

## *Pedro Arrupe's Mysticism of Open Eyes*

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### *Celebrating the Centenary of Pedro Arrupe*

This is the first in a series of events at JSTB honoring the centennial of the birth of Pedro Arrupe, S.J. Fr. Arrupe the superior general of the Society of Jesus during the tumultuous period following the Second Vatican Council, from 1965 until his formal resignation in 1983. He is an important figure for many reasons and the idea of dedicating a series of events to honor his memory struck a chord with many members of the JSTB community. Many Jesuits remember him as a dynamic and beloved leader who was broad-minded, patient with and trusting of those under him. And of course, he presided over an extraordinarily important period in our history and during that time was one of the most recognized and influential Catholic leaders in the world. There are good reasons why Jesuits would like to celebrate such a towering contemporary figure. For myself, I entered Jesuits in the mid-1970s during Fr. Arrupe's term as General. As I say in the introduction to the small collection of his writings that I was privileged to edit, he was "a hero to those entrusted with my early formation in the Jesuits [who] quickly became my hero."<sup>1</sup>

However, as important as Arrupe is to Jesuits, his influence does not begin or end there. Many others religious women and men of various congregations as well as numerous lay men and women, acknowledge a tremendous debt to him for his leadership and vision. It was to a group of religious sisters that Arrupe spoke what are nearly his most famous words. He said:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin F. Burke, S.J. "Introduction: A Mysticism of Open Eyes," in *Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings*, 37.

affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.

The community at JSTB has particular reasons for holding Fr. Arrupe in esteem. He was the general who encouraged and approved the move of Alma College to Berkeley, California. This was no mere geographical move, as you know. The journey from a theologate to international theology center was dramatic, complex, and profound. We are a very different school today than we once were and Pedro Arrupe was instrumental in that change. It is hard to image JSTB and our participation in the GTU apart from the new mindset and culture that Arrupe helped initiate.

Along with these reasons for celebrating Pedro Arrupe, there is another that goes deeper. It has to do with what I would call “his significance for theology.” This theme lies at the heart of my remarks tonight. But to avoid any misunderstanding, allow me first to note that Pedro was not a professional theologian in the usual sense of the word, in the manner, for example, of Karl Rahner, John Courtney Murray, and Bernard Lonergan, three Jesuit theologians born in 1904 whose centenaries our school celebrated three years ago. Rather, Pedro Arrupe exercised an indirect influence on theology. His influence is more akin to that of Ignatius Loyola or Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day or Thomas Merton, Flannery O’Connor or Gerard Manley Hopkins and, as such, in this sense functions as something of a theological source. That is, on the one hand, he lived a theologically dense life. On the other, he contributed in important ways to the growth of a new theological culture in the Jesuit order and in the church.

I have one last prefatory remark. Because of the dramatic changes that occurred in the life of the Society and the church during Fr. Arrupe’s term as general, some have likened him to a

“second founder” of the Jesuits. I must confess, however, that I am not fully comfortable with this designation. There exists a deep continuity between the renewal under Fr. Arrupe and the original and enduring foundation of the Society in the mysticism of Ignatius Loyola. I worry that the language of “re-founding” tends to occlude this continuity. For this reason, I prefer the term *renewal*. I think it is accurate to say that Arrupe exercised decisive leadership over the renewal of the Society of Jesus mandated by Vatican II. He also inspired the renewal efforts engaged by other religious congregations, serving, from 1967 until 1982, as the president of the Union of Religious Superiors General. Along with the term “renewal” I think it is fair to speak of the Society *recovering* its original inspiration under Arrupe’s leadership. But I would hasten to add, as he himself insisted, that he did not accomplish any of this alone. I think it is appropriate to celebrate him, but to do so as a way to remember what God has been doing among us and through us and through the efforts of many, many other people who have gone before us.

With this in mind, my remarks tonight follow a fairly basic logic. I intersperse sketches of several dramatic and formative moments in Fr. Arrupe’s life with a fairly basic argument that, as one himself steeped in the mysticism of Ignatius Loyola and as one who helped facilitate a dramatic recovery of that mysticism as a “mysticism of open eyes,” Pedro Arrupe made a decisive contribution to the way we can and should do theology today.

