exercises*
Integration of different dimensions of one's life Humility as integration	Interior dispositions and thoughts, external signs of words-deeds-gestures, and love of God	Obedience to the law, cognitive commitment to the way of Christ, affective love for the person of Jesus, and decision-making
Self-transcendence in thought and action Humility as a self-transcending act	Guidelines for ascetic living in monastic community life The daily life as transformative	Guidelines for individual prayer and discernment The process of making the election, or decision-making based on the way of Christ as transformative
Spiritual tradition and Christian vocation Humility as imitation of Christ	Monastic spirituality and vocation Following Christ through fidelity to monastic ascetical practices	Apostolic spirituality and vocation Following Christ in the world through discernment and action

Integration of different dimensions of one's life. Both the *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises* identify a number of points necessary in living out a humble life. There are twelve steps in the ladder of St. Benedict, and three kinds or ways in the prayer points of St. Ignatius. They may be seen as increasing grades or degrees in the practice of humility. As such, for both *Rule* and *Exercises*, the summit in the living out of a humble life is the love of God and Jesus Christ, and how this love flows into one's daily actions (in the case of the *Rule*) and basic decisions in life (in the case of the *Exercises*).

More than stressing the degrees in the practice of humility, the *Rule* and the *Exercises* specify certain dimensions that need integration in one's life. The twelve ladders in the Rule can be summed up through three essential elements, namely: interior dispositions and thoughts, external signs through words, deeds, and gestures, and love of God. The twelve steps are not strictly arranged in terms of value or importance;

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rather, they show which aspects of a monk's life need to be integrated in order to be authentically humble in the monastic community life. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, on the other hand, the three ways of humility become requirements for an authentic election to follow Christ. Hence, four dimensions are integrated, namely: obedience to the law, cognitive commitment to the way of Christ, affective loving and imitation of Jesus, and decision-making. All, not just one, are needed, like the twelve steps of St. Benedict.

Self-transcendence in thought and action. The *Rule* and the *Exercises* are both pedagogies toward self-transcendence. Transcendence entails going beyond the self toward values and goals that are higher than one's interests and concerns. It stretches one's perspectives and behaviors through the act of choosing and acting, and is thus both cognitive and performative,[42] facilitative of self-transformation. Both the *Rule* and the *Exercises*, in different ways, provide concrete guidelines to facilitate this process of transcendence and transformation.

The *Rule* is a set of guidelines for living the monastic life, while the *Spiritual Exercises* are guidelines for prayer and discernment of one's vocation in life. As such, the *Rule* presents very specific ways of living, thinking, and acting out the ascetic life expected of a monk living in community. It stresses the practice of poverty, obedience, control of appetites, work and prayer structure, regulation of behavior, and submission to spiritual authority. Fidelity to these is the way to self-transcendence and transformation. The daily life in monastic community and cloister thus becomes transformative in itself.

The *Spiritual Exercises*, on the other hand, facilitates transcendence and transformation through discernment and decision-making. For Ignatius, the election is central to transcendence.[43] Unlike the *Rule*, the *Exercises* is not a guide for ascetic living in community but

[42]Spiegel, "The Moral Irony of Humility," 133–135.

[43]L. M. Garcia Dominguez, "Inordinate Affections in Ignatian Anthropology," in F. Imoda, ed., *A Journey to Freedom: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Anthropology of Formation* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 280–281; Melloni, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*.

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an individually-directed process of making discernment. Ignatius prescribes a process that entails cognitive transformation leading to performative commitment. Through meditations, considerations, and contemplations, the values and worldviews of Christ are slowly internalized through the Four Weeks, preparing the exercitant toward an Election that is centered in God, the implications of which will be lived out after making the *Exercises*. Through the *Exercises*, the spiritual disposition of the retreatant matures through the three ways of purgation, illumination, and union, leading to a choice for the Kingdom.[44] The emphasis of the *Exercises* lies more on this process of maturing in spirituality, rather than on following strict rules of thinking and acting. The ten centuries that separated the *Rule* and the *Exercises* seemingly allowed the progression of a spiritual pedagogy of transcendence from rule-promulgation to process-orientation.

