

IN A COLLEGE ROOM

The First Jesuits

Paris, AD 1530

A Play for Voices

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HISTORICAL PREFACE

How did the Jesuits come into being? The Company or Society of Jesus, as it is properly called, had its first official recognition and approval by Pope Paul III on the 27 September 1540. At the time it had twelve members. Since then, all sorts of myths have grown up about the Jesuits, and about their founder, Ignatius Loyola, who has often been portrayed as a military strategist - someone who carefully planned to form an army of religious shock-troops to fight the Reformers in a Counter-Reformation. The reality is quite different.

Personal Formation

Many influences helped shape the character of Íñigo (or Yñigo), as he was named at his baptism - his birth in 1491 as the youngest of thirteen children, his Basque culture and language, his noble lineage, his nurturing and upbringing among Basque peasants and craftsmen, the early loss of his mother and, a little later, of his father, his youthful formation as a page, his reading of *Amadís of Gaul* and the popular tales of Arthurian legend. Though he enjoyed sword-play, Íñigo was a courtier rather than a professional soldier. After a vain and hopeless attempt to prevent the French from taking the town of Pamplona, in 1521, where his leg was smashed by a cannonball, he underwent a profound though gradual religious conversion. He was about thirty years of age.

When his wounds had healed, Íñigo spent almost a year in prayer and penance at Manresa, near Barcelona, living as a beggar. There he reflected on his experiences and made notes which would eventually become his *Spiritual Exercises*. His growing desire was to help ordinary people find God, in their life and in their prayer. His pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1523 left him with an obsession to return to the Holy Land, together with a few companions if possible. He intended to spend the rest of his life in the places where Jesus had lived. In Barcelona he made attempts to attract others for this project, but without much success. After several encounters with religious authorities, Íñigo began to realize that he would need some formal education in theology if he was going to be allowed to teach others about God. He spent a little time at the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, where he and a couple of companions were imprisoned for a few weeks. Then the pilgrim went to Paris. It was during his years at the University of Paris that the Jesuit Order had its real beginning. There he met Pierre Favre and Francis Xavier, the first two of several companions who were later to become the core of his Company.

The University of Paris

In a college setting at a great university - this is where it all began. The modern university, like our cathedrals and parliaments, had its origin in the Middle Ages. This phase of European history is the invention of historians. There is a negative view of a single "Middle Age" - *le moyen âge* - as a dark period of ignorance and superstition, lasting a thousand years, from the barbarian invasions and the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West (in the fifth century) to the rebirth or *renaissance* of Greek and Roman culture and learning in Italy (in the fifteenth century). "The romantics of the early nineteenth century replaced this negative view of the Middle Ages with the shining image of a Gothic culture steeped in idealism, spirituality,

heroism, and adoration of women.”¹ Íñigo was very much the product of the late Middle Ages, and he embraced and identified with all those qualities so much admired by people of a later period.

Prior to the revival of learning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was “an earlier revival, less known though in its way quite as significant, which historians now call the renaissance of the twelfth century.”² It began with the flow of new knowledge into Western Europe through Sicily and Italy, and especially through Spain, with its highly developed Arab civilization. It was Arab scholars who introduced to Western Europe the works of Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy, as well as the new arithmetic, making use of Arabic numerals instead of Roman numerals.

The rudiments of the seven liberal arts had been taught in the schools of monasteries and cathedrals: Latin grammar, rhetoric and logic (the *trivium*), and the elements of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music (the *quadrivium*). The new learning went far beyond this, and demand for the teaching of medicine and law, philosophy and theology, is what led to the formation of universities - first, a medical university at Salerno, then a school of law at Bologna, and later, at Paris, a school of theology. Grammar became not just the study of parts of speech but the art of interpreting phenomena, and logic developed into dialectics - the science of testing arguments. Both grammar and logic were necessary for metaphysics and theology.

The University of Paris (which was granted its first royal charter in the year 1200) became the model for many other universities, including those of Oxford and Cambridge, and its colleges were the model also for all the colleges later established by Ignatius (as he came to call himself). It began in the cathedral school of Notre Dame, whose chancellor licensed teaching in the diocese. A university was thus originally a way of training teachers, and graduate degrees today - master, doctor - have preserved these teaching designations.

The University Colleges

A university, however, had at first no buildings or grounds - no library or laboratory, no playing field or stadium. It was in the beginning simply a society of masters and scholars, that is, of teachers and students. The colleges were the great innovation, and these began at Paris. They were endowed residences providing room and board for poor students who could not otherwise afford to attend the university. Haskins tells us that there were sixty-eight such colleges in Paris by the year 1500. By the time Íñigo de Loyola arrived on the scene twenty-eight years after this date, the colleges had long been centres of teaching with lecture halls as well as living quarters. They were thus boarding schools for secondary and post-secondary students, similar to the eight-year Jesuit institutions that grew up later. Íñigo was thirty-seven years old when he began his studies at Paris, attending classes with boys in their early teens or younger.

¹Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, Quill, William Morrow, New York, 1991, p. 29.

²Charles Homer Haskins, *The Rise of Universities*, Cornell University Press, Ithica, NY, 1957, p. 4.