### ***From Spain to Japan***

Pedro Arrupe was born on November 14, 1907, in Bilbao, Spain. The youngest of five children, he lost his mother when he was only ten years old and his father when he was eighteen. At the age of fifteen, having completed his secondary education, he began undergraduate studies in medicine at the University of Madrid. In 1926, after the death of his father, he and his sisters

traveled to Lourdes where he witnessed a miraculous healing, an experience that led him eventually to set aside his medical career (over the vigorous protests of his favorite teacher) and enter the Society of Jesus on January 15, 1927. He was nineteen.

It might have seemed that Pedro Arrupe turned his back on the world when he entered the Jesuit novitiate. Indeed, Jesuit training at that time manifested many of the features of monastic life, including a radical withdrawal from the world followed by years of seclusion, asceticism and study. But the world kept intruding into his life. In 1932 the Republicans expelled all the Jesuits in Spain from the country. As a twenty-four year old seminarian Pedro Arrupe went into exile and, although he visited Spain on various occasions in later years, he never again returned to live in his native land. He studied in Belgium, Holland and the United States (19). Following his ordination and in response to his own urgent desires, his provincial sent him to Japan in 1938. There he planned to work as a missionary for the rest of his life.

But, of course, life in Japan represented no retreat from the world or the events shaping it. In December 1941 the Japanese military bombed Pearl Harbor and drew the United States into the Second World War. That same month, Japanese security forces arrested Fr. Arrupe on suspicion of espionage and placed him in solitary confinement for thirty-three days. He later referred to this period as a time of great suffering – the peculiar suffering of lonely uncertainty: when the guards came to release him, he thought they were taking him to his execution. But this experience also filled him with a deep inner calm. It deepened his radical trust in God, a gift he would need that for the years ahead.

Not long after his release from prison, Fr. Arrupe assumed the duties of the master of novices for the Japanese mission and moved to Nagatsuka on the outskirts of Hiroshima. He was

there on August 6, 1945, when the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on the city. He writes of that morning:

I was in my room with another priest at 8:15 when suddenly we saw a blinding light, like a flash of magnesium. Naturally we were surprised and jumped up to see what was happening. As I opened the door which faced the city, we heard a formidable explosion similar to the blast of a hurricane. At the same time doors, windows, and walls fell upon us in smithereens. We... were thrown to the floor... (40-41).

Fr. Arrupe continues:

I shall never forget my first sight of what was the result of the atomic bomb: a group of young women, eighteen or twenty years old, clinging to one another as they dragged themselves along the road. One had a blister that almost covered her chest; she had burns across half of her face, and a cut in her scalp caused probably by a falling tile, while great quantities of blood coursed freely down her face. On and on they came, a steady procession numbering some 150,000. This gives some idea of the scene of horror that was Hiroshima.... We did the only thing that could be done in the presence of such mass slaughter: we fell on our knees and prayed for guidance, as we were destitute of all human help (41).

One he got up from his knees, he lost no time sizing up the situation. Drawing on his earlier training as a medical doctor, he converted the novitiate into a hospital and his novices into nurses. They cared for about 150 people suffering from the mysterious aftereffects of radiation poisoning and of these only one died, a small child suffering from meningitis. Arrupe's automatic reaction to these extraordinary circumstances reflected the pattern emanating from the heart of Ignatian spirituality: prayer first, then action. He was standing at the epicenter of a world-changing historical moment without yet realizing it. Twenty-five years later, as the superior general of the Jesuit order, he reflected back on that extraordinary experience:

The roof tiles, bits of glass, and beams had scarcely ceased falling, and the deafening roar died away, when I rose from the ground and saw before me the wall clock still hanging in its place but motionless. Its pendulum seemed nailed down... For me that silent and motionless clock has been a symbol. The explosion of the first atomic bomb has become a meta-historical phenomenon. It is not a memory, it is a perpetual experience, outside history, which does not pass with the ticking of the clock. The pendulum stopped and Hiroshima has remained

engraved on my mind. It has no relation with time. It belongs to motionless eternity. Sad eternity. A constant presence of that human tragedy (188).

