

# **The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola for Everyone**



**Thirty Meditations  
for Twenty Minutes of Prayer**

**Rev. Douglas J. Leonhardt, S.J.  
Marquette University High School**



# **The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola for Everyone**

---

## **Thirty Meditations for Twenty Minutes of Prayer**

---

**Rev. Douglas J. Leonhardt, S.J.**

© 2021 Rev. Douglas J. Leonhardt, S.J.  
Marquette University High School  
All rights reserved

Cover image: The Seal of the Society  
of Jesus, Three Holy Companions Chapel  
at Marquette University High School

# Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 3 Spiritual Exercises Explained and How to Use This Guide
  
- 9 **WEEK ONE**
- 10 MEDITATION 1 **Finding Solitude**
- 12 MEDITATION 2 **God's Acceptance of Us**
- 14 MEDITATION 3 **God's Unconditional Love**
- 16 MEDITATION 4 **God's Perspective on Life**
- 18 MEDITATION 5 **God's Relationship with Us**
- 20 MEDITATION 6 **Broken Relationships**
- 22 MEDITATION 7 **"God be Merciful to Me a Sinner"**
- 24 MEDITATION 8 **The Gift of Forgiveness**
  
- 27 **WEEK TWO**
- 28 MEDITATION 9 **Invited to Companionship**
- 30 MEDITATION 10 **Mary's "Yes"**
- 32 MEDITATION 11 **The Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ**
- 34 MEDITATION 12 **The Baptism of Jesus**
- 36 MEDITATION 13 **Retreat and Temptations of Jesus**
- 38 MEDITATION 14 **The First Sermon of Jesus**
- 40 MEDITATION 15 **Jesus Calls Zacchaeus and Dines with Him**
- 42 MEDITATION 16 **Jesus Meets the Woman at the Well**
- 44 MEDITATION 17 **Jesus Says Who He Is**
- 46 MEDITATION 18 **The Parable of the Sower**
- 48 MEDITATION 19 **Peter Gives Us Hope**

**51 WEEK THREE**

- 52 MEDITATION 20 The Last Supper**
- 54 MEDITATION 21 The Agony in the Garden**
- 56 MEDITATION 22 Jesus is Sentenced to Death**
- 58 MEDITATION 23 Jesus Carries His Cross**
- 60 MEDITATION 24 Jesus is Crucified and Dies**

**63 WEEK FOUR**

- 64 MEDITATION 25 The Risen Lord Appears to His Mother**
- 66 MEDITATION 26 The Risen Lord Meets His Disciples**
- 68 MEDITATION 27 The Risen Lord Surprises Mary Magdalen**
- 70 MEDITATION 28 The Risen Lord Prepares Breakfast for Friends**
- 72 MEDITATION 29 With a Grateful Heart**
- 74 MEDITATION 30 God is Working for Us All the Time**

**77 Living the Retreat**

**80 Record Your Retreat Reflections**



# Introduction

In 2020, the Society of Jesus promulgated four Universal Apostolic Preferences to provide a horizon, a point of reference to animate the mission of the Jesuits over the next ten years. The first preference is: “Showing the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and Discernment.” Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J., the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, stated that in this preference, “we are committing ourselves to offering the Spiritual Exercises in as many forms as possible.” This commitment plus the celebration of the Ignatian Year, 2021–2022, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the cannonball injury of St. Ignatius that led to his conversion, and the 400th anniversary of the canonization of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier has been the incentive for writing and publishing this booklet for the Marquette High community.

This adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises was written by Doug Leonhardt, S.J. He is a native of Milwaukee and has been at Marquette High as a student, principal, president, and now mission associate and alumni chaplain. Through a master’s degree in Spirituality, forming young Jesuits, and giving retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises, he has developed a love and familiarity with the Spiritual Exercises. It is from this love and familiarity this booklet was written to make the Spiritual Exercises available for everyone.



# Spiritual Exercises Explained

For almost 500 years, many men and women have been transformed by making retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

## **Origin of the Spiritual Exercises**

In 1521, St. Ignatius had an experience that turned him away from a life of lust and dissolute living toward a life centered on Christ. This conversion happened while he was bedridden as he recuperated from a cannonball injury to his leg. Only two books were available for him to read, one about the lives of the saints and the other about the life of Christ. As he read and reflected, his desire to follow Christ led him to commit himself to a life of service to God and others. After his recovery, Ignatius began a pilgrimage from his home at the castle of Loyola in Spain to the Holy Land. On his way to Barcelona, where he would catch a ship, he stopped at a small town, Manresa. While there, he worked in a hospital for the poor and sick. Ignatius begged for his food and spent his free time praying in a cave on the banks of the Cardoner River. Planning to stay only a few days, he ended up living there for nearly a year.

During his prayer times, he was blessed by God. He said that God taught him as if he were a little schoolboy. After he finished praying, he wrote in a notebook what God taught him so he would remember. According to *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, during his time at Manresa, Ignatius was blessed with the insight that God is in all things, that God has a dynamic nature, and God is involved in our everyday lives. As he experienced these blessings from God, he began to realize that what he received was not just for himself but to be shared with others. So, over the course of several years,

he organized his prayer notes. These notes became known as the Spiritual Exercises. He saw them as a pathway for an individual to grow in a personal relationship with Christ and to live with a greater awareness of God alive and active in life, other persons, and in creation.

### **Different forms of the Spiritual Exercises**

The book of the Spiritual Exercises is like a cookbook. It is a guide for someone giving the Exercises to another person. Initially, Ignatius envisioned the Spiritual Exercises to take place in solitude for about thirty days. But he knew it was impossible for most people to take thirty days away from family and work. So, he proposed these same Exercises could be made in daily life, praying an hour a day, for a period of six to nine months. But over the years, the Spiritual Exercises were adapted to take on many different forms like eight- or five-day retreats for individuals and preached retreats for groups. This guide is another adaptation but remains true to Ignatius's insight that making the Exercises leads one to an experienced union with God and a renewed commitment to follow Christ.

### **Four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises**

Ignatius designed the Spiritual Exercises to have four different movements. He called these movements "weeks." Weeks did not refer to seven days but to four spiritual invitations. Some people have described them as corresponding to four longings in the human heart: 1) A longing to know we are loved and forgiven, 2) A longing to have a friend and lover forever, 3) A longing to have a more compassionate heart, 4) and a longing to live with hope. These longings are embedded in four graces coming from one's prayer: seeing ourselves as loved sinners, knowing oneself as a companion of Christ, experiencing the suffering of Jesus, and being uplifted by Jesus's Resurrection.

# How to Use This Guide

## **Choice of when these exercises are made**

There are thirty topics for prayer based on the Spiritual Exercises. One could use them for thirty consecutive days. Another might use them just on weekdays for six weeks. And still another might use them on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for ten weeks.

## **Choice of how they are used**

One could pray through these exercises individually. One could pray them individually and talk with a friend once a week about what was happening in prayer. Or a group of people could choose to pray them individually and then come together once a week to talk about their prayer. There is no best way. What works for an individual is best for him or her.

## **Length of time for each exercise**

It is important to spend twenty minutes each day on an Exercise because it takes time to settle down, get focused, and enter into a prayerful spirit. Moving through an exercise is not a task to accomplish but an experience to savor. It is important to remember one is not looking for some secret message in each exercise but that one stays open to the Spirit to receive what God desires to give.

## **Stay where you become engaged**

As you will notice, there are five sections in each proposed prayer topic. The goal is not to get through all five. St. Ignatius suggests that one stay where one feels connected. So, if something in the reflection catches your attention, stay there for as long as you are engaged. If a phrase in the Scripture tugs at one's heart, stay with it. And if the topic on a particular day captivates you, stay with it another day. St. Ignatius gives this advice: "For what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding

the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly.”

—Spiritual Exercises #2

### **Place of prayer**

A person needs to experiment with places where one can pray and reflect. The place should be quiet, comfortable, and without a lot of distractions. Turn off the phone and let e-mails and texts accumulate.

### **Beginning prayer**

The way one begins prayer sets the tone for the rest of the prayer.

And the way one ends prayer is completing the conversation.

One settles into prayer by taking some deep breaths to quiet down and let the presence of God in and around oneself become real.

God is more present than we think.

### **What I pray for**

Holy desires are a sign of God working in our hearts. And so, at the beginning of prayer, we focus on what we desire. If the desire stated does not resonate with one, Ignatius suggests that one can pray to have that desire. Spend at least a minute or two minutes pondering the stated desire so it becomes what you want.

### **Reflection**

The reflections set a context for listening to the word of God in Scripture. Perhaps the reflection will surface a similar experience in your life. Or one might recall another real-life situation. Stay with these. God might be speaking through these.

### **Scripture**

The Word of God is the center of Ignatian prayer. There are several ways to use Scripture. One is called Sacred Reading—*Lectio Divina*, in Latin. A person slowly reads, perhaps out loud, the whole Scripture passage. When one finishes the reading, one pauses and recalls if any words or phrases caught one’s attention. Mull over those phrases, note any feelings that might have surfaced, and consider

what God might be saying. Then, if there is time, read the passage again. Should the Gospel be about the life and ministry of Jesus, St. Ignatius describes a way of praying called contemplative prayer. Read through the passage slowly, immerse oneself into the scene and imagine what might be happening. What do the people look like? What are they doing? What are they saying? How are they interacting with one another? Through one's imagination, the persons in the Gospel passage take on flesh and blood and become real.

