

WEEK THIRTEEN/DAY FOUR
Weekly Theme: *The Fruits of Discernment*
Today's Theme: Following the Star

MORNING EXERCISES
(About 30 minutes)

Again, this week you are 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.

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

The Spiritual Exercises include important considerations for a retreatant to contemplate towards the end of their retreat experience. Because we should expect counter-movements to arise that question our experiences, Ignatius offers a fourth strategy to pray over regarding any specific life decisions.

1. Strategy #4: At the end of your life how will you see this?

Pretend you are nearing the end of your life; St. Ignatius actually suggested that people imagine being on their own deathbeds. Consider the whole of your life—what you did and why, what you are grateful for, what you regret. In light of this long view, how do you see the current discernment you are trying to make?

EXERCISE B: FOR ANY RETREATANT

During the fourth movement (or week) of The Spiritual Exercises, it is important to revisit and make a commitment to an earlier cardinal 'rule' for discernment—this time in light of our retreat experiences:

In a time of desolation never to make a change; but be firm and constant in the resolutions and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in which one was in the preceding time of consolation. Because, as in consolation it is the good spirit who guides and counsels us, so in desolation it is the voice of the predator that speaks, whose counsels we cannot trust to decide rightly.

Rule #5 in 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 deal with counter movements that arise after the retreat?
- How/do you relate to Ignatius' warnings that decisions made during a time of desolation must never to be trusted.

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

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

Remember, our Essence, is our "true nature," that which underlies all external manifestations and is permanent and unchanging (Webster's Dictionary). Within our Enneagram community's definition of "essence," the term suggests more nuance than Webster has to offer us. My simple understanding of what "essence" means, in Enneagram speak, is more so that the HOLY IDEA is the higher mental quality and that our inherent virtue is our higher emotional quality. These qualities are both a definitive part of our true nature. They belong to us. And what's important is to integrate both the higher mental and higher emotional qualities of HOLY IDEA, into our daily lives.

--Based on the teachings of Dr. David Daniels

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.

In the language of the Enneagram, when we experience times of integration our essential qualities, meaning our virtues, and Holy ideas, infuse our personality structure and liberate us from the confines of our originally formed, core beliefs and addictive habits of mind. One good way to do that is by recalling and re-experiencing one of our peak life experiences. A peak experience would be a time in our lives when we had experienced ourselves as fully present, imbued with our inherent virtues, and utterly awake to ourselves and others. At

such times some form of grace was filling the moment. During times of deep contemplation such a state is recreated which opens us up again to soulful integration. What follows is the spontaneous infusion of our highest self into our day-to-day personality structure. Accept the invitation to know, name and take your HOLY IDEA into contemplative practice today. Notice how affirming and life-giving this exercise can be.

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.'

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:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

*"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."*

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:1-12

POINTS FOR COLLOQUY REFLECTION



LITERARY OPTION B

Christmas, Rumi, Ode 134

*There is a morning where presence
Comes over you, and you sing
Like a rooster in your earth colored shape.*

*Your heart hears and is no longer frantic
It begins to dance.
At that moment soul knows the gifts of total emptiness.*

Your heart becomes Mary, miraculously pregnant

*And body, like a two-day old Jesus
Speaks wisdom words*

*Then your heart turns to star light
And your body picks up tempo...*

*Your traveling footprints
Become like musical notes
As you fall into space.*

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Slowly read this poem on the nature of mystery and love. 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 fresh insight into your own experience of what matters most for your soul? What kind of beliefs do you feel called to divest yourself from? Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

- Make an intention today to be aware of how the sacred shows up in your ordinary life experiences. Be aware of the times that this retreat may be influencing your everyday activities.
- Try to just notice and not judge the situation.

The word, sacred, comes from the Latin, *sacrum facere*, or, to make what is ordinary divine. Be attuned to how simple tasks are also divine today.

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 how the ordinary things of life are the places where God speaks.

2. GRATITUDE

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

Ignatius alerts us to find God in the particulars of life. Give thanks for a new awareness to recognize and honor your daily activities.

-Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Inhale the gratitude of awareness for the simple things of life. Exhale a breath of blessing to the ordinary things in your world that you care about. 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.

Consider which of the following two journal questions are speaking to you. 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 fourth 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 #4: At the end of your life how will you see this?

Pretend you are nearing the end of your life; St. Ignatius actually suggested that people imagine being on their own deathbeds. Consider the whole of your life—what you did and why, what you are grateful for, what you regret. In light of this long view, how do you see the current discernment you are trying to make?

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 FIVE THEME:

Living into our decisions

WISDOM FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:

I do not so much obtain Divine Love as I obtain the awareness that it is always there.

ENNEAGRAM TEACHING:

The Enneagram reminds us of our essential unity which is our divine, essential self at our core. These qualities are always at our disposal. They are also what will live on about us, long after our bodies have expired.