

*The Spiritual Exercises* are the underpinning of all Ignatian spirituality. This five hundred year practice is a series of guided exercises reflecting on one's experience, areas of freedom and unfreedom and practical instructions regarding making important life decisions. They are based on the experiences that Ignatius of Loyola had long before he became the founder of the Jesuits. The Exercises are, essentially, "spirituality for busy persons" who are actively involved in the world. They are a means of making decisions in a state of true interior freedom. They include ways of meditating and contemplating, the use of thought, memory, and imagination, with frequent reference to Scripture passages.

- Individuals commit themselves to some time each day for prayer and reflection based on a variety of creative approaches.
- The Ignatian Exercises follow a sequence of themes with personal adaptations to each one's particular life experience.
- Individuals or small groups from two or three meet once a week for about an hour using Ignatian guidelines for sharing about the ongoing experience of *The Exercises*.

There are many reasons that draw people to making these Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. One person seeks to grow in true personal freedom so as to be able to make better choices and decisions. Another seeks a sense of peace and a deeper connection with the Divine. Some desire an experience of profound growth and transformation in all spheres of life, and others seek a more conscious experience of spirituality that supports their desires to bring greater justice into the world about them.

Whatever motives one might have for making *The Exercises*, the benefits of obtaining a clearer focus in one's life are not just personal. Those who grow in a confident peace with themselves become better persons at work, at home – everywhere. Those who develop a more trusting relationship with God deepen their concern for justice among all persons.