### **Reflection questions**

These questions are designed to help one relate what is said in the Scripture to one's lived experience.

### **Conversation**

At the end of prayer, St. Ignatius invites a person to engage in intimate conversation with one of the members of the Trinity or the Blessed Mother. After this, one concludes with the Our Father.

### **Personal reflection**

Space is provided for your thoughts and insights at the end of each meditation.

### **The following prayer by David Fleming, S.J., might be a prayerful way of entering the retreat.**

Jesus we are in your presence with one desire.

We ask you and we want with all our heart  
to have you close to us all the days of this retreat.

We will try to pray, we will stay focused,  
we will spend time with you.

But it is only with your grace and your love  
that we, in our weakness, can remain faithful.

Jesus be our companion and brother. Amen

Prepared for the Ignatian Year, May 20, 2021–July 31, 2022

Douglas J. Leonhardt, S.J.

**What are your hopes and desires for the retreat?**

# Week One

I hold you in the palm of my hand.

Isaiah 49:16



# Finding Solitude

## **Presence of God**

Ponder that God is present in a special way through this invitation: “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” —Matthew 11:28

## **What I pray for**

I ask God to be with me in prayer and to help me hear what God is saying to me as I listen and reflect on His Word.

## **Reflection**

Our lives are filled with phones ringing, voices around us, and noise from the streets. When we have a few moments of quiet from the din, it is a relief. We are so busy or make ourselves so busy that we need to choose to create spaces of quiet in our lives. For a Christian person, taking time for quiet nourishes one’s prayer life and strengthens one’s relationship with God. Praying is an opportunity to be rather than do. Someone defined prayer as “tending the presence of God.” We do not make God present. God is already more present than we realize. Prayer comes as a response to God’s presence. God has the first word and we respond to the conversation God begins. A good conversationalist listens more than speaks. In prayer, we listen to God’s word in scripture. What is God saying? And in the quiet of prayer, we have some thoughts, some feelings, some new awareness, or some nudges. This is how God communicates with us. So, as we begin this journey with God, we turn to a psalm in the Hebrew Scriptures that teaches us about how God is with us. Read the passage slowly several times and then reflect on the questions.

## **Scripture**

Streams of the river gladden the city of God,  
the holy dwelling of the Most High.  
God is in its midst; it shall not be shaken.  
God will help it at the break of day.  
Though nations rage and kingdoms totter,  
He utters His voice and the earth melts.  
The Lord of hosts is with us,  
Our stronghold is the God of Jacob.  
Come and see the works of the Lord,  
who has done fearsome deeds on earth,  
who stops wars to the ends of the earth,  
breaks the bow, splinters the spear,  
and burns the shields with fire.  
“Be still and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.”  
The Lord of hosts is with us,  
our stronghold is the God of Jacob.  
—Psalm 46

## **Reflection questions**

How does the psalmist say that God is active in our midst?  
Is God active like this in our time, in your life? How does stillness  
help one come to know God?

## **Conversation**

Speak to God about what you have just experienced.

## **Personal reflection**

# God's Acceptance of Us

## **Presence of God**

Open yourself to God's abiding presence by pondering: "In Him we live and move and have our being." —Acts of the Apostles 17:28

## **What I pray for**

I ask God to help me understand his unconditional love and acceptance of me as I am and not as I think I should be.

## **Reflection**

We all have a deep desire to be accepted by others. But we also have that haunting voice in the back of our heads that says if people really knew my secrets and what I did in the past, they would back away from me and probably unfriend me. On the other hand, we are surprised when someone who loves us appreciates our gifts and accepts our limitations and faults. The Lutheran theologian, Paul Tillich says, "faith is the courage to accept acceptance from God." Knowing and accepting the love of God takes breaking down some walls. Some of our walls we have been taught or have built ourselves: I need to be a better person for God to love me, my secrets define me and keep God at a distance, or after all these years I am not strong in faith. These walls are ways we look at ourselves and have nothing to do with the way God looks at us. How do I know that someone loves me: they say it and they show it by their actions. That is the same way that God loves us. The first step is listening to what God is saying. And the second step comes later in the retreat when we pray over how the Son of God died for us.

## **Scripture**

God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world His only Son so that we could have life through Him; this is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us when He sent His Son. —1 John 4:9–10

The Lord who created you says,  
I have called you by your name.

You are mine.

I will be with you.

I am the Lord, your God.

You are precious in my eyes;  
and I love you.

Fear not, I am with you.

—Isaiah 43:1–5

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you. —Jeremiah 31:3

## **Reflection questions**

Do I really hear these are God's words of love spoken to me personally? What resistance do I put up? The word "precious" is a very tender phrase; can I accept this?

## **Conversation**

Speak to God the Father or Jesus about how you feel about Their love for you.

## **Personal reflection**

# God's Unconditional Love

## Presence of God

Open yourself to God's abiding presence by pondering these words: "It was you who created my inmost self and put me together in my mother's womb." —Psalm 139:13

## What I pray for

I ask God to help me realize how much God loves me unconditionally, as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

## Reflection

Several years ago, a friend's son was involved in a drug deal that went bad and the son shot and killed another man. For a long time, members of the family did not want to be seen in public. They were so heartbroken over what he did, but their parental love for their son never wavered. If parents can exhibit such love, so much more our great lover, our God loves each of us personally in only a way God can—one hundred percent all the time. We are the ones who project limits on God's love for us. It is hard to fathom that if we are unfaithful in our love for God or His people, God remains faithful. That is why Jesus, who is the human face of God, uses the story of the prodigal son to show God's unconditional love for every human being. In the parable, a father's love for his son was overflowing when the son wanted his inheritance early so that he could live as if his father were dead. The father's love remained constant even though his son disappeared. The father's love was even stronger when the son returned after he dissipated his father's money. All the father wanted was to celebrate his son's return. Tony DeMello, S.J. has this wonderful image of God: "Behold God beholding you and smiling."

## **Scripture**

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare His only Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that He will not refuse anything He can give. Nothing, therefore, can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried or being persecuted or lacking food or clothes or being threatened or even attacked. As Scripture promised: For your sake we are being massacred daily and reckoned as sheep for the slaughter. These are the trials through which we triumphed by the power of Him who loved us. For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, not angel, nor prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, nor any power or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord. —Romans 8.31–39

## **Reflection questions**

God's word is stronger than my conditions. What conditions do I put on God's love for me? Our worries and trials do not come from God. How does God love us when we are absorbed by these?

## **Conversation**

Speak to God about your reaction to the fact that nothing can come between you and God.

## **Personal reflection**

# God's Perspective on Life

## Presence of God

Open yourself to God's presence by pondering these words:

“You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence.”

—Psalm 16.11

## What I pray for

I ask for the grace to have God's perspective on life—who I am, where I am going, and how to get there.

## Reflection

As one begins the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius has a retreatant consider what he calls the First Principle and Foundation. It is a vision of life. As most of us know, vision statements can oftentimes be dry and abstract. But Ignatius invites us to let this come alive for us by letting it speak to our experiences. The statement defines us as creatures in a relationship with a loving God with a goal to be with God forever. Also, God gives us an abundance of gifts. With all these gifts, God gives us the freedom to choose to use or refrain from using the gifts insofar as they help us achieve our goal. As one reflects on the Principle and Foundation, the word “indifference” can be a stumbling block for some: not fixing our desires on health or sickness, a long life or a short one, etc. Certainly, all of us prefer health over sickness. But when sickness confronts us, will we still serve God and others? For some, health, a long life, wealth become idols rather than means to our goal. In reflecting on the Foundation, Ignatius invites us to pray to desire this vision of life for ourselves. But he knows the desire will be fulfilled by making the retreat.

## **The Principle and Foundation**

Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God, our Lord, and by means of doing this to save our souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created. From this follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it. To attain this, it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honors rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one and so on in all matters. Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created. —Translation by G. Ganss, S.J.

### **Reflection questions**

What truths about this vision of life stand out for me? Does this vision of life appeal to me? Why?

### **Conversation**

Speak to God about what you appreciate in the First Principle and Foundation and what you find difficult to understand or swallow.

### **Personal reflection**

# God's Relationship with Us

## **Presence of God**

Open yourself to God's presence in and around you and ponder:  
"Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . . I will enter His house  
and dine with Him." —Revelation 3:20

## **What I pray for**

I ask God that I may see the countless gifts that surround me and  
the many people who enter my life as God taking the initiative to  
have a relationship with me.

