Communication as Spiritual Practice

I. Introduction

A. The *Spiritual Exercises* as essentially a matter of communication

The relationship between the exercitant and the one who gives the Exercises

The relationship between the exercitant and God and Christ

B. The Society of Jesus and ministries of the word

Ministries of education

Ministries of justice

Ministries of interiority (spirituality)

C. The understanding of ordained priesthood in the Society of Jesus as prophetic priesthood, i.e., priesthood involving various ministries of the Word

D. The “account of conscience” as part of the Society’s “spiritual governance”: Jesuits communicating openly with their religious superiors about their strengths and weaknesses, desires and temptations

II. Communication and Silence

What are the different kinds of silence?

What is the relationship between speaking and being silent?

III. A Key Text: Ignatius’s letter of 1546 to the three Jesuits who would be present at the Council of Trent

Seven points about how to relate to others while at the Council:

1. Take conversation and its potentialities seriously: the gift of presence

2. Be slow of speech, careful and affectionate: watch the tempo of your talking

3. Listen well and give careful attention to the whole person: the “music” behind the words; can you repeat what the other has just said to you, without distorting it?

4. Be as free as possible from prejudice, from pre-judging: consider the cons and the pros on every important issue, beyond advocacy on behalf of one side

5. Be cautious about using arguments from authority. Intrinsic evidence is often the stronger argument

6. Be modest and lucid in exposing your point of view. When you are in touch with the truth, present it clearly and modestly, with more interest in the truth of the matter than “trumping” the other person

7. Take enough time: give the matter the amount of time it deserves.

IV. Basic Attitudes

Reverence

Generous Listening

The need for trust; “giving the plus sign”

Attention to the Neighbor as “Other”

Entering by the other’s door: adapting to the other’s world and viewpoint and concerns

V. Paying attention to myself; listening to myself

Learning to notice, calmly, what arises in me and allowing it to show itself to me. And then, acting in relation to what I have noticed. The difference between having feelings or being “had” by them.

Paying attention to “dissident” voices within, other sides of myself that I do not usually favor.

From: Willi Lambert, S.J., *Directions for Communication: Discoveries with Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2000).