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Ignatian Spirituality and the Life of the Lawyer: Finding God in All Things – Even in the Ordinary Practice of the Law

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**Ignatian Spirituality and the Life of the Lawyer:
Finding God in All Things – Even in the Ordinary Practice of the Law**

Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J.*

I.

Let me begin my remarks this evening by calling attention to an image that seems to have been central to the spiritual experience of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The image is that of the rays of the sun bringing the light of God's presence and the warmth of God's love into every part of our lives and into all of our experience. You may be familiar with this image from the seal of the Society of Jesus, on which the cross and the name of Jesus (signified by its first three letters in Greek) are framed by the blazing rays of the shining sun. A similar image of the sun makes a crucial appearance in the final contemplation of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, which is commonly known as the Contemplation to Attain Love. In that exercise, Ignatius invites the retreatant to "consider how all good things and gifts descend from above; for example, my limited power from the Supreme and Infinite Power above; and so of justice, goodness, piety, mercy, and so forth – just as the rays come down from the sun."¹

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¹ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF SAINT IGNATIUS: A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY 95 (George E. Ganss, S.J. trans., Loyola University Press 1992).

Still more images of light make prominent appearances in the *Autobiography* of Ignatius. For example, during the ten months of prayer and spiritual growth that he spent in Manresa,² Ignatius says that “[o]ne day it was granted him to understand, with great spiritual joy, the way in which God created the world. He seem[ed] to see a white object with rays stemming from it, from which God made light.”³ On another occasion, while at Mass, “he saw with inward eyes, at the time of the elevation of the body of the Lord, some white rays coming from above. . . . [H]e clearly saw with his own understanding how our Lord was present in that most holy Sacrament.”⁴

Light is also associated with what has been described as “the decisive moment in Ignatius’s spiritual development.”⁵ While sitting on the banks of the River Cardoner outside Manresa, Ignatius says that “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 all these things seemed new to him.”⁶ And at the end of his life Ignatius reported that “his devotion, that is, his ease in finding God, was always increasing, now more than ever in his entire life. At whatever time or hour he wanted to find God, he found

² ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *A PILGRIM’S JOURNEY: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA* 28 (Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J., trans., 1985).

³ *Id.* at 37.

⁴ *Id.* at 37-38.

⁵ *Id.* at 38 n. 30-31.

⁶ *Id.* at 38-39.

Him.”⁷ In the same breath that Ignatius described this experience of ease in finding God, he also noted that he “now ha[d] many visions, especially those . . . of seeing Christ as the sun.”⁸

I was struck by these Ignatian images of the sun and its light as I considered what I might contribute to the stated purpose of this series of talks, which is to explore the ways in which the lives of extraordinary Catholics can shed light on the ordinary practice of the law. Given that purpose, Ignatius’s repeated use of the image of the sun and the light of its rays suggests to me that we could not have a more appropriate saint on whom to reflect than Ignatius of Loyola. I hope to show that Ignatius is a most appropriate saint for us tonight, because the spirituality that shines forth from the life experience of Ignatius sheds an extraordinary light that illuminates the path to encountering God’s presence and experiencing God’s call in the midst of the ordinary practice of the law.

There is abundant evidence that lawyers today could use the guidance provided by the light of Ignatian spirituality. Nearly twenty years ago, Professor David Granfield called attention to a crisis of meaning and value in the law. Granfield described the crisis in terms of the following question: Can members of the legal profession “afford to practice law as a fascinating technique for earning a living, if it remains separate from what they believe are the most vital and

⁷ *Id.* at 120.

⁸ *Id.*

fundamental concerns of life?"⁹ Granfield saw this crisis as rooted in the difficulty lawyers have integrating the practice of law into the whole of their lives. Granfield feared that, if the law "remains merely a job, a prestigious way of making a living, a sophisticated dialectical skill, or a springboard to a position of power and influence," then the practice of law could split the lawyer's life "into uncoordinated personal and professional compartments."¹⁰

More recently, professor and former dean David Hall, of the Northeastern University School of Law, published a book calling for a spiritual revitalization of the legal profession.¹¹ Professor Hall identifies a number of spiritual challenges facing lawyers today, including dissatisfaction with the practice of law; stress, loneliness, depression, and anxiety; a sense of being adrift, and, echoing Professor Granfield, a dis-integrating separation between one's inner self and one's professional self.¹² Drawing on the work of Professor Randy Lee of Widener University Law School, Professor Hall concludes that "there can be no cure for the malaise afflicting the legal profession unless and until individual

⁹ DAVID GRANFIELD, *THE INNER EXPERIENCE OF LAW: A JURISPRUDENCE OF SUBJECTIVITY* 7 (1988).

¹⁰ *Id.* at 274. See also Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J., *Law School as a Culture of Conversation: Re-Imagining Legal Education as a Process of Conversion to the Demands of Authentic Conversation*, 28 *LOY. U. CHI. L.J.* 333, 336-342 (1996-1997) (discussing the crisis of meaning and value in legal education).

¹¹ See DAVID HALL, *THE SPIRITUAL REVITALIZATION OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION: A SEARCH FOR SACRED RIVERS* (2005).