## **Reflection**

Right from the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures, we see God  
taking the initiative to establish a relationship with the Jewish  
people. He makes covenants with them that are formal alliances  
made with their representatives: Noah, Abraham, Moses, and  
David. In return for the promises in the covenants, He asks that  
individuals relate with God as the one true God and love their  
neighbor. He gives the Ten Commandments as guidelines for  
these right relationships. Then Jesus comes along and establishes  
the definitive covenant. Jesus, the face of God, relates with us in  
human terms and establishes His covenant by dying and rising for  
us. Jesus's teaching about right relationships is concise: "You shall  
love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and  
with all your mind, and with all your strength. You shall love your  
neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:30–31) In any relationship, there are  
three movements: one of the parties initiates it, there is mutuality,  
and the parties enjoy being with each other. This is God's way of  
relating with us and God invites us to do the same with Him and  
with our brothers and sisters.

## **Scripture**

All you who are thirsty, come to the water. You who have no money, come buy grain, and eat. Why spend your money on what is not bread, your wages on what does not satisfy? Only listen and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Pay attention and come to me; listen, that you may have life. I will make with you an everlasting covenant. Yet, just as from the heavens, the rains come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats. So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.  
—Isaiah 55:1–3, 10–11

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. I no longer call you slaves because a slave does not know his master's business. I call you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I chose you. —John 15:12–16

## **Reflection questions**

How have I experienced God taking the lead to establish a relationship with me? What is my reaction to Jesus calling me a friend?

## **Conversation**

Speak with God about His invitation to friendship and how you want to respond.

## **Personal reflection**

# Broken Relationships with God and Others

## Presence of God

Open yourself to God's abiding presence and ponder these words:  
"But for me it is good to be near to God; I have made God my refuge."

—Psalm 73:28

## What I pray for

I ask God for the grace of contrition because God has been so good to me and my response has been minimal.

## Reflection

The Psalmist sings: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; and His love is everlasting." (Psalm 136.1) God is so good to us; but from the time of Adam and Eve, the human response has been lacking. People have chosen to ignore God, and some have turned to false gods and idol worship. Adam and Eve were not satisfied with being creatures but wanted to be like God. Moses, after meeting with God, became exasperated because his people were worshiping an animal figure made of molten gold. We see how the Jews, the chosen people of God, neglected their worship of the true and loving God, made alliances with other nations, and adopted their pagan customs. We also see how some Jews neglected the poor, strangers, and the widows in their communities. We can point fingers, but we are part of that same human history. We have tried to play God. We have bowed down and worshiped idols of success, wealth, and reputation. We have sold out to consumerism. We have turned a blind eye to the poor, the immigrant, and the marginalized. We have polluted the earth. We, too, have sinned.

## **Scripture**

When Israel was a child, I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them the further they went from me, sacrificing to Baals and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, who took them in my arms, but they did not know I cared for them. I drew them with human cords, with bands of love. I fostered them like those who raise an infant close to their cheeks. —Hosea 11.1–4

Return, Israel to the Lord, your God, you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take your words and return to the Lord. Say to Him, “Forgive all iniquity and take what is good. Let us offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria will not save us nor will we mount horses. We will no longer say, ‘Our God to the work of our hands’ for in you the orphan finds compassion.” I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger is turned away from them. I will be like the dew for Israel; he will blossom like the lily. —Hosea 14.2–6

## **Reflection questions**

What return do I make to the Lord for all the good God has done for me? When I know myself as a sinner, to whom do I turn?

## **Conversation**

St. Ignatius suggests one imagine oneself at the foot of the cross and ask: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What will I do for Christ? Then speak whatever comes to your mind and heart.

## **Personal reflection**

# “God be Merciful to Me a Sinner”

## **Presence of God**

Open yourself to God’s abiding presence as you ponder these words: “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all of your heart.” —Jeremiah 29:13

## **What I pray for**

I pray for a healthy sense of shame and confusion when I consider the ways my sins have affected my relationship with God, my family, and so many others.

## **Reflection**

When St. Ignatius invites us to consider the sinful actions and omissions of our lives, we do this with the awareness of how Jesus treated sinners. Jesus said this about His mission: “I have come not to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.” The righteous are people who justify their actions. But we are in good company when we admit we are sinners; we are among those whom Jesus came to save. We see in the Gospels that physical healings are just a sign of a deeper healing Jesus wants to give—pardon of sins. At this point in the retreat, recall those sins and omission where you need God’s forgiveness. Where has selfishness affected my relationships? Where has jealousy tainted my heart? Where has my tongue been a sword that slays others? Who have I not forgiven? Where might we have given into the lure of what are called capital sins: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. We have sinned. But God came to forgive us our sins when we turn to him and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Assured of His forgiveness, then we can begin to forgive ourselves.

## **Scripture**

He then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their righteousness and despised everyone else. Two people went up to the temple area to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, “O God I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and pay tithes on my whole income.” But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast and prayed, “O God be merciful to me a sinner.” I tell you the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted. —Luke 18.9–14

The Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. Jesus said, “Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone . . . Go and from now on, do not sin anymore.” —John 8. 2–11

## **Reflection questions**

With whom do you identify in the Gospel stories? What does Jesus want from a sinner?

## **Conversation**

Talk to Jesus regarding how you feel about your identity as a sinner and thank Him for his forgiveness.

## **Personal reflection**

# The Gift of Forgiveness

## Presence of God

Open yourself to God's abiding presence by pondering: "Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord that He may teach us His ways and we walk in His paths." —Isaiah 2:3

## What I pray for

To experience the comfort of the words of God from Ezekiel: "I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you."

## Reflection

Many Christians have taken the phrase: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" too literally. This literal interpretation has caused some people to give up trying to be good Christians because they know they cannot be perfect. Yet our experience is that we always fall short; we sin. We are creatures and fragile. St. Paul knew this when he said the good he wanted to do, he ended up not doing and what did not want to do, he ended up doing. Later he asks, "Who will deliver me from this mortal body?" (Romans 7:24) And his immediate response is, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 7:25) It is Jesus who saves us from our becoming our sin; moreover, He loves us in our brokenness and sinfulness by the gift of forgiveness. This forgiveness empowers us to forgive ourselves and forgive others. According to St. Ignatius, our identity is being a loved sinner. With this realization, we are invited to cry out in gratitude and wonder how we have been allowed to live and even prosper when we have misused others, have tarnished the goods of the earth, and even tried to be God.

## **Scripture**

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So, he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’” So, he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. —Luke 15:11–20

## **Reflection question**

What was missing in the son’s relationship with his father? Recall the times when God has treated you in a similar way to the prodigal son after we came to our senses.

## **Conversation**

Speak to God about his promise: “I will give you a new heart and new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” —Ezekiel 36:36

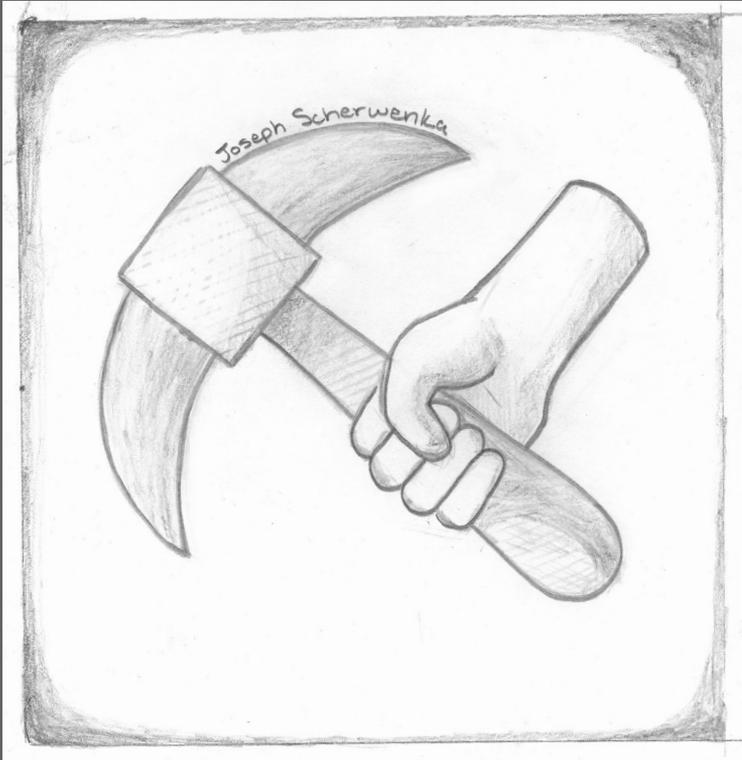
## **Personal reflection**

**Record your Week One reflections here.**

# Week Two

**Come to me all you who labor and are  
burdened . . . Learn from me.**

Matthew 11.28-30



# Invited to Companionship

## **Presence of God**

Consider God’s abiding presence in the invitation of these words: “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find help.” —Hebrews 4:16

## **What I pray for**

To be able to listen to the invitation of Christ as He invites you to accompany Him in building the Kingdom of God in this world.

