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# INTRODUCTION

This anthology is not intended to be a comprehensive presentation of Jesuit spirituality. This form of spirituality is so rich that it could fill volumes of detailed analyses. Three authors were selected: Louis Lallemant, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, and Claude de la Colombière. But if they do not comprehensively represent Jesuit spirituality, they are are among what we would call its "gems" because of their deep contemplative orientation.

Before reviewing why these three authors were chosen, it is important to define first what is understood by the word "spirituality," and what is the origin and general history of Jesuit spirituality.

When deciding upon a choice among Jesuit writings, my first principle was to avoid repeating what is commonly known about the Jesuits: it has become fashionable to deal with this religious society by referring to the most spectacular or sensationalist activities of the Jesuits in the Catholic Church. This very outward aspect of things, often controversial and not always accurately reported, is not part of what we here consider as "spirituality." Much has been written to reconstruct, deform, and even defame the reputation of this order, and it is certainly not the goal of this book to enter again into this useless debate.

On the contrary, our goal is to present to the public something less known, more profound, and more contemplative, thereby providing a more objective insight into an extraordinary world of sanctity, wisdom, and spiritual knowledge. Indeed, "spirituality" is nothing else if not sanctity and wisdom and a method with which to realize them. It does not consist of "building a better world" (such a goal could in any case only result from universal sanctity), but of "saving souls" at whatever level—from avoidance of sin to the purest form of love and knowledge of God. It is true that many people nowadays find it difficult to accept such words as salvation and sin. Perhaps the reading of the following texts, although written around three centuries ago, will help them realize that "spirituality" differs from ordinary "psychology" (in the modern sense of the word) and from "morality"—although it is obvious that fundamental virtues are the necessary basis of any spiritual path.

As to the meaning of the word "spirituality," George E. Ganss, S.J. writes:

> For a century or more the English word *spirituality* has been used to designate a person's interior life, manner of praying, and other such practices. It also designates the spiritual doctrine and practices characteristically formulated in the writings of some person or group.… In this light, Christian spirituality is a lived experience, the effort to apply relevant elements in the deposit of Christian faith to the guidance of men and women toward their spiritual growth.[1]

It is true that Jesuits are mainly known for their activity in the world: their vocation is not one of cloistered monasticism but of "contemplation in action." It is also well known that a number of them were, and still are, eminent in various intellectual pursuits. But the goal of this anthology is to present the other side of their lives: the spiritual method—beyond the famous "Exercises"—in which they are rooted. Much of Jesuit life is learned and practiced in novitiates where Jesuits undergo an intense spiritual training based on Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises". This anthology will not enter into the details of these "Exercises," this having already been done quite extensively in other works. In fact, the only way to really understand what they are all about is to spend a month, or at least a few days, practicing these "Exercises" with a knowledgeable director.

However, we can briefly summarize their use. Since the vocation of man is to conform himself to God's will as perfectly as possible, the very general goal of the "Exercises" will be to place his soul in a disposition that allows him to discern this will without interference from the ego, and then build—or rebuild—his life accordingly. Of course, there are many degrees to this discernment, from knowing what God asks us to do in our life in the world (profession, vocation, family, etc.), to how to respond to more contemplative calls. Every individual case differs from others, and that is why it is not possible to enter into the details of the "Exercises."

It should be emphasized that the spirit of these "Exercises" resulted from an extraordinary spiritual illumination (we could also say enlightenment) on the part of St Ignatius: he saw and understood in a lightning fashion many spiritual insights which determined the rest of his life. We are referring here to the grace

[1] *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*,, edited by George E. Ganss, S.J., Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 2002, p. 62.

that Ignatius received in Manresa, a grace which was, according to the best spiritual Jesuit commentators of the time, a real "descent" of the Holy Ghost. The supernatural nature of this inspiration is *a posteriori* confirmed by its "fruits" in Ignatius and in his successors. As Ganss writes: "St Ignatius of Loyola … had a dynamic spirituality which was ordered toward both personal spiritual growth and energetic apostolic endeavor."[2]

And also:

> One prominent characteristic of his spirituality, especially important for understanding his *Spiritual Exercises* and his *Constitutions*, is his sharp focus on ends with accompanying means. His ends were clear in his mind and arranged in a series leading up to God. The one supreme and inspiring end, the keystone to which all the other elements in the arch of his thought were supports, was "the greater glory of God," with "glory" meaning praise and implying service. To pursue this single aim was his own constant endeavor…. God should be found in all one's actions, and one should order them all to his glory.[3]