¹² *Id.* at 53-65; see *id.* at 61 "Law is generally taught in an abstracted, disembodied and depersonalized manner. Students are subtly, and sometimes directly, instructed to extract their feelings, emotions and themselves from the learning process. Law becomes an objective and sterile process that has very little connection to the person learning it. . . . From its early introduction law resides outside the person. Therefore it should not be surprising that lawyers experience this sense of separation from the practice of law, even though they are engaged in it on a daily basis.").

lawyers and the profession as a whole begin to break down the walls that have separated work from faith, and approach the practice of law as an integral part of their spiritual journey.”¹³

I suspect that Ignatius of Loyola would prescribe a similar cure for the spiritual crisis afflicting the contemporary legal profession. Ignatius conceived of his whole life as a pilgrimage – a spiritual journey – and he experienced God laboring in the world in a way that breaks down any walls that separate work from faith. Indeed, the life story of Ignatius and the gift of Ignatian spirituality offer powerful resources for just the sort of spiritual renewal that Professor Hall thinks our profession needs if we are “[t]o meet the challenge of today and the potential crisis of the future.”¹⁴

II.

In many ways, the most distinctive characteristic of Ignatian spirituality is rooted in a story. The story, which may be familiar to many of you already, comes from the life of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. As a soldier for the king of Spain, Ignatius suffered a horrible wound fighting against the French at a battle in the border fortress of Pamplona. During his long convalescence from that wound, Ignatius began to pay attention to the different ways in which his heart was moved as he read different kinds of books and as he imagined different ways of living his life. Up to that point Ignatius had lived his

¹³ *Id.* at 64 (quoting Randy Lee, *Faith Through Lawyering: Finding and Doing What is Mine to Do*, 11 REGENTS U.L. REV. 71, 88 (1998-1999)).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 65.

life in the world of the Spanish court. But he found that reading courtly romances and imagining a return to his former life as a courtier left his heart dry and lifeless. At the same time, when he would read about Jesus or the lives of the saints, or when he would imagine himself doing the things that St. Francis or St. Dominic did, he found his heart on fire with energy; he felt his heart filled with excitement and life. As he reflected over time on those contrasting experiences of what he came to call desolation and consolation, and as he considered the way the story of his life had unfolded, Ignatius gradually began to ground his life in the following central conviction of Ignatian spirituality: we can discern how God is calling us to lives of freedom and wholeness and integrity if we pay attention to the feelings moving in our hearts as we reflect on our own life experiences. Ignatius's own experience convinced him that all of us can grow in freedom and wholeness and integrity if we make choices that are faithful to the times when we have experienced joy and freedom and fullness of life in the ongoing stories of our own everyday lives.

Having said a little bit about the story of the life of Ignatius, I want to share a bit of the story of my own life, which I hope might help to illustrate how I've come to understand the process of Ignatian discernment at work in my own ordinary experience. I'll first share some of the story of how this lawyer came to be a Jesuit, and then a bit of the story of how this Jesuit came to understand that his Jesuit priestly ministry ought to be lived out, for the moment at least, primarily as a law professor.

I was a lawyer for several years before I entered the Jesuits. I finished college at Georgetown in 1985, and went immediately to law school at the University of Michigan. Up to that point in my life, I had never given any thought that I can remember to entering the Jesuits. Instead, I had what I thought was a pretty straightforward course worked out: After law school, I would do a judicial clerkship, then I would practice law for a few years in Washington, and then I would look for a teaching position in a law school. That had actually been my plan from some point fairly early in my undergraduate studies.

But during my third year in law school, I had an experience that began the process of altering the sequence of that plan pretty dramatically. I had a great friend at Michigan who had also been a classmate of mine at Georgetown. We eventually both ended up together on the editorial board of the law review. My friend had grown restless with the Christian tradition in which had been raised, but he had been exposed to, and developed a bit of an interest in, Catholicism while at Georgetown. Eventually during law school he and I began to have some fairly significant conversations about how I understood my faith as a Catholic and why it was so important in my life. A few years later when we were both practicing law, my friend decided to enter the Catholic Church, and I was able to be his confirmation sponsor.

Back during our third year in law school, in the midst of these conversations about how I experienced my faith, my friend asked me a question

that eventually put my life on a somewhat different course than the one I had planned. As I remember things, somewhat out of the blue, he asked me if I had ever thought about becoming a Jesuit. I don't ever remember having consciously considered becoming a Jesuit before that moment, but as I began to think about the possibility, something seemed to click in my heart; what he was suggesting seemed to fit and make sense; it felt right.

But I didn't feel like I could drop everything and explore entering the Jesuits right away. At that point in my life, I was set to clerk for a year on the Seventh Circuit, and I had an offer to work with a firm in Washington once I finished my clerkship. In fact, everything was sort of going along according to my pre-existing plan, and entering the Jesuits at that point would have been a significant, unanticipated change of course. Although I didn't have any language for the idea of discernment at that time in my life, I can remember praying with real desire for God to help me to see what I should do. As I imagined the different possibilities during the rest of my third year, I began to notice things about how my heart was moved. Some part of my heart that I really hadn't been aware of had come alive in me through my friend's question and our conversations, and I felt a deep assurance that at some point I would be a Jesuit, but at the same time I felt a lot of peace and a real sense of rightness in thinking that I ought to stay on the course I was on - I should clerk and go on to practice, and somehow the Jesuit question would come back into my life later if that was what God really wanted me to do.

I ended up having a tremendous experience clerking for Judge Kenneth F. Ripple on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. The judge became a wonderful mentor for me, and he taught me a great deal about the central importance of taking seriously the real human implications of every legal decision we worked on. And as a litigator in Washington for three years I worked with some fine lawyers, and I gained some practical lawyering experience that has enabled me to have a bit of credibility teaching Civil Procedure today. But after a couple of years, even though my experience of practice was interesting and rewarding in many respects, I began to be more and more aware that a part of my heart was not fully engaged in what I was doing.