The University of Paris had developed into a corporation, a university of masters, with four faculties, each under a dean: arts, canon law, medicine, and theology. The pre-eminence of theology is what made Paris pre-eminent among universities. But, before one could study theology, there were the long years leading to a bachelor's degree. Those in the arts, who were more numerous than the others, were grouped into four "nations": the French, the Norman, the Picard, and the English. There were great rivalries and hatreds among these so-called nations, which led to name-calling, fist-fights and even riots.

The colleges, which varied in size (*Sainte-Barbe* had about two hundred students), were often filthy and infested with vermin. Íñigo, despite his passion for poverty, was fastidious about cleanliness and order. He lodged first at *Saint-Jacques*, a hospice for pilgrims, and took courses in Latin at the *Collège Montaigu*, where Erasmus, the famous Dutch humanist, had studied. The hospice was about three kilometres - almost two miles - from the college, and so he had to be up before four o'clock in order to be on time for his first class of the morning at five. There were also nearby boarding houses where students could rent rooms, and he later moved to one of these.

A Poor Student in Every Sense

Unable to find employment with any professor, Íñigo was forced to beg in the streets, and eventually he took two months off every year to beg for alms in the port cities of London, Antwerp, and Bruges (Bruges was then a port - the "Venice of the North" - before the harbour silted up). These towns were centres of great wealth (Bruges was the birthplace of the first stock exchange - *De Beurs* or *La Bourse*). In them Íñigo met generous Spaniards who even sent him letters of credit in Paris. In 1529 he was admitted to the Arts Faculty at *Sainte-Barbe* (the college of Saint Barbara), where he began the study of Aristotelian logic and philosophy.

Various professors were associated with the colleges, and at *Sainte-Barbe* Íñigo studied under Master Juan de la Peña, the only teacher mentioned in his *Autobiography*. Doctor Peña was at first displeased with the way Íñigo influenced other students, who, in imitation of his poverty, gave away their possessions - even their books - and took to begging in the streets. He reported him to the Rector, who threatened to have him flogged in public. Íñigo soon befriended the Rector, but he also changed his ways, and ceased talking in public about spiritual matters. It seemed the prudent thing to do, if he was ever going to become serious about his studies.

While most of the students were "clerks" or clerics, like Chaucer's "Clerke of Oxenford" (that is, had received the tonsure prior to admission to minor orders, as had Íñigo), there were still relatively few students in theology, for the simple reason that theological studies were not a prerequisite for ordination to the priesthood. This requirement came in only with the Council of Trent (1545-1563). A "clerical" education originally prepared a person to become a good secretary, skilled in taking notes and writing letters in Latin. Íñigo had come late to studies. He was not good at mastering languages, either ancient or modern, and was much more inclined to action than to intellectual pursuits. But, by hard methodical work, he came to appreciate the value of academic learning, which included an integrated knowledge of

Scripture and the writings of the early Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church, as well as the theology of the “schoolmen” or scholastics, and the philosophy of the pagan Greek Aristotle, upon which this scholasticism was built.

The Reformers

Paris was a dangerous place at this time. Because he had no academic qualifications for teaching anything, Íñigo had already run into difficulties with the Inquisition in Spain for attempting to teach others about sin and prayer,. At the University of Paris there were factions that favoured the doctrines of the Reformers, and the ideas of both Luther and Erasmus were hotly debated by students as well as professors. In 1523 Luther’s books had been burned on the square in front of Notre Dame, and, in 1526, two young men, a student and a graduate, who were found guilty of heresy had been burned at the stake. Íñigo did not involve himself in these conflicts. He was not someone who feared for his life or avoided risks. He humbly accepted insults (for instance, when jeered at for begging), but he would tolerate no slanders against his orthodoxy. Whenever such occasions arose, he went at once to the authorities, presented whatever evidence was required (usually the notes which became his *Spiritual Exercises*), and asked to have his name cleared in writing. His passionate desire was to teach ordinary people about the things of God, and he would overcome any obstacle in order to be able to do so.

During these years Íñigo was still a vagabond, a pauper, and a pilgrim, and so he did not at all fit the stereotype of those wastrel students celebrated in the Latin songs and verses of the Middle Ages. If we were to form an opinion from these songs alone, we would have to conclude that students frequented the taverns as often as the lecture halls, and were interested less in studies than in drinking and carousing and fighting. Íñigo had already outlived this phase of his youth in Spain. He was now almost forty years old, and felt at last that he understood with a certain clarity what God wanted him to do with the rest of his life. It was to lead others to find God, and to do this in the Holy Land, with the help of a few like-minded companions. His life was yet to unfold in ways that he could not possibly foresee, but at the University of Paris he finally gathered the first companions who would be part of this unfolding.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Ignatius Loyola (Íñigo de Loyola), Francis Xavier (Francisco de Javier, originally Francés de Xavier) and Peter Faber (Pierre Favre) are the first companions out of whose friendship the Jesuits (the Company or Society of Jesus) eventually came into being. They were its foundation stones. This play, which attempts to capture something of their initial encounter at the University of Paris in 1530, was written to commemorate the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of Loyola (1556), and the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Xavier and of Faber (1506), all celebrated in the year 2006.