What is specifically Jesuit in this spirituality comes therefore from the "Exercises" and from Ignatius himself. But on the other hand, as Ganss indicates, Ignatius was deeply inspired by the religious orders of the Middle Ages and by the Fathers of the Church, even though he lived mostly in the sixteenth century. No Jesuit spirituality could be radically different from the spirituality of St Bernard, St Benedict, or St Francis of Assisi. The appearance of a fundamentally different spirituality would have amounted practically to the advent of a new Christianity, *quod absit.*

> Ignatius was the founder of … a school of spirituality, one with an emphasis directed especially toward personal spiritual growth and that of others. Emphasizing a desire to bring greater glory to God, here and hereafter, it has propagated a message of service through love and discernment. His spirituality—like that of others—is simply Christian spirituality with emphasis on those elements in the deposit of faith which he stressed.[4]

[2] Ibid., p. 9.
[3] Ibid., p. 12.
[4] Ibid., p. 62.

And again:

> The beginnings of Ignatius' spirituality must be sought in the Catholic faith, which he inherited with its sixteenth-century trappings amid the cultural environment of his youth. When he turned to serious spiritual living at the age of thirty, he began the lengthy formation of his personalized concept of God's redemptive plan by drawing particularly from writings of the Dominican, Carthusian, Cistercian, and Franciscan schools.[5]

What this anthology would like to point out, however, is that the Jesuit movement arose during a time in need of synthesis and adaptation. The Society appeared at the end of the Renaissance, when people, especially in Europe, were becoming more individualistic, more characterized by psychological and reflexive tendencies, as Maritain noticed. In such a context, it became more and more necessary to discern between true spirituality and egoic concerns. Consciousness became more "subjective," more complex, and the task of spiritual masters became more difficult because of the imbroglio raised by sentiments, emotions, and passionate reasoning—to such an extent that it became difficult to realize the meaning of the love of God and the salvation of the soul. Since we have inherited this complexity, it seems quite appropriate to include authors who were best at discerning these intricacies thanks to their experience with aspirants in novitiates, and because of their own sanctity of soul.

The texts of Louis Lallemant serve as an excellent introduction to the anthology because they have the merit of presenting in a comprehensive and very organized fashion the diverse aspects of spirituality in its most general compass. Jean-Pierre de Caussade's texts direct the reader more towards the everyday life of a spiritual path, with concrete examples of the numerous problems the soul encounters when it tries not only to master itself, but to transcend itself, which is precisely what the ego is very reluctant to allow because it corresponds to a kind of death. Caussade's writings on the prayer of the heart emphasize in a systematic way his spiritual method. Lastly, Claude de la Colombière's writings enter even more deeply into the psychological analysis of the soul; and they do so with such clarity that he proves—if proof be required—that spiritu-

[5] Ibid., p. 13.

al masters and saints knew—well before the advent of psychoanalysis—the complex functionings of the human soul and, above all, how to help it escape from its self-inflicted suffering without it thereby losing the *raison d'être* of human existence.

**Louis Lallemant (1587-1635)**

Louis Lallemant was born at Châlons-sur-Marne and died at Bourges. After completing his studies under the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, he entered that order in 1605 and followed the usual course of study and teaching. He then taught philosophy and theology for some time until he was made master of novices, an office he filled for four years. He was then appointed director of the fathers in third probation;[6] but after three years in this difficult post he broke down in health and was sent to the college of Bourget, in the hope that change of occupation would restore him. This hope was not to be fulfilled, and he died a few months later. He is known today mainly for his *Doctrine Spirituelle*, a collection of maxims and instructions gathered together by Fr Jean Rigoleuc, one of his disciples, which details very thoroughly his spiritual method.[7]

*The Spiritual Teaching of Father Louis Lallemant*, from which we have excerpted the texts that follow, "was compiled by Father Champion, S.J., from manuscript notes made by Fathers Rigoleuc and Surin, the two chief disciples of Father Lallemant, and was first issued in 1694."[8] The structure of this book is still under discussion by specialists in the field, but it does not prevent it being considered as "one of the most important monuments of French [and Jesuit, we would add] spirituality."[9] Since the book is 300 pages long, we have made a selection of those passages of more "universal scope," spiritually speaking, while excluding those *pro domo* texts specifically addressed to future Jesuits and to their religious communities, as also those which deal with the more specific points of Catholic theology. Such passages would have required extensive contextualized explanations, at the expense of the spiritual focus of our anthology.

[6] Tertianship represents the final phase of training for a Jesuit.

[7] After a text at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08752e.htm.