My experience was telling me that a part of me was not being fully utilized where I was. I wasn't as full of life and energy and joy as God desires for us. And at that point I began to think seriously again about entering the Jesuits. As I began to learn more about prayer and discernment, and as I spent more time, with the help of a good spiritual director, imagining what life as a Jesuit and a priest might be like, there was an excitement and a freedom and sense of wholeness and rightness that eventually led me to enter the Society of Jesus in August of 1992, after four years of practicing law. As I look back on this period of time in my life, I can see now that I was paying attention to my experience; I was trying to reflect on what my experience might mean and where it might be leading; and I was trying to respond to all that with love and fidelity to the truth of who I knew myself to be.

That's a bit of the story of how I came to leave legal practice to enter the Jesuits. Once I entered the Jesuits there was, of course, no guarantee that I would ever end up as a teacher at a Jesuit law school, and that was fine with me. I had lots of questions about whether life in Jesuit higher education in general and in a law school more particularly would allow me to be the kind of Jesuit that I wanted to be. For example, in the highly secularized environment of higher education, especially in the world of legal education, would I be able to speak to people about friendship with Jesus with the kind of explicitness and directness that I wanted to be part of my Jesuit ministry? Would the pastoral part of my heart stay alive in the face of the professional academic demands and secularized environment of contemporary legal education?

As I got closer to my own ordination, and as I reflected on various experiences that I had during my years of Jesuit formation, I became increasingly convinced that the story of my own life was leading me in the direction of ministering as a legal academic. For example, I began to see new significance in an experience that I had as second-year novice, when I was teaching a constitutional law seminar to undergrads at Georgetown. I found that I was good at it, that I had a lot of fun doing it, and that other people noticed that I was energized by it. When I would return home to the community where I was living, one Jesuit in particular would often ask me about what I had been teaching that day, and he noticed that there was a lot of life and energy in me as I told him about the cases we had been talking about in class that day. On another

front, both during my philosophy studies at Loyola Chicago and during my theology studies at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, I had the opportunity to do some pastoral work with law students. I found that law students had the sorts of questions about their lives and their faith that I hoped I could help people explore as a Jesuit priest, and it also became clear to me that I, as Jesuit lawyer, might be able to talk about their questions with a credibility that a pastoral minister without a legal background might not have.

I also began to think more about how I understood Jesuit priesthood and how I thought my ministry could contribute to the larger mission of the Society of Jesus at this point in the world's history. I came to understand Jesuit priesthood as a way of serving God that tries to give flesh to God's word in all the different areas of human life that engage reflective human beings, especially areas of human endeavor where God's word might otherwise not be heard, where God's presence might not be noticed.¹⁵ It seemed to me that the law and

¹⁵ See Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *Jesuit Priesthood: Its Meaning and Commitments*, 8 STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS (December 1976) 159 (“[H]istorically there has been a union between Jesuits and other men in the common tasks that engage reflective human beings: in the sciences, in the arts, in education, in exploration, in social studies – Jesuits have been found. And the value of this conjunction is that there would be priests whose lives are continually consonant with the human enterprise, who have penetrated it in some depth, and who bring their priesthood into this area of humanity. The concern of Jesuits for the arts, the sciences, practical projects and speculative theory – this concern and engagement continually incarnates the word of God in parts of humanity in which otherwise it would be silent. The languages in which is preached will differ, each diverse human concern offering its own structures of intelligibility and nuance. It is vitally important for the word of God to resound in these manifold and different structures. And for this it is imperative to have priests who unite the ministry of their lives with an active and profound engagement in the diversely human.”); cf. Karl Rahner, S.J., *Poetry and the Christian*, in 4 THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS 357 (Kevin Smith trans., 1966) (“Theology as reflective faith cannot be completely alien to what fills the lofty hours of man and so must be gathered home to God as a whole, since the one seed sown by the one God must ripen in all the diverse fields of the world.”).

the contemporary law school were the sorts of human endeavors that fit that description. Similarly, part of the mission of the Society of Jesus today is to bring the Gospel into dialogue with contemporary culture.¹⁶ Both the legal profession and the law school as an institution are clearly important components of contemporary American culture.

Since my education and experience gave me a familiarity with the legal culture that not many other Jesuits have, it occurred to me that teaching in a law school might be a particular way in which I could embody that full engagement with culture that is demanded by the mission of the Society of Jesus today. As I reflected on all this, I began to be excited by the prospect of ministering as a law professor; I had a sense that all my gifts and talents and desires could really be fully engaged by that work, and that my training and experience and background made me uniquely well-suited to meet a particular need in the world in a particularly effective way. As I imagined myself moving down this path, I experienced a deepening sense of peace and rightness, a movement toward joy and hope, the sort of movement that Ignatius would describe as

¹⁶ See DOCUMENTS OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH GENERAL CONGREGATION OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, Decree 2, "Servants of Christ's Mission," n. 21 (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995) ("[W]e can now say of our contemporary mission that the faith that does justice is, inseparably, the faith that engages other traditions in dialogue, and the faith that evangelizes culture."); *Id.*, Decree 6, "The Jesuit Priest: Ministerial Priesthood and Jesuit Identity," n. 4 ("a full engagement with human culture has been part of the Society's charism"); cf. Rahner, *Poetry and the Christian*, *supra* n. 15, at 358 ("[T]he grace of God does not only start to work for the first time, when the word of the gospel reaches man through the official preaching. It precedes this word, it prepares the heart for this word by every experience of existence which takes place in the life of man. It is, in diverse ways of course, secretly and powerfully at work in what we call human culture, because humanism itself, wherever it exists, wherever it still exists, revives, proves itself true and displays itself radiantly, would not exist at all, if the secret grace of God did not anticipate its own manifestation in the word of the gospel.").

