

MOVEMENT THREE: WEEK ONE
DAILY EXERCISES
PROMISE: LIFE IS HARD

This month, the focus of our daily exercises supports the third movement of The Exercises which focuses on the mystery of suffering and desolation. As a way of safely engaging with this mystery, we will draw on the FIVE PROMISES OF INITIATION from Richard Rohr's book, Adam's Return. During each of the five weeks ahead, we will reference another of these five 'promises' since they parallel the Ignatian Wisdom about times of desolation. The final week of the exercises proposes a mid-year, in depth exploration of how the Wisdom of the Enneagram complements The Exercises through enhanced awareness and mature personal spiritual growth.

DAY ONE (SUNDAY) JANUARY 11
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON INTENTION

After beginning the exercises, one should expect a voice of contradiction drawing us back into the illusion that life should be pain free and without challenge. Ignatius

Begin your day by reading the FIVE PROMISES OF INITIATION. Focus today on the following question in the form of an INTENTION for your day:

May I become more aware today of any pain which I consciously or unconsciously transmit to those I will encounter.

DAY TWO (MONDAY) JANUARY 12
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON A COLLOQUY REFLECTION

During times of desolation be honest and speak with God about your struggles, but avoid major life changes. Instead, seek guidance from a spiritual director, and remember that with hindsight, such trials are often doorways to new life. Ignatius

This week you will continue to begin each day by re-visiting the FIVE PROMISES OF INITIATION. As a COLLOQUY, consider engaging your imagination with either/both of the two readings that are proposed. Then, consider one of the reflection questions that follow either the NATIVITY STORY EXTENDED REFLECTION or the Rumi poem on SURRENDER.

A Christmas Reflection on False Expectations.

I've always been fascinated by the moments in the story of Jesus when it was painfully clear that everyone around him fundamentally misunderstood what he was doing. Like when Peter chopped off Malchus's ear, or when the 5,000—with bellies full of fish and bread—decided to install Jesus as their king “by force” (John 6:15). Or when—after Jesus's death and resurrection the disciples still asked, “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?” (Acts 1:6). Why, I always wondered, were the people around him so confused about his mission? If it was obvious to me that the good news was about freedom for every person from whatever enslaves us to injustice, suffering and death. Why then were the people next to him so convinced that he was going to establish a political kingdom?

Well, the disciples and crowds—not to mention Herod, the chief priests, and the scribes in Matthew's gospel—were so confused simply because they had misplaced expectations. In Matthew 2—a passage we all read during the Christmas season—we read that wise men come from the east to seek a newborn prophet. Along the way, they do the only sensible thing and ask the ruler of that region where this king of the Jews is. But Herod is deeply disturbed to learn of the birth of a new king, and he does the sensible thing from his point of view by asking Jewish scholars where this Messiah would be born.

Herod was right to be worried, and it seems like the rest of the people around Jesus were right to be confused.

The religious leaders of the day unhesitatingly name Bethlehem, the home town of Israel's iconic King David. They know the Messiah will be born there, they say, because the prophet Micah foretold it centuries ago. The key for our question—why did the people living during that time expect a revolutionary to overthrow the oppressive Roman government and set God's chosen people free?—lies in the words of that same ancient prophet.

Micah preached to Israel and Judah over a span of about fifty years some seven centuries before Jesus was born. His primary concern was to call God's people—in particular the political and religious leaders—to repent for having repeatedly failed to fulfill the two greatest commandments: love God and love neighbor. If they refused to repent (spoiler: they refused), then God would demonstrate his faithfulness by keeping his promise to send a reminder of what is most important. Micah 5 is where we learn that this new messenger of hope would come from Bethlehem. And yet, as the story

continues, everyone who is closest to this radical teaching of the old and new covenant will continually miss the point.

Who wants to follow a Teacher whose disciples pull out their swords instead of offering forgiveness, who seize the opportunity to collect their pound of flesh rather than dying to their desire for vengeance?

But if I'm honest, I'm part of that "everyone," despite my raised eyebrows and chuckle at the disciples' expense. My dad died about ten years ago; we never had much of a relationship after he left when I was six. I can't tell you how many times I wished he would die—at least then there'd be a reason he wasn't around. Once my dad told me that his wife, with whom he had a daughter just a few months older than me while married to my mom, had cheated on him and they were getting divorced. "Good," I responded, looking my dad in the eyes. "Now you know how it feels."

