

DAILY EXERCISES

WEEK THREE/DAY FIVE

Theme: *Listening to the Still Voice Within*

As you move towards the last days of Week Three we suggest that you focus especially on the End of the Day Examen. This exercise will be more meaningful if you set an intention at the beginning of the day; your intention then provides a point of reflection at the end of the day. As we journey deeper into The Exercises in the months ahead, Examen and your associated journal entries can become the most useful aspect of this tradition for spiritual discernment.

MORNING EXERCISES

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Take a few moments to quiet your mind and welcome the following teaching. Before starting your morning exercise, it is best to spend a few moments getting grounded through a favorite meditation practice or, consider using the simple breathing exercise described on R2 of your online site resources.

Often times, our strong desire can be manifestation of a deep desire. What we need to know is where the strong desire is coming from. Sometimes strong, loud desires will block out the deeper, quieter ones. The Exercises invite us to listen to the quiet whisper inside. When we take enough time and create space to listen to what's underneath our desires, we can better discern what is most life giving. For example, when I get angry the sacred question might be: 1) Can I be with my anger without judging it. Anger is just energy that says there's something wrong with this picture so my anger can be energy for change. But my anger may also be masking something deeper. Perhaps I'm angry because I'm feeling threatened, and I'm feeling threatened because I'm feeling fearful... and I'm fearful because I am so tender. The first week is about how you get to that tenderness. And when we follow that thread, it always leads to being grateful that you're loved after you have been seen for the tender person you are. We don't have to pretend or hide, even from ourselves. Ignatius says, this is how God loves me.

Jack Kennedy

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

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

- Accept the invitation to embrace something that we might normally see as negative.
- What is it like to dive beneath an emotion or reaction to catch what is deeper in me?
- How can this kind of radical acceptance lead to gratitude and self-compassion?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

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

When we fully participate in the world and exclude nothing—including our own weaknesses— what follows is radical detachment from anything that would get in the way of who we are including career, money, status, family, health and ego.

They are all survival strategies which come from our fear of loneliness and abandonment. When we remember our essential and unshakable connection to our Source (God, Creator, Higher Power) we can trust what Julian of Norwich said, 'Faith is nothing else but a Right Understanding of who we completely are—trusting and allowing things just to Be.' What a relief!

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.

-Read both the AFFIRMATIONS and RELEASES of your Ennea-Style in Enneagram Transformations (cf. Enneagram References #3).

-Identify how both your strengths and weaknesses create who you are. There is no need for self-hatred, only the willingness to embrace both our darkness and light.

5. DEVOTIONAL READINGS: *Deeply listening*

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.'

SCRIPTURE OPTION A

From the Hebrew Scriptures: "...Elijah was lead to the mountain where he hoped to receive guidance from the Holy One. First he encountered a hurricane but the Creator was not in the storm. Then he encountered a powerful earthquake but the One was not in the earthquake. Then he saw a great fire but the Holy was not in the fire. But after the fire there was a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood at the entrance of the cave."

1 Kings 11: 13-19

REFLECTION POINTS:

- Consider how this passage speaks to you today.
- When have you experienced guidance from a still, small voice within?
- What noisy 'ego voices' block out the inner voice that you can trust?

POETRY OPTION

From the Evergreen Teachings: "The Living Spirit exists inside each of us. It is a flame that easily becomes suppressed into just an ember by our time in the world. But that tiny ember acts as a still, small voice within that reminds us of our true nature and our relationship with God. When we live our life totally in the world we lose sight of the forest through the trees. That still small voice is overshadowed by the incredible pressures, attachments and possessions of life. However, it is possible to experience the world fully but without attachment. Once we begin to pay attention to that still, small voice, that tiny ember begins to grow and our deepest desires emerge pointing to the life that we desire more than the lives that our small ego selves have built around us. Ram Dass, Darma Talk, 1975

REFLECTION POINTS:

- Consider where this passage speaks to your experience.
- When are you most able to hear the 'still, small voice within.'?
- Identify and be grateful that the ember of our true nature is always present, if we bring our attention to it.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

Make an intention to notice where the 'ember' of your still, small voice is audible—and where the noisiness of daily life blocks it out. Try just to notice and not judge.

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:

Where can you detect (or do you no longer hear) the 'still, small voice' in your daily activities. Try just to notice and not judge.

2. GRATITUDE

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

-Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Recall that it takes a moment of silence to hear the whisper of the Divine Voice within.

-You might try a traditional spiritual breath practice of inhaling on the count of three and breathing out on the count of six. Try this for about one minute.

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 as your guide. Consider what it would be like to talk with God about this or even a loved one who has died.

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR TODAY'S EXAMEN:

- Where/when did I hear the small still voice within today?
- Where/when did the noise of daily life block out the still voice?

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.