consolation and that he would attribute to an experience of God's Spirit calling me forward in freedom. And as I described all of this to friends and superiors and people who knew me well, they all confirmed my sense that this was the right path for me to take at this point in my Jesuit life. This path seemed to fit with my history and desires, and this path really did seem to be the direction in which the story of my life was leading. All of that helped me to discern that choosing to follow the path revealed by the movements of my heart as I reflected on my ordinary experience would be the way for me to best respond to God's call in my life with freedom and integrity.

III.

That's a bit of the story of the life of Ignatius, and a bit of the story of how I've experienced some the insights of Ignatius at work in my own life. Let me be clear about one thing: I don't share my own story primarily in order to invite people to consider a path that looks like mine. Instead, by speaking about how the Ignatian understanding of discernment has helped me to grow in my own vocation, my hope is to encourage everyone in this room tonight to consider the nature of their own unique vocations, which are undoubtedly different from mine. I offer my own story as a way of prompting all of you to think about the stories of your own lives and your encounters with God in your own daily experience of the ordinary practice of law.

The experience and example of Ignatius invite each of us to listen attentively to the stories of our own experience, our own hearts, our own desires,

and our own lives so that we all can respond to God's call with freedom and integrity. We all know that life as a lawyer can often become stressful, hectic, compartmentalized, and dis-integrated. And we all know lawyers who seem lifeless, joyless, directionless, and unfree, following paths they haven't consciously chosen, that lead them to places they would never have chosen to go, seemingly locked in lives they haven't freely chosen to live.

The spirituality that comes to us from Ignatius illuminates a path that can help us to avoid that trap. Ignatius shows us the way to pay attention to God calling us to freedom and integrity in the ordinary experiences of our daily lives. As we reflect on our daily lives, what are the events and experiences that give us joy? When do we feel most fully alive and fully engaged with the world? When do we feel our hearts on fire with love and energy and hope-filled desires? Ignatius would say that those are the times and places where God is at work calling us to freedom.

Ignatius would encourage us to find a few quiet moments to pause each day to pay attention to the experiences that make known to us God's call, to reflect a bit on what those experiences might mean and where they might lead, and to consider how we might respond with love and generosity when we have a sense of how God is calling to us in a particular situation. Those quiet moments might help us little by little to develop hearts more attuned to God's presence in all of our daily experience. Developing this kind of discerning heart, a heart attuned to God's presence, might open a path through the walls that can

separate work from faith; a path toward living a life of freedom and integrity, especially when our lives are lived in the complex world of the law.

The story of Ignatius also reminds us to be patient and gentle with ourselves as our efforts to discern God's call unfold through trial and error and repeated readjustment over time. For example, in order to make a clean break with his former life of vanity and courtly elegance, Ignatius at one point in his life stopped combing and cutting his hair, and he let the nails of hands and feet grow, since he felt that "he had also been overly neat with regard to them."¹⁷ Ignatius's ongoing experience, however, taught him that his wild appearance made it difficult for him to engage people in spiritual conversation. He was scaring people away. He was experiencing his appearance frustrating the work to which he believed God was calling him.¹⁸ This new experience revealed to him that his prior discernment about his appearance needed re-assessment. At this point in his life, Ignatius recognized that "God was dealing with him in the same way a schoolteacher deals with a child while instructing him."¹⁹ The God of Ignatius is a patient and gentle teacher, and we can be similarly patient and gentle with ourselves as we engage in the daily effort to discern God's call through trial and error and re-adjustment in our own lives.

IV.

¹⁷ ST. IGNATIUS, A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY, *supra* n. 2, at 28; *see also id.* at 28 & n.19.

¹⁸ *See* HARVEY J. EGAN, S.J., IGNATIUS LOYOLA THE MYSTIC 44 (1987) ("[F]or the sake of the apostolate, [he] paid more attention to his appearance.").

¹⁹ ST. IGNATIUS, A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY, *supra* n. 2, at 35-36.

Father Howard Gray has said that “[t]here are two key questions in any spirituality: Who is your God? How do you come to your God?”²⁰ In order to see more clearly the way in which Ignatian spirituality can bring light into our experience of the ordinary practice of the law, I want to address briefly the Ignatian answers to Fr. Gray’s two key questions. I’ll turn first to the central features of Ignatius’s understanding of who God is, and then I’ll discuss the method or strategy that Ignatius offers for helping us to find God in all things and all places. The method proposed by Ignatius can help us to align ourselves with what God is doing in what Fr. Gray calls the “buzzing, demanding reality of everyday life,”²¹ which we might describe as the ordinary experience of the practice of law.

The distinctively Ignatian understanding of God that provides the foundation for the Ignatian spirituality of discernment is found in the exercise that I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the *Contemplatio ad amorem*, or the Contemplation to Attain Love. At the heart of this contemplation, Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider four points whose purpose is to draw the retreatant into a deeper experience of how God’s love is active in their lives. Taken together, these four points of the *Contemplatio* provide the foundation for experiencing what Fr. Michael Buckley calls “the religious density of all things

²⁰ Howard Gray, S.J., *Ignatius’s Method for Letting God Shine through Life’s Realities*, 16 COMPANY no. 3, at 30 (Spring 1999).

