

WEEK NINE/DAY SIX
Weekly Theme: *Imagination in Prayer*
Daily Theme: Harvesting the Week's Experiences

Today you have a variety of REFLECTION READINGS to choose from.

Friday is also the opportunity to look back in review of the past week's exercises and JOURNAL about these two reflection questions:

- How/has your experience of "PRAYING ALL-WAYS" been enhanced by The Exercises?
- Reflect on your experiences of COLLOQUY

See how, by noting these questions at the beginning of the day, you may have greater awareness of their invitation by the end of the day.

MORNING EXERCISES
(About 30 minutes)

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Take a few moments to quiet your mind and welcome the following teaching.

There are several reasons why we might find ourselves desolate (in addition to the times in life when circumstances are truly beyond our control). There are times we may have become lazy and allowed the needs of our heart and soul to be clouded with distractions. Other times we may find ourselves building a nest in things that are not ours to keep. At such times, the desolation can clear a way for us to discover a deeper, truer treasure that we may have lost sight of.

Rule # 9 of the Spiritual Exercises

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

Consider journaling for today by noting 'what arises in you' as you consider any of these points for discernment:

- Ignatius' advice challenges us to do a soulful inventory on life. This rule is not interested in moral inventories that make us feel guilty-- falling into the trap of self-loathing. See where you may find an invitation here to dig deeper into your deepest desires lest anything else get in the way.
- One of the most predictable habits or behaviors of many of us is that we sabotage our deepest desires by creating unrealistic expectations.
- Recall that the Ignatian form of prayer follows the 'way of the heart' and invites us into conversation about our deepest concerns as we would talk to a good friend.

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

Simply observe how the following Enneagram insight complements today's teachings.

There is a light in the soul, a light that is uncreated and uncreatable. It shines on places where, in denying ourselves and turning away from external things, we discover the Great Union. That little spark in the soul, which neither space nor time can touch, is accessible in moments of deep silence and self-awareness.

Meister Eckhart

4. ENNEAGRAM AWARENESS

Spend a few minutes with today's Enneagram insights; consider making a journal entry which you could return to at the end of the day.

Return to the Enneagram of Lies once again (Document #4 on the 30 Day Retreat website). Recognize where these characteristic orientations lead us to forsake our deepest needs. Instead of feeling guilty or frustrated about our ingrained attitudes and addictions, offer a simple prayer of desire for greater awareness. You might feel attracted to the following famous poem of St. Richard of Chichester (13th c.) and echoed in a song from Godspell:

Day by day
O dear Lord, three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly,
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day.

5. DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION:

Choose one of the following passages and one of its points for reflection as a way to enter into a period of prayerful intention. This is not so much a time for analysis but for reflection. Choose whatever form of devotional prayer or meditation you like to complement the passages. Always end your reflection time with a moment of gratitude and 'savoring.'

Note there are two different scripture passages offered below. The first is in keeping with the tradition from The Exercises to keep this week's focus on the last days of Jesus' life. The second is from the well-known story of Martha and Mary. Select the passage and points for reflection that most attract you today.

SCRIPTURE OPTION A

From the Gospel Tradition:

Near the cross of Jesus stood some women, among them were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Dear woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple he said, 'Here is your mother.' And from that time on, this disciple took her into his home."

John 19:25-27

POINTS FOR A COLLOQUY REFLECTION

- Using your imagination place yourself in this story. Consider the persons involved (Jesus, Mother Mary, John the Beloved Disciple, the other women or yourself as an onlooker). Which character and aspect of the story do you feel especially drawn to and why?
- Identify how this story may be impacting for you... is it primarily in your feelings, thoughts or reactions? Try to name the sensation and where it is located in your physical or emotional body.
- How can you use this story as an invitation to respond to today's focus on not losing sight of our priorities? This passage invites us to consider our deepest priorities even at a time of profound desolation. Consider a time of prayerful reflection on your last wishes for those you love at the end of your life. Savor the experience.

ALTERNATIVE SCRIPTURE

From the Gospel Tradition:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the rabbi's feet listening intently to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the household and meal preparations that had to be made. So she came to him and protested, "Teacher, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" But Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about so many things, but really very few are really needed — and perhaps only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." *Luke 10:46-52*

POINTS FOR A COLLOQUY REFLECTION

- Using your imagination place yourself in this story. Consider the persons involved (Jesus, Martha, Mary or yourself as an onlooker). Which character do you feel especially drawn to and why?
- Identify how this story may be of impact for you... is it primarily in your feelings, thoughts or reactions? Try to name the sensation and where it is located in your physical or emotional body.
- How/can you use this story as a personal invitation to consider life's most important priorities and what often gets in the way for you. Speak to God/Jesus/your best friend about your desires and expectations. Savor the experience.