The title (and much of the inspiration for this little work) comes from the brilliant biography, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Pilgrim Saint*, by José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, English translation by Cornelius Michael Buckley, sj, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1994 (based on the second Spanish edition of *Ignacio de Loyola: solo y a pie*, Ediciones Cristiandad, S.L., Madrid, 1987). Edmond C. Murphy, sj and John W. Padberg, sj have provided a very useful introduction to their edition of *The Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre* (the Institute of Jesuit Sources, Saint Louis, 1996). *The First Jesuits*, by John O'Malley, sj (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1993), is also a great source of background information.

Since the play is intended for voices, no directions are given for those who may wish to stage it. As a dramatic reading, sound effects are needed for knocking at the doors, some costuming is helpful (a hat, a scarf, etc.), as well as some movement during long exchanges in Scene One (entrances, exits).

To bring out their different origins (Basque, French, Savoyard, Spanish), it would be helpful to cast the characters with slightly different accents, since (whatever language we may imagine them speaking - French, Latin, or Spanish) most of them would not be using their mother tongue.

Íñigo should have a restrained but passionate intensity, Pierre a youthful enthusiasm, and Francisco a blunt yet refined stubbornness. The level of language is that of informal yet respectful conversation among equals.

A Devotional Moment

from

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

Book II, Chapter 8

A Devotional Moment

This “devotional” moment” is meant to prepare the way for a dramatic reading of the play by engaging the audience with the actors. Its intention is also to put all of us in touch with a piece of medieval devotional literature dear to the heart of Ignatius. *The Imitation of Christ*, in its original Latin version, replaced the tales of romance which had so captivated the heart and imagination of Ignatius, and became his favourite book. It was always at his bedside.

The text used here is from the first edition of an English translation made about 1530 (the very year in which our play is set) by Richard Whitford (edited with an introduction by Edward J. Klein, and published by Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1941, 1943). The quotations below are excerpted from pages 72-74. Since Ignatius visited London about this time to beg money for his studies, he would have come into contact with the spoken language of this period, though perhaps not always in the simple and elegant cadences of Richard Whitford, a friend of Thomas More, who is sometimes called the father of modern English.

For the audience to take part and read the passages marked “All”, the text needs to be made available in a programme or on a printed sheet. Participation will be further facilitated by teaching the Latin song to the audience, and having everyone sing it together to introduce and conclude each scene.

Leader: When our Lord Jesus Christ is present, all things are liking –

All: And nothing seemeth hard to do for his love;

Reader 1: but when he is absent all things that are done for his love are painful and hard. When Jesus speaketh not to the soul there is no faithful consolation, but if he speaketh but one word only, the soul feeleth great inward consolation. Did not Mary Magdalen rise soon from weeping when Martha showed her that her Master, Christ, was nigh and called her?

Leader: Yes, truly. O that is an happy hour –

All: – when Jesus calleth us from weeping to joy of spirit!

Reader 2: He that findeth Jesus, findeth a great treasure that is best above all other treasures, and he that loseth him hath lost more than all the world. He is most poor that liveth without Jesus, and he is most rich that is with Jesus. It is great wisdom to be well conversant with him, and to keep him is right great wisdom.

Leader: Be meek and peaceful, and Jesus shall be with thee;

All: be devout and quiet and he will abide with thee.

Reader 3: Thou mayst anon drive away thy Lord Jesus and lose his grace, if thou apply thyself to outward things; and if through negligence of thyself thou lose him what friend shalt thou then have? Without a friend thou mayst not long endure, and if Jesus be not thy friend before all others, thou shalt be very heavy and desolate and be left without all perfect friendship . . .

Leader: We should rather choose to have all the world against us –

All: – than to offend God;

Reader 4: and therefore, of all that be to thee lief and dear, let thy Lord Jesus be to thee most lief and dear, and most beloved to thee above all others. And let all others be beloved for him and he only for himself . . . desire not that anything be occupied with thee in they heart, nor that thou be occupied with the love an any created thing; but that thy Lord Jesus may be in thee, and in every good man and woman.

Leader: And if it happen so with thee [that grace withdraweth], yet despair not overmuch therefore –

All: – and leave not thy good deeds undone,

Reader 5: but stand always strongly after the will of God, and turn all things that happen to thee to the laud and praising of his name. For after winter cometh summer, and after the

night cometh the day, and after a great tempest showeth again right clear and pleasant weather.

ORDER OF VOICES

Servant Boy

Íñigo de Loyola

Doctor Juan de la Peña

Pierre Favre

Francisco de Javier

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Prologue

(A Latin song is sung softly by Íñigo, not with the Latin stresses but with equal stress on each syllable and with more stress on the final syllable of each line, as is the tendency in French. The *h* in *nihil* is pronounced as a *k*: *Pauper sum ego. Nihil habeo. Cor meum dabo* - A pauper am I. Nothing do I have. I will give my heart.)

Servant: I was a young serving boy when Íñigo de Loyola arrived in Paris, alone and on foot. It was February, 1528, though I did not meet him until two years later. He came from Salamanca in Spain, where he had been imprisoned for “helping souls,” as he put it, through spiritual conversation. He was forbidden to speak of matters such as sin without first acquiring a theological foundation. And so he came to the University of Paris, renowned for its school of theology.