²¹ *Id.*

within and because of the action of God.”²² My hope is that a brief description of the four points of the *Contemplatio* will allow us to better appreciate the “religious density” of our everyday experience of the ordinary practice of law.

Ignatius first invites us to understand all that is as gift. Creation, redemption, along with every particular thing in our lives – everything is gift. Using our memory and imagination, Ignatius invites each of us to “ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for [us], and how much he has given [us] of what he possesses, and consequently how he, the same Lord, desires to give [us] even his very self.”²³ As Ignatius views the world, and as he invites us to view the world, anything that is, is gift. “God in love has given everything that is, even himself. Creation is God’s gift of all that is created; grace is God’s gift of God Whatever is, is gift.”²⁴

In the second point, Ignatius invites us to understand God as dwelling within all created things, “especially within human beings.”²⁵ Ignatius directs the retreatant to consider “how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and

²² MICHAEL J. BUCKLEY, S.J., *THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY AS PROMISE AND PROJECT: REFLECTIONS IN A JESUIT IDIOM* 82 (1998).

²³ ST. IGNATIUS, *THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES*, *supra* n.1, at #234. For a helpful study of the text of the *Contemplation to Attain Love*, see Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Contemplation to Attain Love*, 24 *THE WAY SUPPLEMENT* 92-104 (1975)

²⁴ BUCKLEY, *THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY*, *supra* n. 22, at 82.

²⁵ *Id.*

intelligence; and even further, making me his temple, since I am created as a likeness of the Divine Majesty.”²⁶ All that is, is not only gift, but sacred gift. Again, in the words of Fr. Buckley, everything is sacred “because God is immanent within creation”; by this indwelling, God transforms every “human life into that which is sacred.”²⁷ Indeed, every human life we encounter in our practice of the law is a temple, “a dwelling-place of God.”²⁸ The indwelling presence of God defines the nature of reality. “Whatever is, is sacred.”²⁹

In the third point of the *Contemplatio*, Ignatius asks us to see God at work in all of creation. The retreatant is to consider “how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth; that is, [God] acts in the manner of one who is laboring.”³⁰ Ignatius wants us to see God laboring in all of creation, working to bring each one of us and our entire world to life and wholeness and freedom. The understanding of God set forth in this third point of the *Contemplatio* may in fact be the most critical part of our discussion tonight, because, again drawing on Michael Buckley, it is this understanding of God that is most distinctively Ignatian, and it is this understanding of God that “stands as the foundation for discernment.”³¹

Buckley asserts that, because God is at work in all things, because God “relates to all things as a laborer,” and because “all things are effected and

²⁶ ST. IGNATIUS, THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, *supra* n.1, at #235.

²⁷ BUCKLEY, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, *supra* n. 22, at 82.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ ST. IGNATIUS, THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, *supra* n.1, at #236.

³¹ Buckley, *The Contemplation to Attain Love*, *supra* n. 23, at 102.

affected by the struggle of God to achieve human salvation, . . . [e]verything that is, is not only gift and sacred, but part of sacred history.”³² Accordingly, our lives and our work are part of sacred history. Our ordinary practice of the law is part of sacred history. I suspect that this understanding of God as one who labors, one who struggles with hard work to bring all things to life and wholeness, to freedom and integrity, may well resonate with women and men whose lives are given over to the daily labor – the hard and rigorous work – of practicing law. God, as Ignatius understands Him, is not distant from our labors in the law. Instead, we are working in the trenches alongside God who is always already at work in our midst, and the challenge for us is to try to discern more clearly how God is at work in us and around us, so that we can more fully align our labors with His.

If all of this is true of God, then, as Buckley says, there is a “religious density” to our lives as lawyers. If God is at work in all things and in all events, then there is a “religious importance” to all things and all events. In light of this pervasive religious importance, Buckley argues that it is “religiously imperative” that we try to discern just how God is laboring in our midst, so that we can “merge [our] choice and [our] actions with the workings of God.”³³

³² BUCKLEY, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, *supra* n. 22, at 83.

³³ Buckley, *The Contemplation to Attain Love*, *supra* n. 23, at 102.

This effort “to read, to interpret and to understand things as caught up in [God’s] labours,”³⁴ is how Ignatius understands discernment. And the following questions become central questions for discernment in the midst of our ordinary daily lives: How in this moment can I more closely labor alongside God, rather than at cross purposes with God? How can I be more attentive to the God who is in fact laboring in me and through me? Or to invoke another Ignatian image, how can I more and more understand myself as an instrument being dexterously wielded by the divine hand?³⁵ If lawyers today experience a spiritual crisis because they believe there is a wall between their faith and their work, the answer to the crisis might be found in this Ignatian insight. God is always already laboring alongside us. Because this is true of God, opening our lives to more intimate contact and union with the hand of God who is always hard at work in us and around us might bring a new depth of meaning and integrity to our labors in the ordinary practice of the law.