## **Reflection**

When we move through the first phase of the Spiritual Exercises and experience ourselves as forgiven sinners, we want to do something more. We do not have to look far. Ignatius asks us to consider the call of Christ the King. As we consider this call, Christ is clear about His mission and the invitation: Building a Kingdom of justice, love, and peace. He wants to bring about God’s dream for all men and women who are experiencing what Christ says in another place: “I came that you may have life and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10) As Christ is clear about His mission, He is equally clear about needing our help to continue building the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. What He began as a master builder when He walked the earth, He needs us to continue. He promises to be our companion in this enterprise. It will not always be easy. The work is hard. But the reward will be a full life now and to share His glory someday.

## **Scripture**

The next day John was at the Jordan again with two of his disciples and as he watched, Jesus walked by. He said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi (which translated means teacher) where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So, they went and saw where He was staying and spent the whole day with Him. —John 1:35–39

Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom and curing every disease and illness. At the sign of the crowds His heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned. Then He said to His disciples: “The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few.” —Matthew 9:35–37

## **Reflection questions**

What makes Christ so attractive to the disciples? Who are the troubled and abandoned today and who is caring for them? Is that the way He wants us to follow Him?

## **Conversation**

Speak to Jesus about the hopes and fears you have about His call to follow Him.

## **Personal reflection**

# Mary's "Yes"

## **Presence of God**

Ponder that God is present in a special way through this invitation: "Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of God has risen upon you." —Isaiah 60:1

## **What I pray for**

An interior knowledge of God's love for me because his Son became human for me.

## **Reflection**

To introduce the prayer on the Annunciation, St. Ignatius has an imaginary contemplation about the three persons of the Trinity gazing on all men and women on the face of the earth. They see some men and women being born, some dying, some at peace, some at war, some weeping, others laughing. They do not know who they are, where they are going, or how to get there. They are lost. So, the Trinity decides: "Let us work the redemption of the human race"—redeeming them from their blindness and sinfulness and introducing them to God's dream for them. So, they send their messenger, Gabriel, to Mary with a greeting that baffles her and with an invitation that confuses her. She was being asked to take part in God's plan for humanity. She was to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. With her questions answered and the information that her cousin, Elizabeth, had conceived a child when she was past child-bearing years, Mary consented to God's plan. "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14) St. Ignatius invites people to use their imaginations when they pray over Gospel scenes. Listen to what the people are saying. Watch how they are acting. Enter into the scene.

## **Scripture**

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one. The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus." . . . But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing is impossible with God." And Mary said: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." —Luke 1.26–38

## **Reflection questions**

Can you identify with the fear and the questions of Mary? What has Mary's "yes" meant for the whole human race?

## **Conversation**

Have a conversation with Mary and speak to her about what troubled you or consoled you as you prayed.

## **Personal reflection**

# The Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ

## **Presence of God**

Ponder God's presence by reflecting on God's closeness to us:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.”

—Titus 2:11

## **What I pray for**

An interior knowledge of the Lord who was born for me that I may love Him more intensely and follow Him more closely.

## **Reflection**

**The Proclamation of Christmas provides the context of our prayer on the birth of Jesus:**

“Unknown ages from the time when God created the heavens and the earth and then formed man and a woman in his own image. Several thousand years after the flood, when God made the rainbow to shine forth as a sign of the covenant. Twenty-one centuries from the time of Abraham and Sarah; thirteen centuries after Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt. Eleven hundred years from the time of Ruth and the Judges; one thousand years from the anointing of David King; in the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of Daniel. In the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad; the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the foundation of Rome. The forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus; the whole world being at peace, Jesus Christ, Son of the eternal father, desiring to sanctify the world by His most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and nine months having passed since his conception, was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary. The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## **Scripture**

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So, all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph, too, went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were struck with great fear. The angel said, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is the Messiah the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” —Luke 2:1–14

## **Reflection questions**

Where do you put yourself in this scene? What do you see and hear? What is the significance of the announcement to shepherds?

## **Conversation**

Speak individually with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus and say what comes to your mind and heart.

## **Personal reflection**

# The Baptism of Jesus

## **Presence of God**

Recall God's presence within you and surrounding you by considering: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call on Him in truth." —Psalm 145:18

## **What I pray for**

A deepening awareness of the relationship between Jesus and His Father as well gratitude for the gift of our own baptism.

## **Reflection**

After about thirty years of a very ordinary life, except a brief experience at the temple at the age of 12, Jesus lines up with others to be baptized by his cousin, John. Some wonder why it took Jesus so long to become a public figure and begin His work. Two reasons support the delay. The first is that Jesus had to grow in a human awareness of Himself as Messiah. He did through pondering and praying over the Hebrew Scriptures. The other reason given by a commentator is that many people can identify more with Jesus in His hidden life than His public life. This is because most of our lives are very ordinary. The fact is that Jesus, like us, is building the kingdom of God day by day in enjoying friendships, working with His hands, and praying as much as He did by preaching and miracles. So, when Jesus goes to John to be baptized, John objects. Then he gives in and Jesus receives confirmation of His identity as Beloved Son. Another commentator said that Jesus's awareness of being beloved Son of God is what got Him through all the difficult times in His life. The same is true for us; in baptism we are named as beloved sons and daughters of God.

## **Scripture**

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John tried to dissuade Him. “It is I who need baptism from you,” he said, “and yet you come to me.” But Jesus replied, “Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands.” At this, John gave in to Him. As soon as Jesus was baptized, He came up from the water and suddenly the heavens opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him. And a voice spoke from Heaven, “This is my Son, the Beloved, my favor rests on Him.”

—Matthew 3.13–17

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption through which we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God. —Romans 8.14,16

## **Reflection question**

Imagine what Jesus was feeling when the Father told Him he was the Father’s beloved son. What does it mean for you to be called a “child of God” and be able to cry out, “Abba?”

## **Conversation**

Talk to Jesus and the Father about their familial relationship with you and your relationship with Them.

## **Personal reflection**

# Retreat and Temptations of Jesus

## **Presence of God**

Ponder the presence of God surrounding you and his Word of invitation: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

—James 4:8

## **What I pray for**

To enter into the experience of Jesus as tempted like me that I may know Him better as God-man.

## **Reflection**

Many people go on retreat every year. Their reasons vary. Some people need time to slow down and let life catch up with them. Others want to tune up their relationship with God. And some want to have the time to make a prayerful, major decision in their lives. My sense is that Jesus went to the desert right after His baptism because He was overwhelmed by hearing His Father’s voice and feeling the presence of the Spirit. He needed time to absorb the experience and understand where He was being led. There is a similarity between contemporary retreats and what Jesus experienced, letting silence and solitude lead one to a deeper communion with God. During His time in the desert, Jesus was vulnerable and experienced temptations. A commentator states that the only way the temptations were recorded in Scripture is because Jesus must have told His disciples about His experience. These temptations are expressed in a stylized way, but they were as real as any we experience. He was tempted to give into the desire to have many possessions, the desire to be important, and the desire to have power. He resisted because he was not a worldly leader, but his mission was to touch peoples’ hearts with love and forgiveness.

## **Scripture**

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which He was very hungry and the tempter came and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.” The devil then took Him to the holy city and made Him stand on the parapet of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you in his angels’ charge and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.” Next taking Him to a very high mountain, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “I will give you all these,” he said, “if you fall at my feet and worship me.” Then Jesus replied. “Be off Satan.” Then the devil left Him.

—Matthew 4.1.11

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who has similarly been tested in every way but without sin. So, let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help. —Hebrews 4.15–16

## **Reflection questions**

Do I see temptation, as it was for Jesus, as a way for me to choose the kind of person I want to be? Do I see my temptations as wanting to possess, receive recognition, and have power as ends and not means?

## **Conversation**

“Confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace for timely help.”

## **Personal reflection**

# The First Sermon of Jesus

## **Presence of God**

Ponder God's creating presence within you and around you and consider His Word: "But for me it is good to be near God; I have made God my refuge." —Psalm 73:28

## **What I pray for**

To come to know Him as my Savior that I may love Him more dearly and follow him more surely.

## **Reflection**

When a company, a school, or a parish develops a mission statement, it is meant to describe the purpose of the group and what it intends to accomplish. When I was on a board for a social service agency, each board meeting began with a reading of the mission statement to help the directors focus on what we were doing and why we were doing it. Sad to say, sometimes mission statements get printed, framed, and posted but they are just part of the decor. But when a mission statement animates the lives of people in an organization, then it becomes a living document. In the Gospels, Jesus issues His mission statement in the first sermon He gave after coming from His retreat in the desert. He goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath and reads a scripture passage that identifies His mission and ministry. After reading the Scripture, His first sermon was only nine words. It initially drew applause, but later criticism. The criticism came because His listeners thought they knew Him and would not believe He was anyone other than a hometown boy.

## **Scripture**

Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath as He usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed Him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight, to set the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. —Isaiah 61.12

Rolling up the scroll, He handed it back to the assistant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at Him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke highly of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His mouth. But they also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” —Luke 4.16–22

## **Reflection questions**

Who were the people Jesus was sent to minister to? Do I consider myself in any of the categories? How does “This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen,” apply to you?

## **Conversation**

Speak to Jesus person to person as your Savior. What good news do you need to hear from Him? What kind of captivity do you need to be freed from? What insight do you need to have?

