

**A MANUAL OF FORMATION  
FOR  
CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY  
PHASE III  
SHARING EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES**



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**THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES  
FOR CLC GROUPS**

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## THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

Ignatius Loyola is most well-known for his small handbook of prayer exercises entitled the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. He describes these exercises by comparing them to physical exercises such as running, jumping, walking and push-ups. As such they are like physical exercises which keep the body in good shape for health or for ability to play games. They are designed to help people gain spiritual freedom and unity with God and become better instruments of God's goodness, justice, peace and love in this world. As such they are somewhat different from ordinary prayer.

Ignatius was convinced that other people might benefit from the kind of religious experiences he had at Manresa and in his many pilgrimages. He anticipated that people might make these Spiritual Exercises in 30-day retreats, four 8-day retreats or by praying one exercise a day for about 30 weeks.

It was during the crucial experience at Manresa that he began to sketch the lines of this little book. He hoped that others could attain the insights and freedom he had achieved without repeating his near-fatal mistakes. He envisioned the one praying receiving guidance in a step-by-step process of many meditations and contemplations in order to bring the person to a freedom of vision where he/she could see God's will without his/her own fears of selfishness getting in the way.

Its basic premise, repeated over and over, is that growth in relationship with the Trinity is made only in proportion to the surrender of self to God. Over an extended period of time the one praying ponders the purpose and fulfillment of human life and the sin which prevents it. She/he ponders Christ living human life to its fullest, loving his brothers and sisters even to the ultimate sacrifice of himself. She/he ponders Christ's sacrifice of himself leading to the resurrection of a new person born free of time and space, free of selfishness and death, free to love.

Everyone is able to base her/his life and work on the same Principle and Foundation, that is, we humans are created to praise and serve God and by this means to grow to our God-given fulfillment. We do this by using all other things on earth in freedom and become united more intimately with our benevolent, loving God. With serene freedom he/she is to follow the paradoxical leader, Christ, poor, generous, and loving, out into the world to spread the good news that the reign of God has come.

The Spiritual Exercises can be summed up in the sentence Ignatius spoke to Francis Xavier: "Go and set the world on fire with the Love of Christ!"

John English, SJ

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# SHARING EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

## A. Purpose Of This Manual

The CLC way of life is based on Ignatian spirituality which can be summarized in Ignatius' statement: "**I desire to find God in all things, that I may the better love and serve God.**" It includes an ability to pray with scripture and the constant practice of integrating one's life of faith in all aspects of daily living. Such practices are to enable one to discover God's will and act upon it for the greater good of one's family, parish and humanity.

This manual is assembled to assist people to continue the Christian Life Community (CLC) Journey of Life. It presumes that the CLC has already journeyed through Phases I and II. Phases I and II have been summarized in this fashion:

The goal of **Phase I** of the CLC journey is to arrive at two destinations. The first is a lived experience of the overall vision and dynamic of CLC. The second is to gain a heightened awareness of personal interior movement of spirits, for this is fundamental to the members of CLC as they strive to be *Discerning Communities of Apostolic Mission or Service* to the whole of humanity in the spirit of the Church.

There are four important destinations in **Phase II** of the CLC journey. The first is to gain a deeper understanding of Theological Reflection from an Incarnational perspective. The second is to grow in spiritual understanding of our world. The third is to discover the way of decision-making through communal discernment of spirits. The fourth is a preparation for the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

*This Phase III Manual* is the natural follow-up of the fourth destination of *Phase II*. It is designed to be an in-depth experience of Ignatian spirituality gained through an experience of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises from personal prayer and through communal sharing. It is designed for CLCs who do not have enough spiritual guides of the *Spiritual Exercises* available in their area. It might best be described as an instrument for sharing experiences of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The communal Dimension happens in the weekly sharing of the results of making the Exercises and the communal consideration for next week's prayer assignments.

## B. Sharing

*Phase I* explained the purpose and way of sharing in a small group. The reasons for sharing in *Phase I* were to assist the individuals to grow in awareness of their

## **SHARING EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES**

### **B. Sharing (continued)**

interior life and to establish an atmosphere of trust and commitment for the community's faith life. This sharing is an important instrument of discernments in individual and communal decision-making. Such sharing will continue to be a part of CLC life and will come to the fore when a community is in the process of decision-making.

In *Phase II*, the heightened awareness necessary for discerning the impact of the culture on our lives in general and at a particular time, requires a somewhat different type of sharing. After prayerful consideration on a topic of cultural concern the group may come together to share how this topic of our culture is influencing each individual. Then a discussion can take place on how we are being influenced by this dimension in our culture and what we can do about it as responsible persons in our culture.

In *Phase III* the sharing has four purposes: to heighten awareness of one's own prayer experience by listening to other members of the CLC; to recognize the communal dimension in the individual prayer; to deepen CLC bonds; to assist each other in the next set of prayer experiences.

### **C. Basic Pattern of Every Meeting**

#### **PART I: SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Part I is a time of gathering and communal appreciation. During Part I the members of the CLC share the effect in their lives of doing the Exercises. This sharing includes the experiences of the *Spiritual Exercises* and what has come forward in the *Daily Examen*.

#### **PART II: TRANSITION INTO NEXT WEEK'S PRAYER**

Part II introduces the new theme for next week's series of Exercises and connections with next week's prayer. This is meant to assist the members to see the continuity of their previous week's experience with the material for the new series of Exercises. It is a very important activity in each meeting. It is the moment of discernment. It has an evaluation aspect similar to PART III of an ordinary CLC meeting. With this in mind we can look back over the sharing in our meeting to discover how this and our past prayer experiences move into the next week's prayer material.

#### **PART III: MATERIALS FOR NEXT WEEK'S PRAYER**

Part III gives the grace and daily prayer material for the next week's prayer.

# THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

**Phase III** of the formation program of the National CLC of Canada is to be an experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. This can be done in a number of ways: a personally directed experience of the 30-day *Spiritual Exercises* (*Sp Exx* [20]), a personally directed experience of the 30-week *Spiritual Exercises* (*Sp Exx* [19]), or in a communal situation.

St. Ignatius Loyola seemed to prefer the personally directed experience of the 30-day *Spiritual Exercises*, as he says in his book (*Sp Exx* [20]). Yet he recognized that God works in all situations and that under guidance, different ways of doing the *Exercises* could profit people a great deal. The lack of skilled spiritual guides for many persons in CLC indicates that a sharing in community of one's personal prayer with the materials and graces of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola* would be one way for CLC persons to fulfil the desires of GP #5:

The spirituality of our community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. It draws from the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our times.

**Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.** Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life. We recognize particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment (personal and communal), of the daily examination of consciousness, and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things.

This *CLC Phase III Manual* has three purposes: There are instructions for personal prayer in accord with the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*; there are guidelines for sharing the experience of one's personal prayer; there are some simple ways of assisting each other to understand some interior spiritual experiences.

Ignatius designed the *Spiritual Exercises* to assist a person to come to spiritual freedom and make a good decision in congruence with the Holy Spirit's inspirations. In Ignatius words they are "**Spiritual Exercises which have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one's life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment**" (*Sp Exx* [21]).

By the terms “Spiritual Exercises” is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of other spiritual activities that will be mentioned later. For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises, so we call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul (*Sp Exx* [1]).

Ignatius divides his series of Exercises into four parts which he calls “Weeks” even though they can be more or less than 7 days in duration. After stating his “First Principle and Foundation” Ignatius suggests that the one doing the *Exercises* pray for a number of days on the topic of personal sin (First Week). After this he suggests that the person spend a number of days on the childhood and public life of Jesus Christ during which time the person is to make a serious decision in tune with the mind and heart of Christ (Second Week). Following this, the one doing the *Exercises* enters into prayer over the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Third and Fourth Weeks).

Ignatius describes and suggests a number of ways of praying during these prayer exercises such as reflective reading of sacred scripture, rhythmic prayer with the Our Father, meditation, contemplation and the application of the senses. The most common method that Ignatius suggests (contemplation) is the use of the imagination over certain gospel events of the life of Christ.

In each prayer exercise of one hour duration Ignatius has a number of steps to help the person become disposed and present to the material being pondered. These are preliminaries, such as an act of presence before God, a composing of oneself for prayer, recalling the place and history of a gospel events and the grace one wishes from God. Then Ignatius gives some points to assist the person to enter into the prayer proper. During and at the end of the prayer the person is to carry on a conversation with the Persons of the Trinity or with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. When the prayer time is up, Ignatius advises that the person look back over the experience to recognize “how it went with me” for appreciation and for the next exercise.

## A COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

There are many ways of doing the *Spiritual Exercises* in common. One is a form of group dynamics by which a group actually comes together to develop a deeper relationship among the members and make a serious group decision together. This activity is known as the *Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* for the Corporate Person (*ISECP*). Manuals of the Exercises and of Facilitation are available from George Schemel at the University of Scranton, Scranton, PA, 18510-4605.

Another way of doing the *Spiritual Exercises* in common is the one proposed by Fr. John Wickham, SJ in his books: *The Common Faith* and *Communal Spiritual Exercises*. These books contain a series of prayer exercises that follow the basic pattern of Ignatius. They contain much cultural analysis and a modern theory of spirituality. Wickham's approach is similar to the personally directed experience with the advantage of communal sharing. Each person in the group prays privately on the various prayer exercises and brings the results of prayer to the group sharing. After the group sharing the members of the group receive the same conference on a theme and prayer assignment for the next week.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Fr. John Wickham, SJ, to this kind of approach to the *Spiritual Exercises*. Much of the material in the manual is an adaptation from John Wickham's two books: *The Common Faith* and *The Communal Spiritual Exercises, Part A and Part B*. (Ignatian Centre, 4567 W. Broadway Ave., Montreal, PQ H4B 2A7) members of the CLC may wish to Read John Wickham's books as the weeks and months proceed.

However, the approach in this manual is much simpler and less demanding. The subtitle of the CLC Phase III Manual: *Sharing Experiences of the Spiritual Exercises* indicates that the fuller experience of the personally directed Exercises is not present in this CLC Communal Experience of the Exercises.

## PROCESS IN THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The basic process outlined by St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* can be expressed as a five step movement from *experience* to *articulation* to *Interpretation* to *decision*.

In the personally directed *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola* this takes place in the process of the activities from private prayer, to review of private prayer, to sharing the results of one's prayer with a spiritual guide, to the discernment of the meaning of the prayer experience by the person in dialogue with the

spiritual guide to the material and object of the next prayer periods. Briefly: prayer, review of prayer, interview, discernment and next prayer period.

In the personally directed *Spiritual Exercises* the basic experience takes place in private prayer as those making the Exercises follow the instructions of St. Ignatius with the materials he presents. This means that people use different methods of prayer such as consideration, discursive meditation and contemplation of gospel events, to dispose themselves to the Holy Spirit and receive the various graces sought. During such prayer the persons will have various spiritual experiences. Some of these will be in conformity to the graces sought and some will not. St. Ignatius classifies these experiences as spiritual consolation or spiritual desolation and he gives a number of Rules to help persons understand their experiences and uncover their meaning especially for serious decision making.

It is in the “Review of Prayer” that persons discover how the Holy Spirit is relating to them. Some of these experiences are pure gift and some of them are the result of the attentiveness or lack of it by those doing the *Exercises*. The Review of Prayer presumes that people have had spiritual experiences during their prayer periods and that it is important to reflect on these experiences in order to appreciate the activity of the Holy Spirit with them. This review is not an examination of right or wrong but a way of heightening awareness of various spiritual experiences. Ignatius key question is “How did it go with me?” Discernment is necessary to understand the meaning of these experiences and what to do with them. The main activity of discernment and future prayer activity is in the time of the interview with the one giving the *Exercises*.

During the interview those giving the *Exercises* are present to listen carefully to the spiritual experiences of those making the *Exercises* since the last interview. The various prayer exercises are the context in which these spiritual experiences of each day are understood. The time of the interview is basically an experience of dialogue in which those giving the *Exercises* and those making them come to understand the meaning of the various spiritual experiences. As Ignatius suggests this dialogue is to “the benefit of both” [22]. The understanding of these previous spiritual experiences are important for the next set of *Exercises*. Through dialogue decisions are made regarding future prayer exercises.

Those who have used the CLC Phase I and Phase II Manuals will recognize this five step dynamic in the three parts of every meeting. In the Phase III Manual the dynamic gets expressed in *Part I: Sharing of the Past Week, Part II: Transition into Next Week's Prayer, Part III: Materials for Next Week's Prayer*.

*Part I* has the three dimensions of experience (since last meeting), reflection (appreciating one's "story"), and articulation (sharing the story with the group).

*Part II* helps the person connect what has been happening (interpreting) and relate

it to next week's theme as a way of facing next week's prayer (deciding).

Part III gives the somewhat predetermined graces and prayer materials to be done (deciding and action). The materials for prayer suggested in *Part III* should be approached in terms of the theme presented and the finding of the *Daily Awareness Exercise*.

In the Phase III Manual two sets of activities take place. One set is private and the other is public. The private activity consists of personal prayer and review of one's prayer. The public consists of sharing the results of one's prayer with the group. Listening to other persons' prayer helps each person to interpret the significance of the personal prayer and decide what will be one's future prayer or action.

Briefly, these are the five activities: Private Prayer, Review of Prayer, Sharing Results of Prayer in Group, Group and Spiritual Guide's (Coordinator's) Response, Prayer Assignment.

As in the personally directed experiences the experience in prayer is key to the rest of the dynamic. It is expected that each person in the group pray through the *Exercises* personally and make a serious review of their prayer experience.

Articulation of the prayer experience is also important and this is done in the group. This sharing consists of speaking briefly on one's prayer experience, listening carefully to the other person's prayer experience and participating respectfully in the interchange in order to help each other discern the significance of their prayer and to understand the matter and grace of the next prayer periods.



## **MEETING 1**

(Disposition Days)

### **PART I**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader suggests this grace: to enter into the experience of the Spiritual Exercises with great hope and generosity.

After this, the leader reads aloud CLC General Principle #5: "The Spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and participation in the Paschal Mystery. It draws from the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Greater Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our times. Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality. Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life. We recognize particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment (personal and communal), of the daily awareness exercise, and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things."

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help you, recall the experiences of your prayer time in the past week. How do you sense that God is in your story and that you are in God's story?

After this, read silently the article on the Spiritual Exercises (previous page) and share how you feel about beginning the Spiritual Exercises with the other members of your Christian Life Community.

#### **Overview of the Spiritual Exercises:**

Disposition Meetings: Principle and Foundation (P&F) basic position before God – (this section takes approximately 9 meetings)

1st Week of the Exercises - Loved Sinners - (this section will take approx. 7 meetings)

2nd Week of the Exercises - The Call - (this section will take approx. 11 meetings)

3rd Week of the Exercises - The Passion - (this section will take approx. 5 meetings)

4th Week of the Exercises - The Risen Lord - (this section will take approx. 5 meetings)

5th Week of the Exercises - The *Contemplatio* - (this section will take approx. 1 meeting)

*Contemplatio as a time of appropriating the desires of the Trinity for intimate relationship with all of us and humanity at large.*

#### **Commitment to Prayer and meetings**

Each person in the CLC is expected to do one formal prayer exercise a day, no longer than one hour, followed by a review of prayer and a daily awareness exercise of 10 to 15 minutes at another time of the day. He or she will see that the fruit of formal prayer is often revealed during the daily awareness exercise and in the community's weekly meeting (of about 2 hours).

## **PART II : THEME MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:**      **The Trinity and Ourselves**

Read and share: “The Contemplatio” and “The First Principle and Foundation” (page 3)

## **PART III       MATERIALS FOR DAILY PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Read:** Aids for Prayer & Spiritual Journal (pages 3 and 4)

**Grace:** I ask of the Trinity a deep awareness of the Trinity’s unconditional love for me that I may in all things love and serve them.

### **Daily Prayer Material:**

- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. The <i>Contemplatio</i> , point #1 | 4. The Principle & Foundation         |
| 2. The Principle & Foundation         | 5. The <i>Contemplatio</i> , Point #3 |
| 3. The <i>Contemplatio</i> , point #2 | 6. The <i>Contemplatio</i> , Point #4 |

### **Contemplatio - (Contemplation)**

**PRENOTES:** The *Contemplatio* begins with the two pre-notes: “Love shows itself in deeds,” and “Love consists of sharing.” These pre-notes are a description of the Trinity’s love for us and of our response to the Trinity in love.

**Image:** We compose ourselves with all the Communion of Saints enjoying the eternal love of the Trinity.

**Grace:** We ask of the Trinity a deep awareness of the Trinity’s unconditional love for us, that we may in all things love and serve them.

### **Points:**

1. I go through my life experience, paying special attention to the extraordinary grace of being created, redeemed from sin and called to participate in the great salvific work of Jesus Christ for the whole human race. Then I make a free offering of myself in my own words.
2. In a similar way, I go through my life experience to become sensitive to the constant presence of the Trinity to me in all creation, in the plants, the animals and humans, giving me life and calling me forth to enjoy their presence forever. After this, I repeat my offering.

**3. As in Points 1 and 2, I go through my whole life and seek to raise my awareness of the ways in which the Trinity sustains all humanity as do those who labour in effort and suffering with us. After this, I repeat my offering.**

**4. Again, I go through my whole life, seeking to know how my power, justice and mercy are an expression of the Trinity's power, justice and mercy seeking to appreciate how the Trinity graces me with gifts of body, mind and heart, gifts of creativity and perseverance coming to me like sun rays from the sun or water from a spring. After this, I repeat my offering.**

## **THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION**

Our faith tells us that we were brought into existence because the Trinity wanted to share their own intimate love with creation and free responding human beings. Knowing this, our hearts are moved to respond by praising, reverencing and serving this Trinity of love in our relationship with all other beings on the face of the world. This calls us to have a free attitude to all that is not of God, such as a long or short life, health or sickness, riches or poverty, honour or dishonour and all other things on the face of the earth. In our hearts, we realize that our one desire and choice is to fulfill the end for which the Trinity brought us into existence, i.e., to share their own intimate love with praising, reverencing and serving the Trinity in all things.

## **AIDS FOR PRAYER**

**1. Determine the matter you wish to pray about from *Scripture* or Saint Ignatius Spiritual Exercises or another source. Read through the materials some time before actually beginning the prayer period.**

**2. Choose a place where you will be undisturbed and able to be attentive to God. Realizing that harmony of body and spirit is important, take a peaceful, relaxed meaningful position and proceed, now kneeling, now sitting, now standing – whatever is helpful at the time.**

**3. Spend a few moments quieting yourself. Bring yourself into the presence of God through a short prayer or gesture of recognition or humility. Focus on that which you are seeking from God and pray for that grace.**

**4. Begin to work slowly through the materials you are considering. *Do not be anxious to cover everything.* Reread phrases. Repeat the grace to yourself. Try to not think or figure things out *on your own*, but let the Spirit pray through you (Rm 8):26-27). Pause, ponder and savour wherever you feel drawn or moved by God, as Mary did. Respond from your heart.**

**5. Close the time of prayer by speaking to one of the Persons of the Trinity, Our Lady or a Saint, as you are moved. End with the Lord's Prayer.**

**6. Sometime in the day, recall your prayer period and what you were given.**

Consider: "How will I bring the fruit of this prayer into my day and to my next prayer period?

### SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

A spiritual journal is a form of diary. It is a way of recording spiritual experiences of one's day. The spiritual experiences can occur at the time of formal prayer, or at any other time during the day and in any situation.

A simple way to keep such a journal is to use one or both of two exercises of spiritual awareness: the *Daily Awareness Exercise* and the *Review of Prayer*. If you choose to use one only, then the *Daily Awareness Exercise* is the instrument to help you. This exercise covers your whole day and can include your formal time of prayer. If you choose to use the two exercises, then add the results of the *Review of Prayer*. During or after the time of doing these awareness exercises, you can write briefly that which God had revealed to you while doing them.

So you may record experiences of the presence of God with a companion, spouse, family, friend, or while working or driving home. You may record experience of dryness or joy or special insights given to you about Jesus or yourself in prayer. Sometimes you may experience anguish over a decision or action. Experiences of this sort make up the spiritual journal.

As you grow in awareness of the interior life, you will find more and more experiences to record. Choose the more significant ones and write them down briefly by means of a word, a phrase or a sentence.



## **MEETING 2**

(Disposition Days)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader should recall the grace of the past week's prayer. In this instance, we asked for a deep awareness and unconditional love of the Trinity for us, that we may in all things love and serve them.

After this, one of the last week's daily prayer material is read aloud by the leader. In this instance reread the *Contemplatio # 1*.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With you journal to help you recall the experiences of your prayer life since the last meeting, how do you sense that God is in your story and that you are in God's story? Share your story, keeping in mind the gift of a listening heart and the ability to "speak briefly". (Good article on sharing (Spiritual Conversation) is found on page 8)

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:**      **The Great Christian Story (page 6)**

Read and share: Eucharistic Prayer IV (page 7)

**Connection with the past week's prayer theme:**

Ignatian spirituality is founded upon the belief that the Trinity is active in our world and is relating to each one of us in love. From this base, Ignatian spirituality encourages us to "Find the Trinity in all things so that we may better love and serve them." On the *Spiritual Exercises*, one set of prayer experiences leads into the next. This is a very important activity in each meeting. It is the moment of discernment. It has an evaluation aspect similar to PART III of an ordinary CLC meeting. With this in mind, we can look back over the sharing in our meeting to discover how this and our past prayer experiences move into the next week's prayer material.

## **PART III: MATERIALS FOR DAILY PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Read:** Spiritual Conversation in Small Groups (page 8)

**Grace:** I ask of the Trinity the grace to appreciate the mystery of our created worth

### **Daily prayer material:**

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Eucharistic Prayer IV& Ps 104  | 4. Eucharistic Prayer IV & Jn 1: 9-14  |
| 2. Eucharistic Prayer IV & Ps 51  | 5. Eucharistic Prayer IV& 2 Cor 4:8-11 |
| 3. Eucharistic Prayer IV & Ps 105 | 6. Eucharistic Prayer IV & Rm 8:22-27  |

## **PRAYER THEMES OF THE GREAT CHRISTIAN STORY**

1. **Creation:** The ultimate end in everything we do is expressed here. Like streams flowing together and forming a single river which arrives at last at the ocean, all our actions are good in-so-far as they contribute to this final goal. To what extent has this been true of the main action of your life? (Psalm 104)
2. **Sin:** God hates sin because God knows how dreadfully it can destroy us. God continues to love sinners despite their alienation, and patiently draws them back. Can you identify such events in your own life? (Psalm 51)
3. **Covenant:** God treats us as sons and daughters and invites us into a truly personal relationship, one which will fulfill our deepest needs. How well have you come to know the Trinity? (Psalm 105)
4. **Incarnation:** In order to overcome human difficulties in relating to God, the Trinity sent the Son to be born into a fully human life. Christ comes near to us, and calls us to follow. Have you experienced an intimate union with Jesus? (John 1:9-14)
5. **Salvation:** Human beings need to be liberated. Not only from the captivity of sinfulness, but from the triviality of a worthless existence, by entering spiritually into the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Have you, in faith, been able to identify the death and new life of Jesus in your own life experiences? (2 Corinthians 4:8-11)

6. **Holy Spirit:** The Spirit transforms us interiorly and moves us with holy desires to give ourselves to the faith community in its witnessing to the gospel in the world. Have you been changed by the Holy Spirit and moved with desires for the service of others? (Rm 8:22-27)

#### **FOURTH EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

God, our creator, we acknowledge your greatness: all your actions show your wisdom and love.

1. You formed us in your likeness  
and set us in the world  
to serve you, our creator, and to benefit all creatures Creation
2. Even when we disobeyed you  
and lost your friendship,  
you did not abandon us to the power of death.  
But helped us all to seek and find you. Sin
3. Again and again you offered a covenant to us,  
and through the prophets  
taught us to hope for salvation Covenant
4. God, you so loved the world  
that in the fullness of time  
you sent your only Son to be our Saviour.  
Jesus was conceived through the power of the Holy  
Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary,  
a human being like us in all things but sin. Incarnation
5. To the poor Jesus proclaimed  
the good news of salvation,  
to prisoners, freedom, and to those in sorrow, joy.  
In fulfillment of your will  
Jesus went through death:  
But by rising from the dead,  
Jesus destroyed death and restored life. Salvation
6. And that we might live  
no longer for ourselves but for God  
the Trinity sent the Holy Spirit,  
as a first gift to those who believe,  
to complete their work on earth and  
to bring us the fullness of grace. Gift of the Spirit

## SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION IN SMALL GROUPS

Spiritual conversation is an important form of group prayer. “Those who feared God spoke with one another, and God listened attentively” (Malachi 3:16).

This conversation is deeply rooted in faith – humble, poor, open, and willing to learn or to teach, to forgive and to be forgiven, to be loved and to love.

The following reminders facilitate the mode of expressing and listening:

1. The major activity of any small group sharing is *grateful listening*.
2. Every person is an expert on his/her own experience.
3. Times of silence are very appropriate and needed.
4. Confidentiality is important. *No one should be “quoted” outside the group conversation.*
5. Participation in a small group is not a communal performance. Share what you can, not what you cannot. Listening is an important form of participation. As you go around the circle, if you choose not to share, simply indicate this by saying, “I’ll pass for now”.
6. Describe your experience, views, concerns, questions, etc. in a *brief, clear* manner.  
Small group interchange is *not* the place to “homilize”, monopolize, convert others to your point of view or continually “impose” your favourite topic or idea upon others.
7. This is not the place for extended discussions, solving problems, rescuing, deciding, debating or interfering with another’s contribution.

The prime purpose of our sharing is to listen to each other. We are not a study group or a discussion group, so we do not make judgments on each other’s responses. Our purpose is to obtain a heightened awareness of our own experience of prayer, through a comparison with the experience of the others in the group. We do this by listening to what the others found in their prayer. We are not to dominate the group’s time. The emphasis should be on listening to and absorbing what has already been said before one speaks.

**Brief reflection (Review of Prayer):**

**What did I experience as I prayed?**

**As I looked over my prayer, where and how did I experience God’s presence most deeply? What experience in the past is present to me now? today?**

**What images were given to me?**

**What feelings does this arouse in me?**

**What will I share, and how will I express myself briefly?**

**Share by going around the group, expressing and listening to each other.**



## **MEETING 3**

**(Disposition Days)**

### **PART I            SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of the past week's prayer. In this instance, we asked for the grace to appreciate the mystery of our created worth.

After this, one of the last week's daily prayer materials is read aloud by the leader. In this instance reread Rom 8:22-27.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal, reflect for a few minutes on last week's prayer experience and share your story.

#### **Read: Second Round of Sharing**

After the persons in the group have gone around and shared about their prayer experience, it is helpful for those sharing as well as for a sense of community that a second round of sharing take place. After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly.

1. Where did I experience harmony and a union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared any experiences, images?
2. What new insights was I given about myself – about the group?
3. How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

### **PART II        TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

#### **Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:**

#### **The Purpose of Creation**

Read and share "The Purpose of Creation" on pages 10-11.

## **PART III** MATERIALS FOR DAILY PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Reading:** “*Praying for a Grace*” and “*Prayer of a Listening Heart*” (pages 10 and 11).

**Grace:** I ask of the Trinity to move more completely into the basic truth of human goodness, affirming without reservation my own created worth and that of others.

### **Daily prayer material:**

- |                     |                  |                                      |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. God is love      | (1 Jn 4:16-21)   | 4. The Purpose of Creation (page 10) |
| 2. Loving exchange  | (Ruth 1:15 - 19) | 5. Jn 17:20:23                       |
| 3. Gift of the Magi | (pages 11 – 13)  | 6. Rom 12:3-13                       |

### **THE PURPOSE OF CREATION**

We come into existence because the one God-beyond-all wanted to create intelligent and free persons with whom to share life and love. The whole universe has been designed for that purpose. The Creator has called us together into a loving, personal relationship with God, and this requires of us (binding together our diverse individual responses) a communal response, which response will gradually develop through time, and so lead to the greater glory of God – humankind “fully alive.”

### **PRAYING FOR GRACE**

Another word for *grace* is gift. In the spiritual life, the basic gift we are praying for is the gift of a deep relationship with the Trinity, a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for a grace because we have not got what we want and desire and we realize that we cannot achieve it through our own effort.

Someone has said that the longest journey in this world is from the head to the heart. So it is that our intellect may tell us about our faith and what we want but the deep-felt belief, knowledge and conviction of our faith may not be present. And so we pray to the Trinity, who can give this to us.

Another reason we need to pray for a grace is because God wishes us to truly desire what only God can give.

### **PRAYER FOR A LISTENING HEART (*Lectio Divina / Divine Reading*)**

I approach the text of Scripture as the Word of God spoken to me.

I make an effort to realize that through it God is speaking to me in my present situation. I try to be present to the words and scene given in the text. I ask for the grace to be present to these words of God with a “listening heart”.

I begin by reading through all the verses of the text 2 or 3 times. Then I read a verse and pause to meditate on it for a few moments. If it impresses me, I stay with that verse and respond to God’s word in thanks, amazement or petition. When I am satisfied with this verse I move on to the next verse. I read it. I pause and meditate on it. I stay with it and respond to the words of God in thanks, amazement or petition. I continue in this way until I have completed all the verses. After this, I pause for a considerable length of time and make myself present in contemplation (by simply *being with*) and in appreciation of God’s word spoken to me. In this way, I have Read, Meditated, Responded to the Word and Contemplated – the four steps of (*Lectio Divina*).

Throughout this process of prayer, I carry on a *Dialogue with the Trinity*, especially during the times of Response to the Word, and at the end of the period of prayer.

### O. HENRY’S: GIFT OF THE MAGI

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one’s cheeks burned. Three times Della counted it. \$1.87. And the next day would be Christmas. There was nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking on a grey fence in a grey backyard. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling – a bit near to being worthy of Jim.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the Jim Young’s in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim’s gold watch that had been his father’s and his grandfather’s. The other was Della’s hair.

So now Della’s beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered and stood still while a tear of two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts she fluttered down the stairs to the street. Where she stopped the sign read “”Mme Sophronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.” One flight up Della ran, and collected herself before Madame.

“Will you buy my hair?” asked Della. “I buy hair,” said Mme. Down rippled the brown cascade. “\$20,” said Madame. “Give it to me quick,” said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present. She found it at last. It was a platinum fob-chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone. It was even worthy of The Watch. \$21 they took from her, and she hurried home with the 87 cents.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out the curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages. Within 40 minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long. "If Jim doesn't kill me, she said to herself, "He'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl."

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying pan was on the back of the stove and ready to cook the chops. Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob-chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door. Then she heard his step on the stair, and she turned white for just a moment.

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He looked thin and very serious. He needed a new overcoat and was without gloves. He stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed on Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, not surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He just stared at her fixedly with the expression on his face. Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again – you won't mind, will you? You don't know what a nice – what a beautiful nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously. Then, out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. Then he drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going for a while."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy: and then alas! A quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs – the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims – just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair ....

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at last looked up with dim eyes and a smile to say, "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!" Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

**“Isn’t it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over the town to find it. You’ll have to look at it a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.”**

**Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.**

**“Dell”, said he, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ‘em for awhile. They’re too nice to use at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.**

**But in a last word of the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. They are the Magi.**



#### **MEETING 4 (Disposition Days) PART I**

##### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God’s loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.**

**Following this, the leader recalls the grace of the past week’s prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace to move more completely into the basic truth of human goodness – affirming without reservation our own worth and that of others.**

**After this, one of the past week’s prayer materials is read aloud. Reread 1 Jn 4:16-21.**

##### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

**With your journal to help you, reflect for a few minutes on last week’s prayer experience and share your story.**

## **PART II            TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

*Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:*      **Human Development in Creation**

Read and share this segment of Human Development in Creation, on page 14 below.

## **PART III        MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Read:** Review of Prayer page 14 below

**Grace:** I ask of the Trinity the grace to hear and respond to the call of God to personal growth for myself and for human development.

**Daily prayer material:**

1.     Historical role of Judaism (Rm 11:1-36)
2.     Two prophecies (Is 2:1-5; Is 11:1-9)
3.     Human Development in Creation p. 14 and P&F p. 3
4.     The Trinity's care (Mt 10:28-31)
5.     Ps 139 p. 15
6.     1 Jn 3:2

### **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN CREATION**

Humans first appear in time as “undeveloped”, in initial social and personal conditions which are full of great but as yet unrealized potentials. The unfolding of human history on earth is thus included as a central component of creation. It consists in the co-creative choices made in common by human beings, and enabled by divine providence, which build and ever re-build interpersonal ways of living with one another and with the Creator. The first humans are revealed to be made in the image of God: co-creative of their own history through love.

### **REVIEW OF PRAYER**

After the formal period of prayer is over one should change position and place of prayer and do a Review of Prayer over what happened during the prayer time. This review helps one reflect upon interior movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, and so on – perhaps something about one's distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. It helps one notice one's interior experience rather than one's ideas. Thus it enables one to be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and to go with the flow of experience. If one were to monitor oneself during the period of prayer, one would be interfering with God's communication. One lets happen what is happening during the prayer time; afterwards one takes a look to see what God is saying in all this.

After the formal period of prayer is over one should change position and place of prayer and do a *Review of Prayer* over what happened during the prayer time. This review helps one reflect upon interior movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, and so on – perhaps something about one's distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. It helps one *notice* one's interior experience rather than one's ideas. Thus it enables one to be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and to go with the flow of experience. If one were to monitor oneself during the period of prayer, one would be interfering with God's communication. One lets happen what is happening during the prayer time; afterwards one takes a look to see what God is saying in all this.

Questions such as the following may help:

**What went on during the period of prayer?**

**What impressed me?**

**How did I feel about what went on?**

**What was my mood, changes in mood?**

**What did the prayer show me?**

**Is there some point I should return to in my next prayer?**

**I thank God for favours granted and ask pardon for my own negligence.**

It is helpful during this review to jot down a few reflections that strike one so that one can more easily prepare for the next period of prayer. God may be inviting one to go back to a point where one was moved. St. Ignatius says, "I should remain quietly meditating upon a point *until I have been satisfied*," i.e., until the movement has been completed (the insight completed; the struggle resolved; the consolation ended; the meaningfulness finished ... for now). Jotting down one's reflections during the review may also assist one at the weekly meetings.

### Psalm 139

Yahweh, you examine me and know me,  
you know when I sit, when I rise,  
you understand my thoughts from afar.  
You watch when I walk or lie down,  
you know every detail of my conduct.  
A word is not yet on my tongue  
before you, Yahweh, know all about it.  
You fence me in, behind and in front,  
you have laid your hand upon me.  
Such amazing knowledge is beyond me,  
a height to which I cannot attain.  
Where shall I go to escape your spirit?  
Where shall I flee from your presence?  
If I scale the heavens you are there.  
if I lie flat in Sheol, there you are.

If I speed away on the wings of the dawn, if I dwell beyond the ocean,  
there your hand will be guiding me, your right hand holding me fast.

I will say, "Let the darkness cover me,  
and the night wrap itself around me," even darkness to you is not dark,  
and night is as clear as the day.

You created my inmost self,  
knit me together in my mother's womb. For so many marvels I thank you;  
a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders. You knew me through and through,  
my being held no secrets from you, when I was being formed in secret, textured in  
the depths of the earth. Your eyes could see my embryo.

In your book all my days were inscribed, every one that was fixed in there.  
How hard for me to grasp your thoughts, how many, God, there are! If I count them.  
they are more than the grains of sand; if I come to an end, I am still with you.



## **MEETING 5**

### **(Disposition Days)**

#### **PART I**      **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of the past week's prayer. In this instance, we asked for the grace to hear and respond to the call of God to personal growth for ourselves and for human development.

After this, read aloud Ps 139 page 15.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal, reflect for a few minutes on your last week's prayer experience and share your story.

*Do a second sharing.*

**PART II      TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME  
TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:**

**Our Common Task in Creation**

Read and share "Our Common Task in Creation" on page 17.

**PART III      MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Read:**      Repetition pages 18 - 19

**Grace:**      I ask of the Trinity the grace to understand and respond to my own and humanity's development in justice and love.

**Daily Prayer Material:**

1. Jonah's flight from the common good (Jon1:1-17; 2:10; 3:1-5)
2. Our Common Task in Creation page 19, and 1st Principle & Foundation page 3
3. My own story of flight
4. Extract from Vatican II: (The People of God) in the Modern World page 29
5. Call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10)
6. Repetition pp. 18 - 19

**OUR COMMON TASK IN CREATION**

The common task assigned to all by the Creator is, with the help of God's grace, to build together ways of life (cultural structures, which will express just and loving relationships on earth. This effort will prepare us all for divinely achieved leaps-in-being up to entirely higher forms of life in him. This is what "complete development" signifies.

**From the Vatican II documents (relating to "Our Common Task in Creation")**

"The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, those too are the joys and hopes, the grief and

**anxieties of the followers of Christ .... This community, the [Greater] Church realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with humanity and history. For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed.**

**... Thus, the language intelligible to each generation, the [People of God] can respond to the perennial questions which people ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other ....**

**Today, the human race enjoys such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power. Yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens is still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before have humans been so keenly aware of freedom, yet at the same time new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance ....**

**The scientific spirit exerts a new kind of impact on the cultural sphere and on modes of thought. Technology is now transforming the face of the earth, and is already trying to master outer space. To a certain extent, the human intellect is also broadening its dominion over time: over the past by means of historical knowledge, over the future by the art of projecting and by planning. ... History speeds along on so rapid a course that an individual person can scarcely keep abreast of it. The destiny of the human community has become all of a piece, where once the various groups of humans had a kind of private history of their own. Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. ... The industrial type of society is gradually being spread, leading some nations to economic affluence, and radically transforming ideas and social conditions established for centuries.**

## **REPETITION**

**Repetition is an important part of prayer life. It is important to know what *repetition* means and what it does not mean.**

**Repetition does not mean:**

- 1. the repeating of the prayer material as one repeats a study assignment for more thorough understanding.**
- 2. a return to the same matter for prayer in order to dig for something new or different.**
- 3. a return to all the material of the last prayer period.**

**Repetition means: that I return to those points where I have experienced “greater consolation, desolation or great spiritual appreciation”) Sp. Exx. #62). Hence, I use the discoveries I made in the *review of prayer* and return to those points where I have experienced significant movement, not to the experience itself but to the Points or parts in Scripture where the experience occurred.**

### Some examples:

1. I have prayed over the Scripture account of the Last Supper. In my review I notice that I have spent much time absorbed in the adoration of the sacrament; I also notice that I had a struggle reflecting upon the persons present at the Last Supper. In the following prayer period I return to both the real presence and to the various persons present.
2. I have used my imagination in praying over the Baptism at the Jordan. In my review after the period of prayer I notice that I was with Jesus but his back was to me and I had a feeling of sadness. So in the next period of prayer I return to the place where Jesus was turned away from me and where the experience of sadness occurred.
3. I have prayed over the hidden life of Jesus. In the review I notice that I could not get settled, that I was filled with distractions and anxiousness. So in the next period of prayer I return to the same material.
4. I have prayed over my sin history and from requesting of God a deeper awareness of the effects of sin on my life. This was given to me. In my review I have a sense that the Lord desires to show me more. So I keep on returning to the same material.