Spiritual tradition and Christian vocation. The differences in formative thrusts of the *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises* are rooted in inherent differences in their respective spiritual traditions. They are products of their times. St. Benedict and St. Ignatius are both pioneers and recipients of spiritual traditions that responded to the call of their respective epochs in the history of the Church and of the world. A vast ocean spanning ten centuries separates these two saints and their works. The specific tenor of their respective spiritualities defines their unique paths to holiness, or ways of following Christ, and their corresponding teachings on humility. They possessed a common passion to search for and follow God, but held in different contexts of Church history and tradition. They expressed, codified, and propagated this search and their ideas of Christian vocation in different ways, as seen in the distinctiveness of the *Rule* and the *Exercises*.

St. Benedict and his *Rule* inherited the ancient monastic tradition of the early Church dating back to the fourth century, the time of Antony the Great of Egypt. The thrust was *fuga mundi* or flight from the world through asceticism in solitary (anchoritism) or community-based (cenobitism) forms, emphasizing separation and remoteness

[44]Melloni, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*.

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from traditional centers of habitation.[45] The Christian Church was in its nascent, formative stage, and understandably the Christians of the early Church centuries defined their lives closely with the Scriptures and in close imitation of the life of Christ himself. This served as the pattern for early monastic regulations, which influenced the *Rule*:

> The Rule is an epitome of Sacred Scripture. Benedict's aim is to form men according to the Beatitudes. Christ is the prototype of monks. Monks are Christians who commit themselves fully to the ecclesial community. The Acts of the Apostles offer the perfect pattern of such commitment. The early monastic Fathers and Benedict transposed this *biblical ideal* into a monastic rule of life.[46]

Christian perfection is thus attained through life inside the monastery. Through fidelity to the structures of a common life of prayer, work, and obedience, the monastery becomes both a foretaste of and the longing for the heavenly Jerusalem.[47] This is the specific thrust of the monastic paradigm of Christian vocation.

The Church of Ignatius's time in the fifteenth century, on the other hand, was very different. Recovering from the Middle Ages, the Church was struggling for its survival amid an increasingly complex world characterized by rapid discovery of and expansion to new territories, advances in science and technology, church-state conflict, and threats to papal authority. It was a Church splitting apart due to the Reformation and the new ideas of Christian vocation that Protestant Reformers like Luther propagated. Ignatius and the first Jesuits became instrumental in the "Counter-Reformation" movement that defended the Church. The reform that they sought was geared to revitalize exemplary conduct among Christians through a spirituality that called for a renewal of mind and heart, and that which resulted

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[45]McBrien, *Catholicism*; O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*; C. Stewart, *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

[46]Holzherr, *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Guide to Christian Living*, 1, italics author's.

[47]Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 174.

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in action and service for others.[48] This was a reform movement that reclaimed the fundamentals of the Christian faith amid a confusing environment of competing theologies and ecclesiologies, creating a distinctive spiritual tradition like no other in that era.

Ignatian spirituality emerged in continuity with the 13th century mendicant tradition of the Franciscans and Dominicans, seeking *vita apostolica*, or the apostolic way of following Christ, living and serving in closer contact with the lives of ordinary people than did the monastic orders.[49] Ignatius and his companions, however, made a difference through a "profoundly positive evaluation of the contingencies of history," inaugurating "an original, creative interpretation of the Christian life."[50] The Society of Jesus eventually replaced monastic community and spirituality "with a modern, professional, ascetic individualism—all at the service of the church," influencing not just religious men and women but the laity and secular clergy as well.[51] New and diverse expressions of the Christian ministry and vocation, which affirmed rather than denied the world, thus emerged in the Church through Ignatian spirituality, the *magna carta* of which is the *Spiritual Exercises*.