## **Personal reflection**

# Jesus Calls Zacchaeus and Dines with Him

## Presence of God

Open yourself to God's creative presence in you and around you and ponder: "Find your delight in the Lord, who will give you your heart's desire." —Psalm 37.4

## What I pray for

That I may come to know Jesus and the type of people He hangs around with because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

## Reflection

When we were young, our parents warned us not to hang around with friends who were troublemakers. They had bad reputations and our association with them would tarnish our reputation. These were legitimate concerns of our parents. But Jesus must not have heard such a warning from His parents. He hung around with people with bad reputations. "I have come not to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners." (Luke 5:32) Along with his disciples and apostles, He chose the company of sinners, tax collectors, and women with bad reputations. One of the people He signaled out was a man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a tax collector and as a representative of the Roman regime, was hated by the Jews. In Greek, his name means "pure;" but it stopped with his name. Because of his profession, he had to develop thick skin and was always shunned and despised. So he kept his distance from Jesus, a Jew, and climbed a tree to get a better view of him passing by. Little did he suspect that Jesus would notice him but also invite Himself to Zacchaeus' home. Just this brief contact with Jesus led him to repentance.

## **Scripture**

Jesus came through Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was chief tax collector, and a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was about to pass by. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” And he came down quickly and received Him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything for anyone, I shall repay four times over.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man, too, is a descendent of Abraham, for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.” —Luke 19:1–10

## **Reflection questions**

What do you think attracted Zacchaeus to Jesus? What would cause Zacchaeus to receive Jesus with joy? What happened to Zacchaeus that made him give away half of his possessions and make a promise of restitution?

## **Conversation**

Speak to Jesus about your reactions to the Zacchaeus story and what His invitation might be to you.

## **Personal reflection**

# Jesus Meets the Woman at the Well

## **Presence of God**

Recall God's creative presence in you and around you and ponder: "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them." —Revelation 21.4

## **What I pray for**

That I may come to know the heart of Jesus and His desire to quench the deepest thirsts and hungers of everyone.

## **Reflection**

When we were growing up, we were taught many rules that were expectations in family life, Church life, and our relationships with others. We followed these rules without knowing where they came from and why they are important for good order and respect for others. But as adults we began to understand the spirit behind many of the rules. And another thing we learned was that rules were norms for behavior and sometimes needed to be adapted or changed due to evolving circumstances. So as a young man, Jesus had to learn 613 rules of the Torah that regulated a Jew's relationship with God and others. Any violations would make a person unclean, needing purification before ritual holiness could be restored. But Jesus knew the spirit of the laws; and He taught that they needed to be adapted to persons, places, and circumstances. Because Jesus adapted the laws, He received much criticism from the Scribes and Pharisees. He said that Sabbath was for the person and not the person for the Sabbath. He touched people with diseases or who were deceased. He associated with non-Jews and people with bad reputations. He went to the margins.

## **Scripture**

Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down beside Jacob's well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman said to Him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water that I shall give will never thirst." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not be thirsty." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband and come back." The woman answered, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband;' for you have had five husbands." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I can see you are a prophet." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming; when He comes, He will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I am He, the one speaking to you."

—John 4.4–26 (Passage is abbreviated here.)

## **Reflection questions**

What is this woman really thirsting for? For what do you thirst? Jesus reveals Himself as Messiah to a sinner. What does this say about Him?

## **Conversation**

In your imagination, sit by that well and speak to Jesus about your deepest hungers and thirst and let Him speak to your heart.

## **Personal reflection**

# Jesus Says Who He Is

## **Presence of God**

Recall God's creative presence in you and around you at this moment and ponder His word: "Behold I am with you always until the end of the age." —Matthew 26.20

## **What I pray for**

That I may come to know Christ and become more aware of how He cares for me every day.

## **Reflection**

Almost daily we fill in our personal information online: our name, our address, our phone number, and our e-mail address. Such bits of information describe minimal external facts about us; but they do not reveal what is most important about us and what makes us unique: our motivations, our gifts, our dreams, and our relationships. These are the characteristics that make us attractive to others. They reveal our heart and soul. So, as we pray and study about Jesus, we are invited to know Jesus in the fullness of His personality. The study of theology gives us some knowledge about Jesus. But it is only through prayer that we come to appreciate His humanity, His gifts, His dreams, and how He relates with others. In John's Gospel, the writer uses six metaphors to describe Jesus. These metaphors describe who Jesus is in Himself, how He wants to be for others, and how He wants to be for us. Metaphors are not literal but poetic, opening our imagination to the real.

### **Scripture: John's Gospel**

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never hunger; he whoever believes in me will never thirst. —John 6.35

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness; but will have the light of life. —John 8.12

I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. —John 10.11

I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live. —John 11.25

Í am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. —John 14.6

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him will bear much fruit because without me you can do nothing. —John 15.5

### **Reflection questions**

How do these metaphors give you a deeper insight into the personality of Jesus? How has the Risen Lord, through the power of the Spirit, been bread, light, shepherd, resurrection, the way, and the vine for you?

### **Conversation**

Speak heart to heart with Jesus, being grateful for one of the metaphors which best captures who He is for you.

### **Personal reflection**

# The Parable of the Sower

## **Presence of God**

Recall God's creative presence in you and around you at this moment and ponder His Word: "Wait eagerly for the Lord and keep His way." —Psalm 37:34

## **What I pray for**

That I may listen attentively to God's word and let it draw me to greater intimacy of the Risen Lord.

## **Reflection**

When we hear a sermon, read a passage from Scripture, or hear someone talk about his or her prayer life, we often feel we do not measure up in our faith life. When we step back, we might give ourselves a C+. Negative attitudes about ourselves come from focusing on our shortcomings and not our gifts. We feel we are never enough—a good enough parent, a successful enough student, a competent businessperson, or a good enough son or daughter. We put more demands on ourselves than God does. That is why Jesus shares the parable of the sower and the seed. He is not telling the parable for His disciples and listeners to feel guilty or bad about themselves. He is inviting people to reflect on their lives as listeners to the Word of God and then to make decisions on how to become better listeners. The challenge with the parable is to start our reflection by asking ourselves: Where is the seed falling on good ground in my life? By starting there, we will know better what gets in the way of being better listeners and doers. Best of all, God will take the lead to show us where we can improve. God is more interested in our being good ground for His Word than we are.

## **Scripture**

And Jesus spoke to the crowds at length in parables, saying, “A sower went out to sow. As he sowed, some seed fell on the path and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep and when the sun rose it was scorched and withered for lack of roots. Some fell among thorns, and thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit, a hundred-, or sixty- or thirtyfold.” Hear the parable. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no roots and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word, and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred-, or sixty-, or thirtyfold.

—Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23

## **Reflection questions**

Where is God’s word bearing sixtyfold in your life? What prevents you from being a better listener to the Word?

## **Conversation**

Speak to Jesus about the ways you are grateful for living your Christian life and ways to improve.

## **Personal reflection**

# Peter Gives Us Hope

## **Presence of God**

Recall God's dwelling in you because of your baptism and ponder God's word: "Courage, it is I do not be afraid." —Mark 6:50

## **What I pray for**

That I come to know Jesus better by observing how He works in others and gain a deeper appreciation of how He works in me.

## **Reflection**

The story of Peter, the apostle, gives us hope as we strive to grow in our love of God and our neighbor. Jesus's invitation to Peter to become a follower was marked by Peter's awareness of his sinfulness. This did not stop Jesus from promising Peter that he will become a "fisher of men and women." Even with the promise and then having left all, Peter asked Jesus what might be in it for him. Again, this did not stop Jesus from inviting Peter to special times of intimacy, especially at the Transfiguration and at the agony in the garden. Peter had the insight and grace to confess Jesus was the Messiah. Peter had the bravado to ask Jesus to let him walk on water. And it was Peter, at the Last Supper, who did not want Jesus to wash his feet. And it was Peter who three times denied he knew Jesus during Jesus's trials. Finally, it was Peter who confessed to Jesus after the resurrection that he loved Him. Impulsive, concerned about himself, denying Him, keeping Jesus at a distance, yet loving Him with his whole heart, this was Peter. Despite Peter's failures, he was made head of the Church. Peter's saving grace was he always came back to the side of Jesus. This way of proceeding can be ours.

## **Scripture**

Jesus said to Simon and his brother Andrew: “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. At once they left their nets and followed him. —Matthew 4:19–20

When Simon Peter saw the miraculous catch of fish, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” —Luke 5:8

Lord, if it is you, command me to come to come to you across the water. Jesus said, “Come.” When Peter felt the wind, he became frightened and began to sink. —Matthew 14:28–30

Peter said to Jesus, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.” Simon Peter said to Him, “Not only my feet but my hands and head as well.” —John 13:8

And they said to him, “You are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” —John 18:25

Jesus said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to Him, “You know everything, you know I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” —John 21:1

## **Reflection questions**

How do you identify with Peter? What gives you hope when you look at the relationship between Jesus and Peter?

## **Conversation**

Talk with Peter about what always brought him back to the side of Jesus.