After spending a year and a half studying Latin grammar and rhetoric, he began to give what he called “spiritual exercises” to students and teachers in the Latin Quarter, which again got him into trouble. The following year, he enrolled in the course in humanities at the *Collège Sainte-Barbe*, and, a few months later, he found a room in a high tower, where he could study and pray. My mother and I were servants there.

What was he like? He was very different from the other students. He was much older than most of them, some of who were not much older than I was. He was very kind and gentle with almost everyone, but there was a certain fire in his eyes as well. He was fierce about injustice and dishonesty. He dressed very poorly but was always neat and clean. I was struck by his fingernails – how clean and carefully trimmed he kept them. There was something else about him that’s harder to describe. He had a kind of presence that was more than mere piety. I always felt privileged just to be around him.

Scene One

(The same Latin song is hummed again by Íñigo.)

(A servant boy shows Íñigo to his room in a tower. It is sparsely furnished but has a splendid view of the city.)

Servant: Where shall I put your things, *Monsieur*?

Íñigo: Put the books on the shelf, please, and hang the cloak on that hook by the bed. (Going to the window) Oh, I can look upon the whole world from here!

Servant: Is this all you have, *Monsieur*?

Íñigo: There are so many poor students in the Quarter - poorer than I am! It’s impossible not to give them something - a scarf, a coat - when they are freezing in the cold. (Laughingly) It seems that I haven’t much left to give away. Do you provide candles here?

Servant: No, *Monsieur*, only the inns do that. But you can purchase some at the chandler’s shop just down the street.

Íñigo: Thank you, boy. Say a little prayer for me that my stay here may be blessed by God.

Servant: I don't know any prayers, *Monsieur*.

Íñigo: I will teach you the Our Father, if it please you.

Servant: Perhaps another time, *Monsieur*. Good day.
(There is the sound of a door closing as the servant boy leaves. Íñigo groans a little as he gets down on his knees. His prayer is spoken slowly and is full of whispered sighing.)

Íñigo: O good Jesus, my Creator and Lord . . . I kneel in your sight . . . here in this room. I thank you with all my heart . . . that you have once again answered my poor prayers, all unworthy as I am . . . and have led me here, to this place of solitude . . . where I can study and be alone . . . to speak with you.

(There is a knock at the door, followed by a pause as Íñigo rises painfully from his knees.)

Íñigo: Yes, come in, come in . . . Ah, Master Peña! How good to see you!

Peña: Good day, my dear Íñigo. With your permission, I would like to present to you a young man who has asked to meet you: this is Master Pierre Favre.

Íñigo: With pleasure!

Pierre: I am delighted to make your acquaintance! I am not yet a Master, sir, but am soon to receive that degree, God willing.

Peña: Yes, and with the highest of honours - *summa cum laude*. Pierre is one of the finest students that it has ever been my pleasure to instruct. And now I will leave you. My opinion is sought on a matter of great importance to the English.

Pierre: The English?

Peña: Yes. After twenty years and four children, King Henry VIII now has grave doubts about the validity of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

Pierre: And the King seeks your opinion on this matter?

Peña: Doctor Thomas Cranmer of Cambridge University has recently asked the universities of Europe to consider the case – thus taking it out of the hands of the ecclesiastical courts. I am invited to help set up the commission to deal with his request.

Pierre: It seems that the English embrace Spanish wine only to reject Spanish women!

Íñigo: Poor Catherine! I saw her once at Alcalá when she was a young girl just a few years older than I was. We must pray for her.

Peña: And for me! Good day, my friends.

Pierre: Good day, Doctor Master Peña.

Íñigo: *Adios, Doctor.*

Pierre: Forgive me for being so bold, sir, but Master Peña has told me a little about you - about your zeal for spreading the Word of God.

Íñigo: Has he indeed?

Pierre: Yes – about your zeal for spreading the Gospel. He's told me how you spend much of your time in teaching little children the catechism, and conversing about prayer with everyone you meet.

Íñigo: I no longer speak much in public about spiritual matters - it only gets me into trouble with the authorities.

Pierre: Doctor Peña says that you're on fire with the love of God.

Íñigo: I cannot deny it.

Pierre: *Deo gratias!* You're a gift of God to me! How I've desired to open myself to another about the longings of my heart! But those I meet prefer to engage in controversy - to debate the doctrines of the Reformers, to talk about abstractions, or to argue whether all are saved or only a few.

Íñigo; God is not an abstraction.

Pierre: Yes, I know!

Íñigo: And salvation is not a proposition to be debated! It's a goal to be striven for by following in the footsteps of Jesus, our Saviour.

Pierre: That's exactly how I feel! I want to follow Christ our Lord more closely, but I don't know where or how to begin.

Íñigo: Begin with yourself.

Pierre: I find myself . . . paralysed!

Íñigo: Paralysed? How?

Pierre: Trapped in doubts . . . fears . . . scruples.

Íñigo: I too have had these subtle temptations.

Pierre: The result is that I can trust nothing anymore - not my judgment, not myself!

Íñigo: Your trust must be in God before you can begin to trust yourself.

Pierre: Yes, in God . . .

Íñigo: Have you asked God's help?

Pierre: I've asked and sought and knocked until I'm almost ready to give up!

Íñigo: When you *are* ready to give up - *that's* when the door is opened!

Pierre: Well, I'm almost at that point!