This distinctive character of Ignatian spirituality is formed through the discernment and election processes of the *Exercises*. In the *Exercises*, "the name for union with God is 'election'," and this union

> comes about in the world through the continuous discernment of the will of God, that from this discernment emerges the shape of a personal vocation, specific to each individual and which it is for each to find … [it is one] of incarnation not elevation, or more accurately, the form of elevation for Ignatius is one of descent … not through the flight from

[48]J. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience: 1539, Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997); J. W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University Press, 1993).

[49]McBrien, *Catholicism*, 1026.

[50]McBrien, *Catholicism*, 1030.

[51]O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 121.

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> the world of monastic tradition, but through the kenotic movement of incarnation in the world and for the world. This "in the world" and "for the world" are contained in every act of choice.[52]

Thus, discernment and election, the act of choosing to align one's self with the mission and ministry of Christ in the world, are the unique contributions of the Ignatian *Exercises* to the mystical and spiritual tradition of the West. This world-affirming character of Ignatian spirituality thus integrates contemplation and action, prayer and mission. A person is imbued with humility and other virtues in the way of Christ, for the purpose of actively joining Christ in His mission of building the Kingdom in the world today.

Conclusion: Forming Humility Today Through the *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises*

Having reflected on the formation of humility through the *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, it is time to put together some thoughts on how these two pedagogies of humility are relevant today. How can these ancient works of the sixth and sixteenth centuries inform our contemporary understanding of, and concern for, the foundational virtue of humility? There are perhaps three ways to answer this, ways that correspond to the three points in the contemporary understanding of humility that were discussed in earlier sections: humility in contrast to pride and low self-esteem, humility as a way of seeing, and humility as a way of relating. The following table summarizes the main points.

Contemporary Understanding	**Deepening Lessons from the *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises***
Humility as distinct from pride and low self-esteem	Humility as cultivation and integration of interiority and exteriority
Humility as a way of seeing	Humility as discernment and transcendence
Humility as a way of relating to others and God	Humility as relating with Christ in daily life and mission

[52]Melloni, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*, 50.

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Humility as cultivation and integration of interiority and exteriority. As discussed above, humility today is properly understood as distinct from the self-inflation of pride, on one hand, and the self-deflation of low self-esteem, on the other. It is thus an accurate or proportionate estimation of one's self amid the temptations of self-aggrandizement and self-abasement. These temptations can be addressed. The *Rule* and *Exercises* show that this can be done through the formation and integration of interiority as well as exteriority. Interiority refers to the inner life of the individual, his or her thoughts, feelings, motives, and intentions. Exteriority may refer to the outer life, inclusive of actions, gestures, and works. The *Rule* and *Exercises* stress the flow and movement from inner to outer, from one's soul to one's world, from one's prayer and contemplative life to one's active engagement with the mission of Christ on earth, and vice-versa. A disruption of this flow causes fixation on the self, leading to the pitfalls of self-centeredness manifested in pride, narcissism, and self-denigration. There is an Ignatian maxim that shows the need for this integration of interiority and exteriority: "Work as if everything depended upon you, but pray as if everything depended upon God."[53] This has been reinterpreted as the opposite: "Work as if everything depended upon God, but pray as if everything depended upon you."[54] Both versions emphasize intensity of prayer and dedication to works for God, and the need to integrate both. This wisdom addresses the modern-day struggle and tension of work and prayer, contemplation and action.

Humility as discernment and transcendence. As discussed in earlier sections, humility is a way of seeing one's self from a standpoint that is accurate and grounded in reality. The *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises* cultivate this honest self-evaluation by situating the self always in reference to one's world. For the *Rule*, this is the call to obey monastic community norms; for the *Exercises*, this is the call to join Christ's mission. Temptations to focus on one's excellences and one's power are therefore countered

[53]McBrien, *Catholicism*, 1030.

[54]W. A. Barry, "Jesuit Spirituality for the Whole of Life," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 35:1 (2003): 11.

