

The Ignatian Anniversaries: Three Holy Jesuits

By David L. Fleming SJ

We are celebrating this year (officially beginning with the feast commemoration of St. Francis Xavier on December 3, 2005 and closing with his same feast in 2006) what is called the Ignatian Anniversaries. St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, died on July 31, 1556. We are remembering that it is now 450 years since his death. Ignatius' most famous friend and companion was St. Francis Xavier, the missionary *par excellence*, who was born in 1506. We remember that it is now 500 years since his birth. And the third Jesuit companion we celebrate is Blessed Peter Faber (also known by the French citing of his name as Pierre Favre) who, like Xavier, was born in 1506. Faber, too, is remembered for the 500 years since his birth.

I intend to use the *Spiritual Exercises* as the lens through which we can view each of these men. Ignatius Loyola, the author of the *Exercises*, is sometimes said to have provided us with his autobiographical signature throughout this very book. For his part, Ignatius thought that Faber was the best of the companions in giving the Exercises to others. And Francis Xavier was the last of the original six companions in Paris (and reputedly the most difficult one to work with, according to Ignatius) to whom he gave the Exercises. I think that seeing these men in this light, especially in terms of their relationship with Jesus, we can find ourselves helped in our own relationship with God. In drawing upon these men's experiences, we will be moved more deeply in our appreciation for and identification with Ignatian spirituality and our own Jesuit version of it.

Ignatius and God the Communicator

Ignatius is one who experiences God as a communicator. God speaks, and God is always desiring to be in dialogue with us. At the beginning of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius presents us with the Principle and Foundation. At first, it would seem to be a simple statement about the kind of creator God we believe in. But Ignatius makes sure that we understand creation in terms of gifts. God presents us human beings with all of creation as gifts for us to help us to know and respond in thanks and love with the Giver of all good gifts. Within the text of the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius deliberately changes his language from a seemingly general human approach - an "everyman" approach - in the first two contextual paragraphs to an involving "we" in

the concluding three paragraphs. It is necessary for us to make a choice among the multitude of gifts presented before us to determine which ones are more helpful for knowing and responding to God. Our response is a necessary part of the communication dialogue that God has initiated.

In the final exercise of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius presents us with two prenotes to the exercise titled "The Contemplation on the Love of God." The prenotes deal with what love means. Ignatius wants to remind us of two important aspects of loving. The first is that lovers want to put their love in deeds more than words. Then he adds the more essential second point. Lovers always want to share with the one loved whatever each has, for example, valuable things like rings or jewelry or expensive travel and vacations, or perhaps learning and appreciation of theater, dance, music or art. Yet when Ignatius chooses a word for what lovers do in this second prenote, his Spanish word choice is significant. Ignatius chooses the Span-

ish word *comunicar*. Just as we hear it in English, *comunicar* includes all the connotation of "communicating." All gifts are meant to communicate, open up to dialogue; all gifts are meant to speak. This essential aspect of gifting fills out concretely what the Principle and Foundation has already implied.

ish word *comunicar*. Just as we hear it in English, *comunicar* includes all the connotation of "communicating." All gifts are meant to communicate, open up to dialogue; all gifts are meant to speak. This essential aspect of gifting fills out concretely what the Principle and Foundation has already implied.

We must be able to listen to all the ways that God wants to communicate with us, especially through Jesus and the Gospels. We need to take time to pray, to listen to and to dialogue with God, and then continue our daily life in his company. Similarly, we must truly communicate with those who are close to us - our families, our close friends, our religious community, what we call our support systems - and truly interact with them. Flowing from the strength of these first two circles of communication, we find ourselves being the true ministers of God and God's word in our communicating with people who come into our ordinary life or into our specialized ministry.

