

GENERAL INTRODUCTION - REFLECTION



I ask for what I desire as we begin this topic



I pray that my entire being become open to God's grace



I imagine these texts being addressed to me, and note my response

Grace: that we become conscious of the frontiers in our world and to allow them to change us interiorly

Context: As we enter in the increasingly complex world of exercising leadership at the frontiers, we begin with a consideration of stories of journeying, missioning and involvement with others' pain and vulnerability. The journey to the frontiers (physical or abstract) is a journey of conversion and renewal. These narratives carry a message for us today and invite us to contemplate how we can serve others and allow them to change us.

Ignatius and his first companions understood the importance of reaching out to people on the frontiers and at the centre of society, of reconciling those who were estranged in any way. From the centre in Rome, Ignatius sent Jesuits to the frontiers, to the new world, "to announce the Lord to peoples and cultures that did not know him as yet". He sent Xavier to the Indies. Thousands of Jesuits followed, preaching the Gospel to many cultures, sharing knowledge with and learning from others. He also wanted Jesuits to cross other types of frontiers between rich and poor, between educated and unlearned. He wrote a letter to the Jesuits at the Council of Trent on how to behave and insisted that they should minister to the sick. Jesuits opened colleges in Rome and in the great cities of Europe, and they taught children in villages across the world.

Jesuit General Congregation 35 – Decree 3 §15

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'

The Conversion of Saul - Acts 9:1-6

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What are the exterior frontiers that my organization and I are facing? (poverty, displaced individuals, prisoners...) What are the inner frontiers that I am called to cross? (absence of meaning, demotivation, lack of empathy...)

Where do I need renewal and conversion in my mission?

We are not born for ourselves alone [...] Everything that the earth produces is created for our use, and we, too, as human beings are born for the sake of other human beings that we might be able mutually to help one another; we ought therefore to take nature as our guide and contribute to the common good of humankind by reciprocal acts of kindness, by giving and receiving from one another, and thus by our skill, our industry, and our talents work to bring human society together in peace and harmony.

Passage from *De officiis* (by Marcus Tullius Cicero), translated by John O'Malley SJ

When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity, which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection... learn to perceive, think, judge, choose, and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, 2001

[Journey] is altogether the most ample 'place' and reaches as far as the globe itself. For wherever they can be sent in ministry to bring help to souls, that is the most glorious and longed-for 'house' for these theologians. For they know the goal set before them: to procure the salvation and perfection of all women and men. They understand that they are to that end bound by that Fourth Vow to the supreme pontiff: that they might go on these universal missions for the good of souls by his command, which by divine decree extends throughout the whole church. They realize that they cannot build or acquire enough houses to be able from nearby to run out to tile combat. Since this is the case, they consider that they are in their most peaceful and pleasant house when they are constantly on the move, when they travel throughout the earth, when they have no place to call their own, when they are always in need, always in want - only let them strive in some small way to imitate Christ Jesus, who had nowhere on which to lay his head and who spent all his years of preaching in journey.

John O'Malley SJ (quoting Jerónimo Nadal) - *Mission and the Early Jesuits*

If we have the patience and the humility and the courage to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they have to teach us what we can do to help them. Without this arduous journey, our efforts for the poor will have an effect just the opposite from what we intend. ...Through such humble service, we will have the opportunity to help them find, at the heart of their problems and their struggles, Jesus Christ living and acting through the power of the Spirit.

Jesuit General Congregation 32, Decree 3, §50

1-See 'To travel to any part of the world: Jeronimo Nadal and the Jesuit vocation', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* vol 16, no 2 (March 1984), especially pp 6-8.