### ***From Hiroshima to Vatican II***

In 1954 Pedro Arrupe became the superior and later the provincial of Jesuits in Japan. When Jean-Baptiste Janssens died in October 1964, he journeyed to Rome as a delegate to the Thirty-first General Congregation that met to elect a successor to Fr. Janssens. On the morning of May 22, 1965, much to Arrupe's surprise, the Congregation elected him. A man whose life took shape in the midst of the great events of the time, who experienced exile, imprisonment, war, and the dawn of the atomic age, now assumed responsibility for the largest religious order in the church at the very moment the church was asking itself anew how to engage the World.

In the early 1960s the church and the world were still feeling the aftershocks of the Second World War, the horrors of Auschwitz, the massacre of six million Jews, and the dawn of the Cold War and the nuclear age. How was the church to respond to this changed world? How do believers live in the world? These and similar questions motivated Pope John XXIII to call the Second Vatican Council. The Council met from 1962 to 1965 and ignited an extraordinary process of renovation in response to the signs of the times. Vatican II dramatically reshaped Catholic liturgy and devotions. It renewed the forms of religious life and rediscovered the role of the laity. It shifted its relationships with other Christian churches and redefined its relationship to other religions, to secular institutions, and to the world itself as "secular."

Taking his cue from the Council, Fr. Arrupe urged Jesuits to rediscover their call to contemplation in action, to a spirituality of a profound engagement with God in the World. The first companions who founded the Jesuits understood this to mean a spirituality of "finding God in all things." For Pedro Arrupe and for us it means finding God even in the tragedies and

tensions of world history and personal history, finding God in a world marked and symbolized by Hiroshima and Auschwitz, a world fraught with division and oppression. And the real trick is *finding God* and not just our own images of God, our own projections of what we think a god should look like. This requires us to *discern the signs of the times*, an important biblical saying adopted by Vatican II in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

### *A Mysticism of Open Eyes*

Fr. Arrupe helped the Society of Jesus rediscover its fundamental call to discernment, its call to read the signs of the times. Before the council Jesuits ran schools, sent missionaries to so-called ‘mission lands,’ and did retreat work and spiritual ministries. After Vatican II, with a renewed sense of discernment, Jesuits found they were not so much called to abandon their schools or missions or retreat work, but to do all these things in new ways. We serve the Church by being at the growing edge where the church is constantly running up against the world. In the early 1970s, at General Congregation 32, the Society of Jesus asked itself this question: *What is it to be a Jesuit?* The answer it gives is memorable. *It is to know that one is a sinner, yet called to be a companion of Jesus as Ignatius was: Ignatius, who begged the Blessed Virgin to “Place him with her Son,” and who then saw the Father himself ask Jesus, carrying his Cross, to take this pilgrim into his company.*<sup>2</sup>

This vocabulary adopted in this formula reflects a crucial mystical experience in the life of St. Ignatius Loyola: the vision in the chapel at La Storta while on his way to Rome in 1537 with Diego Lainez and Pierre Favre. In his autobiography Ignatius dedicates a one-sentence description to this momentous event. Ignatius recalled: “One day, a few miles before reaching

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<sup>2</sup> Society of Jesus, General Congregation Thirty-two, Decree 4, “Jesuits Today,” in *Documents of the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977) 401.

Rome, while praying in a church, he felt a great change in his soul and so clearly did he see God the Father place him with Christ, His Son, that he had no doubts that God the Father did place him with His Son.”<sup>3</sup> Ignatius’s description is terribly spare. Fortunately, Diego Lainez later supplied a fuller picture of this scene:

As Ignatius entered the chapel he felt a sudden change come over him, and while he was praying he had a remarkable vision. He saw God the Father together with Jesus, who was carrying His cross. Both Father and Son were looking most kindly upon him and he heard the Father say to the Son: “I wish you to take him as your servant.” Jesus then directed His words to the kneeling pilgrim and said: “I wish you to be our servant.” This was exactly what Ignatius had always wanted. Then he heard the Father add: “I will be favorable to you in Rome.” This was God’s answer to Ignatius’ frequent prayer that he be placed next to Mary’s Son. Leaving the chapel and continuing his way to Rome, Ignatius did not know whether he would meet success or persecution, but he knew that God would be with him.<sup>4</sup>