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since the monk and the exercitant are always brought face-to-face with the values and standards of Christ, and are asked to make choices that impact on their lives both on a daily and a long-term basis. They are constantly made aware of the contrasting and opposing forces and worldviews, those belonging to Satan and the evil spirits of the world. This attunement constitutes the act of discernment, and the choice to follow the path of Christ is the act of transcendence of self for the sake of the Kingdom. Both acts—discernment and transcendence—foster the virtue of humility. In a world full of individuals obsessed with their own excellences and power, discernment and transcendence are formative acts for nurturing humility.

Humility as relating with Christ in daily life and mission. As discussed in earlier sections, humility is understood as a way of relating to others and to God, a way that fosters a creaturely dependence on one's Creator, and an impulse to serve others. The *Rule* and the *Spiritual Exercises* deepen this relationship further by forming an intimate relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. Both works affirm that this relationship is the summit, the center, the ultimate dimension in the formation of humility. It is in the imitation of Christ—poor, humble, and obedient—in one's daily life, and in one's definitive choices or elections for vocation and mission, that infuses the spirit, attitude, and disposition of humility. It is in knowing Christ's ways and standards, following His mission on earth, and loving Him affectively that the self is transformed toward authentic humility. Ultimately, it is a personal relationship with the person of Jesus, nurtured by a spirituality, whether monastic or apostolic, that forms the humble individual in today's world. The contemporary spiritual hunger can be seen as a hunger for such a relationship with the person of Jesus who is fully human and fully divine, fully humble, integrated, discerning, and transcendent.

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IDENTITY, LIFESTYLE, AND MISSION OF THEOLOGIANS[1]

Jose V.C. Quilongquilong, S.J.

Most Rev. Honesto Ongtioco (*Bishop of Cubao*), Rev. Fr. Antonio Moreno, S.J. (*Provincial Superior)*, Rev. Fr. Jose Mario Francisco, S.J. (*past LST President*), Rev. Fr. Enrico Eusebio, S.J. (*Dean of LST*), members of the LST Board of Trustees, Most Reverend members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps, LST administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni, LST benefactors, superiors of religious communities, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon!

I began my theology studies at Loyola School of Theology in 1989, and I completed it with my ordination to the priesthood in 1993. I left Manila in 1999 to pursue further studies in theology, specializing in Spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. In all these years of theological studies, it never occurred to my consciousness that I would become president of LST.

[1]Inaugural address of Rev. Fr. Jose V.C. Quilongquilong, S.J., S.T.D., on the occasion of his installation as the 9th President of Loyola School of Theology (LST). Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, Philippines: July 05, 2013.

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Thus, to stand before this special academic convocation is truly a humbling experience. I acknowledge my former professors in Theology; many of them enjoy the special status of being "emeritus," and I pray for my other professors who passed away into eternal life. I thank all of them for their important role in my basic theological formation. I also follow a distinguished line of past LST presidents (those who are present here are Fr. Catalino Arevalo, Fr. Joel Tabora, and my immediate predecessor, Fr. Jose Mario Francisco).

The invitation card that was sent on this occasion featured the kneeling statue of St. Ignatius of Loyola on the grounds facing the main building of Loyola School of Theology. The image commemorates the mystical experience of St. Ignatius beside the river Cardoner in Manresa, where he stayed for ten months from March 22, 1522 to Mid-February of 1523. But what you see now in front of the LST building is St. Ignatius looking into a pool representing the river Cardoner. In the middle of the pool is a Hebrew script of the name of Jesus, "Yeshua." Since my theological formation is in the area of Spirituality, I thought that the chosen design on the invitation card by Fr. Francis Alvarez is an appropriate image as I start my mission in LST.

The mystical experience of St. Ignatius beside the river Cardoner was a turning point in his spiritual life. Ignatius described this event in his words:

> … the eyes of his understanding were opened and though he saw no vision he understood and perceived many things, numerous spiritual things as well as matters touching on faith and learning, and this was with an elucidation so bright that these things seemed new to him. He cannot expound in detail what he then understood, for they were many things, but he can state that he received such a lucidity in understanding that during the course of his entire life—now having passed his sixty-second year—if he were to gather all the helps he received from God and everything he knew, and add them together, he does not think they would add up to all that he received on that one occasion.[2]

[2] *Autobiography*, no. 31.

