

Week Seven

After the Exercises

Bearing with Hardships

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.

Polanco's letter to the Jesuits of Padua conveying St. Ignatius Loyola's comments for them:

I know that with persons who are mindful of their state of life and keep before their eyes Jesus Christ naked on the cross, there is no need for exhortations to accept suffering—particularly since the letter itself shows how well you all accept it if you have some experience of poverty. Nevertheless, by commission of our father in Jesus Christ Master Ignatius, who has a true father's love for you, I will take consolation together with all of you in this grace which his finite Goodness gives us, both here and there, by granting us to experience holy poverty—I do not know how strongly where you are, but very much so here—in keeping with our profession. I call poverty a grace because it is a very special gift from God. Scripture tells us that “poverty and probity are from God”; and how much God loves it has been shown us by his only-begotten Son, who came down from his heavenly seat and chose to be born and brought up in poverty. He loved it not only in life—suffering hunger and thirst, having no place to lay his head—but even in death,

choosing to be stripped of his clothes and deprived of everything, even of water for his thirst.

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall difficulty or distress or persecution or hunger or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake all day we are in danger of death;
we are counted as sheep for the slaughterhouse”

No, in everything we are more than victors through Him who loved us. For I know that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all the universe, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

From *Abandonment to Divine Providence* of Jean Pierre de Caussade

Oh! what delightful peace we enjoy when we have learnt by faith to find God thus in all His creatures! Then is darkness luminous, and bitterness sweet. Faith, while showing us things as they are, changes their ugliness into beauty, and their malice into virtue. Faith is the mother of sweetness, confidence and joy. It cannot help feeling tenderness and compassion for its enemies by whose means it is so immeasurably enriched. The greater the harshness and severity of the creature, the greater by the operation of God, is the advantage to the soul. While the human instrument strives to do harm, the divine Workman in whose hands it is, makes use of its very malice to remove from the soul all that might be prejudicial to it.

Mark 8:34-36

Then Jesus summoned the crowd to Him along with His disciples, and He said to them, “Those who wish to come after Me, must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, but those who lose their life for My sake and for the gospel will save it. What does it profit you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? Or what can you give in exchange for your soul?”