Íñigo: You must also trust in God's Church - in the sacraments.

Pierre: I've known some wonderful churchmen, but often the priests and even the monks are corrupt. Or they're ignorant of spiritual things.

Íñigo: Sad but true.

Pierre: Some of the Reformers here in Paris are ready to throw out everything - even the Mass! But, as Erasmus says, the Church *is* desperately in need of reform.

Íñigo: The Church is always in need of reforming - now more than ever! But I have determined to begin, first, by reforming myself.

Pierre: I must remove the wooden beam from my own eye before trying to remove the speck of sawdust from someone else's eye!

Íñigo: I can see that we will get along well, we two!

Pierre: So, I ask you, how should I go about this task of reforming myself?

Íñigo: Well, I can tell you this much: it's hard work. It's not to be done by drifting with the current, but rather by swimming with all your force against the currents that draw you downstream, away from God.

Pierre: Towards self-destruction?

Íñigo: Yes, but at first only toward self-interest.

Pierre: In what way?

Íñigo: You are trapped in your scruples?

Pierre: Yes . . .

Íñigo: You could as easily be trapped in something else.

Pierre: For example . . . ?

Íñigo: You could be trapped in your gifts of intelligence or in your desire for fame.

Pierre: Or in my desire for love?

Íñigo: (He speaks slowly at first.) We all desire love. Yes, clearly - the love of a woman, a family. We long for sons and daughters, for a hearth, a home.

Pierre: Or?

Íñigo: (He begins to speak faster and faster.) Or we set our hearts on a career in the world of letters - to be sought after by brilliant students, to have degrees and titles and honours heaped upon us. We're carried along by ambition. We make plans and schemes and grand designs, and one thing leads to another - struggles, failures, successes all pile up. But never is the question asked, "Where is *God* in all my grand designs and noble purposes? What is *God's* purpose for my life?"

Pierre: You overwhelm me with an avalanche of words!

Íñigo: And you mystify me with your strange words! What is the meaning of this *avalanche* you speak of? Is it dialect or *patois*?

Pierre: It's Savoyard. In my country - in Savoy, where I grew up as a shepherd boy - snow accumulates in the Alps in winter and, as it melts in spring, it often cascades down a mountainside, ripping up rocks and trees, and sweeping away whole villages. This is an avalanche. And this is how your words overwhelm me and sweep me off my feet!

Íñigo: I must speak less.

Pierre: No, not less, just less quickly!

Íñigo: And yet I cannot stop up the Word that's in my heart, burning like a fire in my breast.

Pierre: You sound like Jeremiah! But this is indeed what I wish to talk about with you. I feel that I've been led here, to Paris and to this university, by God. I've been carried along in my studies - by a desire for knowledge, for truth, for wisdom. But, now that I'm soon to have my efforts crowned with the degree of Master of Arts, I feel a certain emptiness in my soul. I find myself unsure where to go next, or what to do.

Íñigo: What attracts you?

Pierre: Knowledge and learning are what attract me most of all! As a child I wept because I couldn't go to school!

Íñigo: Your Parents . . . ?

Pierre: They kept me at home tending sheep.

Íñigo: "Peter, do you love me more than these?"

Pierre: More than these sheep? Yes!

Íñigo: Do you love Jesus?

Pierre: More than any *thing* or any other person!

Íñigo: What else attracts you?

Pierre: Marriage and family life attract me. I could stay on at the university make a living as a teacher. Ordination to the priesthood is also open to me - I could acquire a rural parish and live quite comfortably, but I desire . . . something more.

Íñigo: Yes, something more! That's the desire by which you must allow yourself to be led! This *more* you speak of is not something more for yourself. It's something more for God.

Pierre: "Our hearts are made for you, O Lord . . ."

Íñigo: ". . . and we are restless till we rest in you."

Pierre: I also love the great Augustine!

Íñigo: How I envy your learning! It does not come as easily to me as I grow older. But God has reached down to me in my poverty and ignorance, and taught me things that cannot be learned from books. Tell me about your way of praying.

Pierre: I have a pattern of devotions which I go through every morning when I arise at four o'clock, before going to class - certain prayers I say, petitions I make, saints whose intercession I ask. After the first class there is Mass at six.

Íñigo: Devotions are good, but I will teach you something more, since this is your desire. I will teach you to reflect on your daily experience, beginning by giving thanks to God for all that has been given to you that day.

Pierre: I already do this! I count my blessings every night, and often I find my heart swelling with gratitude!

Íñigo: Gratitude is essential. There is no greater sin than the sin of ingratitude. But there are other movements of the soul as well, movements quite the opposite of gratitude.

Pierre: What do you mean?

Íñigo: Besides this kind of spiritual consolation there is also, often, a certain spiritual desolation.

Pierre: Spiritual desolation? You mean discouragement? Depression? I'm often depressed!

Íñigo: No, that's not what I mean - not just a *feeling* of wretchedness, but a *spiritual* state that comes with a loss or diminishment of the gifts of faith, hope and love.

Pierre: In that order?

Íñigo: No, hope is usually the first thing to go. We may find our hope subtly eroded by disappointments, and when this happens, we begin to doubt that God is present, or that our prayers are heard, or, if heard, that they'll be answered.