Francis Xavier and the Busy God

When we think of Francis Xavier, the image is likely to be of a man-in-motion. Francis Xavier, the patron saint of missionaries, was the first Jesuit to evangelize India, particularly the area of Goa claimed by the Portuguese. But Francis kept looking over the horizon to the Molucca islands, to Japan, and then even towards China. Ignatius appointed Xavier the first provincial of India. Shortly thereafter, Ignatius raised an issue in a letter to Xavier whether as provincial he might better stay in India, taking care of the home base and sending some of his fellow Jesuits to Japan and China, rather than taking on the missionary venture himself. Ignatius was gentle and kind with this best of friends, and typical-

country, just as Jesus took on the customs and dress of his country, was truly to be "working with Jesus." With Jesus in the lead, Xavier could be *imaginative* with children crowding around him, *fearless* before the sometimes unsavory characters of his own countrymen on his voyages, and *hopeful* about the goodness of people, however strange their customs and their beliefs.

Francis Xavier will forever be the man of the Call of the King. Xavier will forever be busy, but busy with a God who works. And Xavier will always be working with his busy God. From Francis Xavier, then, we learn something about living with our ideals and our dreams, but more importantly we are moved to be busy about our dreams and ideals, always being shaped by our working *with our busy God*.

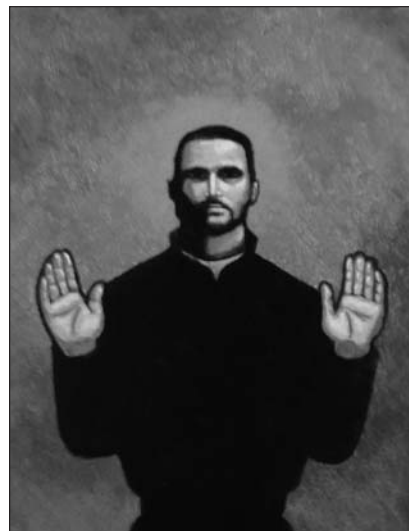
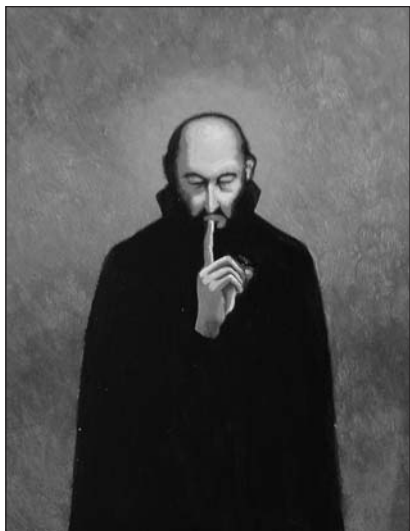
Peter Faber and the Eucharistic Christ

Peter Faber is the first companion to be ordained a priest. In fact, Peter Faber is the celebrant of the Mass at the Montmartre chapel where the first seven companions in

Paris make their promises about going to the Holy Land. Faber appears to be the one, after Ignatius, that all the first companions are drawn to. He is the one who listens; he is the one whose wisdom and counsel they readily accept. He truly merits the designation *companion*.

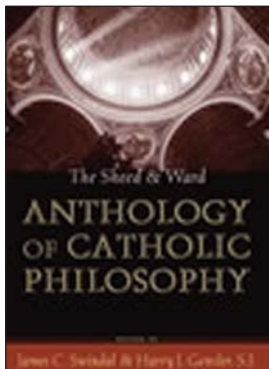
Faber captures, I believe, the relationship with God mirrored in the Third Week of the Exercises. He is the one who knows what it means to "stay with," to be compassionate, even with the older and struggling student Ignatius. As the first priest of the Parisian group, he relates to the Eucharistic Christ. Peter Faber as the first priest received the gift of living out this Third Week grace in a way that stands out beyond all the other companions. He lived out the Jesuit charism of finding the Eucharist the center of his spiritual life and his prayer life as a Jesuit. From the Eucharist, he drew his strength to be companion - one who shares the Bread of eternal life - which makes the community one Body. From the Eucharist, identifying with Jesus who is in the eternal stance of giving over his life to his Father and to us, his sisters and brothers, Peter could give his life over to the work of reconciling the first Lutheran reformers. Faber was truly our first Jesuit ecumenist, and he did it lovingly. His letters and instructions always show him to be an irenic man. He holds to the truth as he believes it, but he is always willing to enter into dialogue with those who see it

