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Let's Talk

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Let's Talk

The word, "colloquy," is not used much in contemporary English. But Ignatius of Loyola gave us a new meaning for the word, applying the basic notion of a conversation to a way of praying, recommending it as a preferred mode for interacting with God. We are familiar with some traditional prayers, and some of us are able to manage a little unscripted blessing prayer of our own before a meal. But Ignatius strongly encourages individuals, in private communication with God, to think, feel and act, with and without words, just as we do when conversing with a friend: to engage in a "colloquy."

When we have a colloquy with God, we exercise our faith in a variety of particulars. We believe that God is not concerned about proper grammar, but about respect. We trust that God is interested in us as persons, not only in whatever verbal content we might bring to our exchange, but in how we feel, and in all that takes place in and around us that attracts our attention or that moves within our minds and hearts, including the holy and the not-so-holy, the graces received, and the mistakes we have made. God is present: hearing, receiving, loving even without replying to us in as many words as we tend to use.

Just as we do not always use the word "love" in our conversations with friends, though we both know that some aspect of love enables us to converse freely, love is always a part of every thought, inspiration, feeling or word that we receive from God. And, however hidden, love is at least implicitly within all that we direct towards God.

We all have a broad range of capabilities for carrying on conversations with people who are close to us and with those we hardly know. We use one set of intonations, gestures and facial expressions with little children and different modes with peers. We adapt our "persona" to the perceptions we have of the persons with whom we speak: authorities, colleagues, friends or family members. We also make further adaptations in all our ongoing relationships, as we continue to grow "in wisdom, age and grace." If we reflect upon the positive modes of communication that we have developed with people, we will be able to draw upon them for direct or analogous use in our colloquies with God.

We cannot see God, but neither do we always use physical sight in every conversation with other persons we know. The better we know someone, the easier it is to convey meaning from one to another by a few words on one occasion, by gestures (such as a hug) on another, or even by sitting together in silence. We trust one another, we care for one another, and so the quality of our sharing is not limited to, or determined by, only what we

say. In all these ways, our connection with God is no different: trust (or "faith") is the environment enabling us to have direct experience of God.

Whether or not we use the word "colloquy," we are capable of engaging in a most gracious manner of praying that might otherwise be described as following the common expression: "Let's talk."