The fourth point of the *Contemplatio* brings us briefly back to the image with which I began my remarks. Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider how all good things descend from above, just “as the rays come down from the sun,

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ See BUCKLEY, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, *supra* n. 22, at 85 (“[F]or the attainment of the objective [sought by the Society of Jesus], which is to aid souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end, the means which unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded dexterously by His divine hand are more effective than those which equip it in relation to men.”) (quoting *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* X.2.#813). Buckley notes that “[t]his theology of the human as the instrument of the divine, as the means through which the divine enters human history, runs throughout Ignatius’s writings.” *Id.*

or the rains from their source.”³⁶ All that is, comes from God; all that is participates in God’s presence. Buckley asserts that “[o]ne can find God in all things because all things descend from God and speak of God.”³⁷ Thus, “[t]o find God, one does not prescind from creation; one enters into it. . . . Whatever is, is God’s self-revelation and communication.”³⁸

Ignatius’s vision of God and God’s relationship with the world therefore assures us that we don’t have to remove ourselves from our ordinary daily experience in order to draw closer to God. Instead, our pilgrimage toward God invites us to seek God in the midst of our ordinary daily lives and work. Ignatius offers us the hope that we can find God by letting the light of God’s love illuminate our ordinary daily lives and work. If we do so, we might find God already hard at work alongside us, and we might discern the ways in which we can unite ourselves with what God is always, already doing in our midst. In the words of Howard Gray, God is “laboring within every human event to bring creation to its fullness”; the God who labors alongside us “illuminat[es] within the concrete details of [our lives] the way that Christ [can] be followed.”³⁹

Having briefly touched on Ignatius’s understanding of who God is, I want to conclude by sharing some reflections on Ignatius’s method for drawing closer to God in the midst of ordinary life. Howard Gray finds in the *Constitutions* that Ignatius wrote for the new Society of Jesus a succinct description of a structured

³⁶ ST. IGNATIUS, *THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES*, *supra* n.1, at #237.

³⁷ BUCKLEY, *THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY*, *supra* n. 22, at 83.

³⁸ *Id.* at 84.

³⁹ Gray, *Ignatius’s Method*, *supra* n. 20, at 31.

method⁴⁰ by which, not just Jesuits, but all people can become contemplatives in action, habitually open to finding “God’s activity, design, and direction”⁴¹ in the world and in their daily life experiences.

In a section of the *Constitutions* addressing the formation of Jesuit novices, Ignatius proposes a process for becoming more and more “attuned to God’s presence” in the midst of the ordinary events of daily life.⁴² This process involves three movements or attitudes of heart: attention, reverence, and devotion. Ignatius was convinced that through the process of attention, reverence, and devotion, one could find God in the experiences and relationships of daily life. Here is how Howard Gray describes this process unfolding in practice:

First, bring focus to your life by taking time to listen to others and to see what lies before you. Bring yourself to a self-possession before that reality. Then give your attention (maybe *attentiveness* is a better word) to what is really there. For example, let that person or that poem or that social injustice [that comes into your experience] become as genuinely itself as it can be. Then reverence what you see before you. Reverence is giving acceptance to, cherishing the differences of, holding in awe the uniqueness of another reality. So, before you judge or assess or respond, give yourself time to esteem and to accept what is there in the other. And, if you learn how to do this, Ignatius urged, then you will gradually discover *devotion*, the singularly moving way in which God works in that situation, revealing goodness and fragility, beauty and truth, pain and anguish, wisdom and ingenuity. Attention, reverence and devotion establish the process for finding God in all things.⁴³

⁴⁰ See *id.*

⁴¹ Howard J. Gray, S.J., *Ignatian Spirituality*, in *AS LEAVEN IN THE WORLD: CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES ON FAITH, VOCATION, AND THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE* 324 (Thomas M. Landy, ed. 2001).

⁴² Gray, *Ignatius’s Method*, *supra* n. 20, at 31.

⁴³ *Id.* See also Gray, *Ignatian Spirituality*, *supra* n. 41, at 324-26 (discussing the Ignatian understanding of attention, reverence, and devotion). Attention “means allowing the reality of the other to be present to you in all its integrity. To be attentive is to be focused, i.e., gently alert

This, Gray concludes, is Ignatius's "method for letting God shine through life's realities."⁴⁴

Michael Campbell-Johnston, former provincial of the British province of the Society of Jesus, describes the dynamic in this way: "It is a question of letting privileged moments speak more deeply, of dwelling on them, savouring them, entering into them The opportunities are infinite, as varied and complex as life itself."⁴⁵ The challenge for us is to begin to see the events of our daily lives practicing law as privileged moments that speak to us of God's presence. For example, can we be attentive to the real struggles of the client telling us his story in our office? Can we be reverent before the goodness reflected in a colleague's well-argued brief or before a judge's careful efforts to craft an opinion that applies the law to a complex human situation with clarity and sensitivity?⁴⁶ Are

to what has been revealed." *Id.* at 324. Reverence "means what one has been attentive to must now be accepted as it is, in its own terms. . . . If attention symbolizes 'letting in,' then reverence is 'embracing what I have let in.'" *Id.* at 325. "Devotion represents a privileged moment of personal revelation. It is also a moment when the heart is touched, drawing the person to greater love or deeper faith or surer trust or to a more courageous willingness to follow Jesus." *Id.* at 325-26. The experience of devotion - the movement toward God that Ignatius calls consolation - might be gentle, or it might be experienced as a shocking or painful but honest realization that the values one is following in one's life do not correspond to the values God desires one to live by. "But these movements of honest confrontation are also consolations, if they lead to a deeper yearning to be converted into the likeness of Jesus or into a deeper harmony with his discipleship or into a freer acceptance that God's extravagant mercy extends to everyone." *Id.* at 326.

⁴⁴ Gray, *Ignatius's Method*, *supra* n. 20, at 31.