Pierre: Yes, I've known something of that desperate condition!

Íñigo: Unless we reflect upon ourselves, first to become aware of these movements, and then to act against those that trap us in our own helplessness, we can gradually slide into a state of despondency.

Pierre: Without hope?

Íñigo: Almost. Then faith withers and love dries up, and prayer becomes difficult and distasteful.

Pierre: You say *to act against* these movements. Do you mean by praying more?

Íñigo: Not by praying more, but by insisting more on praying.

Pierre: I see . . .

Íñigo: When we find ourselves in this kind of spiritual desolation, the first temptation is to give up praying altogether. What's the point of praying, we think, if God isn't listening or is not going to answer our prayers?

Pierre: And so to pray more - to say more prayers or to spend more hours in prayer - would only wear us out in times like this?

Íñigo: Exactly. I say simply that we must be more *insistent* on praying. We must not abandon our habits or patterns of prayer, but stay the course we've set out upon. To do this is to go *against* the temptation to give up praying. It takes a certain effort. But we are never alone in our struggles.

Pierre: If only my roommate, Francisco, could hear you talk like this, it would do him much good.

Íñigo: Francisco?

Pierre: Francisco Xavier - he's a fellow countryman of yours, a Spaniard.

Íñigo: Yes, I know the name, but I am Basque, and I served the kings of Aragon and Castile, while his family served the kings of Navarre and France.

Pierre: That may be one reason why he resisted the request to come with me to meet you. But he's also heard many negative things about you - about your outlandish way of life, as he calls it, and about your difficulties with the Inquisition in Spain - and he's formed a certain prejudice against you. Perhaps if you wrote to him, he would consent to visit you.

Íñigo: Allow me to reflect on this and pray about it.

Pierre: I must be on my way. You've lifted my spirits and given me much practical advice! I would be honoured if we could meet again to continue this conversation.

Íñigo: Nothing would please me more. I feel that the Lord will do much good through you. May God be with you!

Pierre: And with you! *Salve.*

(As Pierre leaves, we hear him singing the opening Latin song.)

Scene Two

(The servant boy comes to Íñigo's room.)

Servant: You called for me, *Monsieur?*

Íñigo: Yes, my boy, be kind enough to take this letter to the room of Master Pierre Favre, who was here the other day. It's for his roommate.

Servant: What is this strange name, François *Zavier?* *Savier?* *Shavier?* How do you pronounce this letter X?

Íñigo: *Shavier* is close enough. The Portuguese are the only ones to get it right, though, like me, he's from Spain.

Servant: And what's to be my reward for running this errand, *Monsieur?*

Íñigo: I'll teach you the Hail Mary.

Servant: I'll go without the reward.

(The servant boy goes out, closing the door. Íñigo goes over to the table beside his bed and picks up a book. He sits on a chair and begins to turn the pages slowly.)

Íñigo: Ah, the *De Imitatione Christi*. Let me see where I last left off - "Book the Second, Chapter the Eighth: Of the Familiar Friendship of Jesus." How this chapter never fails to move me! Jesus, you are indeed my familiar friend . . .

(Íñigo's eyes seem to be fixed on something above. He is silent for a while. There is a knock at the door. Íñigo stirs from a kind of ecstasy.)

Íñigo: Enter, please!

Francisco: Señor Íñigo de Loyola?

Íñigo: Yes . . .

Francisco: I am Francés do Yasu y Xavier.

Íñigo: Do come in, please!

Francisco: I trust I am not disturbing you?

Íñigo: No, I was just reading this little book, *The Imitation of Christ*. Do you know it?

Francisco: Is there anyone who has not heard of it?

Íñigo: I suppose not. But to *know* it is something else again. There are whole chapters that I have learned almost by heart. (He puts the book on the table.) I thank you for coming to see me.

Francisco: I could not refuse a fellow countryman, could I? But that is not really why I came here.

Íñigo: Is it not?

Francisco: No. Until now I have avoided you, Señor. But your letter was so simple and so direct - it touched something in me that eloquence could not touch - and here I am!

Íñigo: Ah, yes, one stubborn Hidalgo confronts another! We are both cut from the same cloth, are we not?

Francisco: This is true, but we've served different kings, you and I.

Íñigo: I now serve only Christ the King.

Francisco: Had I been old enough to take up arms at the siege of Pamplona, we might have faced each other across the fortifications.

Íñigo: You were how old then?

Francisco: Fifteen years old. And You?

Íñigo: Almost twice your age.

Francisco: And now we face each other here in Paris.

Íñigo: Nine years later.

Francisco: Yes, you and I, together at last - but still worlds apart!

Íñigo: How so?

Francisco: Here am I with my determination to become a scholar and Master at a great university, and there you are, with your wild project of going to Jerusalem to conquer the Moors! Pierre has told me of your plans.

Íñigo: Not to conquer by force of arms - I hung up my sword and dagger long ago at the Abbey of Montserrat.

Francisco: Then how?

Íñigo: I intend to conquer souls, not foreign lands or fortified cities. And to conquer only with the sword of God's Word.

Francisco: I would rather leave that work to another Francis - *Il Poverello* of Assisi. The Friars are already there in the Holy Land, doing well enough without you or me.

Íñigo: True. But I've *gone* to Jerusalem, and I've been filled with love for her very stones!

