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Pedro Miguel Lamet, S.J.

Pedro Arrupe: Witness of the Twentieth Century, Prophet of the Twenty-First.
Trans. Joseph V. Owens, S.J. Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020.
Pp. viii + 510. Pb, \$34.95.

Though he died over thirty years ago, Pedro Arrupe (1907–91) is still very much present today in memory and influence. As Jesuits and other admirers continue to track the progress of the cause for his canonization, this volume emerges as a very complete account of the extraordinary life and challenging times of this Basque superior general of the Society of Jesus. The volume had been revised and expanded several times in the course of twenty-five years before the release of this initial English translation. This work displays many valuable features, not least of which are the dozens of revealing photographs (best of all the candid photos) that document the remarkably wide-ranging activities of Arrupe in practically all corners of the world.

Even the reader with solid prior familiarity with the life story of Arrupe will come away with a renewed appreciation for just how widely traveled and consistently energetic was this Jesuit leader. National boundaries could not contain this “man on fire with apostolic zeal”; expulsion from his homeland (in 1931, along with all Jesuits in Spain) merely opened the door to broader horizons and wider service to church and world. While Lamet repeatedly refers to Arrupe as a “citizen of the world” and “man of universal identity,” it is also important to juxtapose the image of sheer extroverted activity with an appreciation for Arrupe the mystic—a man who dedicated hours each day to contemplative prayer and who could maintain a laser focus on subtle spiritual movements on the most intimate of levels with those he encountered. His enormous success as a Christian missionary and formator in Japan, both before and after he witnessed the August 1945 atomic blast in Hiroshima, may be attributed to this rare combination of skills and personal attributes. Leading the Jesuit novitiate community, and later the entire Jesuit province of Japan in the aftermath of the atomic bomb is surely a high point of this account, but emerges as just one of many extraordinary twists and turns Arrupe experienced in the most eventful twentieth-century life one might imagine.

Lamet documents with exceptionally painstaking effort a series of particularly decisive moments that, by providentially turning Arrupe's life in certain directions, exerted pivotal influence on the course that the Society of Jesus would follow until the present day. Whether navigating delicate ecclesiastical politics in Rome (arguably with only mixed success) or exhorting world leaders to safeguard the lives of refugees and the desperately poor, Arrupe's own personal moments of truth became amplified and morphed into turning points for millions of others, in Jesuit apostolic networks and well beyond. Lamet supplies abundant details that afford readers a new appreciation for Arrupe's accomplishments, including his role in calling the Thirty-Second General Congregation and delivering the transformative "Men and Women for Others" address to the European Congress of Former Jesuit Students in Valencia, to mention just two signature developments that unfolded in the mid-1970s.

Lamet makes two stylistic choices that may raise objections among many readers. First, he quite deliberately presents personal testimonies and documents at a greater length (two or three full pages is not uncommon) than most biographers would countenance. While it is easy to admire the author's commitment to first-hand documentation and evident access to rare and valuable sources (most notably, Pedro's personal journals and his stunningly frank personal letters to members of the Arrupe family), there are many occasions when more judicious editing would prevent taxing the patience of the reader. Second and more significant, it is hard to defend Lamet against the charge that his account of this man, however magnificent, lapses at times into hagiographical excess. The attribution of saintly virtues and qualities of character grows too thick at times for the comfort of even the most enthusiastic booster of Arrupe. To his credit, Lamet does treat this issue regarding tone squarely in the introduction of the book, explicitly acknowledging his tendency to uncritically laud Arrupe and offering the half-concession: "Whether this book is an objective history or a biased defense is left to the reader to judge" (13). Compounding the lingering awkwardness around this issue, at several junctures the author calls attention to the acknowledgment of defects (such as occasional mistakes in judging character or excessive trust and idealism) in Arrupe; most of these assessments are attributed to Arrupe's contemporaries, including some of his closest allies who confided these criticisms in interviews (see 368–69 for one example). While some credit is due to Lamet for attempting to balance the scales and edge away from a thoroughly hagiographical account, authors surely have at their disposal better narrative techniques than he manages to employ in this regard. The entirety of the book's eighteenth and longest chapter (titled "Profile of an Eagle," 343–78) treats the public image (mostly, in a

quite literal sense) of Arrupe and tends to lack the requisite critical distance readers generally expect.

Yet no reader should question the central through-line of this account: how Arrupe played a key role as an agent of change in the Society of Jesus, in the postconciliar Catholic Church at large, and especially in the shape of religious life (recall his six terms as elected president of the Union of Superiors General). His unwavering support for placing the promotion of social justice at the center of Jesuit apostolic life, his role in the renewal of Ignatian spirituality, and his founding of the Jesuit Refugee Service in 1980 all constitute testimony to the aptness of the author's favored labels for Arrupe: witness, prophet, and pioneer.

Adding to the value of this biography is the fact that Lamet is one of a privileged few who had the opportunity to interact at length with Arrupe after his debilitating stroke in 1981. The author's account of a dozen long conversations at Arrupe's bedside in Rome in July 1983 (during the papal intervention into the ordinary governance of the Society and just two months before the election of his successor at the Thirty-Third General Congregation) constitute a moving fifteen-page section ("Confidences of a Sick Man") within the volume's final chapter. Highly emotional in effect, this material felicitously complements the preceding chronological accounts of what Arrupe said and did in the many settings where he found himself. Those close encounters with the debilitated Jesuit obviously inspired Lamet to include an insightful ten-page epilogue in which he endeavors to capture several strands of Arrupe's personal spirituality that surfaced in these tender moments perhaps more than in the course of any of the foregoing activities covered in the biography. Lamet offers his list of a dozen or so key spiritual attributes of Arrupe (including simplicity, detachment, trust in God, humility and prophetic commitment) and even ventures to propose a gospel verse exemplifying each one (480).

Plutarch, one of the first biographers, challenged anyone attempting to write biography to "attend to the signs of the soul" in their subjects rather than simply to recount their external, observable deeds. Perhaps especially in the case of Pedro Arrupe, the full truth of a life emerges only from a consideration of the values and virtues that underlie the accomplishments that fill the pages of this volume. To cite a phrase of Johann Baptist Metz, it was a "mysticism of open eyes" that Arrupe lived out; it is no mere indulgence in hagiographic excess to attribute to him the gift of an enhanced understanding of what it means to be a Jesuit, a Christian, a believer. In a sense, all Christians today are descendants of Arrupe. We inhabit a century that he did not live long enough

to experience, but one to which he was a prophet, as Lamet's volume aptly reveals.

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