⁴⁵ Michael Campbell-Johnston, S.J., *Being and Doing*, 246 TABLET [London] 434 (April 4, 1992).

⁴⁶ As professionals who spend our lives paying careful attention to the spoken and written word, we lawyers should have a special attentiveness to, and reverence for, the Word laboring in the words we read and write and speak. Faith in the Word made flesh makes *every* human word an opportunity to encounter God's self-communication:

"Deep down within the narrow earthly well of the human word the spring that flows for ever gushes forth, the flames of eternal love leap out of the burning bush of the human word. . . . [E]ver since the human word has existed as the embodiment of the Word of

we open to experiencing devotion as we recognize how God is at work in opposing counsel or in a difficult meeting or in a frustrating relationship? If more of us could come to experience the ordinary practice of the law as a privileged forum in which to encounter God at work, perhaps lawyers would have a deeper sense of meaning and value in their work. Perhaps Ignatius's method for letting God shine through life's realities can offer lawyers a more life-giving experience of connection between their work and their desire for wholeness and integrity, their desire for a deeper experience of connection to God in the midst of their professional lives.

None of this, of course, is easy or automatic. Developing a discerning heart, deepening what Howard Gray describes as our "awareness of how God moves within [our lives] and within the events that surround [us],"⁴⁷ requires patience and practice, and it involves trial and error and recalibration. And here, too, Ignatius can share with us one final extremely practical insight with which I'll end my remarks this evening. Ignatius knew that if we really want to grow in our ability to find God in all things, then we have to take time each day

God which abides for ever, and ever since *this* Word has been heard in its permanent embodiment, there is a brightness and a secret promise in every word. In every word, the gracious incarnation of God's own abiding Word and so of God himself can take place, and all true hearers of the word are really listening to the inmost depths of every word, to know if it becomes suddenly the word of eternal love by the very fact that it expresses man and his world. If one is to grow ever more profoundly Christian, one must never cease to practise listening for this incarnational possibility in the human word."

Rahner, *supra* n. 15, *Poetry and the Christian*, at 362.

⁴⁷ Gray, *Ignatian Spirituality*, *supra* n. 41, at 327 ("Discernment is not so much a technique as it is an awareness of how God moves within one's life and within the events that surround a person.").

to stop and ask God to help us to see how God has been at work in us and around us.

Ignatius emphasized the importance of taking time each day to look back on one's experience of the day, in order to gain deeper sensitivity into how God has been at work. Ignatius himself, throughout his life, regularly paused to pay attention to how God was moving in the events of the day. One of the first Jesuits, Pedro de Ribadeneira, reported that Ignatius was faithful to a "habit of examining his conscience every hour, and of asking himself with careful attention how he had passed the hour."⁴⁸

I want to emphasize, however, that this examination of conscience is not the practice of identifying our sins with which we might be familiar as a way of preparing for confession. Instead, the exercise to which Ribadeneira is referring is the practice sometimes called the Ignatian examen of consciousness. The Ignatian examen is a way of praying whose function is to develop the "inner alertness"⁴⁹ to God's presence in all things which constitutes the "heart of Ignatius' mysticism and spirituality."⁵⁰ We can understand the examen as a way

⁴⁸ EGAN, *supra* n. 18, at 63 (quoting *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initis* (vol. II) 345 (D. Fernandez Zapico, C. de Dalmases, & P. Leturia, eds., 4 vols. 1943-60)).

⁴⁹ *Id.* ("This inner alertness is an essential part of Ignatius' mysticism of discernment, decision, and having this decision approved by God. To seek and to find God's will in all things required an acute sensitivity, a mystical sensitivity, to the least sign of God's will.").

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 63 n. 44.

of praying that breaks down those walls we can experience separating work from faith.⁵¹

Ribadeneira suggests that Ignatius engaged in this exercise on an almost hourly basis, but we might simply try to find fifteen minutes at some point in our day, whether at noontime or before going to sleep or while walking to work or whenever a quiet moment presents itself, to pause and ask God to help us to become more alert to his presence in our lives. While the roots of the practice of the Ignatian examen are found in the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves, Fr. Dennis Hamm has more recently outlined a helpful way of approaching the examen in an article whose title aptly captures what the examen is most fundamentally about. The article is called, “Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day.”⁵²

⁵¹ Howard Gray describes the examen of consciousness as a prayer form designed to capture “self-awareness before God.” Gray, *Ignatian Spirituality*, *supra* n. 41, at 322; *see also id.* (the aim of the examen is “a developing alertness to what really motivates a person, to a person’s pattern of choices that gradually reveal the character and personality of woman or man before God”). For a classic discussion of the Ignatian examen, *see* George A. Aschenbrenner, S.J., *Consciousness Examen*, in *NOTES ON THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA* 175-85 (David L. Fleming, S.J. ed., 1981); *see also* Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., *The Most Postmodern Prayer*, 26 *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 1, 61 (1994) (“We go to our examen . . . to find an imminent God who creates unceasingly and works incessantly in our self and among us in our life world. We find God not so much governing as guiding; we find not an established divine plan but an unfolding divine project in which God invites us sinners to cooperate. We are trying, in all of our prayer, to find God’s concrete hopes for the cosmos and for our selves.”); Donald St. Louis, *The Ignatian Examen*, in *THE WAY OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* 154, 155 (Philip Shelldrake, S.J., ed. 1991) (“Ignatius saw the Examen fundamentally as a prayer of discernment, a vitally illuminating and dynamic experience of prayerful reflection that both celebrates and enhances one’s awareness of and response to the Lord who is ever-present in our human experience.”).