### The reasons for making repetitions:

- *Repetition allows spiritual movements to develop.* This facilitates discernment of interior movements, one of the goals of the Spiritual Exercises. Scampering from one Scripture passage to another, even within the same theme, tends to cut off such interior movements.
- **Repetition is the way one can respect God's communication.** Just because a prayer period has ended, one should not suppose that God has nothing more to say through the particular passage one have been using. Repetition respects God's communication, for one keeps on returning to the same material until one senses that God wants one to move on.
- *Repetition may be the occasion for desolation to become consolation.* As stated above, repetition is used where there has been struggle, distraction, discomfort, ennui (bore-dome). Often these latter experiences indicate that God is trying to communicate with one at a deeper level and one is resisting God's approach. When one returns to those points which were experienced "negatively", one often discovers that God overcomes one's barriers and then desolation gives way to consolation; darkness to light; struggle to surrender.
- Finally, *repetition helps one to experience God's mystery more deeply.* When Ignatius writes: "I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire without any eagerness to go on till I have been satisfied," he means not only *within* the one period of prayer, but also *over* several periods of prayer, and even days of prayer. Through repetition one allows Jesus' mystery to touch one's own mystery at deeper levels of one's being. Often, through repetition, a kind of simplification of one's own activity takes place as one becomes more and more passively receptive to God's activity. Often, what starts off as meditation, through the use of repetition subsequently becomes contemplation and stillness.



## MEETING 6

(Disposition Days)

### PART I

#### SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace to understand and respond to our and humanity's development in justice and love.

After this, read Jer 1:4-18 aloud.

#### *Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience*

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a second sharing.

### PART II

#### TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

*Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:* *First Leap-in-Being, God's Covenant*

Read and share: "The First Leap-in-Being ..."

At the time of God's covenant with Israel, God initiated a new stage of growth for humans, by concentrating on the transformation of a single group. God's intention was to raise this people to a person-to-person relationship with the Godhead, and was revealed to them as the one God-beyond-all, and the source of all that exists. God's choice introduced into history a new level of human life, which was destined as a gift for all nations through the free and lived-out response of Israel.

### PART III

#### MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Grace: I ask the Trinity for the grace to renew within myself the covenant relationship, which carries me to a new level of being.

### **Daily prayer material:**

1. God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 18:1-15; 21:1-7; 22:1-18)
2. Burning bush experience (Ex 2:23-25; 3:1-12; 4:10-12, 21-23)
3. Crossing the Red Sea (Ex 14:15-30)
4. First P&F, page 3
5. Parable of the Blocked Stream, page 21
6. First Leap-in-Being (above)

### **PARABLE OF A BLOCKED STREAM**

Let us image a stream flowing between banks which become damned, suddenly, by falling rock from the hillside. The flow is stopped, the water builds up to form a lake. There is now a lake, and in it may grow fish and weeds, and by it may grow trees, and animals may drink and flourish, which otherwise might not have been able to do so. But when the new water level reaches the top of the dam, or encounters stone or earth loose enough to be pushed out of the way, it will flow over the top and fall, with much more force than that of the original flow. It can also be used to generate other kinds of power – to pump, to drive engines, to light a town.

This suggests that the fullest energy of love becomes available *because* something is 'wrong' with the situation. Love, in fact, is experienced not only as peaceful creativeness but as violent breakthrough. Such a break in nature occurs, of course, wherever the mounting pressure of frustrated energy finds a weak spot. The rising water will fall over the dam whenever it can surmount the lowest rock, or displace a wobbly one. But the creation of a weak spot could be (as in a real dam) done deliberately, so as to direct and exploit the released power in the best way.

The stream refers to a created source of human energy driving forward. The fallen rock (or devised dam) is like a social structure which stops the flow for a time and uses human powers in a settled, static situation. The weak spot indicates where a breakthrough to something better might occur. Now, the Lord gives the stream its energy, but he also exploits the weak spot: "Happy are the poor in spirit – the Kingdom of God belongs to them!"

(From Rosemary Haughton, *The Passionate God*)



## MEETING 7

(Disposition Days)

### PART I

#### SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace to renew within ourselves the covenant relationship which carries me to a new level of being.

After this, read Ps 89: 1-18 aloud.

#### Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### PART II

#### TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting: Second Leap-in-Being, the Son of God becomes human

Read and share: "The Second Leap-in-Being ..."

The second "leap-in-being" given in the Bible, for which the first had prepared, was the coming of Jesus Christ, born of a human mother and revealed to be the Son of God. Jesus Christ brought about an actual breakthrough to complete human fulfillment in his own person. Jesus called together men and women disciples and prepared them to share the new kind of life, one of intimate trust and love of God, which trust and love Jesus made present to them and available to them through interpersonal union with himself.

### PART III

#### MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity the grace to develop my relationship with Jesus and to be drawn to a new level of being.

Daily prayer material:

1. Jesus' baptism (Mk 1: 9-12)
2. Jesus' transfiguration (Mt 17:1-13)
3. Second leap-in-being (above) & First Principle & Foundation, page 3
4. Transformation (Rom 8:11-17)
5. Liberation (Gal 4:1-9)
6. Completion (Co 1:15-20)



## **MEETING 8** (Disposition Days)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace to develop our relationship with Jesus and to be drawn to a new level of being .

After this, read Gal 4:1-9 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

#### **Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting: Third Leap-in-Being; the Christian Faith Community**

Read and share: Third Leap-in-Being; The Christian Faith Community

The emergence of a new kind of community, the *faith community* we call Church, was a major event in creation history. The Risen Christ sent the Holy Spirit to effect the inner transformation of the disciples and so to incorporate them into a special sort of *faith community*, one which can be present to every human culture and people. The role of this faith community is to give continuing witness to the realm of God. This the community does by striving through faith and hope in the Lord's real presence, to *live out* in community the ways of behaving lovingly and justly in the world, ways which point to the final destiny of all human beings.

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace to experience a breakthrough to the new kind faith-life that my baptism implies.

#### **Daily prayer material:**

1. First Community (Acts 2:1-13, 22-32, 40-47)
2. Damascus community (Acts 9:1-22)
3. Caesarian community (Acts 10:1-48)
4. Third Leap-in-Being, p. 24 and P&F page 3
5. *Vita Apostolica* (below)
6. 1 Cor 1:1-31

#### **VITA APOSTOLICA**

This phrase is the traditional Latin name (it means “the way of life of the first disciples”) for a central vision of the Christian faith-community, an ideal dream about any local church (or “ecclesia”). This intensely felt dream was cherished, for example by St. Francis of Assisi, with his little circle of friends in the Lord in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and also by St. Ignatius of Loyola with his early lay companions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This dream refers to the life of Jesus, with his apostles and other disciples, both men and women, when they were traveling about together, preaching to the people in the towns and villages of Palestine. Many Christians have wanted to imitate this model in their apostolic group or gathering of believers, but of course it's the Risen Jesus, known by faith, who is really present among us today. Have you had any taste of this experience? Or do you desire to experience it with others? Please consider Luke 8:1-3.



**PART I****SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace to refresh and develop our personal experience of Jesus, so as to respond better to his efforts to draw us up to a new level of being.

After this, read Gal 2:11-21 aloud.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

**PART II****TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME  
TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

Theme of the prayer periods following the meeting:      Discerning from the Light in  
my Graced History

Read and share: "Discerning from the Light ..." on page 26.

**PART III****MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Read:      *Ways of Praying with Graced History* page 26

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace to be present to my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and to respond more generously to God's love flooding my heart.

**Daily prayer material:**

1. Read Dt 1:23-29 and follow *Personal Light History* page 26
2. Read 1 Cor 1:26-31 and follow *Personal Light History* page 26
3. Same as 1 and 2 but begin with Eph 1:15-23
4. Same as 1 and 2 but begin with 2 Th 1:1-4
5. Same as 1 and 2 but begin with Eph 3:14-21
6. Same as 1 and 2 but begin with Rom 8:26-39

## **DISCERNING FROM THE LIGHT IN MY GRACED HISTORY**

### **PERSONAL LIGHT HISTORY**

**All of our life experience is graced by the love of God. But this graced history has different aspects, light, shadow, joy, pain and hope.**

**It is important for us to gain a reflective knowledge of the presence of God throughout our life as an instrument to help us discern the intimate ways that the Trinity keeps sustaining us in life and calling us forth in love to be with Christ, and join him in the enterprise of developing the realm of peace, justice and love on our earth.**

### **WAYS OF PRAYING WITH GRACED HISTORY**

**Pray over your history in all the ways you would pray with sacred Scripture.**

**Contemplate:**

**I re-live the event, seeing the persons, hearing the words and observing the actions.**

**Lectio Divina:**

**I regard an event of history as sacred Scripture spoken by God in my life or in the history of my group. I read this word, ponder it and respond.**

**Meditation:**

**I question God about the events of this history and seek its meaning.**

**Quiet prayer:**

**I take one moment of this history as an experience of God's presence to me and abide with it as it resides in the depths of my being.**

**Use any or all of the above methods, best of all the ones with which I am most comfortable.**

**Review of Prayer:**

**I spend some time reflecting on what happened to me in this time of prayer.**

## **DISCERNING FROM THE LIGHT IN OUR GRACED HISTORY**

### **Personal Light History**

**Context: And I said to you: Do not take fright, do not be afraid of them. Your God goes in front of you and will be fighting on your side just as God fought for you in Egypt. In the wilderness, too, you saw how God carried you, as a parent carries one's child, all along the road you traveled on, until you arrived in this place. But for all this, you put no faith in God, who had gone in front of you on the journey to find you a camping ground, by night in the fire to light your path, by day in the cloud. (Dt. 1:29 – 33)**

**In tune with Dt. 1:29 – 33, I begin with Jesus as my companion to look back on my life.**

**Grace: I seek the grace to be present to my life story as the Trinity lovingly tells it, and I pray that I may respond generously to the Trinity's love flooding my heart.**

**Remembering:** I consider my life story in terms of the light-filled moments of my background: parents – grandparents – relatives – friends – male/female companionship – incidents of childhood – school – experiences of church – baptism – Eucharist – sacrament of reconciliation – talents – health – assisting others – position I have held – my unique gifts.

I look over my life story, searching out those special times when I have experienced the presence of God.

I enter into the ones that most impress me at this time.

After this time of remembering, I ponder the continual presence of God with me during my life, where I have experienced being drawn beyond myself, (i.e. someone else's love for me, my love for someone else, the Trinity's love for me, the Trinity's activity through me, the sense of the one, the true, the beautiful, the good, grasping and drawing me to the One, the Truth, the Beautiful, the Good.

**Dialogue with the Trinity:**

Throughout the dialogue speak to the persons of the Trinity, in gratitude and wonder.

Close with the *Lord's Prayer*.



## **MEETING 10**

(Week One)

### **PART I**

**SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other. Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace be present to our life story as it is lovingly told by God, and to respond more generously to God's love flooding our hearts.'

After this, read Eph 1:15-21 aloud.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

**PART II**      TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE  
COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**      **Structural and Interpersonal Sin**

Read and share on the “Fall of the Angels / Fall of Humankind” and “Structural and Interpersonal Sin”.

**A. The Fall of the Angels**

*Briefly:* The mystery of human sin belongs with the larger mystery of evil forces let loose in the universe. Human beings cannot understand evil but feel its power to be greater than their own. This sense of superhuman powers of evil at work in the world is expressed in the story of Lucifer and his demons.

**B. The Fall of Humankind**

*Briefly:* The story of Adam and Eve, as linked with the stories of Cain and Abel, of the Flood and of Babel, shows that from the beginning of human history, sin invaded the loving relationships of human beings with one another and with God. Radically, sin means a refusal of creative development by choosing to establish one's selfhood apart from interdependence with God and other persons.

**Introducing Structural Sin**

The aim of this exercise is to remove false disguises or blinkers from those of us who have fallen into the habit of imagining ourselves to be wholly “on the side of the angels.” In fact, acts and habits of sin are very deeply *rooted* in nearly everyone. And yet, somehow, we are mostly unaware of this fact. How could we become blind to such a dreadful reality?

The main reason is that as we grow up we are shaped interiorly by social and cultural institutions of our world, which institutions are influenced or coloured by sin. This is seemingly a “natural” process. There is little or no escape from it. And since nearly all our best cultural gifts derive from this same source, we tend to overlook the reality of the sinfulness that is structured into our lives.

Sinful processes and an entrenched resistance to the teachings of Christ about the Creator's will for human life and the ways of salvation are not exceptional in our social institutions. Rather, they are typical.

Our society has been humanly devised, and this means that deep-rooted fears and self-seeking anxieties have permeated our political, economic and social structures.

But those cultural forms infiltrate the inmost being of every individual member. Our personal reality has been deeply shaped by them. We may not be responsible for making them that way (for the most part, this happened before our birth). But we are indeed responsible collectively for their maintenance today and for joint decisions about what to do about them in the near future.

Finally, it should be emphasized that in the Christian Church, the most devoted believers tend to imagine – as with the Pharisees in the time of Jesus – that they are “above” this kind of sinfulness. We must ask whether this false assumption might not be true of ourselves as well. St. Ignatius wants us to ask for the graces we may need to become entirely open to unpleasant truths of this kind, and then to move forward more realistically onto better ground.

### **Introducing Interpersonal Sin**

Jesus shows us that the way we are to *return* God’s gift of love is by loving one another. But our earliest experiences usually include the difficulties met in learning how to love others well, whether in receiving the gift of love from them or in giving it back to them authentically

In other words, we begin our lives already bound into relationships with other persons. The human sciences today have insisted on our individual reality as essentially relational: what happens *between* us is what makes us who we are (or, at least, it conditions what we will do with our natural gifts).

Only gradually do we reach a sense of our personal identity, and even this is mostly suggested to us by others. It often remains provisional and uncertain for many years, needing to be tested out, adapted and then realized in further relating.

Now, during this long process, negative judgments from others upon one’s behaviour and one’s own harsh judgments against self often fill the atmosphere. In modern culture (perhaps much more than in earlier times) individuals, as they seek their place in society, easily become isolated from one another in their deepest sense of self.

Each one has a story of many alienations, of separated selves forced to relate to others over walls of mistrust and suspicion. And all these diverse and complicated forms of social separation derive from a more radical alienation of human persons from their source and destiny in the Divine mystery.

In this meditation, you are invited to search more deeply through investigating your own involvement in the perplexing forms of sinfulness imbedded within the interpersonal relationships that have shaped your growth as an individual member of society.

### **PART III      MATERIALS FOR DAILY PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Read and share the “Outline of each prayer exercise” below.

### **Outline of each prayer exercise:**

Below is a *basic* outline of each Prayer Exercise. Having read the suggested Preparatory Prayer, on page 30 below, you may wish to compose your own. The other elements of the prayer exercises will change with the subject matter. For the next few Exercises, details will be given. By then you will know the method to follow and be able to adjust easily to the material for prayer.

**Preparatory Prayer:** Each prayer period begins with an acknowledgment that one is in God's presence. This acknowledgement is followed by a Preparatory Prayer. (Ex. "O Blessed Trinity, give to me and to all in my community the grace to direct our intentions, actions and operations solely to your service and praise".)

**Composition of self for prayer:** This is an imaginative effort to put oneself into the situation suggested by the grace needed and the context for prayer. For the Exercises with sin, it will be to consider oneself trapped between the many destructive evils we experience, e.g. loss of a healthy environment, loss of one's job, or being caught between consumerism and starvation.

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of our sinful human reality and embarrassment for my participation in it and confusion in the face of Christ's love.

**Points:** (Ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought): This is the material from Scripture or from one's life experience with which one meditates or contemplates in order to obtain the grace one desires.

**Dialogue with Christ:** During the prayer, but especially at the end of the prayer period, it is important to speak with one (or all) of the persons of the Trinity. At this time, you speak to Jesus. Here are Ignatius' words regarding the dialogue: "The [dialogue] is made by speaking exactly as friends speak to one another, or as servants speak to the ones over them, now asking for a favour, now blaming themselves for some misdeed, now making known their affairs and seeking advice in them." (Sp. Exx [54])

**The Lord's Prayer:** End each prayer period with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Review of Prayer:** AFTER each prayer period, look back over the experience of prayer to see how it went with you. From this review you can learn what is important for you through the day and for the next prayer period. Did you receive the grace sought, (e.g. shame and confusion, sorrow and tears for sin)? The prayer may be distressing or satisfying, dismal or inviting, probing or insightful. Whatever it is, you may wish to return to gain more knowledge of yourself or of God's love.

**Grace:** (see the grace of each particular Exercise in your Daily Prayer material below)

### **Daily Prayer material:**

**Day 1: Structural Sin** Read the "Fall of the Angels" Part A, page 28, and see 2 Pet 2:1-22, then proceed in the following way.

**Preparatory Prayer:** "O Blessed Trinity, give to me and to all in my community the grace to direct our intentions, actions and operations solely to your service and praise."

**Composition of self for prayer:** This is an imaginative effort to put oneself into the situation suggested by the grace needed and the context for prayer. For the Exercises with sin, it will be to consider oneself trapped between the many destructive evils one experiences (e.g. loss of the environment and loss of jobs, or between consumerism and starvation).

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of my sinful human reality and embarrassment for my participation in it, and confusion in the face of Christ's love.

**Points:** (*Ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought*) Meditate on the words of 2 Pet 2:1-22 and consider the cosmic sins of the angels as the beginnings of "structural sin" that enslaves us all. How is it that we have not been destroyed or ended up in hell?

**Dialogue with Christ:**

Imagine Christ present before you on the cross. Ask Jesus: "How is it that though you are the Creator, you have become human and are now dying for us?" Then reflect, with the help of the following questions:

What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What am I being called to do for Christ? As I behold Christ in this plight, nailed to the cross, I shall ponder upon what presents itself to my mind.

**Close with the Lord's Prayer**

Review of Prayer – see note on the "Review of Prayer" on pages 14 and 15.

**Day 2: Structural Sin** Read Part B, the "Fall of Humankind" page 28, and see Gen 3:1-7.

**Preparatory Prayer:** The usual preparatory prayer

**Compose yourself for prayer:** as on **Day 1** above.

**Grace:** Continue to ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of your sinful human reality, embarrassment for your participation in it and confusion in the face of Christ's love.