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In his commentary about the aforementioned event, Ignatian scholar Fr. Joseph de Guibert affirmed "that the graces which Ignatius received were in reality eminent intellectual lights, directly infused by God into his faculty of understanding."[3] This grace of mystical illumination was a radical spiritual experience of Ignatius which affected his "identity, lifestyle and mission."[4]

First is identity. Ignatius said that "the eyes of his understanding were opened and though he saw no vision *he understood and perceived numerous spiritual things touching on faith and learning.*" To understand and to perceive is "to attain awareness." This capacity to perceive is also related to discernment, the capacity to distinguish the motions of the spirit which Ignatius observed during the initial stage of his conversion in Loyola.

For Ignatius, the foundation of spiritual things is the *Lord Jesus*, the Word made flesh. The heart of *intellectus fidei* (understanding of faith) is Jesus who transformed the identity of Ignatius. According to Joseph Tylenda, "Together with the broader understanding of the faith Ignatius received a fuller realization of his vocation and possessed a clearer determination to follow Christ."[5]

Second is lifestyle. The determination of Ignatius to follow Christ meant a radical change of his lifestyle. Having donned his pilgrim's tunic at Monserrat, Ignatius began a life of penance and prayer in Manresa in imitation of the saints. It was during this period that Ignatius described "God as dealing with him in the same way a schoolteacher deals with a child while instructing him."[6] In this relationship with God, Ignatius lived the lifestyle of humility and

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[3]Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 31.

[4]Cf. Marie Theresa Coombs & Francis Kelly Nemeck, *Called by God: A Theology of Vocation and Lifelong Commitment* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 2–3.

[5]Ignatius & Joseph N. Tylenda, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), footnote 30–31.

[6]*Autobiography*, no. 27.

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poverty. It was in this context of God's dealings with Ignatius that he described his mystical illumination at the river Cardoner which confirmed his resolution to follow Christ as a pilgrim to Jerusalem, Salamanca, Paris, and finally to Rome.

Third is mission. Ignatius perceived a new vision of the world and all of reality as a result of the illumination of his understanding. His deepened perception of many spiritual things touching on faith and learning led him to greater service in his following of the Lord and shaped his apostolic vocation to help others—*ayudar las almas*! While studying theology in Paris, Ignatius attracted followers who shared his mission. And the evolution of this mission reached its full development in Rome, when Ignatius formed the Society of Jesus and directed its various ministries under the Roman Pontiff.

So the mystical illumination of Ignatius at the river Cardoner was a decisive point in his life. The illumination of his understanding deepened his understanding of faith (*intellectus fidei*) which affected his identity, lifestyle, and mission. In this regard, the monument of Ignatius in front of LST is an appropriate image to make us reflect on our identity, lifestyle, and mission as theologians.

The document issued by the Vatican International Theological Commission last year (2012), entitled "Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria," provides clear orientations about theology. This document is composed of three chapters: first is "Listening to the Word of God"; second is "Abiding in the Communion of the Church"; and third is "Giving an Account of the Truth of God." In his address to the International Theological Commission, Benedict XVI said that "the document seeks to present, so to speak, the genetic code of Catholic theology, namely, the principles that define its identity and consequently guarantee its unity in diversity of its achievements."

With the aforementioned experience of Ignatius as our inspiration and with the guidance of the document "Theology Today" as the "genetic code of Catholic theology," I seek to outline our mission as theologians of LST in terms of our identity, lifestyle, and mission.

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On the Theologian's Identity

Chapter one of "Theology Today" underlines the central place of God's Word in theology. The document affirms that "theology, in all its diverse traditions, disciplines and methods, is founded on the fundamental act of listening in faith to the revealed Word of God, Christ himself. Listening to God's Word is the definitive principle of Catholic theology."[7]

Therefore, the theologian's identity is anchored on listening to the Word of God. The theologian is first a listener, a hearer of God's word. We know how creation came to be through the power of God's Word (*Dabar Adonai*), so my identity as a theologian is rooted in this listening to the creative power of God's word. The theologian's identity is also shaped by a faith response to the Word of God. As affirmed in the document, "the act of faith, in response to the Word of God, opens the intelligence of the believer to new horizons … in this light, faith contemplates the whole world in a new way; it sees it more truly because, empowered by the Holy Spirit, it shares in God's own perspective."[8] This quotation echoes the illumination experience of Ignatius at the river Cardoner.