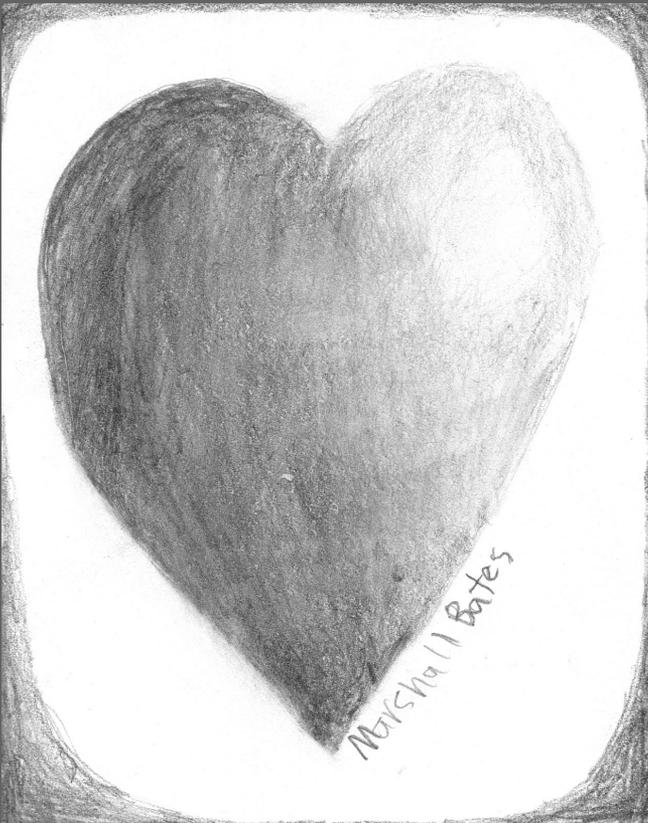
## **Personal reflection**

**Record your Week Two reflections here.**

# Week Three

I have loved you with an everlasting love.

Jeremiah 31:3



# The Last Supper

## **Presence of God**

Recall God giving you life at this moment as well as the gift of creation and ponder these words: “The word is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.”

—Deuteronomy 30.14

## **What I pray for**

That I come to know Jesus’s love, presence, and saving action in the Eucharist.

## **Reflection**

With this reflection, the retreat moves into its third phase. St. Ignatius invites a person to begin the considerations of the passion and the death of Jesus. From our experience, we know how difficult it is to sit vigil with someone during the final days of their life. We cherish and remember any conversation, expressions of love, and have compassion for their pain and suffering. So, it is with Jesus as He moves into the final days of His life. We hear His words of love in His final lecture in John’s Gospel and listen to His dying words from the pulpit of the cross. But we also witness how He is tortured and executed as a criminal. We are invited to respond with compassion. This final journey begins with the Last Supper, recounted in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; but John’s focus is on the washing of the feet of the disciples. Both portray Jesus’s desire to continue His presence among us after He dies, rises, and ascends to Heaven. The Eucharist will be a special way His saving act will continue to be present and effective in the world. But His presence also continues through us serving one another as the body of Christ by figuratively washing the feet of our brothers and sisters.

## **Scripture**

While they were eating, He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take it; this is my body.” Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. They all drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you. I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”

—Mark 14.22–25

He rose from the supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around His waist. Then He began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around His waist. So, when He had washed their feet and put His garment back on and reclined at table again, He said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me teacher and master, and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you should wash one another’s feet . . . Amen, Amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master, nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him.” —John 13.4–6, 12–16

## **Reflection questions**

Christ wanted to continue His saving presence in the Eucharist. What does this say to you? Would you allow Christ to wash your feet? How do you wash the feet of others?

## **Conversation**

As you ponder the gift of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, speak to Jesus about what is in your heart.

## **Personal reflection**

# The Agony in the Garden

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God keeps you in existence at this very moment as well as all that surrounds you and ponder: “My soul be at rest in God alone.” —Psalm 62.6

## **What I pray for**

That I may grow in compassion for Jesus as He experiences the agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

## **Reflection**

All of us have seen news clips of the fear in the eyes of parents with their children running through streets while bombs are tearing apart buildings around them. Many of us have seen a picture of the sadness in the eyes of a mother holding her child dying of malnutrition. We have seen the images of grieving parents sprawled over the casket of a deceased child. These images of anguish and fear make us feel helpless and tear at our heartstrings. By Jesus’s becoming human, He, too, was vulnerable to pain, fear, and anguish. Our consolation is that He carries with him these human experiences as resurrected Christ and so understands what we go through. One of the experiences He carries in his Sacred Heart is His agony in the garden. It was that moment in His life when He went to prayer in desperation. He was experiencing the imminent threats of the religious authorities to get rid of Him. He feared what might come and knew He probably would end up dying. He was overwhelmed. So, He goes to the garden to pray with his disciples. In His prayer He called out to His Father but knew what He needed to do to be true to His mission. As He anguished, all He asked was that His closest companions stand by.

## **Scripture**

Then they came to a place called Gethsemane and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with Him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Remain here and keep watch." He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by Him; He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup from me, but not as I will but as you will." When He returned, He found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Withdrawing again, He prayed the same thing. Then He returned again and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer Him. He returned a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. Behold the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. My betrayer is at hand." —Mark 14.32–42

## **Reflection questions**

The disciples slept. What would you have done if you had been present? Entering the consciousness of Jesus, what could have caused him to sweat blood?

## **Conversation**

Talk to Jesus about what comes to your mind and heart.

## **Personal reflection**

# Jesus is Sentenced to Death

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life and your surroundings and ponder God's word: "My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation." —Psalm 62.1

## **What I pray for**

That I can be compassionate as Jesus is subjected to condemnation for breaking the law when His whole life was doing good for people.

## **Reflection**

It is always a triumph of justice in our culture when a person is released from prison because the evidence was faulty. In Old Testament times, many prophets were killed because they spoke the truth people did not want to hear. There was no evidence presented and they were condemned. John the Baptist was imprisoned and killed because he criticized Herod for being married to his brother's wife. The same held true for the greatest of prophets, Jesus who is the Word of the Father. The final injustices were perpetrated against Jesus after He had been betrayed by one of His closest companions. He was brought to trial before the Jewish leadership in the Sanhedrin. Only false testimony was brought forward. When Jesus is asked directly, "Are you the Son of God?" His answer was, "You say that I am." Admitting the truth about His identity brought Him condemnation. Since the Jews could not kill a person, Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, who found no reason to put Him to death. But he capitulated to the crowds, had Him scourged, and handed over to be crucified. Injustice is on bold display.

## **Scripture**

When day came, the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought Jesus before the Sanhedrin. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." But He replied to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They all asked, "Are you the son of God?" He replied to them, "You say that I am." They then said, "What further need have we for testimony. We have heard it from his own mouth." —Luke 22.66–71

Pilate addressed the crowd, still wishing to release Jesus, but they continued their shouting, "Crucify him, crucify him." Pilate addressed them, "What evil has this man done? I find him guilty of no capital crime." With loud shouts, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So, he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished. —John 23.15–25

## **Reflection questions**

What do you think was going on in the mind of Jesus during these trials? Why would Pilate, who found no guilt in Jesus, allow Him to be put to death?

## **Conversation**

Talk with Jesus about how you feel as you witness Him being treated so unjustly.

## **Personal reflection**

# Jesus Carries His Cross

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life at this moment and surrounding you with gifts as you ponder: “Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.” —James 4:8

## **What I pray for**

I may be filled with compassion as I watch Jesus on His death march through the streets of Jerusalem.

## **Reflection**

Every year in January, this nation pauses to remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his marches for civil rights. His memorable speeches such as “I Have a Dream” are recited with enthusiasm. And the replay of his being shot at a motel is viewed with horror. Most of all, he was the voice of his black brothers and sisters who were deprived of some of the rights other Americans enjoyed. He believed all men and women are created equal and everyone is precious in God’s eyes. What kept Dr. King marching was his faith, especially his faith in Jesus who died for all. He knew that the crucified Jesus is no stranger. So, in our prayer, we look to Jesus as He was on the way to be murdered for taking the stand that all men and women are equally loved by God and worth dying for. So, after Jesus was sentenced to death, He was paraded through the streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha—about two thousand feet. Weak physically and emotionally drained from being mercilessly flogged, mocked, and spit upon, He needed help to make it to Golgotha. So, Simon was recruited to shoulder the cross. His only comfort was the loving glance of His mother now and then as their eyes met from a distance.

## **Scripture**

As they led him away, they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep, instead, for yourselves and for your children. Indeed, the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ At that time people will say to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us, for if these things are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’” Now two others were led away with him to be executed. —Luke 23:26–32

## **Reflection questions**

What do you think was the motivation that kept Jesus moving forward on the way of the cross? Where would you have been in the crowd watching? What would you have felt as you watched?

## **Conversation**

What do you want to say to Jesus at this time?

## **Personal reflection**

# Jesus is Crucified and Dies

## **Presence of God**

Recall God is gifting you with life at this very moment and surrounding you with so many gifts. Ponder His word: “Behold, the dwelling of God is with us.” —Revelations 21:3

## **What I pray for**

That I may know deeply in my heart what Christ has done for me, what He is doing for me, and what He will do for me.

