

WEEK THIRTEEN/DAY SIX
Weekly Theme: *The Fruits of Discernment*
Today's Theme: Living into the Question

MORNING EXERCISES
(About 30 minutes)

To complete our consideration of how to discern life questions: 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.

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
INVITING OTHERS INTO OUR DECISION**

The Ignatian discernment tradition encourages involving others when a major life decision is at stake. By expressing our 'election' along with its reasons, to a select group of trusted spiritual companions, another form of confirmation emerges. It would be important, however, to clarify to the group the difference between consensus and unanimity. In consensus one seeks to perceive what is moving with the group, beyond personal opinions. The group does not vote on a decision that has already been discerned but may offer additional insight and prayerful support.

Consider using the tried and true Quaker-inspired practices for Circles of Trust to offer appropriate guidelines and touchstones for group discernment (these can be found on the 30 Day Retreat website under Background Materials and Readings).

EXERCISE B: FOR ANY RETREATANT

Ignatius invites us to name the one thing we want to hang onto... or that has deepened in us... or has been confirmed in us through 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 suggestions described above; how/where does they fall in you? How are you feeling/thinking/reacting at this point about the fruit of your discernment and how it moves forward after your retreat?

-What is it like to notice and name something specific to take away from your retreat experience?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

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

The Enneagram is a system of spiritual psychology which can be a useful tool to explore the best way for people of each Enneastyle to pray. There are a number of valuable resources regarding how the Enneagram can help develop a contemplative attitude toward life. Consider reading about your Enneastyle from a reference on the Thirty Day Retreat website (under the Enneagram Resources tab: The Enneagram & Prayer #12).

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.

Consider how/if you feel invited to continue referring to the Enneagram as a source of personal wisdom and insight.

After reading about the unique prayer practices for your Enneastyle, engage in a time of solitude, silence, and stillness based on those recommendations.

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.'

Another way of creatively engaging with the reflection passages this week is to enter into a dialogue journal exercise.

SCRIPTURE OPTION A

From the Gospel Tradition: Jesus Presented in the Temple

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Blessed Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss^l your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Luke 2:22-44

POINTS FOR COLLOQUY REFLECTION

- Consider the following questions
- Consider a meditation from inside the role of one of the several persons in this story.

Reflect on when you experienced a moment of both profound joy and sadness.

How/did you hold both of these emotions together?



LITERARY OPTION B

The Subject Tonight is Love, *Hafiz*

This is the kind of Friend
You are -
Without making me realize
My soul's anguished history,
You slip into my house at night,
And while I am sleeping,
You silently carry off
All my suffering and sordid past
In Your beautiful
Hands

— شمس الدين محمد حافظ / Khwāja Šams ud-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez-e Širāzī

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Slowly read this poem. Note which lines or words especially speak to you.
- Then, invite a loved one to engage with you in an imaginary conversation about what you have noted. You could also engage with them through a dialogue journal process.
- How/does your conversation offer insight into what supports you and relieves your suffering? Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

- Make an intention today to be aware of what you have treasured about your retreat experience thus far. Be aware of a desire to continue with a practice or exercise.
- Try to just notice and not judge the situation.

A retreat is not an ending but a brand new beginning based on the gifts of awareness received.

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:
- Continue to notice any stirrings or desire to hold onto an exercise that has been life giving for you.

2. GRATITUDE

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

Ignatius invites us to savor the *Magis...* (the more) which we have received as gift and will continue to treasure.

- Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Inhale the gratitude for the gifts of your retreat experience. Exhale a breath of release for whatever is still unfinished. 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.

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: PROVISIONAL DECISIONS

Make a commitment to whatever next steps you feel called to regarding your provisional decision but continue to the Journal B recommendation: Asking a Sacred Question.

JOURNAL B: ASKING A SACRED QUESTION

Regardless of where you have been during this retreat around important life decisions, a beautiful Ignatian-inspired practice is to end a time of discernment with a soulful question. The soul is always 'incubating' questions for us to pay attention to. Consider the exercise of Asking a Sacred Question (observing the 'rules' of avoiding the word 'I', and allowing a simple question to emerge from your heart and soul that you could not possibly know the answer to!

You may begin the contemplative process at this time but continue bringing your question forward in the days and weeks ahead as the fruit of your discernment experience. This exercise can allow you to continue working with the art of discernment practice as you journey into the next movement of The Exercises.