Francisco: Psalm one hundred and two, verse fourteen.

Íñigo: You know the Scriptures better than I do. But I'm talking about the land - the land where Jesus lived and worked and walked.

Francisco: The Holy Land.

Íñigo: Yes! His feet and hands made holy everything He touched. . .

Francisco: Come to the point, please!

Íñigo: To live and work and die where He lived and died for me, for you - does this desire of mine not fill you with a longing to do the same?

Francisco: That's a life for others, not for me. To have spent these many years in the study of logic and rhetoric, of philosophy and theology, so that I might become a professor, and then

to toss it all aside for the sake of some quest for the Holy Grail - that smacks of those fabulous tales of romance, does it not?

Íñigo: I once loved those tales - I *lived* those tales!

Francisco: Indeed?

Íñigo: My whole existence revolved around a dream of doing heroic deeds to win the heart of a fair princess - a *real* princess!

Francisco: Who was she?

Íñigo: I will not reveal her name. I'll say only that she was young and very beautiful - the most beautiful woman I ever set eyes upon.

Francisco: Well, there you have it! A dreamer! A starry-eyed lover! A knight in shining armour! How can I take you seriously?

Íñigo: You're right. I once was all those things. I was a fool for love and honour and glory. I too had other plans.

Francisco: What sort of plans?

Íñigo: In the early days it was simply a desire for noble service.

Francisco: This is my desire also.

Íñigo: Yes, but I grew up as a courtier at Arévalo.

Francisco: In the court of the *Gran Contador* of Castile?

Íñigo: Indeed - the Chief Treasurer of the Realm. There I was surrounded by noble lords and ladies. I learned refined manners and elegant speech - a most excellent Castilian. I learned to compose verses in a fine Italic script - all things of which I was inordinately proud.

Francisco: And all of it meant to prepare you to serve in the Royal Court - all quite admirable!

Íñigo: I also engaged in practices of which I was not so proud: I gambled and played at cards and dice, and I chased after women and fought duels.

Francisco: And then . . . ?

Íñigo: Then came the siege of Pamplona, where, for the honour of my King, I resisted the French.

Francisco: And the King of Navarre!

Íñigo: But I could not resist a cannon ball that left me lame.

Francisco: So I see. I wondered why you are wearing only one silly rope-soled sandal!

Íñigo: Yes, one leg is slightly shorter than the other. I suffered all this gladly for the King of Aragon. Now, however, I serve another King who suffered much more for me, and I strive to make him known, as I try to make amends for my past life.

Francisco: Why then have you come to Paris? Why did you not stay in Jerusalem, to be close to your King?

Íñigo: I went to Jerusalem as a pilgrim, and I would gladly have stayed there, but it was not permitted me by those in authority. Since then, my pilgrimage has taken me to many places - even to prison.

Francisco: Ah, yes! The Inquisition is on to you and your schemes!

Íñigo: I have no schemes. I seek only to win souls for Christ, to make Jesus better known and more loved.

Francisco: And how do you do this?

Íñigo: Through simple conversation - and through what I call "spiritual exercises".

Francisco: Spiritual exercises? Are you an *alumbrado*? An *illuminatus*? A charismatic charlatan? A pious mountebank peddling indulgences? No wonder the Inquisition clapped you in jail!

Íñigo: No, I am none of these things. But this is why I've come to the University of Paris: to acquire enough theology to be permitted to speak to ordinary people about spiritual matters - about God, about sin, above all about prayer.

Francisco: Well, my friend, those are fine aspirations, but they're not mine. I don't think that they are Pierre's either.

Íñigo: Pierre has agreed to make my Spiritual Exercises when he can find the time to go apart for a month.

Francisco: So, you've already begun to win him over!

Íñigo: It's the Lord who is winning him over. And He will win you over too, some day, I feel sure.

Francisco: We shall see what we shall see.

Íñigo: If we must part, let it not be as enemies.

Francisco: No, not enemies, but . . . not quite friends.

Íñigo: Not *yet* friends, perhaps, but we *shall* be friends - friends in the Lord. God go with you.

Francisco: And with you.

(As Francisco leaves we hear Íñigo humming the familiar Latin song.)

Scene Three

(Íñigo is kneeling in the middle of his room, holding his rosary beads, and softly praying.)

Íñigo: . . . *Sancta Maria . . . mater Dei . . . ora . . . pro nobis peccatoribus . . . nunc . . . et in hora mortis nostrae . . .*

(There is a knock at the door. Íñigo rises slowly to his feet.)

Íñigo: Come in, please.

Servant: *Pardon, Monsieur*, your friends are downstairs, asking if they may see you.

Íñigo: Pierre and Francisco? By all means, tell them to come up.

Servant: What's that in your hands?

Íñigo: This is a rosary - with beads of olive wood from the Holy Land. I would like to give it to you for your many kindnesses. Here, take it.

Servant: Do I have to learn to pray these beads?

Íñigo: (He laughs.) No, just wear them around your neck, like a true pilgrim!

Servant: In that case, I accept. Thank you, *Monsieur!*

(The servant boy puts on the rosary, grins, then bows in mock piety, with his hands together like an altar boy, and leaves. Pierre and Francisco enter the room.)