Arrupe, in line with the biographers of Ignatius and the leading historians of the Society of Jesus, focuses on the essential point of the vision. “Ignatius, creator of this apostolic group and bearer of the virtual charism of the Society whose existence is assured at that very moment, is received as the servant of Jesus and of the Father in Jesus” [3.1.4]. La Storta is the summit of Ignatius’s mystical experiences: he experienced God calling him to be a companion of Jesus carrying his cross. Within two years of La Storta, Ignatius and his first companions begin a new religious order. Because of the inspiration of La Storta, Ignatius insisted that this new society take the name of Jesus. The vision at La Storta thus links the mysticism of Ignatius to the essential charism of this Society. It became the touchstone of the Society’s renewal as an apostolic order focused on mission and praxis. Likewise, it unfolds as a spirituality of service with a particular sensitivity for suffering. These are the characteristics that Arrupe helped

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<sup>3</sup> *A Pilgrim’s Journey*, 113.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Tylanda, “Commentary,” in *A Pilgrim’s Journey*, 113. Tylanda draws on the testimony of Diego Lainez; see *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 73 (Madrid/Rome: 1951) 133. [For Arrupe’s commentary, see below, 3.1.4].

recover, the characteristics that I identify with “a mysticism of open eyes,” borrowing that term from the German theologian Johann Baptist Metz.

Metz coins this image to speak of the following of Jesus and the spirituality of the beatitudes. It corresponds closely to the biblical category of “poverty of spirit.” Indeed, it seems to evoke the mysticism of Jesus himself as the synoptic gospels portray him. Metz writes:

In the end Jesus did not teach an ascending mysticism of closed eyes, but rather a God-mysticism with an increased readiness for perceiving, a mysticism of open eyes, which sees more and not less. It is a mysticism that especially makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering, and – convenient or not – pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it, for the sake of a God who is a friend to human beings.<sup>5</sup>

In the “Introduction” to *Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings*, I applied Metz’s notion to Pedro Arrupe:

[The mysticism of open eyes] is a mysticism that *makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering*, a mysticism that *pays attention and takes responsibility*, engaging this broken world in order to find there its God. It is a mysticism of dangerous memory – Auschwitz for Metz, Hiroshima for Arrupe, the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi* for all Christians – in which the mystical and the political are radically engaged and correlated.<sup>6</sup> Arrupe shows us that historical reality itself opens our eyes to the One who transcends that reality. He acknowledges that it was reality that opened his eyes. For example, while celebrating mass early on the first morning after the atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, he turned to face a mangled, bleeding, uncomprehending congregation of survivors: “I saw before my eyes many wounded, suffering terribly.” Some years later, after celebrating mass amidst the appalling poverty of a Latin American slum, a “big fellow, whose fearful looks could have inspired terror,” invited Arrupe to his home in order to express his thanks by sharing with the Jesuit General the only thing he had: a great view of the setting sun. “Señor,” [the man said] “see how beautiful it is!” In both instances Arrupe saw reality and he saw through reality. He saw both the suffering and the beauty. He saw the tragic depths of our mortal poverty and the transcendent depths of our immortal destiny. He lived and prayed with opened and open eyes. This is his gift to us.

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<sup>5</sup> Metz, *Passion for God*, 163.

<sup>6</sup> For Metz’s notion of “dangerous memory,” in particular his understanding of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus as a dangerous memory, and his understanding of the mystical-political structure of Christian faith, see *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Seabury, 1980); “The Future in the Memory of Suffering,” in J. B. Metz. & J. Moltmann, *Faith and the Future* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) Page 3-16.

