

Eternal Lord of all things

We feel your gaze upon us.

We sense that your mother stands near, watching
and that with you are all the great beings of heaven
angels and powers and martyrs and saints.

Lord Jesus, we think you have put a desire in each one of us.

If you will help us, please,

We would like to make an offering of our selves:

We want it to be our desire, and our choice—

if only you want it too—

to live our lives as you lived yours.

It seems a thing of such wonder

that you might call us to follow you and stand with you.

We will labour with you to bring God's reign to earth,

if you will only give us the grace to do it.

Amen.

Four Definitions of Mission

Is there one that attracts you more? Can you say why? Is there anything missing from the definition that you would want to add?

- Our mode of proceeding is to trace the footprints of God everywhere, knowing that the Spirit of Christ is at work in all places and situations and in all activities and mediations that seek to make him more present in the world. This mission of attempting “to feel and to taste” (sentir y gustar) the presence and activity of God in all the persons and circumstances of the world [GC35 D2 n.8]
- ‘that Jesus Christ be known, that he be loved in return, and that Christ’s love be a source of life for all’ [GC36 D1 n.22]
- The mission of communicating life to others [EG10]
- To cultivate, nurture and sustain the great variety of the manifestations of the magnitude of God’s love in all forms of expressivity and creativity. [M. Downey]

Given its use in secular contexts, how might we understand the word ‘Mission’. The requirement of institutes, corporations, businesses etc. is to have a mission statement e.g. Walmart ‘to help people save money so they can live better’. There are also people who have personal mission statements ‘To have fun in my journey through life and learn from my mistakes’ is Richard Branson’s. In these contexts, mission is a goal to be reached, a purpose to be achieved.

Dictionary definition – ‘mission’ from the Latin verb ‘mittere’ to send was used in earlier centuries only when speaking of Jesus being sent by the Father. ‘As the Father sent me so am I sending you.’

In the 1600's it was first used in relation to the sending of people with the Gospel with the sending of Jesuits to northern Europe. First definition - 'act of sending' – written as now obsolete! Theologically, in an Ignatian context, mission is first and foremost an action of sending, to send or be sent, and only secondarily 'what it is one is sent to do.' It seems to me that this allows us a freedom, a being in a process of mission; it's more about attitudes and ways of being missionary, creatively living our sending rather than a specific project which I am sent to do. Having said that, we do of course live with the tension of there being a project, God's project, the *Missio Dei* 'the mission of God', that the initiative of sending belongs to God, that God has launched a project to redeem and restore humankind and the creation. Barry says 'to experience God's one creative action, which calls each one of us and the whole universe into being with the intention of drawing all persons into the one community, the Trinity. '

Ignatius' starting place for reflecting upon mission began with Jesus sending his disciples out but this was illuminated by a mystical experience as noted in his journal entry for 11 February 1544: *'and at the same moment I received new insights, viz. that the Son first sent his Apostles to preach in poverty, and later the Holy Spirit, by granting his spirit and his gift of tongues, confirmed them, and thus, since both Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit, all Three Persons confirmed such a mission.'*

(Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings, J.A. Munitiz and P Endean. London. Penguin Classics 1996)

There is here a simple formulation of his theology of mission: Christ gives the mission, the Holy Spirit confirms it by the giving of gifts, so that the Father may be glorified.

For God's greater glory – a slight aside here as this might add to the above

In scripture *kabod* (glory) means the 'godness' of God. In the world not yet fully manifest. The Glory of God is present whenever the work of God comes about through human freedom, when a person acts with the intention that God be God in a human life and in the world. Ignatius invites us to become 'glory conscious', to view in the light of God's glory, to desire that God be more effectively God in my life but that God too be more manifestly God in God's world. God's glory is in process and we can choose to cooperate with that process, to act in a way that is pleasing to God.

Ignatius drew on his own deep foundational experiences to reflect on that creative action of God and from it to write the Principle and Foundation that we are invited to pray at the beginning of the Exx:

'a human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by doing so to save his or her soul.' [Ivens]

'The goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit.' [Fleming]

It seems to me though that this action of sending by God in our lives can only come about where there is a willingness to be sent, an attitude or disposition of letting go so God can do the disposing, expressed in the other bookend of the Exx, the *Contemplatio* 'All is yours, dispose of it wholly according to your will.' [234]

Pope Francis links this missionary expression with the grace of baptism.