⁵² Dennis Hamm, S.J., *Rummaging for God: Praying Backward through Your Day*, 170 *AMERICA* (no. 17) 22-23 (May 14, 1994). The discussion of the examen which follows is drawn from this article.

Fr. Hamm notes that we should begin the prayer of the examen by praying for light. We might ask God to fill our hearts with the light of His love so that we can see where God has been present and at work in us and around us today. We might pray for illumination so that we can begin to recognize more clearly where the shining light of God's love is leading us in the midst of our daily lives.

Next, in the light of the gift of God's love, we can review the events of the past day in a spirit of gratitude. If all that is, is God's gift to us, it is crucial that we root our relationship with God in grateful recognition of that truth. When we pause to review the day in the light of God's love, we can begin to see just how the day that precedes each experience of the examen is filled with incredible gifts from God. The examen invites us to use our memory to walk back through the day, naming with particularity the gifts we've encountered throughout the day. This allows us, as Michael Campbell-Johnson suggests, to dwell on, and to savor, the privileged moments of the day that we might have overlooked in the busyness of the moment. You might remember an important conversation with a colleague, an insight into the law that you received while reading an opinion, the brilliant yellow of the forsythia lighting up the gray April sky as you walked past the park, the warmth of the sun when you went out for lunch, the energy you felt as you figured out just how to frame a particular argument, a call from your spouse or your child or a friend that left you filled with sense of being loved. Name the privileged gifts and moments that reveal themselves in the

light of God's love, dwell on them, savor them, and say thank you to God for them.

The next movement of the examen invites us to pay attention to the feelings that arise in our hearts as we review the events of the preceding day. The light shed by the life story of Ignatius reminds us that we can get a sense of God's presence and God's call through the affective movements in our hearts. So, if we want to align our lives with God's work and respond to God's call, we must pay attention to these affective movements. Maybe our review of the day leads us to remember an encounter with a client or a co-worker that led us to feel joy or consolation in the recognition that we were in the right place at the right time. Maybe we find ourselves remembering a meeting or a conference call that has left us angry and frustrated. Maybe we are filled with pain as we remember a messy situation that we cannot repair or that the law is making worse. Maybe in the light of God's love we are filled with sadness as we recognize choices we have made that have left us unfree or areas of complacency or blindness in our lives where we failed to align ourselves with how God has been at work. Maybe we are filled with life and energy as we recognize that a choice or decision has brought us closer to God's desires for our wholeness and fullness of life.

As we review the feelings that surface in our hearts during our review of the day, we might try to identify which of those feelings most catches our attention or stirs our hearts most deeply, and then simply speak the prayer that arises in our hearts. Ignatius recognized that those affective movements can be

signs of how God is calling us in the midst of the experiences that generate those movements. Something important, something of “religious density,” may well be revealed in the feelings that move us deeply as we remember the events of our day. This, for Ignatius, is how the privileged moments of our lives speak to us. The examen invites us to listen to those remembered feelings, and then speak to God simply and directly – in words of praise or petition, in words of contrition and repentance, or in words that beg for insight or healing or freedom, whichever words your heart moves you to speak.

You might bring this exercise to a close by imagining briefly what tomorrow will bring. Call to mind the appointments or meetings, the hearings or arguments, the research or depositions that fill your calendar for the day to come. Pay attention to the feelings that arise in your heart as you call those events to mind, and then speak to God the prayer that flows out of the feelings – ask for help and guidance, for hope and strength, for openness to however God will be at work in you and around you tomorrow. Ignatius was convinced that faithfulness to this kind of prayer would help us to grow in our attentiveness, reverence, and devotion; the examen helps to deepen our inner awareness of how God is always already working alongside us and inviting us to labor with him; the Ignatian examen enhances our ability to experience God’s presence in the midst of all things.

We’ve been talking tonight about Ignatius as an extraordinary Catholic whose life might shed light on the ordinary practice of the law. How should we

understand the “extraordinariness” of Ignatius’s life? Ignatius was neither a martyr like Thomas More, nor a missionary to foreign lands like his great friend Francis Xavier, whose 500th birthday we have just celebrated.⁵³ Instead, much of Ignatius’s life might have look a lot like our ordinary lives as lawyers, working away in our offices. Ignatius spent long years at a desk in Rome, refining the *Spiritual Exercises*, drafting the Jesuit *Constitutions* and administering a growing religious community. To the casual observer, his daily life and work undoubtedly looked pretty ordinary, just as our daily lives as lawyers often look pretty ordinary. Yet we can properly describe the life of Ignatius as extraordinary. The extraordinariness of his life is to be found in his constant openness to finding God hard at work and calling him forward in the midst of his everyday experience. The extraordinariness of Ignatius is found in his ability to respond to God’s call with an integrity and freedom that united the instrument of his life ever more intimately to the hand of God at work in the world. This is an extraordinariness to which all of us can aspire, no matter what the nature of our individual vocation. The light shed by the life of Ignatius illuminates an extraordinary openness to finding God in everyday life. This is an extraordinary way of living in which all of us can participate in our ordinary practice of the law.

⁵³ The year 2006 is a Jubilee year for the Society of Jesus, celebrating the spirit of the founders of the Society of Jesus by remembering three special anniversaries: the 500th anniversary of the birth of Francis Xavier on April 7, 1506, the 500th anniversary of the birth of Peter Faber on April 13, 1506, and the 450th anniversary of the death of Ignatius Loyola on July 31, 1556.