LITERARY OPTION B

Finding My Way Home, Henri Nouwen

I have found it very important in my own life to try to let go of my wishes and expectations and instead to live in hope. I am finding that when I choose to let

go of my sometimes petty and superficial wishes something really new, something beyond my expectations begins to happen for me. All our lives we have dreamed of many things, we have desired many loves. Quite often though, something touches us that we have not expected at all. And we realize that it is the very thing we have been looking for all along.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

- Read this reflection in the presence of the Beloved, however you name or imagine them. Take some quiet moments to make this poem an invitation to prayer.
- When you are ready, “Ask for the gift to release petty expectations so that, in their place, you could receive ‘the very thing you have been looking for all along.’ Let your Beloved be a witness to your request.
- Afterwards, see what you hear/sense/receive. Savor your experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

-Make an intention to become aware today of what it is you truly desire... at the same time, bring awareness to where your expectations might cloud the object of your desire.

-See if you can be aware of how false expectations can choke out our deepest desires. Try to just notice and not judge.

-Consider the following prayer as an invitation to welcome the entirety of your humanity into today's exercises.

A PRAYERFUL INTENTION FOR THIS DAY

May you give yourself permission to be unapologetically human today.

May you let go of the need to be and do everything for everyone in every situation.

May there be a softening of the harsh tones of your inner voice and its relentless urging you to want and to do more.

May you stop treating yourself as a problem to be solved and, instead, see yourself as a person worthy of being loved.

May your imperfections not be seen as weakness but as a reminder that what we share most in common is the fragility of being human.

May you release unnecessary expectations and in their place create a space to be surprised at what you receive.

May you be startled with the deep realization that you are enough.

MID DAY EXERCISES

(5-10 minutes)

1. MINI-EXAMEN: HOLY NOTICING

Take a few quiet moments to remember your intention for the day

-Is there an observation from the morning worth noting?

-Renew your intention for the remainder of the day:

To continue noticing the times when your ego-self creates unrealistic expectations.

2. GRATITUDE

Identify at least one experience so far today for which you are grateful

Ignatius encourages us to speak with God as we would our best friend. Be grateful for the moments today when you felt free enough to recognize your heart's desire without added expectations.

-Deep breathing can slow your heartrate and help you turn inside. Savor a few moments of deep, conscious breath.

END-OF-THE-DAY EXERCISES

(About 20 minutes)

1. THE EXAMEN

The daily Examen is the heart of the Spiritual Exercises. This is an opportunity to take a long, loving look back over your day where, 'We recognize the Beloved in the nitty gritty of life and we bring the nitty gritty back to the Beloved.' This exercise is an examination of consciousness (clear awareness) NOT an examination of conscience focused on faults and failings. By being faithful to this practice and journaling your insights, patterns will emerge over thirty days including awareness from your unconscious that would normally have been missed in everyday activity.

-The EXAMEN should take about fifteen minutes. During this reflection time, you can use the following five R's to help guide your time:

REQUEST the presence of Spirit (however you imagine it) to lead you through the review of the day.

RELISH the moments that went well and gifts received today.

REVIEW (walk back through your day) using the suggested focus questions of today as your guide; these are expressed in the Intention of the Day of your Morning Exercises. What would it be like to 'talk to God about this'? Or you might choose the memory of a beloved friend.

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR TODAY'S EXAMEN:

- Looking over the day (with God or someone beloved by my side) I return in my imagination to a moment in my day that may have been worrisome or uncertain. I let myself feel any emotions and notice whether I handled it gracefully or poorly.
- Looking over my day for a second time, I identify the most life-giving moment of the day. Again, I relive the experience and notice how it impacted my emotions.
- I give thanks for both experiences trusting that I was not alone and that their lessons may be of benefit now and in the future.

REPENT for any mistakes or failures by simply acknowledging them without drama or self-loathing. If you feel called to *at-one-ment* with another, the Beloved or yourself, note that desire for whenever an appropriate time arises.

RESOLVE with a concrete intention to live tomorrow consciously and freely.

2. DISCERNMENT JOURNAL

Without a daily journal it would not be possible to track the sometimes subtle spiritual movements in every day experiences. Spend a few minutes making entries that reflect today's experiences and learnings. Here everything belongs, both the gifts and the challenges.

WISDOM FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:

You are not passively awaiting life's tragedies and destinies, you are a co-creator with God of your very life and soul.

THE REWARD OF STUDYING THE ENNEAGRAM:

Consider the Perennial Philosophy that has been taught from age to age and in culture after culture. 1) There is a "divine core in our personality which cannot be separated from God, 2) This divine essence can be *realized*, 3) This discovery is life's real and highest goal. When we realize this goal, we discover simultaneously that the divine within ourselves is one and the same in all - all individuals, all creatures, all of life.

—Eknath Easwaran