In that moment, and in so many after, I felt completely righteous in my condemnation of him—after all, don't 'you reap what you sow,' and all those self righteous platitudes . I don't know what would have happened if I could have forgiven my dad while he was still alive. Honestly, I'm not even sure I've really forgiven him now, a decade after his death. But I do know that I'm not so different from the religious leaders of Jesus' time, the disciples, the crowds, and even Herod and Pontius Pilate. Like them, I struggle to understand—and certainly to live out—Jesus's call to establish a different sort of kingdom, one that could help everyone face the places where life is hard with the antidote of love and forgiveness.

Russ Meek, 2021, professor and writer

COLLOQUY REFLECTIONS:

- 1) Where may my personal expectations (even spiritual ones) spring from an ego centered belief that life should not be hard rather than from a place of soulful wisdom?
- 2) Where might my attachment to self-importance create pain in one of the following areas:
 1. We will become inflexible, blaming and petty as we grow older.
 2. We will need other people to hate in order to expel our inner negativity.
 3. We will play the victim in some form as a means of false power.
 4. We will spend much of our life seeking security and status as a cover-up for lack of a substantial sense of self.
 5. We will pass on our deadness to our family, children and friends.
- 3) Dialogue with your Beloved about a struggle in any of these areas as you seek greater self awareness with immense compassion for the reality of being human.

Rumi's on Overcoming Challenges & Shifting our Mindset

By Fatima Razi, writer of women empowerment fiction

I discovered Rumi at a time of great loss. I had lost myself. And even though people had been telling me for years that the man is something else when it comes to transcendental wisdom, it took me a while to really catch on. And my mind was blown. I think few names hold the power and resonance of Rumi. Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet, mystic, and philosopher, is captivating hearts and minds with his profound insights into the human experience even today. For me, Rumi's quotes carry invaluable lessons on resilience and overcoming challenges.

It is the reason I created my [wellness journal](#) around his quotes.

Rumi on Embracing Impermanence

"Life is a balance between holding on and letting go." – Rumi.

His words often speak of the transient nature of life and the importance of embracing impermanence. His quotes encouraged me to recognize that challenges, like everything else, are ephemeral. By cultivating an understanding that change is inevitable, I felt my perspective shift and open to the possibility of growth and transformation. I don't know about anyone else, but Rumi's words remind me to let go of attachment to the past or anxiety about the future. I found myself focusing on the present moment. By embracing impermanence, I gained the resilience to navigate challenges with what I hope is grace and adaptability. Thank you, Rumi.

The Power of Surrender

"Surrender to the flow of life. Let it carry you where it wills. Don't try to control it. Surrender to existence, and you'll find yourself carried to the place you're meant to be." - Rumi.

Elsa said it, so everyone heard, but no one said, 'Let it go,' like Rumi. His teachings emphasize the power of surrendering to life's circumstances rather than resisting them. I found myself surrendering to the flow of life around me. I felt a trust that there was a greater purpose behind every challenge I encountered. Surrendering doesn't have to mean giving up or being passive; rather, it is letting go of control and surrendering to the wisdom of the universe. Whether you believe in the divine or not. I saw new possibilities and space for guidance through difficult times. Now I think that true strength lies in surrendering to what is, finding peace within ourselves, and aligning with the natural rhythm of life. Thank you, Rumi.

Cultivating Inner Resilience

"Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention." -

Rumi

I found my inner resilience through Rumi, a way to fortify my spirit in adversity. He taught me that challenges are not meant to break me but rather to awaken my inner strength and wisdom. He spoke of the inherent power we all possess within, urging us to tap into our inner resilience and face challenges head-on. I'm not much into the whole meditation and yoga (although I have tried it all), but self-reflection and self-care lit something wild and bright inside me. It developed my resilience to obstacles. I embraced my vulnerabilities and found the courage to rise stronger and wiser. I hope. Thank you, Rumi.

Embracing the Journey of Self-Discovery

"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself." - Rumi.

Rumi was a profound but rollercoaster-like journey of self-discovery for me. His quotes encouraged me to see difficulties as opportunities for growth and self-transformation. Oh, but it was hard. It's not easy to reframe challenges as invitations. But with introspection and self-exploration, I found my mindset shift from victimhood to empowerment. Rumi walked with me through the depths of my struggles. Together, we unearth hidden treasures within me. Every challenge slowly became a chance to uncover my true essence, to see my limits, and to awaken my potential. I explored fears, doubts, and limitations, and I emerged stronger, clearer, and with purpose. Thank you, Rumi.

Living with Gratitude and Love

"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer." - Rumi.