## **Reflection**

My father had been hospitalized for congestive heart failure. One evening after visiting, my mother and I were getting ready to leave and my mother turned to my father and asked, “Doug, do you love me?” And his immediate reply was, “Margaret, you know that I love you.” These turned out to be the last words between mom and dad. He died unexpectedly early the next morning. In our country some professors have given what they termed their last lecture. In such lectures the speaker feels very free to reveal values they live by, share their wisdom about life, and express their affection and gratitude for their students, colleagues, and friends. This happens, too, when friends comfort one another as one is dying. They speak of those things they have always wanted to share with each and the love they have for each other. This is what Jesus did from the cross. His words were His last lecture from the pulpit of the cross, His concern and love were for others and His Father, and not focused on His own pain.

## **Scripture**

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

—Luke 23.34

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

—Matthew 27.46

“Woman, behold your son!” Then he said to the disciple,  
“Behold your mother.”

—John 19.26–27

“I thirst!” —John 19.28

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

—Luke 23.43

“It is finished!”

—John 19.30

“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

—Luke 23.46

## **Reflection questions**

What do you hear in each of the seven last words spoken by Jesus from the cross? He cannot breathe, yet He speaks aloud in prayer and care. In what ways am I invited to be less self-preoccupied?

## **Conversation**

Stand with Mary at the foot of the cross in silence and speak your words of love.

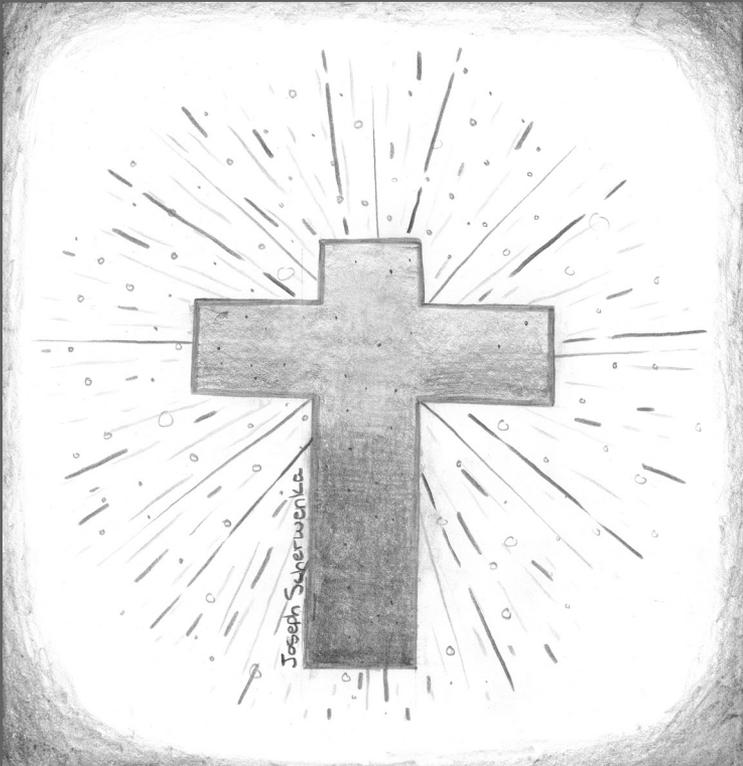
## **Personal reflection**

**Record your Week Three reflections here.**

# Week Four

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

Gerard Manley Hopkins



# The Risen Lord Appears to His Mother

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life at this moment and surrounding you with gifts as you ponder: “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack.” —Psalm 23:1

## **What I pray for**

That I may experience the joy that was Christ’s in having passed through death to risen life and the joy that was Mary’s in seeing her son alive.

## **Reflection**

With this reflection, we move into the fourth phase of the Spiritual Exercises that focus on the Resurrected Christ. In these reflections, we are not to spend time on the mechanics of the resurrection because this will always remain a mystery. Instead, we are invited to witness how Christ consoles those He appears to. His divinity is no longer hidden, yet He does very human things like eating, being hospitable, talking, and surprising His friends and disciples. In His first reflection on the Resurrection, Ignatius proposes a scene that is not contained in Scripture. It is Jesus appearing to His mother. Their mother/son relationship began with His conception when her “yes” led to her body becoming the dwelling place for the Son of God for nine months. It was her DNA He received. She loved Him as any mother loves the child of her womb. And as with any mother, her life was filled with joy at who He had become and what He did. And at the same time, her heart was broken when she heard Him criticized, condemned, and then crucified. Mary lived her life for Jesus and so needed consolation after His death. So, Jesus’s appearance to Mary would be what any loving son would do.

## **Scripture**

### **Special moments of Mary with Jesus:**

She gave birth to her first-born son. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger . . . The shepherds made known the message that had been told them about this child . . . Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. —Luke 2

When they found Him, his mother said to Him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” —Luke 2.48–49

Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother. —John 19.26–27

Although I do not have a Scripture account to guide me, I can easily know the excitement of Jesus in wanting to share the joy of the resurrection with His mother who stood by Him throughout the passion. I let the delight and love of this encounter penetrate my being.  
—Spiritual Exercises 299, D. Fleming, S.J. (translator)

### **Reflection questions**

What would have led Ignatius to propose the appearance of the Risen Lord to His mother? Using your imagination, what might have been the dialogue between mother and son?

### **Conversation**

Speak to Jesus and Mary about how you feel about his resurrection and His new role as consoler.

### **Personal reflection**

# The Risen Lord Meets His Disciples

## **Presence of God**

Recall God is gifting you with life at this very moment and surrounds you with so many gifts. Ponder His invitation: “Give thanks to the Lord, who is good.” —Psalm 106:1

## **What I pray for**

That I may experience the joy that was Christ’s in having passed through death to risen life and the joy of the disciples in seeing Him.

## **Reflection**

Father Donald Senior, a theologian, has written an outstanding article on the resurrection. It originally appeared in *Origins* several years ago. One paragraph expresses very clearly the mystery: “The most radical and most fundamental of Christian beliefs is that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified under the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, rose from the dead, body, and spirit. If Christ be not raised, we are, in Paul’s words, the most pitiable of all people. But Christian faith affirms: The tomb is empty. The bones of Jesus exist but are part of a transformed bodily being whose beauty, mobility, connection to the universe and to the God of the universe is beyond our ken and only imaginable in small part through the eyes of faith. That destiny that we see now only darkly, as through a mirror, is—because of God’s infinite redeeming love—also ours.” After the resurrection, Jesus is the same and yet different. He surprises people. And initially people wonder if it is really Him. Yet, His message and manner are consistent and comforting.

## **Scripture**

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain, they are retained.” Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples said, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Now a week later, his disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving but believe.” Thomas answered and said, “My Lord, and my God.” Jesus said to him, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” —John 20.19–29

## **Reflection question**

How is Jesus consoler to the disciples and what consolation do you want from Him?

## **Conversation**

Speak with Jesus about the times He has consoled you in your life by forgiving your sins.

## **Personal reflection**

# The Risen Lord Surprises Mary Magdalen

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life at this very moment and surrounding you with so many gifts. Ponder His word: “Surely, I wait for the Lord, who bends down to me and hears my cry.”

—Psalm 40:1

## **What I pray for**

That I may experience the joy of the Risen Lord who has passed through death to life and that I may feel His consolation.

## **Reflection**

Many of us have experienced being so consumed with grief or pain that time just stops. We become oblivious to what is going on around us. Voices around us become distant. And we become incapable of hearing or responding well. On the other hand, many of us have seen on TV how a military dad who has been deployed for a year returns home. On his return, he wants to surprise his son at school. So, he walks through the door of his son’s classroom. Unbelief immediately registers on the son’s face before he jumps out of his desk, runs to his dad, jumps into his arms, and does not let him go. These are the kind real-life situations we are invited to bring to Scripture stories to let them come alive for us. The heavy and the joyful feelings from these stories are apropos to what is going on with the appearance of the Risen Lord to Mary Magdalen. Mary is consumed with grief because she received the shock of her life. Her true love who forgave her and restored her to life was gone. He was crucified, died, and was buried. Now even his dead body was missing from the tomb. But her grief turned into a joyful reunion.

## **Scripture**

Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw the two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but she did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to Him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni,” which means teacher. Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and told them what He told her.  
—John 20.11–18

## **Reflection questions**

Mary hears her name; and she recognizes Him. Why would that open her eyes? Mary is sent as the bearer of Good News. What does that say about the place of women in the Bible?

## **Conversation**

Spend time in conversation with Mary probing what was the source of her great love of Jesus.

## **Personal reflection**

# The Risen Lord Prepares Breakfast for Friends

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life at this very moment and surrounding you with his gifts. Ponder His Word: “My soul thirsts for God, the living God.” —Psalm 42:3

## **What I pray for**

That I may experience the joy of the Risen Lord who passed through death to life.

