

WEEK THIRTEEN/DAY THREE
Weekly Theme: *The Fruits of Discernment*
Today's Theme: Unexpected Surprises

MORNING EXERCISES
(About 30 minutes)

Again, you will be offered two different exercises for your morning and evening reflection times. Exercise A is designed for those who have identified a specific life issue for discernment. Exercise B is a general offering for any retreatant. Choose either exercise option or, you can create your own blend of the two. Continue to reflect on the Christmas story through the eyes of your own experiences.

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Take a few moments to quiet your mind and welcome either of the following teachings.

EXERCISE A: FOR THOSE DISCERNING A SPECIFIC DISCERNMENT LIFE QUESTION

Ignatius anticipates that healthy discernment requires spiritual companionship. If you need to revisit a decision made during The Exercises, make sure you do it with someone you trust. "Do not attempt to discern on your own what you arrived at with the companionship of another during the retreat." Today, consider the THIRD strategy using your particular life issue as a focus.

1. **Strategy #3: How would you counsel someone in the same situation?**
Pretend that your dilemma belongs to someone else, and that person comes to you for counsel. How would you approach looking at the situation? What advice would you offer? What questions would you ask? Then try to apply your counselor's wisdom to yourself.

EXERCISE B: FOR ANY RETREATANT

We can presume that all of the old messages about self-hatred and self-doubt that we brought with us into a retreat, will reemerge following a time of consolation.
Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

Regardless of which Exercise you are following, consider journaling today by noting 'what arises in you' as you consider any of these questions for discernment:

-Consider your response to the wisdom described above; how/where does this teaching or experience fall in you? How are you feeling/thinking/reacting at this point about how you might consider to work with issues of discernment after the retreat?
-How/do you relate to Ignatius' warnings that discernment by ourselves can leave us vulnerable to the influences of the 'predator'?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

Observe how the following Enneagram insight complements today's teachings.

The Holy Ideas constitute a map of reality that reminds us of our essential unity. Each Holy Idea reflects an understanding of the wholeness and unity of the world or universe, of human beings, of God and of the functioning of reality. The understanding of unity—the non-duality of the various elements and dimensions of existence—is an element of every traditional spiritual understanding. Both Eastern and Western teachings include a method of inner work that supports awareness of the non-separateness of human and the invisible, the physical world and consciousness, the divine and mundane. Many of these teachings understand that human suffering arises from ignorance of this truth, that is, the lie of our separation or alienation from the sacred or the real. They also teach the necessity of spiritual companionship to alert us when we fall back into the trance of our separateness.

--Based on The Diamond Approach to the Enneagram

4. ENNEAGRAM AWARENESS

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

The Holy Ideas represent particular ways of knowing and recognizing the unity of Being. They are what naturally arises in a clear, quiet mind when a person is present and awake, seeing reality as it actually is. The loss of a Holy Idea leads to a particular ego-delusion about the self or reality, called the type's Ego-fixation. Through the ego-fixation, the person is trying to restore the balance and freedom of the Holy Idea, but from the dualistic perspective of ego, cannot. Thus, understanding the perspective of our type's Holy Idea functions as an antidote to our ego-fixation. Experience what

happens when your mind is quieted through meditation or other forms of awareness practice. Rather than fighting against the ego-fixation, notice how a non-dual perspective of our true nature is restored as we see through the particular delusions of our type.

Based on the teachings of The Enneagram Institute

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:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Luke 2:8-20

POINTS FOR COLLOQUY REFLECTION

REFLECT ON A TIME WHEN YOU ENCOUNTERED AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE
REFLECT ON HOW THE UNEXPECTED MAY HAVE REVEALED A SPIRITUAL GIFT
OR INSIGHT
REFLECT ON HOW YOUR LIFE WAS IMPACTED AS A RESULT OF YOUR
"REVELATION"



- First read the words of the account without analysis.
- Then read the account a second time noticing what arises in you...
- Read the account a third time and engage in a dialogue journal process with characters of the story or with a good soul friend? Savor the experience.

LITERARY OPTION B

The Shepherds (edited), Dave Armstrong

It was like any other evening, in the fields, watching our sheep,
Making sure no predators or reckless thieves harmed our flocks.
Our task was to ensure their safety: health, well-being to keep,
Feeding and protecting them from pits, thorns, and jagged rocks.

All of a sudden, lo, an angel! bright glory all round,
The darkness became as day, with radiant beams glowing bright.
Fearing for our lives, yet somehow still secure, safe, and sound,
We listened intently to the heavenly messenger on that holy night.

Telling us to not be afraid... who ever heard of anything so grand!

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Slowly read this creative reflection and invite a loved one to engage with you in an imaginary conversation about what you have noted. You could engage with them through a dialogue journal process.
- How/does your conversation offer fresh insight into your own experience of suffering and addiction? Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

- Make an intention today to be aware of the ways that unexpected blessing might show up.

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 that you will want to remember at the end of the day?
- Renew your intention for the remainder of the day:

2. GRATITUDE

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

Ignatius alerts us to turn to a trustworthy companion when we are tempted away from our deepest desires. Give thanks for a new awareness to recognize your important support system.

- Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Inhale the light of gratitude for a particularly important relationship in your life. Exhale a breath of blessing to your companion wherever they may be. 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 that would focus on your 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.

Again, you will be offered two different exercises for evening reflection times that support your morning exercises. Journal A is focused for those working with a particular life issue for discernment. Journal B is a general recommendation for any retreatant.

JOURNAL A: STRATEGIES FOR DISCERNMENT

Return to the third strategy for discernment you considered this morning. See if you may discover new or additional insights based on today's awarenesses and experiences. Make sure to write them down!

Remember Strategy #3: How would you counsel someone in the same situation? Pretend that your dilemma belongs to someone else, and that person comes to you for counsel. How would you approach looking at the situation? What advice would you offer? What questions would you ask? Then try to apply your counselor's wisdom to yourself.

JOURNAL B: DISCERNING SPIRITS

Consider the awarenesses you may have had today from the two different kind of voices Ignatius alerted us to—either from the spirit of whole-iness that lead you to moments of authentic trust and love or from the spirit of the 'Enemy of our human nature' that created negativity or self-doubt. If you worked with the Enneagram concepts of the TRAPS and HOLY IDEAS, how/did those concepts show up in your awareness?

3. POINTS FOR TOMORROW

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.

DAY FOUR THEME:

Following your inner teacher

WISDOM FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:

Making a commitment about not changing an important decision afterwards.

ENNEAGRAM TEACHING:

We need to know that our Holy ideas are not just experienced cognitively, but also emotionally, and energetically or somatically. When integrated into our personality, our Holy Ideas change the structure of our lives and literally the very substance of our being. *Dr. David Daniels*