see *Jubilee* on page 23



Paintings by John Brown SJ

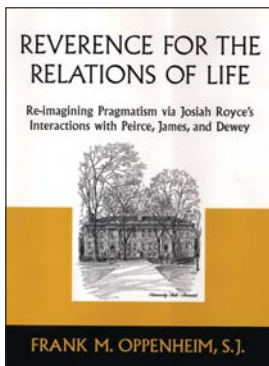
BOOKS



The Sheed & Ward Anthology of Catholic Philosophy

James C. Swindal and Harry J. Gensler SJ, editors
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, MD, 2005
608 pp., paper, \$35.00
ISBN: 0-7425-3198-8

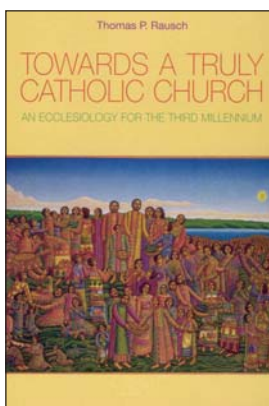
A thorough introduction to the evolution of Catholic philosophy from Biblical times to the present day. The first comprehensive collection of readings from Catholic philosophers, this volume aims to sharpen the understanding of Catholic philosophy by grouping together the best examples of this tradition, both well-known classics and lesser-known selections. The readings emphasize themes integral to the Catholic tradition such as the harmony of faith and reason, the existence and nature of God, the nature of the human person and the nature of being, and the objectivity of the moral law.



Reverence for the Relations of Life. Re-imagining Pragmatism via Josiah Royce's Interactions with Peirce, James, and Dewey.

Frank M. Oppenheim SJ
University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN., 2005
250 pp., cloth, \$68.00
ISBN: 0-268-04019-2

A learned and lucid study of Royce, in relation to Peirce, James and Dewey, who together represent one of the most creative clusters in the history of philosophy. Effectively refuting earlier interpreters, Oppenheim places Royce at the center of thought in late 19th and early 20th century America. Meticulously researched and sparking with fresh insight.



Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium

Thomas Rausch SJ
The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2005
248 pp., paper, \$24.95
ISBN: 0-8146-5187-9

Rausch draws on different voices to develop a theology for the church that builds on the work of Vatican II, is ecumenical in its approach, and envisions the church in the context of the contemporary world and globalization. In an increasingly interconnected world, Rausch offers hope for tomorrow's church, a communion that reconciles unity in diversity.

St. Peter's Celebrates 75th Anniversary of Its Rebirth

In this year of hurricanes and floods, it is all too easy to imagine a college having to shut its doors temporarily to students due to forces beyond its control. In 1918, that's exactly what St. Peter's College did, after losing too many faculty and students to World War I. First founded in 1872 in downtown Jersey City at Saint Peter's Prep, it closed during the war and did not open again until 1930, after a 12-year lobbying effort by the Jesuits of the New York Province.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of that successful campaign. Locating itself temporarily at the Chamber of Commerce building on Newark Avenue, St. Peter's reopened on September 22, 1930, with six professors and 87 students occupying six rented rooms. It remained on that site for about four years before moving to its current spot on Kennedy Boulevard. As its school emblem, St. Peter's adopted the blue peacock, a symbol of resurrection in the Catholic tradition.

"What is remarkable about the college's revival and rebirth is that it took place in the throes of the Great Depression," said Fr. James Loughran (NYK), president. "It is a testament to the dedication and vision of the college's second set of founders."