'The grace and evangelising power of the missionary expression comes from the grace of baptism.' [Dialogue of Pope Francis with the Jesuits GC36]

The Catechism states that *'Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.'* [Catechism Catholic Church 1213]

Through baptism, there is an invitation into the communion of the Trinity and we can return again and again to the source of our baptism to renew us in being missionary disciples.

"To go to Galilee" means something beautiful, it means rediscovering our baptism as a living fountainhead, drawing new energy from the sources of our faith and our Christian experience. To return to Galilee means above all to return to that blazing light with which God's grace touched me at the start of the journey. From that flame I can light a fire for today and every day, and bring heat and light to my brothers and sisters. [Homily Pope Francis Easter Saturday 2014]

Let's look briefly at this community, this communion, this interrelationship of Trinity in which we are drawn. The Father is the source of all. The Son is its manifestation, and the Holy Spirit its giver.

- Prodigal Father saying to the elder Son 'You are with me always and all I have is yours.' [Lk15:31] We hear those same words spoken to us, words that speak of relationship and self-giving. Echoes of the Contemplatio 'I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, how much God has given me of what he possesses, and further, how according to God's divine plan, it is the Lord's wish, in so far as I will permit it, to give totally of God's very own self.' 'To consider how all that is good and every gift descends from on high.'
- Incarnation – Christ who comes to show us the way. *'Jesus embodies God's intention for the world now and to come, a world transfigured in and by love.'* [M. Downey; Consenting to Kenosis, Secularity and the Gospel, Ed. R. Rolheiser, Crossroad Publ. p122]
- *'the experience of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ who called me to follow him and to share in his mission. In this sense, returning to Galilee means treasuring in my heart the living memory of that call, when Jesus passed my way, gazed at me with mercy and asked me to follow him. To return there means reviving the memory of that moment when his eyes met mine, the moment when he made me realize that he loved me.'* [Pope Francis Homily Easter Saturday 2014] Resonates with the grace of the second week of the Exx and the Call of the King.
- The Holy Spirit is the giver. The Holy Spirit isn't mentioned particularly in the Exx and yet it is at the heart of them, the placer of desires, the giver of graces, the mover of the heart.

Nurturing good heartedness and love in action,

How might we incarnate these Trinitarian attitudes? Pope Francis points out the very real danger today – *'Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades.'* [EG2]

When we think back to when given a gift, maybe unexpected or perhaps more than you hoped for or expected, and we remember our response, there may well have been a sense of joy and

gratitude. For Ignatius it seems that this attitude of gratitude, of attentiveness to it, was at the very heart of this dynamic of relationship, a way to nurture good-heartedness.

In a letter to Simon Rodriguez March 18 1542 he wrote:

'It seems to me, in light of the divine Goodness, though others may think differently, that ingratitude is one of the things most worthy of detestation before our Creator and Lord, and before all creatures capable of his divine and everlasting glory, out of all the evils and sins which can be imagined. For it is a failure to recognize the good things, the graces, and the gifts received. As such, it is the cause, beginning, and origin of all evils and sins. On the contrary, recognition and gratitude for the good things and gifts received is greatly loved and esteemed both in heaven and on earth.'

For if we recognise all is given and respond with gratitude then we know ourselves as the loved creature in honest relationship with the loving Creator. We know that without God, nothing is enough.

A question to ponder – what gets in the way, very concretely, of this attitude of gratitude and what helps or encourages it?

We often notice too that gratitude opens us up for others. We are given so much that we can't help but want to share something of it. We are moved to a generosity outward towards God and others. It is a response of love in action. *'Giving is the style of the universe. Giving is woven into the fabric of existence... It is the air into which we were born. It was the action that was designed into us before our birth. Giving is the way the world is. God gives himself. He also gives away everything that is. He makes no exceptions for any of us. We are given away to our families, to our neighbours, to our friends, to our enemies – to the nations. Our life is for others. That is the way creation works... We don't think we can live generously because we have never tried. But the sooner we start the better, for we are going to have to give up our lives finally, and the longer we wait the less time we have for the soaring and swooping life of grace.'* [Run with the horses' Eugene Peterson]

Again, what gets in the way, very concretely, of this attitude of generosity and what helps or encourages it?

How might your CLC group help or hinder these attitudes of gratitude and generosity?

Not only ... but also

'Drawing profit is not individualistic, but it is for the common good ... The formula of Ignatius expresses a tension: 'not only ... but also...'

