

WEEK FIVE/DAY ONE
Theme: *Freedom & Discernment*

MORNING EXERCISES
(About 30 minutes)

Renew your intention for the week to deepen into what it means “to discern” movements of freedom and unfreedom. While the Exercises ultimately lead us to focus on the particulars of everyday life, observing life patterns and habitual responses is a valuable way to strengthen our Inner Observer.

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Take a few moments to quiet your mind and welcome the following teaching.

The Exercises invite us to look back at the patterns of our life and notice their trajectory without judgment. Here we look less at specific incidents and more at the patterns or our underlying dispositions behind our actions. In doing so we will inevitably see patterns both of order (grace) and disorder (sin was the old language). The traditional language is: paying attention to the movements/counter movements called ‘consonance’ and ‘dissonance.’ Week Five of the Exercises is a time to begin noticing the big picture of our lives. The invitation is to look at both our gifts and weaknesses with the same love and compassion ‘as God does.’ In the end I may recognize that I have been led in the midst of both my destructive patterns and my life-giving patterns. This is where we ask, ‘Can I see that Spirit has been with me all along?’ And, ‘Can I be grateful for where I’m at now because of it all?’

Jack Kennedy

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

Consider journaling for today by noting ‘what arises in you’ as you consider any of these questions for discernment:

-Consider the patterns of ‘order’ and ‘disorder’ that have consistently showed up in your life.

-What is it like to consider that ‘you have been led’ both through life’s destructive and life-giving patterns?

-Identify a particular ‘tragic gap’ in your life right now (i.e. a gap between the way things are and the way you would like them to be). Can you identify a familiar pattern in your personality that might be contributing to or exacerbating this situation?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

Simply observe how the following Enneagram insight complements today’s teachings.

The work of the Enneagram invites us to look at the shame and the guilt and the anger (the dispositions we try so flutily to hide) and to allow the Divine Source to gaze on these elements along with us.

Don Richard Riso

4. ENNEAGRAM AWARENESS

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

In addition to becoming more familiar with Type #5 of the Enneagram, also familiarize yourself with the contents of the Spiritual Companion Manual (cf. Enneagram References #9). Locate the section entitled, Spiritual Focus for your Type and reflect on the two categories listed: GIFTEDNESS TO REJOICE IN and SINFULNESS TO PRAY THROUGH (Note that in the Ignatian Tradition the term 'sinfulness' should be translated as WEAKNESS).

5. DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION: *Standing in a Tragic Gap*

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 Hebrew Scriptures: In the day of trouble the Beloved will keep me safe; I find protection in the shelter of sacred tent and am set high on a rock of safety above my worries and my fears. Psalm 27:5.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- How/does the term Beloved in this psalm match your experience of divine support?
- Where do you find refuge when life's troubles are overwhelming?
- Offer gratitude for a time when you were 'plucked out of fear and set high on a rock of safety'? Savor the experience.

LITERARY OPTION

From Thich Nhat Hahn: Fear keeps us focused on the past or worried about the future. If we can acknowledge our fear we can realize that right now we are okay. Right now we are still alive and our bodies are working marvelously. Our eyes can still see the beautiful sky; our ears can still hear the voices of those who love us.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Meditate on how you are okay right now.

- What do you experience when remaining in the present moment?
- Offer gratitude for the gift of this moment in all of its wonder. Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

Make an intention to be aware of a particular 'tragic gap' in your life right now. That is, a place where how things are and how you would like them to be are not in alignment. Notice especially how your personality inclinations affect how you are dealing with the situation. Try to just notice and not judge the situation.

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 worth noting?

-Renew your intention for the remainder of the day:

Continue noticing the same tragic gap you identified earlier today.

2. GRATITUDE

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

Ignatius says that we are where we are in life right now not in spite of-- but because of ourselves and that Spirit does not reject any part of who we are.

-Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Consider the spiritual breath practice of inhaling on the count of three and breathing out on the count of six. 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 focused on 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. 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 was draining and difficult. I let myself feel any emotions and notice whether I handled it gracefully or badly.
- 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.

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.

WISDOM FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:

Where tomorrow will I experience love and where will I experience darkness—knowing it is possible to be fully grateful for both.

ENNEAGRAM TEACHING:

The Enneagram teaches that freedom from the ego is the only thing that can bring ourselves into alignment with what will be.