LST has given primacy of place to the study of the Word of God in its theological programs. You can check the impressive line-up of our biblical scholars on the souvenir program. This is important since "scripture is the soul of theology." Scripture gives the proper identity of our theological enterprise.

On the Theologian's Lifestyle

Chapter two of "Theology Today" speaks about "Abiding in the Communion of the Church." It is within this communion in the

[7]International Theological Commission, "Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria" (Vatican, 2012), no. 4.

[8]"Theology Today," no. 16.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Church that theologians find a home for their theological inquiries. It is within this communion in the Church that theologians "endeavor to open wide the Scriptures to the Christian faithful."[9] It is within this communion in the Church that theologians preserve the fidelity to the Apostolic tradition. Thus, the lifestyle of theologians is marked by communion and the readiness to collaborate with the different states of life in the Church.

The lifestyle of communion for theologians is marked by "adherence to the magisterium in its various gradations."[10] In this regard, the theologians recognize the "competence of bishops, and especially of the college of bishops headed by the pope, to give authentic interpretation of the Word of God handed on in Scripture and Tradition."[11] The presence of our bishops in this convocation underlines the ecclesial bond between LST as an Ecclesiastical Faculty and the bishops.

LST has been active in collaborating with various events and initiatives of the local Church, theological faculties, seminaries, and other sectors of civil society. Our professors have been asked for their expert advice on various matters affecting the Church not only in the Philippines but also in the other Churches in Asia through the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. LST is also a place of cultural communion as it annually forms close to 400 students coming from twenty countries not only from Asia but from as far as Europe, Africa, and Latin America.

LST's relationship with the Ateneo de Manila University and its collaboration with other Jesuit educational networks, and its participation in international programs like the Asian Mandate of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, also highlight the school's openness to dialogue with other academic institutions.

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[9] "Theology Today," no. 24.

[10] "Theology Today," no. 44.

[11] "Theology Today," no. 44.

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Thus, the fruitfulness of our vocation as theologians truly depends on our rootedness in ecclesial communion. Pope Paul VI said that "The task of the theologian is carried out with a view to building up ecclesial communion so that the People of God may grow in the experience of faith."[12]

On the Theologian's Mission

Chapter three of "Theology Today" speaks of "Giving an Account of the Truth of God." To give an account is to give an explanation of the truth of God. Thus, the mission of theologians is "to translate into scientific discourse the Word of God expressed in revelation."[13] In the language of Ignatius, this discourse is about "conversations"—spiritual conversations about God which is central to Ignatian spirituality.

In its theological work of articulating the truth of God's revelation, LST has been intensely involved in fulfilling its vision and mission "to educate in the faith, sustain personal theological growth, and assist in the effective empowerment of all who desire to serve God's people by ministries in and of the Church."[14]

Also, LST has been involved in nation building and was at the forefront in responding to various issues and challenges affecting our country. Our professors and students are actively involved in their respective fields of mission *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Many of our alumni (a number of them are bishops) are recognized and appreciated for their particular service of offering the divine truth in an intelligible form. In particular, the scientific work of theological research and the publication of articles in our LST Journal "Landas" are important

[12]Pope Paul VI, Letter Le transfert a Louvain-la-Neuve to the Rector of the Catholic University of Louvain, September 13, 1975 (cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 22–23, 1975). Also cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis* 19 (AAS 71 [1979]: 305ff).

[13]"Theology Today," no. 60.

[14]Cf. LST Vision and Mission, http://lst.edu/about-us/vision-a-mission.

https://publications.lst.edu/

in fostering "the unity of theology in a plurality of methods and disciplines."[15] Our theological research is also open to other sciences and cultural trends which lead to new frontiers of engagement with post-modern culture today.