If Pedro Arrupe is a gift, how is he a particular gift to theology? As I mentioned earlier, it is not so much in being a theologian *per se* but rather in being a facilitator of new ways of doing theology that Arrupe is a gift to us who study theology today. He enabled other Ignatian geniuses – like his contemporaries Rahner, Murray, Lonergan, like Ignacio Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino, Michael Amaladoss, Aloysius Pieris and many, many others – to recover the mysticism of open eyes and a whole way of doing theology that springs from that mysticism. What is this theology? It is a theology with a particular sensitivity to suffering, a theology that reflects from and on a faith that does justice. Moreover, it is a theology with a special facility for addressing faith within and in terms of the cultures and historical contexts in which that faith is lived. Arrupe's gift to the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley jumps out of our mission statement, where we underscore our commitment to “the reverent and critical service of the faith that does justice,” and where we articulate our desire to “become a more effective national and international center for the study of theology and ministry in the context of the cultures shaping the faith life of people today.” This is a theology rooted in the mysticism of open eyes.

### ***Into that Great Silence: Fr. Arrupe's Final Words***

Let me conclude with a final comment on the mysticism of open eyes precisely as *mysticism*, that is, as a way to God. In early September 1981 Arrupe followed up an exhausting two-week visit to the Philippines with a brief stop in Thailand to visit the refugee work of the Jesuits there. Just one year after founding Jesuit Refugee Services, Arrupe took this occasion to praise the efforts of the refugee workers. Near the end of his remarks focused on their apostolic mission and its requisite apostolic discernment, he exhorted them: “I will say one more thing and

please don't forget it. Pray. Pray much. Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts. I am telling you things that I want to emphasize, a message – perhaps my 'swan song' – for the Society." It's as if Arrupe was telling them that the mystic of open eyes must remember also to "close his or her eyes" so as to find God in prayer. Pedro Arrupe was indeed a man of great prayer and interiority. And his words to the Jesuits in Thailand about prayer in the context of apostolic work proved indeed to be his "swan song." On his arrival at the airport in Rome the following morning, September 7, 1981, Fr. Arrupe suffered a massive stroke from which he would never fully recover. His speech center was severely impaired and he remained partially paralyzed for the rest of his life.

Just months before, aware of his growing age and infirmity, he had attempted to resign as General, but Pope John Paul II had denied his request. Once it became clear that the stroke was of such a severity that Arrupe could not continue his duties, the Pope intervened in the Society's normal procedures for succession. He removed Arrupe's general assistant, Fr. Vincent O'Keefe, and appointed as his own delegate an elderly Italian Jesuit, Fr. Pablo Dezza, to head up the Society indefinitely. When he first learned of this extraordinary intervention into the governance of the Society, Arrupe burst into tears. He was embarking on the most difficult decade in his life, a decade of forced inactivity and silence, a season of profound spiritual poverty and surrender. Yet he met these challenges with courage and trust in God. When General Congregation Thirty-three (GC 33) was eventually convoked in September 1983, Arrupe was able to attend its opening session and formally resign as General of the Society of Jesus. Because of the effects of the stroke he could not speak directly to his brother Jesuits, but his final address was read to the delegates in his presence. Here is what he said to them:

More than ever, I now find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now

there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in His hands. At the end of eighteen years as General of the Society, I want first of all, and above all, to give thanks to the Lord. His generosity towards me has been boundless. For my part, I have tried to respond, well knowing that all His gifts were for the Society, to be shared with each and every Jesuit. This has been my persistent effort.

Similarly, Fr. Arrupe's final homily was delivered on his behalf at mass the following day in the famous chapel of La Storta, the site of Ignatius's profound mystical vision of God the Father placing him with his Son. Fr. Arrupe's trust in God remains his most enduring legacy to us. I conclude with his words:

I have always had a great devotion to the experience of Ignatius at La Storta, and that I am immensely consoled at finding myself in this hallowed place to give thanks to God on arriving at journey's end... How often in these eighteen years I have had proof of God's faithfulness to his promise: "I will be favorable to you in Rome." A profound experience of the loving protection of divine providence has been my strength in bearing the burden of my responsibilities and facing the challenges of our day. True, I have had my difficulties, both big and small. But never has God failed to stand by me. And now more than ever I find myself in the hands of this God who has taken hold of me.

Pedro Arrupe is indeed worthy of our centennial celebration. Happy birthday, Dom Pedro.