Desire

Desire (‘desear’ in Spanish) is a key work throughout the text. It is often linked with another similar word in Spanish ‘querer’ which may best be translated ‘wish for’ or ‘want’, cf. particularly paragraph [48] in the text. Ignatius is concerned not only with the desire as such but with the way in which a person may feel the desire. Before bestowing a gift or issuing a call, God gives a desire, at least in the form of an openness to the desire. If God were not to give this desire then we would not assimilate it. It would not become part of us. God does not force-feed or in any way, violently impose the call on us.

There are many levels of desire. The Holy Spirit works in the deeper desires, and these sometime overflow into the more immediate desires. We also need to make a distinction between the fundamental desires inherent in faith, hope and charity that all Christians share, and specific personal desires. All these desires are taken up into the process of the Exercises through the prayer of petition, prescribed in the text for the beginning of each period of prayer. The purpose is to enable the exercitant to perceive what is the basic dynamic that all Christians ipso facto desire to be caught up in. It is not therefore something arbitrarily imposed by Ignatius, rather it is Ignatius’ way of enabling each person to perceive what all Christians desire, and for each to appropriate them in a free, personal, graced way.

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