**Points:** (*ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought*) Meditate on the word in Gen 3:1-7, the story of the "Fall of Humankind" depicted in the sins of Adam and Eve.

**Dialogue with Christ:** (see Day 1, above)

**Close with the Lord's Prayer** Review of Prayer

**Day 3: Interpersonal Sin** Read "Interpersonal Sin", page 29, and see Mt. 25:31-46.

**Preparatory Prayer:** The usual preparatory prayer

**Compose yourself for prayer:** (see Day 1, above)

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of my own sin and a knowledge of my particular pattern of sinfulness in relating to others, for a growing and intense sorrow, even tears, for my sins.

**Points:** (ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought) I begin with Jesus' words in Mt. 25:31-46, which indicate that my relationship with Jesus is found in the way I relate to others and then I consider my personal sin history.

**Dialogue with Christ:** I imagine Christ present before you on the cross. Ask Jesus: "How is it that though you are the Creator, you have become human and are now dying for us?" Then I will reflect with these questions: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What am I being called to do for Christ? As I behold Christ in this plight, nailed to the cross, I ponder upon that which presents itself to my mind and heart.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.... Review of Prayer.

#### **Day 4: Interpersonal Sin** (see Rm 7:14-25)

Begin with the usual preparatory prayer and composition of self.

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of my own sin and a knowledge of my particular pattern of sinfulness in relating to others and for a growing and intense sorrow, even tears, for my sins.

**Points:** (ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought) I meditate on St. Paul's words in Rm 7:14 - 25 which express how I am caught in the frustration of all humanity as I seek to do the good thing but find that I do the bad thing. Then I look back over the sinful history of my life.

**Dialogue with Christ:** (see Day 1, page 30)

Close with the *Lord's Prayer*

Review of Prayer

#### **Day 5: Hell, the full experience of sin**      Read the "Meditation on Hell", see Lk 16:19-31.

Perhaps Jesus' teaching on Hell may best be perceived in the present day through imagery which has, as its primary bearing, an illumination of the fearful reality of our condition in this life. It reveals the radical thrust of concrete sinfulness in our community (or in each member of it) toward total spiritual death. Because we tend to hide this knowledge from ourselves, Jesus desires to cure our spiritual blindness by using imagery of the final destruction to which such blindness may lead.

The traditional teaching on Hell is an attempt to bring into our present awareness the negative forces that are actually at work in us now.

The serious nature of our choices during this life are seriously threatened by forces of evil at work all around us in the world (disguised, of course, by pleasant distractions and reassuring words), but also within our own spiritual depth. Yet we easily build up habits in our daily lives and barriers within ourselves which can give a false sense of security. The real danger comes from our own tendency to rely upon our common possessions and controls – our own defense – when these are in fact quite illusory.

The teachings on Hell clearly reveal that our free choices matter ultimately, that the powers of sin are much stronger than we are, and that without God's grace we are indeed in terrible danger of spiritual death – that is, total separation from our loving Lord who alone can save us from utter misery.

There is a uniqueness of call for each one of us from God. But our future is a cooperative reality. Our free decisions – responding to grace – orient us and determine our identity and destiny.

In this week's exercises we are invited to repeat the exercise on Structural Sin and Interpersonal Sin and meditate upon their interconnections. We are to seek a heightened awareness that may dispose us to receive graces of liberation from this deep-rooted sinfulness.

I begin with the usual preparatory prayer and composition of self with ONE of the following images of "Psychic" pain.

*Final separation:* the end of a deep love relationship;

*Ultimate starving:* feelings in my heart that I am about to collapse

*Total isolation:* totally cut off so that I fear insanity

*Utmost tension:* to contrary forces, both of which I cling to and that tend to tear me apart completely.

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep sense of the pain suffered by those who have lost God so that if, through my faults, I should forget the love of Christ, at least the fear of those pains will serve to keep me from falling into sin.

**Points:** (ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought) Meditate on Jesus' words in Lk 16:19-31 which express the great abyss and isolation from loved ones of those who, in their sins, have forgotten the love of the Trinity.

**Dialogue with Christ:** Thank Jesus that he is still attempting to save me from destroying myself and plead with him to help me overcome my destructive life patterns and humankind's sinful structures.

Close with the *Lord's Prayer*                  Review of Prayer

**Day 6: God of Mercy and Compassion (see Rm 5: 1-21)**

Begin with the usual preparatory prayer and composition of self.

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep-felt appreciation of the everlasting love of God for us even in our sinfulness so that if, through my faults I should deserve Hell, I will not forget the love of Jesus Christ for me and for all humankind.

**Points:** Meditate on St. Paul's words in Rm 5:1-21, which express the everlasting love of God for us, seen in the death of Jesus Christ, humanity's Saviour.

**Dialogue with Christ:** Same as in Exercises on Days 1 to 5.

Close with the *Lord's Prayer*                  Review of Prayer.

### **Structure of the Exercises**

**In all the Exercises that follow, it is important to keep the outline of prayer (pages 30-31) before one's mind: the Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self for Prayer, the Grace, Points, Dialogue with the Trinity (at the beginning it is with Christ) and the Review of Prayer.**

**As you continue to make the Exercises, use your imagination to help compose yourself for prayer, then seek constantly the grace desired through the consideration of points – and carry on a dialogue with one or all of the persons of the Trinity.**



### **MEETING 11**

**(Week One)**

#### **PART I**      **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.**

**Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we ask for the grace to pray on the multifaceted dimensions of sin, personal and social, and to appreciate the continuous saving action of Christ for humanity.**

**After this, read Rom 5:1-11 aloud.**

### Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

## **PART II      TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

Theme of the coming week's prayer:    Relation between Structural and Interpersonal Sin

Read and share on the “Interplay between Structural and Interpersonal Sin”.

All human individuals are shaped, not only positively and helpfully, but also negatively and sinfully by the institutions and processes of the society in which they are born and raised, trained and matured. Both the false ways of relating to one another, which tend to afflict their personal lives, and the barriers met in their public activities are in great part products of enculturation and socialization. The human sciences in our own time have given us ample proof of this.

In other words, there are connections between the sinful structures of one's cultural situation and the interpersonal obstacles which one experiences. Accordingly, it is essential for adult members of a faith community to gain a heightened awareness of this interplay of social and personal factors. Their conscious grasp of this reality may then enable them to gain freedom from those powerful negative influences which continue to endanger believers who are committed to the Lord.

Lack of this freedom takes many forms. Some members simply accept the social structures as “given” and “unquestionable” and then proceed to judge individual members negatively in terms of their degree of failure in measuring up to society's standards. “What is the matter with them? They ought to smarten up – work harder – ‘snap out of it, etc.’”. Most members tend to judge themselves on the same basis.

Others see the world's social institutions as wrong, but too powerful to change. These persons become fatalistic. The great powers of the world determine everything. The members accept this and call it “being realistic.” Others try to escape into separated social backwaters, out of the mainstream, therefore unable to make a difference.

In all the Exercises that follow it is important to keep the outline of prayer before one's mind. Using one's *imagination* to help compose oneself for prayer and *constantly seeking the grace being sought* through the consideration of 'Points'.

## **PART III      MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of our sinful human reality, embarrassment for my participation in it and confusion in the face of Christ's love.

**Daily Prayer Material: Relation between Structural Sin and Interpersonal Sin** Follow the outline for prayer exercises as seen on Day 1 page 30, except for each day's Points. Meditate on the Points as they are outlined below - Days 1 to Day 6.

**Day 1:** The Preparatory Prayer, Composition of self, Grace and Dialogue is the same as on Day 1, pages 30-31

**Structural Sin** (Communal Effects of King David's Sin - 2 Sam 11:1, 26, 27; 12:1-14.)

**Points:** After the Scripture reading, consider the remorse of David as he realizes his son's death should have been his own for his sins of adultery and murder.

**Day 2:** The Preparatory Prayer, Composition of self, Grace and Dialogue is the same as on Day 2, page 31.

**Interpersonal Sin** (Personal sin history) - James 3:2-12

**Points:** After the Scripture reading, the prayer will be on your personal sin history, recalling various periods and places of sin in your life.

**Day 3:** The Preparatory Prayer, Composition of self, Grace and Dialogue is the same as on Day 3, pages 31-32.

**Interpersonal Sin** - see James 4:1-10

**Points:** After the Scripture reading, pray on your personal sin history, recalling various periods and places of sin in your life.

**Day 4:** The Preparatory Prayer, Composition of self, Grace and Dialogue is the same as on Day 4, page 32.

**Repetition:** This is a repetition of the 6 prayer periods of Meeting 10 and the 3 prayer periods of Meeting 11. Please read the materials on *Repetition* on pages 18-19, then read "Relation between Structural and Interpersonal Sin" on page 35.

**Points:** Focus on one or two experiences that immediately come to you from your last 9 prayer periods where you have most sensed the graces you were seeking.

**Day 5:** The Preparatory Prayer, Composition of self, Grace and Dialogue is the same as on Day 5, pages 32-33.

**Meditation on Hell:** Read "the full experience of sin", and see Mark 9:43-48.

**Points:** Consider the state of those who are eternally separated from their loved ones because by their sins they forgot the love of Jesus Christ.

**Day 6:** The Preparatory Prayer, Composition of self, Grace and Dialogue is the same as on Day 6, page 33.

**Interpersonal Sin:** Read the “God of Mercy and Compassion” and see Psalm 130.

**Points:** Consider the everlasting love of God for us, as seen in the death of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of us all.



## **MEETING 12**

(Week One)

### **PART I**

### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.**

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we continued to ask for the grace to pray on the multifaceted dimensions of sin, personal and social, and to appreciate the continuous saving action of Christ for all humanity.

After this, read James 4: 1-18 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II**      **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

#### **Theme of the coming week's prayer:**    **Patterns of Sinfulness**

Read and share "Patterns of Sinfulness".

There is a relationship between the interpersonal obstacles that we experience and the sinful structures of our cultural situation. Accordingly, it is essential for members of a faith-community to gain a heightened awareness of this interplay of social and personal energies, and to help one another to counter and become free of those powerful negative influences which continue to endanger us. The social structures and processes of the world in which we are born and raised, trained and matured, develop false ways of relating, and barriers to fulfillment. Some of these are:

**Judgmentalism:** Many people today simply assume that the secular world is beyond question. So we should focus all our attention on individuals.

**Fatalism:** This suggests that individuals are helpless. There is nothing much they can do.

**Separatism:** This suggests that individuals are naturally healthy and "right" and that evils are caused mainly by civilization, somewhat similar to Rousseau's naturalism.

Relations between structural and interpersonal reinforce each other: Sinful habits tend to protect themselves in sinful social structures.

**Interplay of market systems and personal competition:** It is not difficult to make the connection between “getting ahead” and outdoing others, between the few who are rewarded and the many who lose out. The “free market system”, in practice, becomes the exploitation of the poor by the rich.

**Interplay of social divisions and personal rancour (malignant hate, spitefulness):** The factions of our world-owners, stockholders, governors, executives, management, workers, students, pensioners, unemployed - provide special openings for sinful relationships between members. We march to factional rhythms. To gain freedom from these enslaving influences is a painful effort at best.

**Interplay between cultural violence and personal domineering:** To be in control of one’s life does not strike contemporaries as a false aim. According to police statistics, most murders in our society are intra-family killings. Differences between members, in imitation of aggressive sports, are very frequently “settled” by outbreaks of physical or psychological violence.

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** (see grace of each particular daily Exercise)

In order to focus more clearly upon the graces sought, St. Ignatius introduces a *Dialogue with Three Persons* at this point.

The first dialogue is with Mary, the mother of Jesus. I bring myself imaginatively into her presence, and ask her to intercede for me with Jesus, her Son. For Scriptural reference, we go to the wedding at Cana, where Mary notices the lack of wine needed for the continued celebration, approaches her son to help the wedding party, and overcomes his reluctance to get involved. I tell her the graces I urgently need, namely:

**1st: The grace to see and acknowledge my membership in a sinful society; the ways in which the roots of sin make me an accomplice of the social evils in the world, and to detest any signs of this in my life.**

**2nd: The grace to desire, without any reservations, to deal with interpersonal differences and offenses in our midst, and to avoid loading blame upon any member or any group in the world.**

**3rd: As one who belongs to the (Christian) Church and loves it, the grace to know my own faith- community’s infidelity to the Christ and to abhor any disorders of the human situation that may be reproduced in my group.**

I conclude the first dialogue by saying a Hail Mary, or by praising Mary for her fidelity to God's will and her deep understanding of her son's love of humanity.

For the second dialogue, I go with Mary to her Son, and let her ask Jesus that the same three graces be given to me.

Conclude this second dialogue by saying the prayer *Soul of Christ*:

**Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.**

**May your body and blood be my food and drink. May your passion and death be my strength and life. Jesus, with you at my side, enough has been given. May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross. Let me not run from the love you offer, but hold me safe from the forces of evil.**

**On each of my "dyings" shed your light and your love. Keep calling me until that day comes, when, with your saints, I may praise you forever. Amen**

(David Fleming sj)

The third dialogue is with the Trinity. I let Jesus ask the Trinity for the same three graces for me.

Close with the *Lord's Prayer*.

Review of Prayer

**Daily prayer material:** Except for the *Points*, the prayer exercises for these 6 days are found from pages 30-33.

**Day 1: Structural Sin** (see Ezek 16: 1-22; 59-63) Follow the instructions of Day 1 on page 30-31.

**Points:** Meditate on the ingratitude of the Israelites in Ezekiel.

**Day 2: Personal Sin History** (see Lk 18: 9-14) Follow the instructions in the Day 3 prayer period, pages 31-32.

**Points:** Pray over your personal sin history, recalling various periods and places of sin in your life.

#### **Day 3: Repetition**

This is a *Repetition* on the previous 14 prayer periods (which periods began on page 30) Your journal will be of great help here because as said on pp. 18-19 in *Repetition* "... one returns to those points where one has experienced "greater consolation, desolation or great spiritual appreciation."

Instead of the *Lord's Prayer*, end your prayer period with the *Dialogue with Three Persons* (Mary, Jesus, and the Trinity - as described on the previous page).

**Day 4: Repetition** - in your prayer, follow the instructions of Day 3 on pages 31-32.

**Points:** Read Patterns of Sinfulness pages 38-39 and Psalm 51.

In this Exercise, focus on one or two experiences that immediately come to you from your last 9 prayer periods, experiences where you have most sensed the graces you were seeking.

End with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*

Review of Prayer

**Day 5: Hell, the Full Experience of Sin**

**Points:** Read “Meditation on Hell”, pages 32-33 and see Lk 12:16-21.

I end my prayer thanking God that I am still alive and not in Hell and that my own and my group’s sins have not destroyed us and put us into Hell.

**Day 6: Exercise on the Mercy and Compassion of God** (see Ps 130)

Follow the instructions from Day 6 in Meeting 10, page 33.

**Points:** Begin with Ps 103 and consider the everlasting love of God for humans seen in the death of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of us all.

Close with the Lord’s Prayer.      Review of Prayer



**MEETING 13**

(Week One)

**PART I**

**SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God’s loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week’s prayer. In this instance we continued to ask for the grace to pray on the multifaceted dimensions of sin, personal and social, and to appreciate the continuous saving action of Christ for all humanity.

After this, read aloud Lk 18:9-14.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

## PART II

### TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

#### Theme of the coming week's prayer:

#### Process of Purification

Read and share “The Process of Purification”.

St. Ignatius would like all of us who make his Exercises to receive the grace of *desiring* our own purification. That grace may not come easily or all at once. At first it is frequent for human beings to be shaken at the thought of needing it.

When an obstacle to our union with God is revealed to us, we tend to become angry or to draw back in fear. Or we might complain at our treatment, grow defensive, make use of all available excuses, and even feel sorry for ourselves.

But after a little further reflection, and after praying before the Lord alive on the cross, we may get into a better disposition. God reveals obstacles to us in order to free us from them with our co-operation. Our Lord has given his life in order to save us from the malice of sinfulness in our world and in our very selves.

Purification from sin and sinfulness is the solid basis for all growth in union with God. Our spiritual tradition is unanimous on this profound truth.

Should we remain unwilling or reluctant to devote ourselves to these meditations on sin, that in itself is a sign of the inner obstacles to God's will which are hindering us and deflecting us from forward progress. It is important to face, and to spend time with, the deep-rooted sinfulness which tries to pull us away from God's path. Thus, we should ask often for the grace of desiring to be purified from every sort of complicity with the sinful world.

When graces of this kind are given to us, as with St. Peter at the Transfiguration, we will exclaim, “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” We will then experience deep within ourselves how much we are in need of purification, and we will sincerely desire to make further progress in it. For purification is a long-range process. It brings graces to which we may often wish to return. We will sometimes need to renew those graced realizations because to be purified in the sight of God is a staple nourishment of all spiritual growth.

## PART III

### MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Grace: See each particular Day of Exercise below

Daily prayer material: Rev 3:14-22

Day 1. Structural Sin Read “Faithlessness of a Community”. For all except Points, follow Day 1 on pages 30-31.

**Points:** Begin with the accusation against the faith community of Laodicea presented in Rev. 3: 14-22.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 2. Interpersonal Sin** - Personal Sin History for all except Points, follow Day 3, pages 31-32.

**Points:** Begin with Ezek 11: 14-22 and then pray over your personal sin history, recalling various periods and places of sin in your life.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 3.** Repetition – prepare by reading Day 3 on page 40. For all except Points, follow Day 3 on pages 30-31.

In your prayer repeat the last 14 prayer periods. Then read “Relation Between Structural and Interpersonal Sin”, page 35.

**Points:** Consider the words of Jesus in Mk 7: 1-23 and look over your life to recognize your own patterns of sin. Pay special attention to the deception suggested in the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 4.** Repetition – another one. In your prayer, follow the previous day’s instructions.

**Points:** Consider the words of 1 Jn 2- 12-17 and look over your life to recognize your own patterns of sin. Ponder the points of deception in the *Dialogue with Three Persons* .

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.

**Day 5.** Hell, the Full Experience of Sin - Meditation on Hell and Self-destruction. Follow the instructions of Day 5, page 32.

**Points:** Meditate with Mk 9: 43-48.

End your prayer by thanking God that you are still alive and not in Hell, realizing that your sins are an expression of self-destruction and an attempt to put yourself in Hell.

**Day 6. God of Mercy and Compassion** - Follow instructions of Day 6, page 33 for all but the Points.

**Points:** Meditate with Lk 19: 1-10.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*      Review of Prayer



## **MEETING 14**

**(Week One)**

### **PART I**

### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.**

**Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for an acceptance of our need for purification from any complicity with the world's sinfulness.**

After this, read aloud 1 Jn 2: 12-17.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

**PART II**      **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer: God of Mercy and Compassion**

Read and share the “God of Mercy and Compassion”.

Ignatius' *First Week Exercises on Sin* are meant to draw (for many) new awareness about ourselves, about the world in which we live, and about the Blessed Trinity. Some of these are -

that we participate in a long line of sinful history and are caught up into these destructive forces as a people and as persons.

that overcoming these destructive forces takes place through love and the specific suffering of Jesus Christ to save us from our self-destruction by dying on the cross for us.

the realization that we humans amplify our sins and disorders in our social structures.

the awareness that our secular world is, basically, a deceptive world.

that we have learned something new about God, beyond that of Creator of the Universe. That we survive the destructiveness of our sins and the sin of the world indicates that God is *Forgiveness* and God is *Reconciler*.