Already we can recognise that living gratefully and generously are not simple. There are tensions and these tensions, life-giving and creative, form part of the pathway of Ignatian spirituality and it's concrete living out. A CLC community is invited to be united within by communion, an expression of self-giving and love, and united outward by the apostolic service received as mission. Easy to say, not so easy to live.

What are some of the tensions you as CLC members experience as part of your Ignatian way of proceeding? E.g.

- Prayer and action– *‘To respond only to the ‘Come’ risks the emergence of a narcissistic or individualistic spirituality. To respond only to the ‘Go’ risks issuing in a driven activism that loses touch with its contemplative roots.’*(Brian O’Leary)
- At the heart of the Church and at the margins of Church
- Companionship and mission
- Within culture and counter-cultural
- Action and formation
- Simple life style and use of goods
- Daily life as mission and apostolic service beyond daily life

What is the invitation in the present to seek the greater and more universal good?

All these tensions require discernment, perhaps the best gift given to us through the school of the Exx. Discernment, as you all know and as is embedded in the heart of CLC and its documents, is one of the 3 concrete points Pope Francis in his address to GC36 and therefore to Jesuits worldwide and by extension those who co-operate and co-work with them in their service of others.

The lay Ignatian lives an apostolic life in community.

‘At times one faces the disjunction between daily lay life as mission, and the commitment to apostolic service above and beyond daily life. It seems to me that the issue is a very profound one. All of life is called to be apostolic. In the ultimate sense, it is the will of God, understood through discernment that must be pointed out, that each one needs to do. Even though I look at family and work life, recreation and rest in the apostolic sense, a lay Ignatian ought to have the impulse to go beyond, addressing himself/herself to the needs of others. I like to think that the desire of going to the frontiers is precisely characteristic of the Ignatian lay person. These frontiers, in the first place, are one’s own children and their new mentality, one’s co-workers. But go further beyond these.’

[Samuel Yanez]

But also:

‘We do not want to be ‘burned out’ prophets in the world, but to rejoice in Christ’s presence in it and to return frequently to nourish our essential relationship with the Lord, and we also need to learn how to serve as leaven in a silent and profound way, promoting and living out just relationships in the family, in the workplace, in public life and in Church issues.’ [CLC Our Common Mission 1998]

To revive the zeal for mission, for the greater good of persons

Pope Francis in his address to the Jesuits at GC36 gave three concrete points towards being missionary today.

1. To ask insistently for consolation – to contemplate the Risen Christ who acts in the office of consoler. Here the importance of prayer, to become the one we contemplate, to use prayer to go against all that desolates, the *agere contra*

We are invited to be people of consolation, to console others, so that the world is not robbed of the joy of the Gospel, ‘to help people live the joys and delights of human life in the presence of the divine, to see and to celebrate all that they have as gift through and through.’ [M. Downey; Consenting to Kenosis, Secularity and the Gospel p131]

For this we need discernment, for ourselves individually and communally and I’ll mention that shortly.

2. Letting ourselves be moved by our Lord placed on the cross

Involves a lifestyle of mercy, concrete gestures that touch the flesh and blood of our neighbours. It is receiving mercy and healing for our own wounds, individual and communal, recognising our need of God's forgiveness and continual gifting, so that we can allow ourselves to be moved to be companions and servers of those who suffer immensely, of Christ crucified present in our brothers and sisters.

3. Doing good led by the good spirit, thinking with the Church

Not enough to think, do or organise the good, but to do it of the good Spirit i.e. to be at the service of the good spirit and of discernment.

All of these engage us in what was named in CLC's mission document of 1998 as a commitment to reconciliation in every situation. Francis too names it in GC36 as reconciliation with God, reconciliation within humanity, reconciliation with creation.

'The state of things which are in the making'

What is coming into being in CLC?

Francis talks of Ignatius seeing the state of things in the making in the Society. What is in the making in CLC? Where is the creative action of the Holy Spirit at play?

Today then the question I offer us as a way to reflect as individuals and as CLC groups is through that very simple formula: *that Jesus Christ be known, that he be loved in return, and that Christ's love be a source of life for all' [GC36 D1 n.22]*

How do I/we/CLC let Christ be known to me/us?

How do I/we/CLC respond to his love of me/us?

How do I/we/CLC share that love in a life-giving way with others?

All of this, as said earlier, is messy. Never forgetting those words of wisdom from the Blues Brothers ... 'Lord works in mysterious ways.' 'Yep.'