[8] *The Spiritual Teaching of Father Louis Lallemant of the Society of Jesus, Preceded by an Account of His Life by Father Champion, S.J.*, edited by Alan G. McDougall, Benziger Brothers, New York, Cincinatti, Chicago, 1928, p. v.

[9] Ibid., p. v.

Since the goal of this anthology is to reach as wide an audience as possible, we thought it necessary to exclude these more circumstantial and specific passages. But since the value of these passages cannot be denied, whoever wishes to enter into these theological aspects can refer to the original texts.

The extracts of Fr Louis Lallemant's *Spiritual Teaching* come first both for chronological reasons, and also because they inspired generations of readers. They provide an excellent "theoretical" and "practical" overview of spiritual life with such clarity, precision, and order that they constitute, as we mentioned earlier, an excellent introduction to the rest of this book. As Robert M. McKeon writes:

> This school promoted contemplation as the way to stand humbly before the Holy Spirit, who resides at the center of the human soul. The aim of prayer was to withdraw into one's center to rest in God's presence, to discern his will, and to carry it out. The life of prayer required discipline and mortification, for devotees have to die to themselves if they want to make a place for God. For instance, Lallemant outlined seven principles of the spiritual life:
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> 1. to know our goal: only God can make us truly happy;
> 2. to pursue the ideal of perfection: specifically as outlined by the rules and procedures of the Jesuit order;
> 3. to purify the heart: what we should purify ourselves of; purity of action and purity of mind;
> 4. to be docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit: working with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit;
> 5. to lead an interior life of inner quiet: the only true source of peace;
> 6. to be united with our Lord by knowledge of his life and teachings, by love, and by imitation of his virtues;
> 7. to follow the three steps of the spiritual life: Ignatian meditation, affective prayer, and contemplation.[10]

**Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751)**

Little is known about the life of this Jesuit priest beyond the bare facts of his career. He was born in 1675 and entered the Jesuit novitiate in Toulouse at the age of eighteen. Later, he taught classics in

[10] Cited from his introduction to Jean-Pierre de Caussade's *A Treatise on Prayer from the Heart: A Christian Mystical Tradition Recovered for All*, translated, edited, and introduced by Robert M. McKeon, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis, 1998, p. 13.

the Jesuit college in Aurillac. He was ordained a priest in 1705 and took his final vows in 1708. From 1708 to 1714, he taught in the Jesuit college in Toulouse, and then devoted himself to the itinerant career of a missionary and preacher.

Between the years 1730 and 1732 he was in Lorraine, and, as John Joyce, S.J., mentions,

> it was during this period that he made his first contact with the nuns of the Order of the Visitation in Nancy, to whom we are indebted for having preserved his letters and the notes of his conferences. In 1731 he was sent as spiritual director to the seminary in Albi, but two years later was back in Nancy in charge of the Jesuit Retreat house there. During his seven years in this office he gave frequent conferences to the Visitation nuns and undertook the personal direction of several of them.[11]

After some administrative responsibilities in various institutions in the south of France, he had more and more difficulty with his eyes but "he bore [this blindness] with courageous fortitude and in the spirit of his own great principle of self-abandonment to the will of God."[12] He died in 1751 at the age of seventy-six.

The choice of Jean-Pierre de Caussade for this anthology could appear inappropriate *at first view* considering the controversy over his method. But, as Robert M. McKeon has indicated, this very contemplative approach to Christian spirituality is one of the best answers, in the Western tradition, to the needs of those Christian laymen and laywomen who are drawn to interior silence and contemplative prayer rather than to ordinary piety and outward activity. For hundreds of years Christianity promoted contemplativity and inwardness as the first characteristic of its method and Caussade is consequently very *à propos* in this respect. As Robert M. McKeon remarks:

> We are all called to contemplation and mystical union with God. But how do we proceed, especially those laypeople among us who lead full, active lives? Has anyone written an accessible guide book

[11] In Jean-Pierre de Caussade, S.J., *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, translated from the standard French edition by Algar Thorold, newly edited by Fr John Joyce, S.J., Burns and Oates, London, 1959, p. xix.
[12] Ibid., pp. xix-xx.

> on prayer like Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life*? The answer is a resounding yes! Jean-Pierre de Caussade's *Treatise on Prayer from the Heart*, written around 1735, leads the reader step by step into deep mystical prayer. He answers our thirst for prayer by showing a simple and direct path to prayer.[13]

"Without me, you can do nothing" said Christ.[14] In keeping with Christ's recommendations, and the graces of the apostolic tradition, it should be strongly emphasized here that Caussade's method should not be practiced outside an authentic and orthodox religious framework.