And so we are filled with amazement and gratitude that the God who created and sustains us is One who relates to us as a suffering, forgiving, rejoicing parent, a friend and lover.

**Connection with the past week's prayer theme:**

During this meeting, what moved you in your sharing of the past week's prayer theme? Does it relate in any way to the coming week's prayer theme?

**PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** a daily grace is given in the instructions below.

**Daily prayer material:** God's Mercy and Compassion

**Day 1. Structural and Interpersonal Sin** Follow the instructions of Day 3, pages 31-32, except for the Points.

**Points:** Begin with 2 Sam 12: 1-14. Consider the remorse of David as he realizes his son's death should have been his own, for his sins of adultery and murder.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 2. Repetition** - Follow the instructions of Day 3, pages 31-32, except for the Points.

This is a repetition on your previous 14 Prayer periods. Use your journal as an aid to recall "experiences of greater consolation, desolation or great spiritual appreciation". Recall the materials on *Repetition* on pages 18-19. Then read "Interplay between Structural and Interpersonal Sin" page 35.

**Points:** Begin with Lk 7: 36-50 and then pray on your personal sin history, recalling various periods and places of sin in your life.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 3. Mercy and Compassion of God** Read page 43 and then follow the instructions of Day 6, page 33, except for Points.

**Points:** Begin with Hosea 2: 14-23 and meditate on the everlasting love of God for us.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 4. Mercy and Compassion of God** Follow the instructions of Day 6, page 33, except for Points.

**Points:** Begin with Lk 15: 11-32 and meditate on the everlasting love of God for us.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 5. Repetition of Days 2, 3, and 4** Follow the instruction of Day 6, page 33, except for Points.

**Points:** Continue with Lk 15: 11-32 with the previous days meditation.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer

**Day 6. Follow the instructions of Day 6, page 33, except for Points.**

**Points:** Begin with 2 Cor 1: 3-7 and meditate on the everlasting love of God for us, seen in the death of Jesus Christ, humanity's Saviour.

End your prayer with the *Dialogue with Three Persons*.      Review of Prayer



## **MEETING 15**

(Week One)

### **PART I**

#### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer. The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer. In this instance we asked for an acceptance of our need for purification from any complicity with the world's sinfulness.

After this, read Lk 7: 36-50 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II**

#### **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

#### **Theme of the coming week's prayer:**    **Discerning from the Shadow in My Graced History**

Read and share on "Personal Shadow History".

All of our life experience is graced by the love of God. But this graced history has different aspects such as light, shadow, joy, pain and hope. Our sinful history is a great puzzle to us. Yet we know that God is present to us at the time of sin and that God can draw good out of evil. If we wish to be instruments of God's justice, mercy, goodness and light in our world, we need a reflective knowledge of the sinful aspects of our graced history so that we can work against the deceptions of our secular world and our disordered tendencies. Praying with the sinful aspects of our graced history in the ways suggested in the "Ways of Praying with Graced History", in Meeting 9, page 27, will help us.

### **PART III**

#### **MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Read:

*Ways of Praying with Graced History* pages 26-27

**Grace:** I ask for the grace to appreciate that Jesus was present with me through this painful history and for the grace of sorrow and healing. I seek forgiveness and the grace to forgive.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Days 1, 2 and 3** will have different Scriptural readings but the same format.

**Day 1. Mk 1: 40-42. Context:** A leper came to Jesus, begging, and kneeling said, “If you choose you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he became clean.

**Grace:** I seek to realize in a deeply personal way the Jesus was present with me through this painful history. I pray for the grace of sorrow and healing. I seek forgiveness and the grace to forgive.

**Remembering:**

- the sinful history of my childhood, adolescence, adulthood, more mature years.
- sinfulness against my self-worth, and accepting responsibility for my choices and decisions
- sinfulness against the spirit of the Gospel
- sinfulness flowing from my successes/failures
- sinfulness flowing from my sense of rejection
- sinfulness flowing from different persons, places, situations

**Pondering:** After this time of remembering my sinful history in company with Jesus, I spend some time reflecting on these questions:

- do I perceive any pattern in my sinful history?
- how has God brought me through my sinful history?
- what in me still needs forgiveness and healing?

**Dialogue with the Trinity (with Three Persons)**

**Review of Prayer**

**Day 2.** Read 1 Cor 1:26-31, create the scene and follow the instructions of Day 1, page 48 (above).

**Day 3.** Read Eph 5: 8-14, create the scene and follow the instructions of Day 1, above.

Days 4, 5 and 6 will have different Scriptural readings but the same reflective reading material. **Context:** The presence of Jesus with me during my personal shadow history.

**Grace:** I seek to realize, in a deeply spiritual way, the ability to recognize my spiritual consolations and desolations and the times when I have made decisions in the time of consolation or in the times of desolation.

**Points:** Read pages 48-50 below and the Scripture texts of each day.

**Day 4.** Read James 3: 13-18 and reflect on Ignatius’ guidelines below (pages 48-50).

**A Reflection on Ignatius’ Guidelines (Understanding interior movements of spirits)**

From the materials given in the CLC manuals of phases I and II, we know that Ignatius presented two sets of *Rules on the Discernment of Spirits* in his Spiritual Exercises # 313 – 336. The first set considers the spiritual experiences for the time of purification

that we have just completed. The second set is concerned with spiritual experiences that are to come later in the *Exercises*.

In his notes on a General Awareness Exercise, Ignatius states, “I presuppose that there are three kinds of thoughts in my mind, which are, first, one which is strictly my own, which arises solely from my liberty and will, and two others which come from without, the one from the good spirit, the other from the evil one.” (*Sp Exx # 19*). Later, Ignatius will suggest that there are two sources of good thoughts: those that are from God alone (the Holy Spirit) and those that are from a good angel (*Sp Exx # 330, 331. 335*).

Today there are two ways to understand the word “spirits”. One is the existence of created good and evil spirits (angels and devils), independent of the human situation. The other is that good and evil spirits are the sum total of human good and evil forces that operate as personal forces in our universe. Of course the Holy Spirit is not a created spirit.

Often, in prayer, it is easier to deal with the outside spirits as good angels or evil devils. But, in considering the ways in which good and evil forces impinge on us from beyond, we may prefer to think of the sum total of good and evil human actions, as they become established in various social structures today.

Now is a good time to consider Ignatius’ first set of rules, because we have become more aware of spiritual interior movements through the use of the *Reviews of Prayer* and *Repetitions*.

Ignatius has two purposes in his presentation. The first is that we will become more aware of two kinds of interior experiences that he calls consolation and desolation. The second purpose is to understand how these affect us in our interior state of being and also in our decisions and actions.

After becoming aware of these interior movements, these rules help us understand the reasons for the way that we feel, at times, and the motivation behind many of our decisions and actions. Discernment, for Ignatius, is concerned about our interior responses and reactions to situations and experiences, for these lead us to make good or bad decisions.

The experience of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation is a faith-related experience. It is only in the context of faith that these experiences make any sense. These are Ignatius’ description of *Spiritual Consolation and Spiritual Desolation* given in the *Spiritual Exercises* # 316 – 317).

I call it consolation when the soul is aroused by an interior movement which causes it to be inflamed with love of God its Creator, and as a consequence can love no created thing on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of all things. It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears, moved by the love of God, whether it be because of sorrow for sins or because of the sufferings of Christ, or for any other reason immediately directed to the praise and service of God. Finally I call consolation every increase of faith and hope and love, and all interior joy which calls and attracts the person to that which is of God and to salvation by filling it with tranquility and peace in God our Creator and in Jesus Christ.

I call **desolation** that which is entirely the opposite of what is described as spiritual consolation, such as darkness of soul, confusion of spirit, attraction to what is base and worldly, restlessness caused by many disturbances and temptations which lead us to lack of faith, hope or love. The soul finds itself completely apathetic, lukewarm, tepid, sad and as if separated from its Creator and Jesus Christ. For just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts coming from consolation are the opposite of those which come from desolation.

So we see that spiritual consolation is more than feeling good, or being on a spiritual high or feeling peaceful or having a sense of well-being. Rather it is an outward movement (beyond self) towards God and neighbour. Its kernel is Love and this love is the virtue of Charity – not a feeling but a movement beyond self.

Similarly, spiritual desolation is more than feeling bad, or disturbed or frightened. It is an interior movement away from God and toward selfishness. Thus a person may get caught up into selfishness whether for pleasure or for concern for one's physical, psychological and even spiritual well-being. Our interior affective states (more relational than feelings) are the indicators of experiences of consolation or desolation. They are tendencies and not states of being and, as such, need to be discerned. It is important to check out the direction these are taking us – to love others, humanity and God, or into an individualized isolated self. Thus we might find that some interior tendencies that look and feel like desolation can be consolation and similarly some interior tendencies that look and feel like consolation can be desolation. We can have painful experiences such as are expressed in the beatitudes, of mourning and suffering for justice, that are consolation. We can have an inflated sense of well-being and pleasure for a successful accomplishment which is desolation, for it tends to separate us from others and from God.

Consolation and desolation are not good or bad in themselves, but they are the occasion for decisions that can lead to good or destructive decisions. **A basic principle for Ignatius is that good decisions are made at a time of spiritual consolation, for then the Good Spirit is guiding and counseling us.**

**In a time of desolation one's tendency is towards selfish or destructive decisions.** In desolation the sense of sadness, heaviness, gloominess, many disturbances as well as a decrease of faith, hope and love of God, may lead to thoughts backed by false reasoning, to doubts about the validity of former choices (whether these involved work, relationships, state of life or values).

**St. Ignatius also indicates why a person is in consolation or desolation, and how to deal with these states. He gives three reasons for desolation: 1) a person is not cooperating with graces given, 2) it is a time for a person to grow into adult Christianity and 3) so that a person will gain a true knowledge and understanding of him/herself, to know that consolation is a gratuitous gift of God (Sp Exx #322). Ignatius says that one is to deal with desolation by striving to gain more self-awareness, by being more faithful in prayer, by persevering in patience and by believing in the salvific will of God, knowing “consolation will soon return” (Sp Exx #323 – 324).**

**Day 5. Repetition of pages 48-50 with Col 3: 12 – 17.**

**Day 6. Repetition of pages 48-50 with Rom 8: 26 – 39.**

**Dialogue with the Trinity: throughout my prayer I speak to God about my awareness.**

**End with the *Lord's Prayer*.**

**Review of Prayer**



## **MEETING 16**

**(Transitional Meeting to Week Two)**

### **PART I**

**SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God’s loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week’s prayer. In this instance we asked for the grace to appreciate that Jesus was present with us through this painful history and for the grace of sorrow and healing. We seek forgiveness and the grace to forgive.

After this, read Mk 1: 40 - 42 aloud.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a second sharing.

## **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

### **Theme of the coming week's prayer:**

### **The Call of Jesus Christ**

Read and share on “the Call of Christ”.

St. Ignatius suggests that we meditate on Christ's call as an introduction to contemplating on the life of Christ.

In the New Testament Jesus, the Risen Lord, becomes known as the one true sovereign. In his public ministry he often refused to be made a king of the kind the people wanted then. He did not choose to enter directly into political action.

One of his three temptations in the desert was an invitation to kingly rule, and we know how he responded to that suggestion. On several occasions, crowds in Palestine tried to force a crown upon his head, but he eluded them. It was only after his resurrection that the early Christians recognized the true nature of his reign over them.

To put this another way, one could say that the religio-political king in the line of David, to be anointed by God and so called “the Christ”, would not, in Jesus way of understanding, lead a worldly regime nor play any role in party politics (not even the opposition). Instead, Jesus would be “really present” to persons in all their social concerns, as to people gathered in his name, and he would exercise his reign interiorly in their midst from within their hearts and enable their own free choices in concrete circumstances (including political ones).

Jesus Christ definitely calls us into action in the world. He expects us to take up valuable tasks and to make our contribution to human affairs. He is confident that we will find our happiness in putting our energies into meaningful efforts for the benefit of human societies on earth. No part of the world, no people or nation, no individual member will be excluded by him. His insistent call goes out to every one of us. How shall we respond?

In this meditation, we try to enter into our Christian vocation more deeply by considering several great human models in turn. We will meet with actual persons in history who have heard God's voice in their hearts and have plunged generously into the situations confronting them. Then we will return to our own circumstances and listen to the call of Jesus Christ to follow him right here and now.

## **PART III** MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Read: *Ways of Praying with Graced History*, pages 26-27.

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace to offer myself wholeheartedly to the enterprise of Christ in my world.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Day 1. First Meditation with Christ's Personal Call to Me**

**PART A. The Call of an Earthly Leader** - This will help me to contemplate the call of Christ, our divine leader.

**Preparatory prayer:** "O Blessed Trinity, give to me and all in my community the grace to direct our intentions, actions and operations solely to your service and praise".

**Composition of self:** Using Lk 8:1 – 3 as a reference, imagine yourself walking along the road with Jesus and those women and men accompanying Jesus. As you walk, listen to Jesus' words: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I call you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." (Jn 15: 15 – 16)

**Grace:** I ask for the grace to respond generously to the call of Christ; not to disregard Christ's words but to hear them from my deepest being and commit my whole self, with confidence, to the enterprise of Christ (the furthering of God's realm of peace, justice and love on earth).

**Points:** (*Ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought*)

- I imagine a human leader who, in response to God's Spirit, has lived out a clear response to life's situations and calls us to join in this life response.

- I hear the earthly leader speaking these words: "It is my will to overcome the evils of injustice and hate in the world and bring about peace and love to the oppressed of every kind. therefore, those who wish to join me in this enterprise must be content with the same food, drink, clothing, etc., as mine. So too, they must work with me day and night etc., that as they have had a share in the toil with me, afterwards they may rejoice with me in our accomplishments.

- Consider what the answer of good persons would be to a leader so generous and noble-minded, and consequently, if persons would refuse the invitation of such a leader, how justly they would deserve to be reproved by everyone, and looked upon as unworthy persons.

**PART B The Call of Jesus Christ**

The second part of this exercise will consist in applying the example of the earthly leader mentioned above to Jesus Christ the Lord, according to the following points.

**Points:** If such an invitation of an earthly leader deserves our attention, how much more worthy of consideration is Jesus Christ, the divine leader, before whom is assembled the whole world. To all, Christ's summons goes forth, and to each one in particular Jesus addresses

the words: “It is my will to redeem the whole world, and thus to enter into the glory of God. Therefore, those who wish to be with me and join me in this enterprise must be willing to labour with me, that by being with me in suffering, they may be with me in glory.”

- I consider that all persons who have heart, judgment and reason will offer themselves entirely to be with me in this work.
- Those who wish to give greater prove of their love, and to distinguish themselves in whatever shows greater love and service of the eternal Leader and God of all, will not only offer themselves entirely to Jesus and the work, but will act against their selfish desires and need for worldly recognition, and offer themselves totally to Jesus and the enterprise in words such as these:

### *Offering of Self to Christ*

Eternal Sovereign of all things, in the presence of your infinite goodness, and of your glorious Mother, and of all the saints in heaven, this is the offering of myself which I make with your favour and help. I profess that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for your greater service and praise, to be with You, imitate You in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and poverty, both actual and spiritual, should Your most holy Sovereign wish to choose and admit me to such this relationship and way of life.

### Day 2. Jesus Christ’s Personal Call to Us.

For Part A, recall great human leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Saint Joan of Arc, Pope Saint John XXIII, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, Mother Saint Teresa of Calcutta, whomever ...and in your own imagination describe you ideal human leader and a program of action for today’s world that would stir up your wholehearted commitment.

- Consider the response you ought to make to such a leader.
- Then continue with the Points of Part B.

You may wish to create your own *Offering of Self* or use the one given by St. Ignatius.

### Review of Prayer

### Day 3. This is a repetition of Days 1 and 2.

Recall you *Reviews of Prayer* of Day 1 and Day 2 and focus on what moved you the most. You may wish to read Jn 10: 11 – 18 at the beginning of your prayer. Then continue with Part A and Part B of the Meditation with Christ’s Personal Call to Us.

Again you may wish to create your own *Offering of Self* to Jesus Christ.

### Day 4. A Contemplation of the Incarnation – The Word of God Become Human

This follows St. Ignatius’ instructions for contemplating a mystery of Christ’s life as given in the Gospel.

**Preparatory Prayer** as usual.

**Composition of Self** (*includes history and placement of the mystery*)

This will consist in calling to mind how the Three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse of all the earth, filled with human beings. Since they see that all are going down to hell, they decree in their eternity that the Second Person should become human to save the human race. It includes seeing with the imagination the great extent of the surface of the earth, inhabited by so many different peoples.

**Grace:** I ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who has become human for me, that I may love Jesus more and follow Jesus more closely.

**First Point:** This will be to see with the imagination the different persons on the face of the earth, in such great diversity in dress and in manner of acting. Some are white, some black; some at peace and some at war; some weeping; some laughing; some well; some sick; some coming into the world and some dying.

Then I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Sovereign. They look down upon the whole surface of the earth, and behold all nations in great blindness, going down to death and self-destruction.

Then I will reflect on all these things in order to draw profit from what I have seen.

**Second Point:** This will be to listen to what the persons on the face of the earth say, that is, how they speak to one another, swear and blaspheme, etc.

I will also hear what the Divine Persons say, that is, "Let us work the redemption of the human race."

I will reflect on all these words in order to draw profit from what I have heard.

**Third Point:** This will be to consider what the persons on the face of the earth do, for example, wound, kill and bring about self-destruction. I will also see what the Divine Persons do, namely, work the most holy Incarnation, etc.

I will reflect upon all that persons are doing and thus draw some fruit from each of these details.

**Dialogue:** I will think over what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, or to the eternal Word incarnate. According to the light that I have received, I will beg for the grace to follow and imitate more closely our Jesus, who has just become human for me.

## **Day 5. A Contemplation of the Incarnation – The Word of God Becomes Human**

**Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self and Grace as in Day 1, page 53.**

**Read: Jn 1: 1 - 18 and Titus 3: 4 – 8. Then consider your Review of Prayer of the previous contemplation and do another contemplation of the Incarnation following the instructions of the previous contemplation (Day 4).**

**Day 6. This will be a repetition of the previous five Days. Begin the prayer period as usual.**

**Recall your *Review of Prayer* and decide on the focal points for this Day 6.**

**Consider the great concerns of the Trinity for the human race and the person and work of Jesus Christ.**

**Listen to Jesus Christ's personal invitation to be part of the enterprise of bringing salvation to the world.**

**Carry on a continual *Dialogue* with the different persons of the Trinity. Repeat your *Offering of Self*.**



## **MEETING 17**

(Week Two)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, giving thanks.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace to offer ourselves wholeheartedly to the enterprise of Christ in our world.

After this, read Jn 1:1 - 18 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a second sharing.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

#### ***Theme of the coming week's prayer periods: Incarnation and Birth of Jesus Christ***

Read and share:

After the intense purification of the First Week Exercises, the Call of Jesus Christ has brought us to the entry of the Son of God into our actual history. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us!" (John 1:14)

Now, in the Second Week, then, we renew our personal union with Jesus Christ who has drawn so near: by contemplating the Gospel stories we are shown a traditional doorway into the human family of Christ.