## **Reflection**

Brendan Byrne, S.J. is a New Testament scholar in Australia. He has written commentaries on all four Gospels. His commentary on the Gospel of Luke he titles: “The Hospitality of God.” He titles the commentary this way because he sees “the life and ministry of Jesus as a divine visitation to the world seeking hospitality. The One who comes as visitor and guest becomes the host and offers hospitality so the entire world can become truly human, be at home, and know salvation in the depths of their hearts.” We see this most evident in scenes like Jesus’s dining in the house of Simon, at the home of Martha and Mary, the generosity of the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and the visit with Zacchaeus in his home. This hospitality of God continues with the Risen Jesus particularly in the scene of Jesus preparing breakfast for his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This hospitality continues in the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. “We will come to him and make our dwelling with him.” —John 14:23

## **Scripture**

Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberius. Seven of the disciples who were fishing, caught nothing all night. When it was dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize Him. He asked if they caught anything, and they said, “No.” He said, “Cast your net over the right side of the boat.” So, they cast it and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So, the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he jumped into the sea. When the others climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and some bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.” So, Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of 153 large fish. Even though there were so many, the net did not break. Jesus said to them, “Come, and have breakfast.” And none of the disciples dared to ask, “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was the third time Jesus was revealed to His disciples after being raised from the dead. —John 21:1–13

## **Reflection question**

What does Peter’s jumping into the water and swimming to shore say about his relationship with Jesus? Imagine the breakfast conversation.

## **Conversation**

Speak with the Risen Lord about the ways He has been hospitable in your life.

## **Personal reflection**

# With a Grateful Heart

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life at this very moment and surrounding you with so many gifts. Ponder his word: “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” —Psalm 107:1

## **What to pray for**

That I may have an intimate knowledge of all the good God shares with me and that I respond in love.

## **Reflection**

St. Ignatius names the final prayer reflection of the Spiritual Exercises, “The Contemplation on the Love of God.” The retreatant is invited to consider all of God’s gifts so that one can grow in a more consistent awareness of God’s fingerprints on everything that is created. There are four ways that God is present in all His gifts. The first two we will consider during this prayer time: God as giver of gifts and God as present in his gifts. Prior to one entering this prayer time, St. Ignatius has two preliminary observations. The first is that love manifests itself in deeds more than words. Words can evaporate, actions leave a mark. Second, love consists in the sharing of goods. A lover is moved to give something of what he/she has to the beloved. There is a mutuality of sharing. This is true of God’s relationship with an individual. There is nothing that God does not share with me. In response I want to share my whole self with Him and with my brothers and sisters. The conversation prayer after each of the four sections is a prayer Ignatius proposes: “Take Lord and receive.” It is a prayer of surrender of my mind, heart, and spirit to God. In return I ask just for God’s love and grace.

### **Contemplation on the Love of God, part 1**

God creates me out of love and desires nothing more than a return of love. So much does God love me that even though I turn away and make little response, the Giver of all good gifts continues to be my Savior and Redeemer. All my natural abilities and gifts, along with the gift of Baptism and the Eucharist and the special graces lavished upon me, are only so many signs of how much God shares divine life with me and wants to share even more.

—Spiritual Exercises, David Fleming, S.J., (translation)

### **Contemplation on the Love of God, part 2**

God not only gives gifts to me, but literally gifts me with the fullness of divine life in Jesus. God's only Son is not only the Word in whom all things are created but also the Word who became flesh and dwells with us. Jesus gives Himself to me so that His body and blood become the food and drink of my life. God pours out upon me His Spirit that I can cry out, "Abba, Father." God loves me so much that I become the dwelling place and temple of God.

—Spiritual Exercises, David Fleming, S.J., (translation)

### **Reflection questions**

What are the gifts of nature and gifts of faith God has given me? (part 1)

What does God's self-giving mean to me? (part 2)

### **Conversation**

If I am to make a reasonable response to God's generosity, what would I say? Perhaps I might want to use these words: Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and grace. That is enough for me.

### **Personal reflection**

# God Is Working for Us All the Time

## **Presence of God**

Recall that God is gifting you with life at this very moment and surrounding you with so many gifts. Ponder His word: “God is in the still small voice.” —1 Kings 19:12

## **What I pray for**

That I may have an intimate knowledge of all God shares with me so that I may respond with loving deeds shown in service to my brothers and sisters.

## **Reflection**

There was a pediatrician who was known for her wonderful ways with children. One of the things she would do is put her stethoscope to the ears of a child and let the little boy or girl listen to their heartbeat. When she was doing this to one of her boy patients one day, she asked him, “What do you hear?” His reply was, “I hear Jesus knocking.” This might have happened to you in prayer or at other times during the retreat. God is more active than we think. Ignatius’s hope for those making the Spiritual Exercises was that the internal senses as well as the external senses would become more attentive to God’s action and presence in the ordinariness of life. This is what he first experienced when he spent hours in prayer beside the Cardoner River while he was in Manresa, Spain—the birthplace of the Spiritual Exercises. His mind was opened to realize that God has a dynamic nature and is intimately involved with us every moment of our lives. These final two reflections on the Contemplation for Obtaining Love put us in touch with the different aspects of God’s dynamic activity in life.

## **Contemplation on the Love of God, part 1**

God loves me so much, even entering into the very struggle of life. Like a potter with clay, like a mother in childbirth, or like a mighty force blowing life into dead bones, God labors to share divine life and love. God's labors are writ large in Jesus's passion and death on a cross to bring forth the life of the Resurrection.

—Spiritual Exercises, David Fleming, S.J. (translator)

## **Contemplation on the Love of God, part 2**

God's love shines down upon me like the light rays from the sun, or God's love is poured forth lavishly like a fountain spinning for its waters into an unending stream. Just as I see the sun in its rays and the fountain in its waters, so God pours forth a sharing in divine life in all the gifts showered upon me. God's delight and joy is to be with the ones called God's children—to be with me—God cannot do enough to speak out and show love for me—ever calling and inviting me to a fuller and better life, a sharing in divine life.

—Spiritual Exercises, David Fleming, S.J. (translator)

## **Reflection questions**

How is God constantly laboring for me? (part 1) How is God, the source of all that is good, alive in all the gifts showered upon you? (part 2)

## **Conversation**

If I am to make a reasonable response, what could I do? Perhaps I might want to respond: Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and grace. That is enough for me.

## **Personal reflection**

**Record your Week Four reflections here.**

# Living the Retreat

The model for living the retreat beyond the thirty days is the Resurrection Story of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. See if you identify with any of the people and/or whether the conversation reflects your prayer experience.

That very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognizing him. He said to them, “What matters are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, “You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days. “What things?” he asked. “All about Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered, “who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death and had Him crucified. Our own hope had been that He would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared He was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of Him they saw nothing.”

Then He said to them, “You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that Christ

should suffer and so enter into His glory?” Then starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, He explained to them the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about Himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, He made as if to go on, but they pressed Him to stay with them. “It is nearly evening,” they said, “and the day is almost over.” So, He went to stay with them. Now while He was with them at the table, He took the bread and said the blessing; then He broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; but He had vanished from their sight. Then they said to one another, “Did not our hearts burn within us as He talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, “Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognized Him at the breaking of the bread. —Luke 24:13–35

### **Facts from the story**

1. The disciples were distraught and were getting out of town.
2. Jesus walks with the disciples, but they do not recognize Him.
3. Jesus invites them to get in touch with their experience.
4. It is Jesus who opens their eyes at the breaking of the bread.
5. They are filled with new hope and new purpose.

### **Prayer form to keep the relationship alive**

We are a lot like the disciples as we go through life, preoccupied by disappointment, not very attentive to our surroundings, blind to the people around us, and needing our eyes to be opened. Through the four weeks of the Spiritual Exercises, we have realized that we do not make God present. God is already present to us. How do we stay attuned and in touch with God’s action in our lives? It is a prayer form suggested by Ignatius called the Examination of Consciousness. He suggests we do this 10–15 minutes a day.

- 1.** Sit down, relax, and realize that God surrounds one with life and love. “Behold God beholding you and smiling.”
- 2.** Recall the events of the day that were enjoyable and delightful. A sense of relief because a big project was completed. A surprise phone call from a longtime friend, etc. As one recalls these happy moments of the day, one can cherish and savor these events and see them as gifts of God. A natural response might be to turn to God to give thanks to the Giver of all good gifts.
- 3.** Then one recalls events of the day that were unpleasant. A fellow worker ignored my suggestion. I snapped at my spouse. I ignored someone I did not like. Events such as these can cause one to feel burdened, guilty, angry, or disappointed in one’s self. They can darken one’s spirit. As one faces these events, one admits one’s helplessness over other people’s actions and realizes one’s own pettiness and brokenness. Then one can recall: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick . . . I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners.” (Matthew 9:12–13) Then we turn to God for healing and forgiveness.
- 4.** Finally, look at the next twenty-four hours. Where does one need God’s presence and wisdom? Perhaps at a difficult meeting. Perhaps in visiting a parent. We pray for a conscious companionship of God on the journey to strengthen us. Close with an Our Father.

**Record your Retreat reflections here.**





MARQUETTE  
UNIVERSITY  
HIGH SCHOOL

---

For Faith, Scholarship and Community