Caussade's writings occupy the largest part of this anthology given the relevance of his method in the modern world. Three sets of texts were chosen: the first one is *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*; the second is *The Fire of Divine Love: Readings from Jean-Pierre de Caussade*; and the third *A Treatise on Prayer from the Heart: A Christian Mystical Tradition Recovered for All*, which is given here almost in its entirety.

**Claude de la Colombière (1641-1682)**

Claude de la Colombière was born of noble parentage in France in 1641 and died at Paray-le-Monial, in 1682. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1659. In 1674 he was made superior at the Jesuit house at Paray-le-Monial, where he became the spiritual director of Saint Margaret Mary and was thereafter a zealous apostle of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1676 he was sent to England as preacher to the Duchess of York, afterwards Queen of Great Britain. Although encountering many difficulties, he was able to guide Blessed Margaret Mary by letter. His zeal soon weakened his vitality and throat and lung trouble seemed to threaten his work as a preacher. While awaiting his recall to France he was suddenly arrested and thrown into prison, denounced as a conspirator. Thanks to his title of preacher to the Duchess of York and to the

[13] Cited from his introduction to *A Treatise on Prayer from the Heart*, p. 4.

[14] John 15:4-6: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."

protection of Louis XIV, whose subject he was, he escaped death but was condemned to exile in 1679. The last two years of his life were spent at Lyon where he was spiritual director to the young Jesuits there, and at Paray-le-Monial. His principal works, including *Pious Reflections*, *Meditations on the Passion*, and *Retreat and Spiritual Letters*, were published under the title, *Oeuvres du R. P. Claude de la Colombière* (Avignon, 1832; Paris, 1864). His relics are preserved in the monastery of the Visitation nuns at Paray-le-Monial. Claude de la Colombière was beatified on 16 June 1929 by Pope Pius XI and canonized on 31 May 1992 by Pope John Paul II in Rome.[15]

Although St Claude de la Colombière lived before Jean-Pierre de Caussade, we have placed his writings at the end of the anthology because he represents a culmination: his psychological and spiritual knowledge of the human soul is of the greatest interest. As Mother M. Philip, I.B.V.M., puts it:

> St Claude … was also a clever psychologist who easily read the hearts of others. His sure judgment, aided by grace, enabled him to understand the difficulties of each soul and give the advice most needed for each person.[16]

Two texts are presented here: the first one is Parts IV and V of *The Secret of Peace and Happiness*, by Fr Jean Baptiste Saint-Juré and Fr St Claude Colombière, S.J., while the second is a selection of themes taken from *The Spiritual Direction of Saint Claude de la Colombière*.

**How to use this anthology?**

This book is not structured to be read from beginning to end, except perhaps for Caussade's *Treatise on Prayer from the Heart*. Readers can locate an entry in the Table of Contents or in the Index according to their present spiritual need. It will be noticed, however, that there are unavoidable "repetitions," but each paragraph contains nuances of approach and expression which may be helpful to different readers, each having their own spiritual needs and experience.

[15] Summarized from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/16026b.htm.

[16] Back cover of *The Spiritual Direction of Saint Claude de la Colombière*, translated and arranged by Mother M. Philip, I.B.V.M., Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1998.

Finally, while reading these texts, one can see that Catholic spirituality does not differ fundamentally from the spirituality of other great religions, at least as to its goal, which is to live according to the truth and to master the ego. For no spirituality can be successful, as Frithjof Schuon reminds us, without (1) detachment from the world, hence purity of soul; (2) struggle against our passions and individualistic tendencies; (3) contentment with the will of God, hence peacefulness; (4) fervor and confidence in God, hence generosity towards our neighbor; (5) discernment between the Real and the unreal; and (6) union with the Real.[17] These three Jesuit authors, while putting the accent on the love of God, which is the main characteristic of Christianity in general, are indeed of great help for those seeking to practice these fundamental virtues.[18]

—Jean-Pierre Lafouge

*"Introduction to For God's Greater Glory" by Jean-Pierre Lafouge*

*Features in*

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[17] See Frithjof Schuon, *Stations of Wisdom*, World Wisdom Books, Bloomington, IN, 1995, pp. 147-157.

[18] To obtain a comprehensive view of Jesuit spirituality see *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice, A Historical Study, A Posthumous Work*, by Joseph de Guilbert, S.J., translated by William J. Young, S.J., edited by George E. Ganss, S.J., The Institute of Jesuit Sources in cooperation with Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1964.