It will be evident that the Second Week, as a whole, is devoted to "knowing Jesus Christ," and this always means the kind of personal knowledge that leads, through love, to action. That is the overall grace to be sought in this part of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Its goal is the growth of each one's being of a "Christic self", freely committed to a particular course of action in service of God's reign:

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" To achieve this "experiential or personal knowledge of Jesus", Ignatius suggests that we use the simple method of contemplating Gospel events.

## **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Read and share: Contemplating the Mysteries of Jesus' Life**

**How does the method of contemplation differ from meditation? It differs primarily in the point of departure. In meditation, the point of departure is the activity of the intellect, will and understanding, i.e., the powers of reflection (what? where? why? how? when?), whereas the point of departure in the method of contemplation is the imagination.**

**Imagination -- a wonderful gift**

Imagination is a human faculty with a poor reputation! How often we hear it said: "It's only your imagination" - or - "It's all in your imagination." And yet, one's imagination is an amazing gift. Combined with memory, it enables one to recall and even to re-live the past. Imagination is also creative: it can combine elements of past experience to create something new, i.e. it can combine the colour pink with an image of an elephant to produce a pink elephant!

**Because imagination is creative, one tends to be suspicious of it. It seems more risky and unpredictable than the five external senses which normally register simply what is "there".**

**Yet, without imagination, there would be no poetry, no art, no music – for one needs what Wordsworth called "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" if one is to open oneself to the mystery of life, to the mystery of God. Consider how often Scripture speaks in the language of imagery, of poetry!**

**Some people claim that they have little or no imagination. Anthony de Mello sj writes: "Formerly I would accept the statement of retreatants who said to me, 'I cannot pray with my imagination. I have a very poor imagination.' And I would advise them to use some other form of prayer. Today I have become convinced that with a little practice everyone can develop his/her power to imagine and thus acquire untold emotional and spiritual riches."**

**Test yourself: close your eyes and see the face of a friend, hear the music of "Silent Night", smell skunk 'perfume', taste crisp bacon, touch the thorns on a rose bush.**

### **HOW TO CONTEMPLATE THE GOSPEL MYSTERIES:**

**In the Second Week Exercises, St. Ignatius wants retreatants to learn (if they have not already acquired it) the method of simple contemplation of Gospel stories that was taught in the high Middle Ages since the thirteen century (800 years ago). He was himself introduced to it in the Life of Christ by Ludolph of Saxony, a book given him in his family home at Loyola, when he was recovering there from his leg wounds. His midlife conversion was occasioned by these experiences of Gospel contemplation. They enabled him, by the movements of the Divine Spirit in his heart, to know Jesus personally, to enter lovingly into union with him, and to desire a life of service to God's realm on earth. That knowing, loving, and following Jesus is precisely the grace that retreatants are to ask for throughout the contemplations of the Second Week.**

The method itself in any given “mystery” may be described briefly. It is really quite simple to do. “Mystery” is the medieval name for a single story told in one of the four Gospels – as in “the mystery plays” or (for Catholics) the mysteries of the rosary”.

The particular mystery chosen, for example the calming of the storm (Mark 4:35 – 41), should be read over several times until all its details are remembered – even to the pillow under Jesus’ head. Then one should imagine the events to be going on NOW, in one’s own time, so that one may enter the story oneself and take part in it as it happens. One does not go back in time as if making a movie out of it, but allows the mystery to come into one’s own present time. Using one’s faith memory and different ways of imagining, such as hearing, seeing, and being present, one wishes to come into the mystery. One’s entry into it should be done humbly. As a little friend or servant of the apostles, one gets into the boat with them, feels their fear when the storm threatens, pulls at Jesus’ garments to wake him up, and so on.

That is the essence of the method. It should be done in vivid faith so as to combine an intimate nearness to the persons, with a deep reverence for them. Fantasies should be curbed. Instead, one should stay within the parameters of the story as given in Holy Scripture. But one ought to surrender to the experience of the story. That is, one should be receptive to its mysterious powers and allow them to move one’s deepest heart.

Afterwards, in the review of prayer, one sets down one’s actual experiences with complete objectivity (even if very little or very ordinary things have occurred). In the group meeting, one may share these descriptions and in listening to the contemplations, others gain further insight into their significance.

In this program, each meeting combines two mysteries which are repeated through six exercises in the following pattern:

1. first contemplation of the first mystery assigned
2. first contemplation of the second mystery assigned.
  
3. repetition of contemplations 1 or 2, or 1 and 2.
4. repetition of contemplations 1 or 2, or 3, or 1 and 2 and 3.
  
5. same as 4 but by *Applying the Spiritual Senses*.
6. another repetition of significant aspects in 1,2,3,4 and 5.

In the Repetitions, one returns to the experiences of previous contemplations in any order and enters the mysteries at events which affected one most positively or to work through any negative aspects that seemed to block one’s progress.

The *Application of the Senses* refers to our inner, or “spiritual” senses as transformed by the Divine Spirit. When this has occurred in some way, then in gratitude and loving response one allows the gifts received to flow through all the rest of one’s personal being – even into one’s bodily sensations, so that one is unified and integrated by them and allows them to flow outward into one’s communal and social worlds. During the prayer, one is at least to begin this self-giving in desire and in fidelity, to the apostolic urgings of the Holy Spirit within one.

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us, that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Day 1** First contemplation: The Incarnation – The Word of God Becomes Human ( see Lk 1:26 – 38)

This contemplation of the Incarnation is a development of Day 4 on pages 54-55. It picks up St. Ignatius' points on the Mystery of the Annunciation and the place of Mary in the Incarnation.

**Preparatory prayer:** as usual

**Composition of Self** (includes history and place of the mystery):

This will consist of calling to mind how the three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse of all the earth, filled with human beings. Since They see that all are going down to hell, They decree in their eternity that the Second Person should become human to save the human race and they send the Angel Gabriel to Mary in Galilee. It includes seeing with the imagination the great extent of the surface of the earth, inhabited by so many different peoples and to focus on the house and room of Mary in Nazareth.

**Grace:** I ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who has become human for me, that I may love Jesus more and follow Jesus more closely.

Read the scripture now as a Contemplation exercise (Lk1:26-38), "The Annunciation".

**First Point:** This will be to see, with the imagination, the different persons on the face of the earth, in such great diversity in dress and in manner of being. Some are brown, some white, some black; some at peace, and some at war; some weeping, some laughing; some well, some sick; some coming into the world, and some dying.

Secondly, I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal dais, or throne, of God. They look down upon the whole surface of the earth, and behold all nations in great blindness, going down to death and to self-destruction.

Thirdly, I will see Mary, and the angelic messenger greeting her. I will reflect on these things in order to draw profit from what I see.

**Second Point:** This will be to listen to what the persons on the face of the earth say, that is, how they speak to one another, swear and blaspheme, etc..

I will also hear what the Divine Persons say, that is, "Let us work the redemption of the human race," etc..

Then I will listen to what the angel and Mary are saying. Finally I will reflect on all these words in order to draw profit from what I have heard.

**Third Point:** This will be to consider what the persons on the face of the earth do, for example, wound, kill, and bring about self-destruction. Also what the Divine Persons do, namely, work the most holy Incarnation, etc.. Likewise I will consider what the angel and Mary are doing: how the angel proclaims the divine message, and how Mary acts humbly

and gives thanks to God. Then I will reflect upon all that the persons are doing to draw some profit from each of these details.

**Dialogue:** I will think over what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, or to the eternal Word incarnate, or to Mary. According to the light that I have received, I will beg for the grace to follow and imitate more closely Jesus, who has just become human for me.

Close with the *Our Father*.

Review of Prayer

**Day 2.** Second contemplation: The Nativity - Jesus is Born of Mary (see Lk 2: 1-14)

This follows St. Ignatius' instructions for contemplating a mystery of Christ's life as given in the Gospel (i.e. a Preparatory Prayer, a Composition of Self, Grace, Points and Dialogue)

**Preparatory Prayer:** as usual

**Composition of Self** (includes history and place of the mystery):

This consists in calling to mind that our Lady, about nine months with child, and, as may be piously believed, on an ass, set out from Nazareth. She was accompanied by Joseph and a maid who was leading an ox. They are going to Bethlehem to pay the tribute that Caesar imposed on those lands. It includes seeing with the imagination the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level, through valleys and over hills. Observe also the place or cave where Christ is born; whether big or little; whether high or low and how it is arranged. (You may want to imagine your own history and place,)

**Grace:** This will be the same as in the preceding contemplations on the Incarnation and identical in form with it. (This grace remains the same for all the contemplations until Week III - the Passion of Jesus.)

Read the scripture now as a Contemplation exercise (Lk 2:1-14)

**First Point:**

This will consist in seeing the persons, namely, our Lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the Child Jesus after his birth. I will make myself a little bit of a body, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence. Then I will reflect on myself, that I may reap some fruit from this contemplation.

**Second Point:** This is to consider, observe, and contemplate what the persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it.

**Third Point:** This will be to see and consider what they are doing, for example, making the journey and labouring that Jesus might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labours, after hunger, thirst, heat and cold, after insults and outrages, to die on the cross, and all this for me. Then I will reflect and draw some spiritual fruit from what I have seen.

**Dialogue:** Close with a *Dialogue* as in the preceding contemplation and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 3. Third Contemplation:** a repetition of the two previous contemplations

Read Lk 1:26 to 2:14 and do a repetition of the previous two contemplations

**Note:** In this Repetition, and in all those which follow, the same order of proceeding should be observed. The subject matter is changed but the same form of the prayer period is used.

**Dialogue:** Close with a *Dialogue* as in the preceding contemplation and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 4.** Fourth Contemplation: a repetition of the three previous contemplations.

Begin with the same Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self and Grace, as in the previous three contemplations. In doing the *Repetition*, attention should be always given to more important parts in which one has experienced understanding, consolation, or desolation.

Close Day 4 with a *Dialogue* and the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 5. Fifth Contemplation:** an application of the senses over the four previous contemplations. Begin with the same Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self and Grace as in the previous five contemplations. It will be profitable, with the aid of the imagination, to apply the five senses to the subject matter of the previous five contemplations in the following manner:

**First Point:** This consists in seeing (in imagination) the persons, and in contemplating and meditating, in detail, the circumstances in which they are, and then in drawing some fruit from what has been seen.

**Second Point:** This is to hear what they are saying, or what they might say, and then by reflecting on oneself to draw some profit from what has been heard.

**Third Point:** This is to smell the infinite fragrance, and taste the infinite sweetness of the Divinity. Likewise to apply these senses to the soul and its virtues, and to all according to the person we are contemplating, and so to draw some fruit from this.

**Fourth Point:** This is to apply the sense of touch, for example, by embracing and kissing the place where the persons stand or are seated, always taking care to draw some fruit from this.

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 6.** Sixth Contemplation: a repetition of the five previous contemplations.

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.



**MEETING 18**

(Week Two)

**PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks

and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that, we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Lk 2:1 - 20 aloud.

#### *Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience*

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

*Theme of the coming week's prayer: Presentation in the Temple and The Flight into Egypt.*

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Read the following Notes.

Note 1. Attention must be called to the following point. I ought to read only the mystery that I am immediately to contemplate. Hence, I should not read any mystery that is not to be used on that day, lest the consideration of one mystery interfere with the contemplation of the other.

Note 2. As soon as I wake, I should place before my mind the subject of the contemplation with the desire to know better the eternal Word incarnate in order to serve and follow Jesus Christ more closely.

Note 3. I will call to mind frequently the mysteries of the life of Christ the Lord from the Incarnation to the place or mystery I am contemplating.

Note 4. As soon as I recall that it is time for prayer, I will call to mind where I am going, before whom I am to appear, and briefly sum up the Exercise. Then, after making an act of presence, I shall enter into prayer.

Note 5. The Hidden Mysteries follow the same process as the Incarnation and Nativity. There is the same Preparatory Prayer, Grace and Dialogue (with various persons in the mystery. Only the Composition of Self and the Points (seeing the person, hearing what they are saying, watching what they are doing, etc.) change depending on the mystery. For the *Application of the Senses* follow the method given on page 62, Day 5.

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me, that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Day 1. First Contemplation - Presentation in the Temple (see Lk 2:22 – 39)**

- Joseph and Mary travel with their child to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- There they offer him to God's will and service.
- They pay for the simple sacrifice of doves or pigeons.
- Simeon greets them and speaks prophetic words.
- Anna, aged 84, arrives and gives thanks.
- Mary and Joseph return with the child to Bethlehem.

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 2. Second Contemplation – The Flight into Egypt (see Mt 2:13 – 18)**

- Joseph's dream and his swift departure with Mary and the Child.
- Herod, anxious about the prophecies of a newborn king, sends soldiers to kill all newborn infants in the Bethlehem area.
- Mary and her child, riding on a donkey led by Joseph, make a difficult journey into Egypt in the heat and amid alien languages and customs.
- They arrive and try to establish a way of life in exile from their home.
- They endure life as refugees for several years until the danger from Herod ceases with his death.

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 3. Repetition of the previous two contemplations.**

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 4. Repetition of the previous three contemplations.**

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 5. An Application of the Senses of all the contemplations made up to now (i.e. the Incarnation, The Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Flight into Egypt).**

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

**Day 6. Repetition of all the contemplations made up to now (i.e. the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Flight into Egypt).**

**Dialogue:** Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer*.



## **MEETING 19**

(Week Two)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Lk 2:39-40 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer: The Obedience of Jesus at Nazaeth & The Finding of Jesus in the Temple**

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Read "Ways of Praying with Graced History", page 26. (Disposition Days- after Meeting 9)

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

#### **Daily prayer material:**

##### **Day 1. The Finding of the child Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:41-50)**

- At the age of twelve, on a visit to Jerusalem with his parents, Jesus has a mysterious experience in the Temple, which causes him to stay behind after all his kinsfolk have left home.
- At the end of a day's journey, Mary and Joseph cannot find him; they return to the city and search in vain for three days.
- At last they discover him among the teachers in the Temple.
- Jesus gives a mysterious answer to his mother's question.

**From now on, conclude your prayer periods in the way that gives you the most profit.**

**Day 2. The obedience of Jesus to his parents from the age of 12 to 30 (Lk 2: 51-52)**

-Despite the mysterious experience he had in the Temple Jesus spends the next eighteen years (his youth-stage of life) in submission to his parents in Nazareth.

-Jesus grows and develops, not only physically but in wisdom and in his personal relationships with God and others.

-Traditionally, it is thought that Joseph, his foster-father, died at some point during these years.

-We may assume that Jesus decided not to marry.

-Jesus' growth must have included a clarification of his sense of mission and his call from Trinity.

-Jesus chose to live unnoticed until his time to begin a public ministry should become clear.

-Meanwhile Jesus worked at Joseph's trade, supporting himself and his mother.

**Day 3. Repetition of the previous two contemplations.**

**Day 4. Repetition of the previous three contemplations.**

**Day 5. An Application of the Senses to all the contemplations made up to now, i.e., the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Flight in to Egypt, the Obedience of Jesus and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple.**

**Day 6. Repetition of all the contemplations made up to now, i.e., the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Flight into Egypt, the Obedience of Jesus and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple.**



## **MEETING 20**

(Week Two)

### **PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us, that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Lk 2: 51-52 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**    **The Meaning and Commitment of Discipleship -- The Two Standards and the Three Classes of Persons**

Read and share on the following:

Two Standards and the Three Classes of Persons – Christian and Secular Values in Contemporary Culture

Despite Christ's personal victory, at each new stage of human development, evil continues to assert power in human societies. One can see this in flagrant examples. But now we wish to concentrate on the more public deceptions directed at committed Christians. These begin with apparently worthwhile and useful trends in contemporary culture and little by little pull us around to evil ends. To avoid being confused by our present social situation, we need a clear perception of this conflict. Our world is cluttered with false suggestions, facile shortcuts and mock versions of the real thing, whereas the teachings of Jesus are meant to enlighten us concerning the deceptive strategy of the secular world and to instruct on his own strategy. *Two Standards* and the *Three Classes of Persons* are designed to give us the knowledge of the two strategies and how we can deal with our attachment to all that is not of God and serve Christ more fully.

## I. A CONTEMPORARY CULTURE APPROACH TO THE TWO STANDARDS

A Christian can recognize a comprehensive strategy operating in secular society: the three steps or stages of this program may be set forth as follows

1. Consumerism's enticement to riches and being in fashion
2. Seeking honour through the seduction and manipulation of others
3. Achieving pride of place through "being nice" or through coercion.

These drives reinforce each other and work together as with a malevolent wheel of worsening conditions.

The version of the program as it affects individuals might look like this today:

1. Compulsion to possess and feelings of addiction
2. Using others and being used
3. Power-hunger and disempowerment

## II. THE STRATEGY OF CHRIST

In order to liberate Christians from the enslaving forces of the secular world, Jesus sets forth his own strategy in the Gospels. It is therefore important to understand the threefold program of Christ:

1. having a genuine spiritual and *actual* poverty, so as to gain *spiritual freedom* from consumerism for creative action
2. acknowledging one's true worth and accepting humiliations in the context of respecting the deep spiritual worth of all persons
3. having a true sense of oneself and humility as the basis for Discerning Love

Another version of this strategy for individuals might be expressed in this way:

1. being accountable and responsible in arranging material needs
2. honouring the weak - the ill, the disabled and the marginalized
3. listening and expressing oneself in true participation

Note: It will help to remember how individuals who are interiorly shaped by belonging may become more creative, and that in such groups the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. The community needs healthy and creative members for its crucial welfare. It is the Lord who desires to enliven this interplay among the members.

## **PART III** MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Read “*Ways of Praying with Graced History*”, page 26.

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace to be present to my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and to respond more generously to God’s love flooding my heart.

### **Daily prayer material:**

At this time in the Exercises, Ignatius presupposes that we have responded to the call of Christ and are eager to be Christ’s disciples. But Ignatius wishes that we be realists and recognize the cost of discipleship. In these two meditations, Ignatius presents our situation as a struggle between good and evil forces. He uses the traditional protagonists in this battle as Jesus Christ (our friend and example) and Satan (the deadly enemy of our human nature)

### **DAY 1. THE TWO STANDARDS (See Lk 6: 12-26) Beatitudes and Maledictions**

#### **Preparatory Prayer:** as usual

**Composition of Self:** I imagine myself present at these two meetings: one an assembly with Christ, the other an assembly with Satan.

**Grace:** I seek for all the members of my community, and for myself in particular, two graces: a) to recognize the strategy and deceits of the enemy of our human nature, and strength to avoid them; b) to know and appreciate the way and strategy of Jesus Christ, with the courage to follow Jesus unreservedly.

### **FIRST PART: THE STANDARD OF SATAN**

**Satan’s Meeting:** Satan is enthroned high above his entourage, and in lengthy harangue he explains his strategy to them. Usually he argues smoothly and ingratiatingly, full of apparent charms and reassurances. For those who can see, the malice of his intense craving for the destruction of humanity is unmistakable. He keeps reminding them, “Make it look good! “ For some he advises that they keep saying, “Try harder!” But he says that for others one can urge them to relax their vigilance, since they have already received many graces.

Satan’s speech to his followers is to encourage trends and biases emerging from human culture itself.