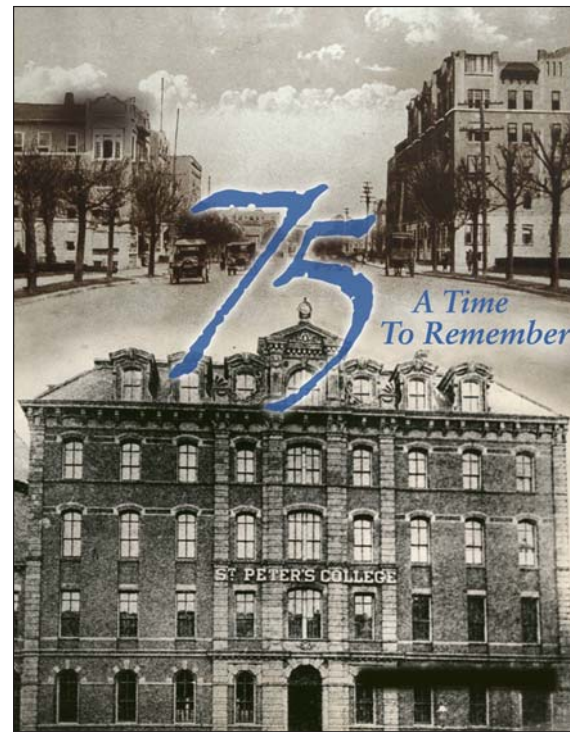


Photo courtesy of St. Peter's College

Jubilee

continued from page 9

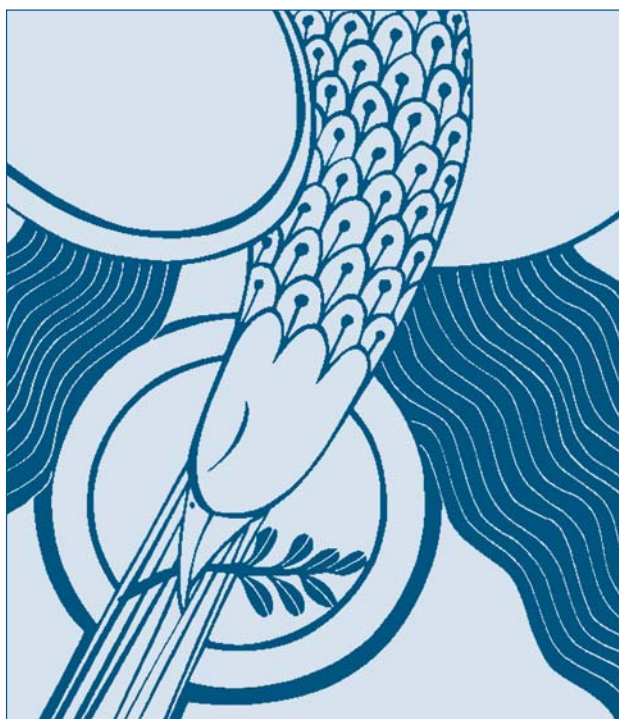
otherwise. He is always slow to condemn, for who can take the place of God the Judge? Just as *eucharist* always means an expression of gratitude, Faber lives a life of gratitude to God. He lives his Eucharist.

Although Faber is the first of Jesuit priests, he remains a symbol for all Jesuits, ordained or not, to find our deepest relationship to the Eucharistic Christ. The Eucharist must remain the central daily celebration of the ones who designate themselves as Companions of Christ. The

Eucharistic Christ is the center of the community life, the center of personal and community prayer, and the center of strengthening missionary outreach. For Jesuits, it is their daily "sending," the root of their "missioning" obedience. The Eucharist expresses the reality of our spiritual attitude: a people ever grateful to God in our whole way of proceeding.

We celebrate this year these three holy Jesuits: models, intercessors and brothers (in a special way for us Jesuits). Each of them highlights for us the integration of our relationships with God in the living of our Ignatian spirituality.

Fleming (MIS) is the editor of Review for Religious and of Jesuit Bulletin.



Merry Christmas

from

NATIONAL
JESUIT
NEWS

"I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord."

Luke 2.10-11