Thanks to Fr. Mario Francisco

At this point, I wish to express the gratitude of the whole LST community to Fr. Jose Mario Francisco who served for seven years as president of LST. In the last issue of the LST student publication "Tinig Loyola," Mario articulated his consolations and desolations as president. Among the consolations he mentioned are the following: "opening doors to diverse voices from outside and facing long-term issues within; working with local Churches through JCAP and the Asian Mandate, linking with international theological centers beyond our region, cooperating with the Jesuit educational network; exploring ways of addressing management and financial concerns." For desolations, Mario mentioned "the sense that administration is never ending. No sooner has one finished with an issue when another issue erupts."

In the same interview, Mario also gave an advice to his successor and this is now directed to me: "To keep his cool. More seriously though, I hope he would listen to voices not only from outside but also from within LST. They would cue him where to go. For instance, I wished that I had done more to encourage and support our faculty in doing more research and writing."

Again, thank you Fr. Mario for your service and for your kind words of advice. Now you deserve a break from your desolations.

Theology and Spiritual Experience

In conclusion, I wish to underline the special relationship between theology and spiritual experience which brings us back to the religious

[15]"Theology Today," no. 85.

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experience of Ignatius at the river Cardoner. As affirmed in "Theology Today," there is a close link between theology and spiritual experience, "which it enlightens and by which in turn it is nourished, and of its nature it opens into an authentic wisdom with a lively sense of the transcendence of the God of Jesus Christ."[16]

The statue of Ignatius in front of LST depicts him kneeling on the ground, his right hand holding a walking staff and his eyes fixed on the Hebrew script of the name of Jesus, "Yeshua," on the floor. As I begin my new mandate as President, I see myself kneeling down before the mystery of God. The task ahead is enormous since I take this responsibility with my other mission as rector of Loyola House of Studies. But I trust in the confidence, competence, and collaboration of the LST community: administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and our benefactors. In this Year of Faith, in the first year of the papacy of Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope, in communion with our bishops and all church communities, we renew our commitment to make the message of Christ known to all the ends of the earth.

Last June 23, I celebrated Sunday Mass in the chapel of Barangay San Isidro, a relocation site in Montalvan, Rizal. Hundreds of people were relocated there after they lost their homes as a result of Typhoon Ondoy. After the Mass, Bro. Ernald Andal invited the people to pray for me, for my new mission as LST President. During the period of silent prayer, I felt deep consolation and communion with our poor. In prayer, I felt their *sensus fidelium* ("the intimate sense of spiritual realities that the faithful have"). At that moment, I felt like being installed as president. This experience reminded me that theology must take account of the *sensus fidei*, the *sensus fidelium* especially of our poor. The document "Theology Today" points out "that theologians depend on the *sensus fidelium*, because the faith that they explore and explain lives in the people of God."[17]

[16]"Theology Today," no. 60.

[17]"Theology Today," no. 35.

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So together we pray, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph her most chaste spouse, St. Ignatius and all the saints, that "the eyes of our understanding may be opened so that we may understand and perceive many things, numerous spiritual things on faith and learning" and be always enlightened by God's Wisdom. Ultimately, theology "implies a striving for holiness and an ever-deeper awareness of the transcendence of the mystery of God."[18]

In the end, we are reduced to silence as we contemplate the glory of God. Amen.

Maraming salamat po!

[18]"Theology Today," no. 99.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Mark L. Lopez, S.J., lived and worked with Mangyan communities in Oriental Mindoro as a Jesuit volunteer after graduating from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1996 with a B.S. degree in Management Engineering. After his volunteer year, he worked with NGOs like the U.N. Development Programme and Venture for Fund Raising. He also served as Executive Director of the Jesuit Volunteers Philippines (JVP) Foundation from 2001 to 2004 prior to joining the Society of Jesus in May of 2004. He has since been involved in other Jesuit social apostolates such as *Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan* and

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