*First, you are to encourage people to acquire many goods as consumerism suggests and to strive for much more income. Above all, lead men and women to identify themselves with what they possess and to want to belong to someone else.*

*Second, move them into habits of maneuvering others. Encourage humans to listen to the feelings of others, to praise and stroke them so long as this enables them to accept what one has already decided. Motivate them to focus on their own gifts and positions in a self-righteous way.*

**Encourage some to make deals to gain attention and self-advancement. Encourage others to be “nice” so as to stay in relationship.**

*Finally, encourage some to form cliques and factions, power groups operating behind the scenes. Counsel others to talk privately to someone with influence and not to rock the boat, nor embarrass anyone. Get them to use their main criterion for every decision, without further reflection, that they ‘feel good’ about it. Encourage exterior or interior anger and resentment. Emphasize that they’re superior to others!*

First step, then, will be riches leading to consumerism, the second, honours leading to seducing and manipulating others, the third, pride leading to lack of respect for others. From these three, Satan will lead us on to all other vices.

## **SECOND PART: THE STANDARD OF CHRIST**

**Christ’s Meeting:** Christ is walking with his disciples. As they journey, the Lord (who eats and sleeps as they do, wears similar clothing and shares all their tasks) speaks to these men and women along the way. Sometimes they ask questions or raise objections. He rejoices in their responses, and he answers each one in a different way. Throughout his teaching, however, Jesus is careful to warn his disciples about the deceptions of Satan, which are concealed within secular practices and built into take-for-granted attitudes all around them. “I’m sending you as sheep among wolves,” he often says. And he adds: “You must be as simple as doves, but as wise as serpents.” Then he urges them to trust, not in their own strength or wisdom, but in their union with himself and with the Trinity who passionately cares for them.

*First, Jesus recommends that the disciples attract others to follow him, and seek the grace of poverty of spirit which always acknowledges our true worth, even to experiencing actual poverty. With this will come freedom from consumerism and the material constraints and association with those who are poor or disadvantaged.*

*Second, Jesus urges them to attract others to a desire to be open and honest, even in the face of insults and offenses, even as they show profound respect for others.*

*Third, Jesus calls them to follow the honest, humble way of discerning love. This means being open and ready so as to discover true love in relationships.*

There are three steps, to achieve the above: first, genuine spiritual and actual poverty, as opposed to consumerism and riches; second, experiences of humiliation while knowing one’s true relationship with God, and a profound respect for persons, as opposed to seducing and manipulating others; third, humility or a sense of one’s true worth, as opposed to pride and disrespect of others. From these three follow all virtues.

Conclude by spending five or ten minutes praying with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*. printed next.

## **THE TRIPLE DIALOGUE OF THE TWO STANDARDS**

**The First Dialogue** is with Mary, mother of Jesus

I ask Mary to intercede for me with Jesus, her son, for the grace to be chosen and received under the Standard of Christ, that I may follow Jesus more closely: first in being so entirely free from false attachments that I desire to practice even actual poverty (on condition that Jesus should choose it for me); second to bear insults and contempt as I openly honour the worth of other

persons out of love, and so imitate Jesus more fully (without ever seeking these on purpose, and on condition that no sin on the part of others is desired).

I will conclude with a prayer to Mary, praising her for her “yes” to the Trinity.

**The Second Dialogue** is with Jesus Christ, our Saviour

With Mary I will go to her son, and ask that these same graces be given to me.  
I will conclude with the Soul of Christ.

**The Third Dialogue** is with the Trinity

With Mary and Jesus I will go to the Trinity, and ask them that the same graces be given to me.  
I will conclude with the *Lord's Prayer*

**Day 2:** Second meditation on the Two Standards. (see Mk 6: 14-44)

End with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards* above.

**Day 3.** A repetition of Days 1 and 2. (read extended materials below, the Two Standards and see Mt 16: 21-28).

**Two Standards and the Three Classes of Persons** – Christian and Secular Values in Contemporary Culture

Despite Christ’s personal victory, at each new stage of human development, evil continues to assert power in human societies. One can see this in flagrant examples. But now we wish to concentrate on the more public deceptions directed at committed Christians. These begin with apparently worthwhile and useful trends in contemporary culture and little by little pull one around to evil ends. To avoid being confused by our present social situation, we need a clear perception of this conflict. Our world is cluttered with false suggestions, facile shortcuts and mock versions of the real thing, whereas the teachings of Jesus are meant to enlighten us concerning the deceptive strategy of the secular world and to instruct on his own strategy. *Two Standards* and the *Three Classes of Persons* are designed to give one the knowledge of the two strategies and how one can deal with one’s attachment to all that is not of God and serve Christ more fully.

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Note: It will help to remember how individuals who are interiorly shaped by communal belonging may become more creative, and that in such groups the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. The community needs healthy and creative members for its crucial welfare. It is the Lord who desires to enliven this interplay among the members.

## DESCRIPTIONS OF TERMS USED IN THE TWO STANDARDS

### The Chain of Consumerism

In every age people will need food, clothing, shelter, health care, means of transportation, and so on – they must consume goods and services. What is new in our time is that these are within easy reach of our hands (at least in some countries of the West), and these goods and services are urged upon us in the commercial media in beguiling ways that slip by nearly everyone's guard. The resulting compulsive drive to purchase more and more is called consumerism. Christians must somehow be liberated from the enslaving pressures of the consumer society – from its structures of greed, its obsessive drives, its addictive tendencies. To counter consumerism we need a spirituality of ‘downward mobility’.

There are many false cultural myths which shore up this part of the secular program:

- a) *the myth of material progress*
- b) *the myth of the technological fix*
- c) *the myth of profit maximization*
- d) *the myth of monetary evaluation* (the worth of persons can be measured by the size of his/her income).

These false materialistic beliefs deceive one into abandoning any kind of trusting openness with God and with others and entice one to place one's welfare in possessions. These beliefs make self-advancement and competition with others a primary goal in society. They create winners and losers.

### Using Persons for One's Own End

Our social structures nudge us in the directions of dealing with persons as things-to-be-controlled. The aim of good “public relations” is to keep this hidden. Even the pleasers and manipulators are not usually aware of doing anything wrong. Some even suppose it to be their duty to bring people around and make use of them even against their own choice or desire. Some of the cultural myths which buttress such a mentality are these:

- a) *the myth of reductionism* ( persons can be handled like things – simply reduce persons to their basic material drives)
- b) the bureaucratic myth (put people in boxes on a computer)
- c) the sentimental myth ( deal with feelings that are apart from the realities which cause the feelings)

These are pernicious falsehoods which bring about untold suffering and losses in our world, but they are structured firmly into our giants institutions.

### Deciding from Positions of Power or Prestige

This is usually done by withholding essential information from those trying to make a decision, often by well-intentioned people who are controlled by institutional directives, hemmed in by budgetary limitations falsely imposed on them, or pressured by indirect threats to their own jobs or family needs. We are all familiar with such ways of proceeding in our governmental, educational, commercial and social institutions, and in the Christian Church at many levels. Often this is done by clever specialists in finance, management, advanced technologies – experts who have risen to the top of our social institutions. Most others tend to feel helpless in the face of this “power play” overhead.

Myths which support this are:

- a) *the myth of equality* (“Everyone enjoys equal opportunities and those who fail to reach the top have only themselves to blame”.)
- b) *the myth of pragmatism* (“Since it produces results and respect, it is good. We are to admire those with lots of money or power no matter how they got it!”)
- c) *the myth of helpless fatalism* (“Blind forces of ‘destiny’ are at work in society which no one can do anything about.”)
- d) *the myth of passive representation* ( Elective representation gives us a just process of decision making.”)
- e) *the myth of the trickle-down theory* (“Give rich and powerful people money incentives and the benefits will trickle down to the poor.”)

### Spiritual and Actual Poverty to gain Spiritual Freedom from Consumerism for Creative Action in the World

In his Gospel, Jesus begins by teaching hope to those who are poor (poverty of spirit) – Lk 4:16-22. One is also weak and exposed, today, by the *humanly* composed consumer society. Constantly wanting the things of an overly commercialized world brings experiences of alienation from one’s true self and from a true life. A dawning sense of one’s false dependence on things and an awakened hope in divine liberation may dispose one to seek and to receive the graces of spiritual poverty.

This grace does not mean that one should neglect one's duty to make appropriate arrangements for regular income and proper expenditures. Nor does it mean that we are obliged to leave the situation in which one live as soon as sinful structures and processes are clearly perceived. One is called to become spiritually liberated from secular false myths and structural programs – in order to be transformed by God's grace into fuller union with Jesus, who unites himself with us as we try to act creatively in our world.

The grace of true spiritual poverty gives one insight and strength (a) to choose a simpler lifestyle economically; (b) to give adequate attention to competent financial arrangements; (c) to free oneself to devote one's main energies to service with Jesus for all humanity.

For individuals, it should be stressed again that this first step in Jesus' strategy is to make sure that members do not get immured behind walls of fear, self-doubt or suspicion, which walls would prevent them from going forward, in trust of God and of one another. Secular forces put pressures on people that drive them to erect barriers against others. Jesus' aim is to free us from those false barriers and come to trust and have confidence in one another.

#### Humiliations in the Context of Respecting the Deep Spiritual Worth of All Persons

The opposite of seducing and manipulating others is to treat them with respect. The key to giving such respect and honour to others with one's conviction of their profound personal worth (despite actual sins in their personal lives and the structured sinfulness of the world which shapes them). Central to Jesus' teaching in the Gospels is his affirmation of human worth. He is concerned that human beings should be able to find communities in which the personal value of all members is, in practice, respected.

Contemporary culture has developed refined forms of seducing and manipulating persons in giant institutions. Contempt and dishonour for the human person is everywhere implied in the secular strategy of our society. Self-advancement in an egotistical sense makes us despise any weakness in ourselves and in others and to treat weak persons with real (if disguised) contempt. The response of Jesus is to give honour most of all to weak and humiliated persons. God is on the side of the poor.

For members of society to become “interpersonal” means to trust one another consciously, in ways that honour the spiritual powers, the unknowable mystery lurking deeply within each person.

When a community begins more and more to experience this marvelous honouring of human life, the members will find the grace to deal with one another interpersonally and with growing respect.

#### Humility as the Basis for Discerning Love

This humility will counter the secular structures of coercion in the world. In the Gospels (Mt. 10: 40-43 and Jn 13: 3-17), Jesus urges his followers to love one another on the model of his own love for them, and this model is presented as that of a humble suffering servant.

In contrast to secular romantic (blind) love from overpowering drives, true love does tend to move the lover into humble service of the beloved. The burdens which blind loving lays on human

shoulders are excessive in the long run and lead to disappointment or even hatred. Left unnoticed is the question: "Precisely what kind of loving does my beloved actually need to receive from me?"

The key issue, therefore, is discernment. One can easily love demandingly or even unselfishly but without any wisdom. To love wisely takes time: time to know the other person much more deeply; time to serve the other in little ways before trying to serve in big ways; time to be surprised by unexpected developments or responses; time to discover one's own modes of response. In situations of decision, discerning love takes time to learn all the data, the concrete options actually available, and then to make real commitments in whatever one decides to do with others.

Humility before oneself, before others and before God is necessary when individual members propose decisions for themselves or for the group. It is important that individual members try out their proposals within the whole community of believers. The latter may be able to get in touch with what rings true and fits well with the will of the Lord, who lives within their pooled depth. Only this kind of communal response can assure members that they are exercising a discerning love.

In this regard, St. Ignatius gives two suggestions about discerning love:

- 1) Love shows itself in deeds rather than in words.
- 2) Love consists in sharing – the lover and the beloved sharing what each has, whether it is material, psychological or spiritual gifts. (Sp. Exx. # 230-231)

Conclude by praying the Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards.

**Day 4. Repetition of Days 1, 2 and 3.**

Conclude with the Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards.

**Day 5. Three Classes of Persons - Read the material immediately below and see Lk 18: 18-30.**

#### **Meditations on Three Classes of Persons**

These meditations are to help one embrace the better and avoid deception.

They are to help one deal with subtle expressions of riches, honours and pride, as these get expressed in our culture:

1. Economic sources that lead to wanting riches and consumerism
2. Social sources that lead to seeking honours through maneuvering others
3. Political sources that lead to power and pride

The following story may help us to consider the significance of our giftedness and seek a true sense of freedom as we work with Christ and others in building up the human family.

#### **A Story by Ignatius.**

Once there were three people, each of whom received an unexpectedly large sum of money. They were all very good people, intent on serving God as best they could. The three, knowing the enormous responsibility entailed with the acquisition of such riches, became fearful. All three asked, "What will this money do to me? How will my relationship with God be affected?" Though the question for each was the same, their responses differed dramatically.

The first person became enamoured with the money; she loved being wealthy! She enjoyed the prestige and security wealth brought to her. At the same time, she was aware of the effects the attachment was having on her. She became progressively preoccupied with the returns she received on her investments. She knew a full decision was required but she remained undecided until death.

The second person also became fascinated with his newly acquired wealth. He was especially concerned that his attachment not prove detrimental to his relationship with God. He wanted to be free of his infatuation with the money. Yet he wanted God to will what he desired. He determined to use a percentage of the interest on the money earned to build a new library for the community in which he lived. He insisted that the library be named after him.

The third person, too, was immersed in concern and questioning upon receiving the large amount of money. She wished to get rid of attachment but in such a way that there remain no inclination whether to keep the money or to dispose of it. Her response was, "How can I best use this gift to reflect the pure goodness of God?" She wanted only to do with the money what God wanted. She placed the money in a trust fund to be used at God's discretion. She nurtured within herself an attitude by which, as far as the affections are concerned, she was giving up everything except what was motivated by the service of God, in such a way that the desire to be able to serve God better was what moved her to take or reject any object whatsoever.

**Introduction:** we are all gifted beyond monetary considerations. Yet money is often a source of deception for us. Therefore, we will begin with the first source of deception.

**Preparatory Prayer:** as usual

**Composition of Self:** Somewhat as in Ignatius' story, I imagine that I belong to a family whose joint-share lottery ticket wins \$3 million. Everyone in the family is a committed Christian and knows that attachment to this money can be detrimental to the faith. The decision of how to dispose of this huge increase in funds weighs heavily on each conscience because on the one hand, each is aware of Christ's teaching on poverty in the Gospels and, on the other, each recognizes the neediness of destitute people in their city and country and in other parts of the world.

**Grace:** I pray to recognize my natural attachment to things (even God-given gifts) and to seek a true sense of freedom as I work with Christ, that I may discern and choose whatever will be for the true growth of persons and for the greater service of God.

**Response:** I consider my response in comparison to the three persons (*Three Classes of Persons*) as described in Ignatius' story

**Conclude** your meditations with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*, pages 70-71, or according to the following NOTES.

**NOTES:**

It should be noted that when one senses that one is not free with respect to money or position, it may be very helpful, in order to gain psychological and spiritual freedom in the matter, though it will be difficult to do so, to ask in the *Triple Dialogue* that our Lord choose one to risk oneself in total dependence on the goodness of God and of others.

One should not play games with this but insist that one desires it, beg for it, plead for full freedom in this matter, provided only of course, that it be for the service and praise of God and of humanity.

**Day 6**. This will be another meditation on the Three Classes of Persons facing difficult decisions and actions.

Reread the materials on the *Two Standards* on pages 70-72.

**Composition of Self:**

I imagine myself present in the following situation: For the first time I have been elected, or appointed, to a position of leadership in my faith-community, and various pressures are secretly felt in my heart about this.

**Grace:** I pray to recognize my natural attachment to things (even God-given gifts) and to seek a true sense of freedom as I work with Christ that I may discern and choose whatever will be for the true growth of persons and for the greater service of God.

**Points:** Praying with situation above, I consider my possible attitudes in terms of the response given.

**FIRST CLASS OF PERSONS**

In this instance, the people go about their new tasks with a desire to become good leaders. They continually study the styles of important leaders who serve God in society, but they never bring these into action.

**SECOND CLASS OF PERSONS**

These persons use skillful tactics in managing others and subordinating them to concealed purposes that the former have decided are better spiritual ones or use someone else's poor agenda in order to gain approval. Deep down, they hope that God will be pleased at this deferential attitude and show support in the recognition others express about their attitude towards God and others.

**THIRD CLASS OF PERSONS**

These persons do not wish to lose sight of God's intentions at a time when new tasks are to be faced. They set aside time for prayer and self-examination before moving into their work. They desire to approach decisions in complete freedom from false movements of social feeling (such as "success" and "achievement") or of interior self-importance (such as "my unusual gifts and virtues") which could bring them to use their position and manipulate others for their own hidden agenda.

So we see the First Class of Persons want to act in an unattached way, but they are distracted and deceived by external concerns – they procrastinate. The Second Class of Persons want to act in an unattached way, but only in terms of their own internal conviction – not from God's inspiration. The Third Class of Persons want to act in an unattached way and hold themselves totally free, waiting on God's incentive.

End your meditation with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*, pages 70-72 , or according to the Notes on Day 5, pages 76-77.



**MEETING 21**

(Week Two)

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.  
In this instance we asked to recognize the deceptions present in our world and the strength to avoid them, to know and appreciate the approach of Christ and the courage to follow Christ unreservedly.

After this, read Lk 6: 12-26 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:** **Jesus beginning his Pilgrimage and Three Kinds of Humility**

Read and share "Jesus enters public life".

#### **Introduction**

The Two Standards and the Three Classes of Persons have given us the spiritual knowledge of the attitudes and responses to true disciples of Christ. The contemplations on the public life of Jesus will be the setting for us to consider and make serious decisions about ourselves as disciples of Christ. Generally, we will consider two mysteries each week. The first five days will be similar to the contemplations of Jesus' infancy given in Meetings 17 -19. The sixth exercise will be explained at each meeting.

**Notes:** In each of the first five days, follow the same process as with the Incarnation and Nativity. There is the same Preparatory Prayer and Grace. The Composition of Self and the Points (see the persons, hear what they are saying, watch what they are doing) change depending on the mystery. Each day's prayer period will conclude with the *Dialogue with Three Persons* described on pages 39-41.

For the *Application of the Senses* follow the method given on page 58-59.

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Reread Introduction and Notes above, on this page.

**Grace:** I ask for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Day 1.** The Baptism of Christ (see Mt. 3: 1-17)

**Preparatory prayer:** as usual

**Grace:** I ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who has become human for me, that I may love Jesus more and follow Jesus more closely.

**Composition of Self and Points** (includes history and place of the mystery): I imagine the scenes which involve Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River and his Temptation in the Desert.

- John the Baptist, whose great reputation was spreading throughout Israel, appears at the Jordan River and calls for a baptism of penitence.
- News of this event reaches Jesus in Nazareth and stirs a great decision in him; it is time to enter into a public ministry (for which he had been preparing himself).
- Jesus says goodbye to his mother, and leaves home.
- He goes directly to John at the Jordan and seeks baptism at his hands.
- John tries to avoid it, but Jesus persuades him.
- As Jesus comes out of the water, the Spirit of God appears and mysterious words are heard affirming his divine kingship.

