

WEEK NINE/DAY ONE
Weekly Theme: *Imagination in Prayer*
Today's Theme: Prayer all-ways

This month offers a deeper dive into the experience of Ignatian Meditation. A highlight of this week's exercises is an encounter with the COLLOQUY tradition of prayer. This will be most evident in the DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION recommendations of your Morning Exercises. However, the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises are based on the invitation 'to pray always' in the words of St. Paul. For Ignatius, that meant to pray 'in all-ways' that is, to weave our disposition of the heart with prayerful attention throughout the course of our normal daily routine. The idea is not to stop the course of life's rhythm but to develop a habit of shifting our attention within a daily experience to gratitude and grace. Today, we begin by introducing this slight shift in attitude in the opening of our MORNING EXERCISES. Notice how, when responding to today's QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT, a desire to recognize GRACE working in us can make a difference in terms of how we respond. Notice the same possibility in terms of how you approach today's INTENTION. We suggest that you move slowly into the DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION selections, simply becoming acquainted with their main message—and leaving the fuller COLLOQUY experience for later in the week.

MORNING EXERCISES
(About 30 minutes)

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

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

The Exercises invite us into a daily 'awareness examen' whereby I will no longer allow myself to listen to the lies of self-loathing, self-doubt and self-hatred. These lies are the voice of the predator, 'the father of lies,' because they undermine 'id quod volo'—that which I deeply desire and choose.

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 your response to the wisdom described above; how/where does this teaching fall in you?

-How/when do the voices of self-loathing, self-doubt or self-hatred block out your sense of self-trust and self-love?

-How/do you relate to the term 'predator'? Identify the voices outside of yourself that pull you away from your True North.

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

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

The Enneagram can act as an instrument to lead us to uncover the lies we tell ourselves which are based on what we developed as survival techniques when we were kids.

Eileen Heaton

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.

Consult the Enneagram of Lies (on-line document #4) and read the statement that corresponds with your Enneastyle. Pay attention to your initial reaction to the statement... how does it make you feel to name and acknowledge a deeply ingrained voice that would cause you to doubt what you know to be true? How can you take this awareness into life today with gentleness and nonjudgment?

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:

Jesus went into the synagogue and a man with a lame hand was there. Some of the priests and religious leaders were also there and looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal the man on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man, "Come here and stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then those same religious leaders went out and began to plot with the government officials on how they might kill Jesus. *Mark 3:1-6*

POINTS FOR COLLOQUY REFLECTION

- Place yourself into this scene as Jesus, the lame man, the religious leaders or an observer. Allow your imagination to unfold a story from your experience.

- What is it like for you to experience the tension between the characters?
- Give thanks for a time when you rejected the false voices of others instead of your own inner knowing-- even though you knew there could be negative consequences. Savor the experience.

LITERARY OPTION B

Religious Liberation, A Reflection by Richard Rohr

A prophet is *one who keeps God free for people and who keeps people free for God*. Both of these are much needed and vital tasks. Without the educated gift of prophecy, God almost always becomes imprisoned and made inaccessible, and far too many people have been shamed and taught guilt to keep us clergy in business. We saw our job as “sin management.” That is not just being clever. I believe we religious leaders actually thought that. Sadly, the laity fully bought into this negative story line. That is what happens when priests are not informed by prophets.

In every religion the priestly class invariably makes God less accessible instead of more so, “neither entering yourselves nor letting others enter in,” as Jesus says (Matthew 23:13). For the sake of our own job security, the priestly message is often: “You can only come to God through us, by doing the right rituals, obeying the rules, and believing the right doctrines.” This is like telling God who God is allowed to love! The clergy and religious leaders, unintentionally perhaps, teach their disciples “learned helplessness.” The goal of religion sadly often falls into guilt and legalism where “attendance” at an occasional ritual is substituted for the constant participation in an Eternal Mystery! God is always breaking the approved “rules of God” by forgiving sinners, choosing the outsider or the weak, and showing up in secular places. Please check the Bible if you doubt me!

Our job is to love others the way God has loved us. In my life, I’ve experienced God’s unearned love again and again. God has persistently broken the rules to love me at the level I needed, could receive, and was able to understand throughout my life. The magnanimous nature of Divine Love keeps liberating me at deeper levels. It’s a journey that never stops giving. Why wouldn’t everybody want that? And why do so many actually fight it?

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Slowly read this reflection on spiritual liberation with something to underline the phrases or lines that most strongly impact you.
- Then, invite a loved one to engage with you in an imaginary conversation about what you have noted.
- How does your conversation lead to more freedom and fresh insight into the nature of God’s unconditional love? Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

- Make an intention to be aware today of moments or situations where you have a choice to either trust your inner voice or are tempted to forfeit your inner authority.
- Try to just notice and not judge the situation.

Today may I recognize the limiting images of life and myself.
Instead, may the Divine Inner Light within me reveal what is most true, beautiful and good.

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 just noticing when subtle lies would steer you off course.

2. GRATITUDE

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

Ignatius encourages us to trust all of the particulars in life. Welcome them all as your potential teachers.

- Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Inhale with the life giving energy that is always available to us. Exhale whatever is false and self-demeaning. 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 (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.