Through Rumi, I found the power of gratitude and love in navigating life's challenges. His quotes showed me the transformative qualities of gratitude, encouraging me to cultivate a grateful heart despite adversity. So hard to be kind when someone is pulling the rug out from under you. But I did. By shifting my focus from what is lacking to what I am blessed with, I shift my energy and mindset, inviting positivity and resilience into my life. Rumi says love is a guiding force. Love, both for ourselves and others, becomes an anchor supporting us through difficult times. Gratitude is a potent tool for overcoming challenges and cultivating inner resilience. Thank you. Rumi.

Rumi's empowering mindset encouraged me to view obstacles as opportunities for growth, to tap into my inner wisdom, and to emerge brighter and wiser (I hope). I encourage you to let Rumi's teachings inspire you.

DAY THREE (TUESDAY) JANUARY 13
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON THE ENNEAGRAM

Spiritual desolation manifests itself in the darkness of the soul which can either be felt as fearful turmoil, ego resistance or self sufficient arrogance. Ignatius

Begin your day again by re-reading the FIVE PROMISES OF INITIATION. Focus today on the following statement as you explore the RELEASES of your Ennea-type personality.

If we do not transform our pain, we will transmit it in some form to others

- 1) Return to the Enneagram Releases on the website E#3
- 2) Identify two or three of the Releases that seem to consistently show up in your life-- making life more difficult than it needs to be.
- 3) Set an intention today to be more aware of where and how one of those particular RELEASES shows up in your daily awareness. Just notice, don't judge!

DAY FOUR (WEDNESDAY) JANUARY 14
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON THE MID DAY EXAMEN

For Ignatius, we grow through desolation only when we resist it.

Begin your day again by re-reading the FIVE PROMISES OF INITIATION. Consider weaving your INTENTION OF THE DAY with your MID DAY MINI EXAMEN. Return to the ENNEAGRAM RELEASES of yesterday and choose another issue that often describes your attitude or behavior. Formulate your intention thus:

MAY I HAVE THE GRACE OF AWARENESS TODAY AROUND (Here name your RELEASE).

See how/if you are able to return to that same intention at Mid Day and either notice how it impacted your day so far. Or, renew your intention to be grateful for the gift of recognizing that this is part of how your personality story contributes to why LIFE IS HARD.

DAY FIVE (THURSDAY) JANUARY 15
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON END OF THE DAY EXAMEN

The promise of the Exercises will manifest to the degree we are willing to engage in regular examination of our consciousness. Jack Kennedy on The Examen

Begin your day again by re-visiting these insights from the FIVE PROMISES OF INITIATION:

Only suffering and certain kinds of awe lead us into genuinely new experiences and an encounter with Divine Nature. All the rest is merely the confirmation of old experiences.

There is both paradox and mystery here. The contemplative mind is content here; the daily calculating mind will try to reject this universal truth because it works in a binary way; either-or thinking gives one a sense of control.

These same teachings are echoed in Ignatian Spirituality. Consider what this paradox and mystery means to you as you deepen into the Spiritual Exercises. Notice in the days ahead where you are just repeating old patterns that reinforce suffering and desolation. Your Enneagram Releases might offer a touchstone to that awareness.

Then, at the end of the day, allow time to walk back through your experiences with compassionate awareness of where LIFE IS HARD. Rather than blaming yourself, see what it is like to hold your human limitations together with Divine Compassion and Grace.

What feelings arise as you allow your contemplative mind to overshadow your calculating (ego driven) mind?

DAY SIX (FRIDAY) JANUARY 16
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON REVISITING YOUR SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY

*When you recognize that you're in a state of desolation, Ignatius reverses things and says, do those spiritual things *nonetheless!**

Revisit the Spiritual Geography Exercise that tracks the HI and LO of your day. As you use this as an end of the day touchstone, how might the lessons from this week shed light on both your consolations and desolations.

Savor a time to rest in the 'promise' that LIFE IS HARD and LIFE is GRACED. What is it like to move from resistance to surrender?

DAY SEVEN (SATURDAY) JANUARY 17
EXERCISE: FOCUS ON HARVESTING THE WEEK'S EXPERIENCES

The key for Ignatius is the fact that desolation if itself does not produce growth. The grace of growth comes with recording and revisiting the movements of spirit in our daily lives and noticing that were never abandoned even during our darkest moments.

Revisit your exercises and journal entries from the week. What movements and lessons have you noticed over the course of the past week?

Make sure you record your summary insights as an important way of tracking your movements throughout this month.