

MONTH TWO / WEEK ONE

Weekly Theme: *Imagination, Discernment and Prayer*

Today's Theme: Welcoming Our Doubts

MORNING EXERCISES

(About 30 minutes)

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

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

The Exercises invite us to trust and develop our innate powers of imagination. Our culture does not trust imagination because our egos are not in control of our dreams, visions and contemplative moments. But especially at those times of surrender, we may most clearly be able to hear the still, silent voice of God—which can be heard beneath the louder noises of everyday life.

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

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

-Consider whether (and why) you feel either attracted to or doubtful about engaging with your imagination this week.

-When are you most able to hear 'the still silent voice of God'?

-How/do you sense that the louder voices of everyday life might be disguising your soul's inner voice?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

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

The Enneastyle of our personality is a lens that affects our intention and attitude towards prayer. Recognizing how the ego personality may be preventing our sincere connection to the Sacred can be an important awareness...

Eileen Heaton

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 Chart of Styles (on-line document #2) and put your finger on the CHIEF FEATURE* of your Enneastyle. Pay attention to your initial reaction to the term... how does it make you feel to name and acknowledge that part of your ego self? What is it like to face this shadow part of your personality with gentleness and nonjudgment?

*An inner obstacle around which everything else forms. It becomes a protective shield behind which we chose our way of being in the world. This feature advises us, reassures us, rationalizing and making us comfortable. It is invisible and allows us to live in delusion.

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.'

SCRIPTURE OPTION A

From the Gospel Tradition: The angel Gabriel was sent to the village of Nazareth to a young woman named Mary who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was of the House of David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, 'Congratulations, favored lady, the Beloved is with you.' Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to imagine what the angel could mean. 'Don't be frightened, Mary, for the Holy One has decided to wonderfully bless you. Very soon now you will become pregnant and have a baby boy and you are to name him Jesus...' But Mary answered the angel, 'How can this be for I am still a virgin?' 'The power of God's Holy Spirit will overshadow you and so the one to be born will be God's special child...' And Mary said, 'I am a humble servant of the Holy One and I am willing to do whatever the Beloved wants.' Luke 1:26-38

POINTS FOR COLLOQUY REFLECTION

- Place yourself in the story as Mary; when has your life taken a dramatic turn?
- In your personal family history, what kind of obstacles did your parents encounter before you were born?
- Give thanks for a time when you said YES even though the outcome was uncertain. Savor the experience.

LITERARY OPTION B

From the Sufi poet Rumi:

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

some momentary awareness comes

as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond. *-The Guest House*

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- **Allow your imagination to engage with the metaphor of The Guest House.**
- **What is it like to anticipate the invitation of what might knocking at your door even if it appears to be troublesome... 'being grateful for each of them as a guide from beyond.'?**
- **Give thanks for a time when you said YES to an 'uninvited guest' which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Savor the experience.**

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

- Make an intention to be aware today of moments or situations of doubt or uncertainty.**
- What is it like to welcome what you cannot control? Try to just notice and not judge the situation.**

Live in this moment...right now you have the opportunity to be awake. Each morning we can wake up to new ways of doing things...of letting go of our usual habitual responses to things.

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:

-Continue just noticing (and welcoming, when possible) the unpredictable and unsolvable issues that may arise this afternoon.

2. GRATITUDE

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

Ignatius encourages us to trust all of the particulars in life. Welcome them all as your potential teachers.

-Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Inhale with the life giving energy that is always available to us. Exhale the anxiety/doubt/opposition to what you are resisting. 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 (expressed in the Intention of the Day at the end 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.

3. POINTS FOR THIS WEEK

The Spiritual Exercises recommend that, before retiring, we consider the spiritual geography for the next day. As we settle into deeper rest we prepare our unconscious for the next day’s exercises. This is not a time for study and analysis but a gentle pointer towards our next movement and direction.

Week TWO THEME:

Discerning between doubt and self-doubt

WISDOM FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:

Where tomorrow will I hear the Divine Voice within?

ENNEAGRAM TEACHING:

The Enneagram welcomes us beneath our strategies of avoidance into a welcome prayer of surrender.