Pierre: Forgive us, my friend, for disturbing you at this late hour.

Íñigo: You are both most welcome - at any hour!

Francisco: I've just received official confirmation that I am now a Master of Arts!

Íñigo: Why, that's wonderful!

Francisco: I want you both to be the first to know, and to celebrate this event with me!

Íñigo: You include me in your celebration?

Francisco: Yes, our Basque blood must count for something! See, I've brought a fine bottle of wine from Navarre to share with you!

Pierre: And I've brought three glasses - and a cheese from Savoy, which I've kept for just this occasion!

Íñigo: And I have a fresh loaf of bread, given to me by the mother of that young lad who runs my errands.

Francisco: Excellent!

Íñigo: This is good news indeed! Come and sit down. I have only one chair, but we can sit on the bed. Tell me, what will you do, Francisco, now that you've attained your goal?

Pierre: You can at least bid farewell to the wretched life of a poor student!

Francisco: I wish that were so, Pierre, but you forget: there are expenses entailed in the honours I've been granted. True, I'll soon have a chair at the *Collège de Beauvais*, but the position doesn't pay much, at least not at first. I shall have to hire a serving man - not just to keep up appearances, but so that I can devote my time to preparing lectures. As well, I've engaged a lawyer to establish the nobility of my lineage, which will help my advancement.

Íñigo: How will you manage all this? I know that your family has fallen on hard times - I don't imagine that they can provide much assistance.

Francisco: True. But for this very reason I feel honour-bound to establish my name and to rebuild my family's fortune.

Íñigo: And in the meantime . . . ?

Francisco: I suppose that I shall have to find students to tutor in Latin and Greek. Perhaps you can send a few my way.

Íñigo: Gladly. I raise a glass to the success of all your endeavours! (They drink.)

Pierre: I sense, Íñigo, that you don't quite approve of all these changes in our friend's way of living.

Íñigo: It's not my place to approve or disapprove. While I share your joy at this success, I also observe the complications that honours bring.

Francisco: And what will *you* do when you attain *your* degree?

Íñigo: I'll go back to my old ways, and - at last without hindrance - I'll speak about God to everyone I meet in the streets!

Francisco: That will not put bread on your table.

Íñigo: As you can see, my table has bread - enough even to entertain my friends!

Pierre: And so you'll continue to live the life of a beggar?

Íñigo: I have less time for begging now that I must study, but the Lord provides nonetheless.

Francisco: But what is the *point* of living in poverty when you don't have to?!

Íñigo: And what is the *point* of having degrees and honours when they bring you so much anxiety?

Francisco: But honour is . . . everything!

Íñigo: The honour of God is the only thing.

Francisco: And without money, who can live?

Íñigo: As St. Paul says, I have learned how to be rich and how to be poor, and I prefer to be poor - the way Jesus was poor.

Francisco: Well, please don't quote me that line about what it profits a man to gain the whole world! I don't desire the whole world - just a small part of it!

Íñigo: As for myself, I already have all that I really need. I'm free from care and worry, and, in my poverty, I meet God each and every day.

Pierre: What do you mean by that?

Íñigo: I mean that, while philosophers and theologians may argue about proofs for the existence of God, I place my needs each day in God's hands, and I can verify each day that my prayers are answered.

Francisco: Well, then, pray for *my* needs while you're at it!

Íñigo: I do, my friend, I assure you that I do! But my prayers for *your* needs take a little longer to answer! However, let me suggest one possible solution to your present predicament. I propose that we throw in our lot together.

Francisco: Throw in my lot with *you*?!

Íñigo: I mean the three of us together. The two of you are already roommates, and have been for some years. It would be less expensive if the three of us were to share a single room - why not *this* room?

Pierre: It *is* a fine room - a paradise in comparison to the one that *we* share, Francisco!

Francisco: A room with a view, Pierre, will not compensate for all this talk of spiritual exercises and poverty!

Íñigo: I give you my word that I will talk only about the things that *you* wish to talk about. I will pray only while you are sleeping. And, whatever Providence sends my way, I will share with the two of you.

Francisco: I shall have to think about this. Pierre and I will discuss it together. But let me say at once that I admire your generous spirit.

Pierre: Thank you, my good friend! Your offer does indeed seem to be an answer to prayer. You never fail to bring light into my life! How can I ever repay you?

Íñigo: You could leave me the rest of that excellent cheese! (All three laugh.)

Epilogue

Servant: Íñigo de Loyola, Pierre Favre and Francisco Javier eventually became roommates and, finally, lifelong friends. They also attracted five other students, who joined them in their project of going to the Holy Land.

But this was not to be. War with Turkey made it impossible to sail across the Mediterranean. The companions went at last to Rome. There the Society of Jesus was given official approval.

Ignatius, as he came to call himself, was chosen as the order's superior, despite his resistance. He spent the rest of his days organizing the Society's structure and overseeing its phenomenal growth.

Pierre Favre became a skilled director of the Spiritual Exercises, and Francis Xavier was sent to the Far East, where he preached the gospel in Goa and Japan, and died on an island off the coast of China. And I? I still wear these olivewood beads around my neck – I even pray them now and then!

(The opening song is sung again, this time as a round, by Íñigo, Pierre, and Francisco.)