

Week Twelve

After the Exercises

Cheerfulness

How to use this booklet:

These passages have been chosen to underscore a theme that is very important in Ignatian Spirituality and in our walk with Jesus. The general direction of prayer that is envisioned by this booklet is one of Lectio Divina. In this method, the passage one reads is meant to help one to reflect, then to move into prayer with God and then to move into a silent and deep communion with God. This trajectory has been described as a ladder: reading—thinking—praying—contemplating. As one finds oneself distracted at any time in the prayer, one simply goes back to reading the passage, letting the words open us to thinking and praying and contemplating. One might end up reading the passage many times or one might not be able to get through the passage because one stops to think, pray and/contemplate so frequently.

You might want to use one passage all week long, rotate through them or repeat one or another of them. There should be enough material to help someone pray for one week.

You probably want to give yourself at least 30 minutes for this.

Preparatory Prayer:

Ask the Lord to help you to find Him more fully in all the aspects of your life.

Lectio Divina:

Read the passage that you choose, stopping as soon as you feel drawn to reflect on the passage or you feel moved to pray. Let go of your sense of wanting to learn or to finish the passage, but instead desire to be open to God and, if you feel a call to just sit quietly in the presence of God, indulge in that. As you get distracted, return gently to the passage and read some more or read parts of it again. Distractions are natural.

Conclusion:

Thank God for your time and be specific about a time or two that you felt the grace of God or felt touched by God's wisdom.

From an Essay on St. Ignatius:

In Ignatius, <cheerfulness was seen in> a quiet superiority which, at the beginning of his conversion to God, often arose from a sort of discriminating disdain toward others. At any rate, this is one of the most significant pieces of information given us by Pedro de Ribadeneyra: " The Father, at the beginning of his conversion to God, often felt himself tempted to break out laughing at the sight of certain people. He drove this laughter away with blows of the scourge; in fact, he used just as many blows when he had scarcely smiled at someone else." But the diary of Luis Goncalves da Câmara still reports this same inclination in 1555; and he indicates how Ignatius — in an ascetical manner, one could say — has transformed this smiling at others into a happy smile at the blessings or virtues of the one who provoked him to laughter. However, it is a characteristic of the mature Ignatius; it is that cheerful and religious joyousness, prudent and measured " (alegria e facilidade religiosa, gravidade e prudencia) which, according to the Portuguese witness Da Câmara, Ignatius wished to see in his sons. Thus it was that no one enjoyed a well-aimed joke or a comical situation more than Ignatius himself;

such occurrences were always a feast " (grande festa) for him.

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be known to all. The Lord is near.

Pope Francis

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and minds of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept His offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.

AND

St. Philip Neri

Cheerfulness strengthens the heart and makes us persevere in a good life. Therefore, the servant of God ought always to be in good spirits.

We are not saints yet, but we, too, should beware. Uprightness and virtue do have their rewards, in self-respect and in respect from others, and it is easy to find ourselves aiming for the result rather than the cause. Let us aim for joy, rather than respectability. Let us make fools of ourselves from time to time, and thus see ourselves, for a moment, as the all-wise God sees us.

Luke 6: 22-23

²² “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.