**Day 2.** Temptation in the Desert (see Mt 4: 1-11)

(Preparatory Prayer, Grace and Composition of Self the same as on Day 1)

**Points:** Temptation in the Desert

- In order to prepare immediately for his mission, and led by the Spirit, Jesus goes into a desert region to fast and to pray.
- There he undergoes deceptive and alluring temptations from the devil, who tries to probe his mysterious name and urge him to deny his humanness.
- The first temptation proposes that he devote his energies to bringing relief to the poor in their hunger and material distress (imagine that Jesus deeply feels the pull of this and the other possibilities).
- The second temptation suggests that he work striking miracles in order to draw attention to his spiritual message.
- The third temptation points in the direction of political and national commitments (with the kingship obtainable at a worldly price) in order to enable Israel to fulfill its destiny with other peoples.
- But in seeking his course, Jesus resists these apparently good ways, determines to devote himself to God's will without reservations and to go forward without trying to control where it might lead.

**Day 3.** Repetition of the previous two contemplations

**Day 4.** Repetition of the previous three contemplations

**Day 5.** An application of the Senses of all the contemplations made up to now (i.e. the Infancy, the Baptism and the Temptations contemplations).

### **Day 6. THREE KINDS OF HUMILITY**

This will be a day of considering three moments of loving response to better love and follow Jesus Christ.

These three moments are found in the three kinds of humility presented below.

#### **FIRST KIND – FIDELITY**

This is necessary for salvation. It consists in this: that as far as possible, I so serve and respond to God in all things, so that not even were I made ruler of all creation, or to save my own life, would I consent to violate, in a serious way, the basic Christian way of life.

#### **SECOND KIND - LOVING CONCERN**

When I find myself at such a point that I am free with riches or poverty, honour or dishonour, a long life or a short life, I am experiencing the second kind of humility. My attitude is only swayed by the loving service and praise of God. It means that I am detached from my own selfishness and that I love God to the extent that not for all creation, or to escape a threat to my life, would I be unfaithful to the word of Christ, even in the slightest way.

#### **THIRD KIND - ACT OF THE HEART**

It consists in this. If I presuppose that I am living out the first two kinds of humility, then remembering that the greater service and praise of God must be my ultimate goal in order to better imitate and in reality be more like Jesus Christ, I desire and choose poverty with Christ being poor, rather than riches; ridicule with Christ ridiculed rather than honours; worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world. So Christ was treated before me.

#### **Preparatory Prayer - as usual**

**Composition of Self:** I imagine myself among the people of Nazareth as Jesus returns and speaks, in the synagogue, about his mission (see Lk 4: 14-30).

**Grace:** I seek the grace of the Third Kind of Humility, if God should wish to grant it to me.

**Points:** I consider the three kinds of humility *in terms of Jesus' experience in Luke 4: 14-30.*

**Dialogue with the Trinity:** Conclude with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*, pages 70-72, or according to the **NOTES** given on pages 76-77.



## **MEETING 22**

(Week Two)

### **PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Lk 4: 14-30 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

### **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**

**Discerning Patterns of Truth and Deception  
in my Graced History**

Read and share: Second Week Discernment Rules – Interior Movements of Spirits

In his second set of *Rules on the Discernment of Spirits* (Sp. Exx. #328-336), Ignatius describes interior movements of spirits that indicate a *true process* of decision and action, and a *deceptive process*. The descriptions of consolation and desolation given on pages 49-50 can serve as an introduction to the following *Rules*.

**1. When one is trying to follow the call of Jesus Christ in one's life, one will find that the good spirit tends to give support, encouragement, and often times even a certain delight in all one's endeavours.**

The evil spirit generally acts in an opposite way. The evil spirit will subtly arouse a dissatisfaction with one's own efforts, will raise up doubts and anxieties about God's love or one's own response, or sting the conscience with thought of pride in one's attempt to lead a good life.

#### **Three Kinds of Consolation (described in terms of sources)**

**2. God alone can bring about consolation without any concomitant (concurring) causes. This is an experience of the immediacy of God and is self-evident somewhat like the presence that we have of ourselves. It is similar to the joy and love that the presence some persons may give us. Certain thoughts, achievements, or events can bring about a sense of great consolation in our lives. This kind of consolation can best be described as the touch of God when there is no thought, no event, no person - in general, no object of any sort – which seems to be the source of such a movement. Words, such as “a touch” or “a taste”, best describe this kind of consolation. The spiritual experience of delight or joy is what we can more readily grasp and speak about. But in these cases, we should be aware that only the experience of immediacy of God brings this kind of consolation.**

**3. When consolation is mediated and has a cause, whether it be from certain thoughts or achievements or events, or from certain people who have an effect upon one, then two kinds of consolation are possible – one from the good angel (true) and one from the bad angel (false). On the one hand, the good angel brings about such consolation in order to strengthen and to speed the progress of one's life with Christ. The bad angel, on the other hand, arouses insights and energy that lead one into a deceptive activity. Only later do we discover the evil direction we have taken - a more selfish motivation, or doing one's own will before all else.**

#### **Ways of Working with False Consolation:**

**4. For a person striving to lead a good life, the bad angel ordinarily begins in the same way as does an angel of light. For example, we find ourselves inspired by pious thoughts or holy desires, and then after some time, we are caught up in the pride of our own intellect and in the selfishness of our own desires.**

**5. We become discerning persons by examining carefully our own experiences. If, in reflecting on the course of our thoughts or our actions, we find that from beginning to end our eyes have remained fixed on Christ, we can be sure that the good angel has been moving us. But if what started off well in our thought and action begins to be self-focused or begins to turn us from our way to God, the bad angel (spirit) has somehow twisted the good beginning to an evil direction, and possibly even to an evil action. So we can discover that an original good course has led us to be weakened spiritually or even to become desolate or confused. The desolation of discouragement or lack of resolve is a clear indication of the bad angel's influence.**

In terms of social forces operating on us from beyond, we might consider what the media of the secular world does to us. Upon reflection we see (1) that the news presented to us by the secular

press, the violence portrayed in music and drama leave us with no hope for this world. And (2) that the immediate gratification and success offered to us by advertising are not fulfilled. So we are totally discouraged, and experience the desolation of separation from God. The secular media does not indicate that our world is on pilgrimage to a destination that may take many centuries to reach, and that each one of us is destined to rise and be with Christ Risen.

6. When we recognize that we have been duped by the bad angel through a certain thought progression or course of action, we should review carefully all the stages which we passed through from the time when the evil became apparent back to good beginnings. By means of such a review, we will find that we can more quickly catch ourselves when we are being led on by the deceit of the bad angel and so we are more enabled to guard ourselves in the future.

Finally, there are further insights in regard to consolation in the progress of our spiritual life:

7. As we continue to make progress in our spiritual life, the movement of the good spirit is very delicate, gentle, and often delightful. It may be compared to the way a drop of water penetrates a sponge.

When the evil spirit tries to interrupt our progress, the movement is violent, disturbing, and confusing. It may be compared to the way a waterfall hits a stone ledge below.

However, in persons whose lives are going from bad to worse, the description given above should just be reversed (i.e. the bad angel's presence is quiet. The reason for this lies in the conflict of opposing forces. In other words, when good or bad angels are at home in our hearts, they enter quietly just as persons enter their own homes. Bad angels cause great commotion and noise as they try to enter into the hearts of the just person intent upon the "good".

8. When the consolation experience in our life comes directly from God, there can be no deception in it. Although a delight and a peace will be found in such an experience, a spiritual person should be very careful to distinguish the actual moment of this consolation-in-God-himself from the afterglow which may be exhilarating and joyful for some period of time. Quite often it is in this second period of time that we begin to reason out plans of action or to make resolutions which cannot be attributed so directly to God as the initial experience which is non-conceptual (non-reflective) in nature. Because human reasoning and other influences are now coming into the total picture of this consolation period, a very careful process of discerning the good and the bad angels should be undertaken according to the previous guidelines before any decision or plan of action is adopted.

### **PART III**      MATERIAL FOR PRAYER PERIODS FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Read:**      *Ways of Praying with Graced History* pages 26-27.

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace to be present to my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and to respond more generously to God's love flooding my heart.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Day 1.** The Second Week Rules of Discernment, pages 82-84.

Preparatory Prayer and Composition of Self as usual

**Grace:** I pray for the insights into Second Week Discernment and for personal knowledge of true and deceptive patterns in my life.

**Read:** Second Week Rules of Discernment – Interior Movements of Spirits

Conclude with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*, page 70-72, or according to the **Notes** on pages 76-77.

**Day 2.** My own life in the light of Lk 6: 17-49

Recall *Ways of Praying with Graced History*, page 26.

**Context** for this prayer period : my own life in the light of Lk 6: 17-49.

Jesus stood on a level place with a great crowd of disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the realm of God ... hungry ... weep ... hated (vv. 17-22) Rejoice on that day and leap for joy for surely your reward is great in heaven (v. 23). ... Woe to you who are rich for you have received your consolation (vv. 24-26). ... Love your enemies (vv. 27-42). ... Each tree is known by its own fruit (vv. 43-45). ... Like building a house on rock ... or on sand (vv. 46-49).

Preparatory Prayer

**Composition of Self:** I imagine myself on the hillside listening to these words of Jesus and I review my life in terms of patterns of true and deceptive decisions.

**Grace:** I seek from the Lord discerning knowledge of the patterns of truth and deception in my life story so that I will be able to decide and act as a true disciple of Christ.

**Points:** I recall Ignatius' insight that correct decisions are made in a time of spiritual consolation and I focus on those times of decision in my life when I have sensed being drawn beyond myself towards Christ.

I will also consider times of decision where I have sensed insecurity and fear of commitment along with a desire to be and work with the Lord.

As I consider my life in terms of the times of correct decision and action, what patterns of truth do I see coming from the Holy Spirit?

Conclude with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*, pages 70-71, or according to the Notes given on page 76-77.

**Day 3.** Repeat Day 2 except for the Scripture reading ( 2Cor 11:14) and the following Points.

Points: I recall Ignatius' suggestion that deceptive decisions are made in the times of elated desire to do good or in the flash of insight of what to do: "Satan is often disguised as an angel of light." (2 Cor 11:14)

I focus on certain deceptive decisions and actions and look for the patterns of deceptions. What patterns of deception do I see? What basic gifts and virtues get exaggerated, and lead me into deceptive decisions and actions?

Conclude with the *Triple Dialogue of the Two Standards*, page 70-71, or the Notes given on page 76-77.

**Day 4.** I review my life once again as I repeat Days 2 and 3.

**Day 5.** Repeat Day 4 with the review of the Three Classes of Persons on page 77.

**Day 6.** Reread the Three Kinds of Humility (page 81). Then read the materials of *Discerning a Personal Life Decision* which follow:

### **Preparation and Context for Discerning Decisions**

Having discovered the constant compassion and mercy of God for us in the First Week of the Exercises, we have responded in generosity to the call of Christ and are in the process of gaining intimate knowledge of Jesus so that we can be better disciples with him, in encouraging the realm of justice, mercy, love and peace in our world. We are approaching the time of concrete decision and commitment for this enterprise. This is a time of interior movements of desire, insight, love, fear and deceptions.

At this time in the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius has presented three meditations: *Two Standards*, *Three Classes of Persons*, and *Three Kinds of Humility*. These are designed to give a context for recognizing various interior movements and learning the correct criteria for making our decision. The insights and attitude of these three meditations will assist us as we continue to contemplate the public life of Jesus and grow in intimate knowledge of his person.

The *Two Standards* meditation is designed to help us to recognize deceptions from the secular world in contrast to the truth of Christ. The *Three Classes of Persons* meditation is to help us to recognize deceptive and true ways of responding to good intentions. The *Three Kinds of Humility* meditation is to help us to surface our heartfelt desires as companions of Jesus.

### **Discerning a Personal Life Decision**

Discerning a personal life decision in the Spiritual Exercises takes place in a 6-week period, while contemplating the mysteries of Christ's public life. It applies Ignatius' Rules of Discernment, keeping in mind his "dictum" (principle) that good decisions are made in the time of true spiritual consolation. During this time, the one making the Exercises is able to discern the affective component of Jesus' call and the difference between the strategy of Christ, working for humanity, and the deceptive patterns of secularism.

There are 4 important elements that precede good decisions in Christ: 1) intimate knowledge of the unity, beauty, truth and goodness in the person of our leader Jesus Christ; 2) knowledge of true and false impulses coming to us from beyond us; 3) personal awareness of our usual ways of meeting a commitment; 4) responding in great desire to be with Christ in the enterprise.

**NOTE:** There is not enough time in our meetings for us to follow the process of Communal Helps in Personal Decisions as given in the CLC Phase II Manual. As is true with prayer time experiences, no individual will be obliged to share in detail the various results of discernment. Nevertheless, all members will be invited to share with others whatever may be rightly said. It will be very helpful for each one to hear the topics chosen and the development of others.

### **Phases in Making and Implementing a Personal Life Decision**

**Phase 1: Researching the topic and formulating an open question**

**Phase 2: Formulating the possible answers**

**Phase 3: Gathering the data and praying over them**

**Phase 4: Making the decision**

**Phase 5: Seeking confirmation**

**Phase 6: Implementing the decision**

**Each of these phases will be introduced in prayer material over the next few meetings.**

### **Phase 1: Researching the topic and formulating the question**

As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus not merely in our moments of prayer and devotion (although these are essential), but to live-out commitments to the tasks and personal relationships of our concrete situation in the world. We are called to be instruments of God's grace in our world.

It is one thing to break from whatever might hinder our independent response (our generous "Yes") to the call of Jesus Christ. But then another issue arises. In a positive way we must discover how we are to serve Christ. For service does not occur abstractly or in a void. It needs to be concretely realized.

N.B. But how is this to be realized? Is there any new decision to be made in our lives? Or do we need to make changes as we give ourselves to a state of life, to kinds of work or ministry, or to lifestyles and volunteer services already chosen?

We should, of course, co-operate with the series of graces given us. God's love always takes the initiative. It is therefore essential that disciples of Jesus avoid any tendency to "run ahead of the Holy Spirit" and learn, instead, how to be attentive to movements of feeling which lead to a Christian pattern of life in the world. This consists in a prolonged process of absorbing interiorly the master's values, attitudes and style of response – his personal way.

**Context:** Phase 1 takes place as Jesus enters his public life, after contemplating on the Baptism of Jesus, the Temptation of Jesus in the Desert and Three Kinds of Humility.

**Grace:** I begin by asking for the grace of spiritual insight to consider a personal life decision in terms of the way that God is calling me at this time.

**Points:**

1. I begin by considering different items of concern.
2. I gather my hopes and dreams over these concerns.
3. I formulate an open-ended question which accurately reflects all the issues raised  
(e.g. - “How did I most effectively ...?”)

I put down on paper – in a phrase or a few words – the general ways in which I feel I am called to follow Jesus more closely, (e.g. a change in my life style, becoming more committed to the CLC way of life, of giving myself to a significant apostolate. This does not mean that there is any solution to this process, nor any arguments, but merely the area or topic of my search in my present situation. It might take a little time to settle on the right area.

Write down several possibilities, and mull these over until you feel fairly sure you have found the “growing edge” in your life, the place where the Lord is drawing you forward. What do you suspect is the area in your life-situation where you imagine that “the next step” should be taken by you? Where do you think a new development should be made in God’s service at this time?

**Dialogue with the Trinity;** In this dialogue, I express my state of being.

I close with the Lord’s Prayer.



## **MEETING 23**

(Week Two)

### **PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked the Trinity for discerning knowledge of the patterns of truth and deception in our life stories so that we would be able to make good decisions in the future and act as true disciples of Christ.

After this, read 2Cor 11:14 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. If you wish, after this you might indicate the issue you are facing for your Personal Life Decision. Since your decision is personal, only share what you wish to share. Since the meetings are already somewhat full, your sharing should be brief.

Do a second sharing. Your response to others is to come from what moved you as you listened. This is not a place for problem solving or giving advice.

If you wish, after this you might indicate your progress with your Personal Life Decision. As stated in Meeting 23, since your decision is personal, only share what you wish to share. Since the meetings are already somewhat full, your sharing should be brief.

### **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

Theme of the coming week's prayer periods: Continuing the Pilgrimage as a Disciple with Jesus

Reread and share the material from pages 86-87:

- a. Preparation and Context for Discerning Decisions
- b. Discerning a Personal Life Decision
- c. Phases in Making and Implementing a Personal Life Decision
- d. Phase 1: Researching the topic and formulating the question

## **PART III** MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

### **Daily prayer material:**

**Note:** In each of the first five days, follow the same process as with the Incarnation and Nativity. There is the same Preparatory Prayer and Grace. The Composition of Self and the Points (see the persons, hear what they are saying, watch what they are doing) change depending on the mystery. The prayer periods will conclude with the *Dialogue with Three Persons* described on pages 39-41.

### **Day 1: HOW TO CONTEMPLATE THE GOSPEL MYSTERIES** (refer to pages 58-59)

In the Second Week Exercises, St. Ignatius wants retreatants to learn (if they have not already acquired it) the method of simple contemplation of Gospel stories that was taught in the high Middle Ages since the thirteen century (800 years ago). He was himself introduced to it in the Life of Christ by Ludolph of Saxony, a book given him in his family home at Loyola, when he was recovering there from his leg wounds. His midlife conversion was occasioned by these experiences of Gospel contemplation. They enabled him, by the movements of the Divine Spirit in his heart, to know Jesus personally, to enter lovingly into union with him, and to desire a life of service to God's realm on earth. That knowing, loving, and following Jesus is precisely the grace that retreatants are to ask for throughout the contemplations of the Second Week.

The method itself in any given "mystery" may be described briefly. It is really quite simple to do. "Mystery" is the medieval name for a single story told in one of the four Gospels – as in "the mystery plays" or (for Catholics) "the mysteries of the rosary".

The particular mystery (or story) chosen, for example the calming of the storm (Mark 4:35 – 41), should be read over several times until all its details are remembered – even to the pillow under Jesus' head. Then one should imagine the events to be going on NOW, in one's own time, so that one may enter the story oneself and take part in it as it happens. One does not go back in time as if making a movie out of it, but allows the mystery to come into one's own present time. Using one's faith memory and different ways of imagining, such as hearing, seeing, and being present, one wishes to come into the mystery. One's entry into it should be done humbly. As a little friend or servant of the apostles, one gets into the boat with them, feels their fear when the storm threatens, pulls at Jesus' garments to wake him up, and so on.

That is the essence of the method. It should be done in vivid faith so as to combine an intimate nearness to the persons, with a deep reverence for them. Fantasies should be curbed. Instead, one should stay within the parameters of the story as given in Holy Scripture. But one ought to surrender to the experience of the story. That is, one should be receptive to its mysterious powers and allow them to move one's deepest heart.

Afterwards, in the review of prayer, one sets down one's actual experiences with complete objectivity (even if very little or very ordinary things have occurred). In the group meeting, one may share these descriptions and in listening to the contemplations, others gain further insight into their significance.

In this program, each meeting combines two mysteries which are repeated through six exercises in the following pattern:

1. first contemplation of the first mystery assigned
2. first contemplation of the second mystery assigned.
  
3. repetition of contemplations 1 or 2, or 1 and 2.
4. repetition of contemplations 1 or 2, or 3, or 1 and 2 and 3.
  
5. same as 4 but by *Applying the Spiritual Senses*.
6. another repetition of significant aspects in 1,2,3,4 and 5.

In the Repetitions, one returns to the experiences of previous contemplations in any order and enters the mysteries at events which affected one most positively or to work through any negative aspects that seemed to block one's progress.

## THE DYNAMIC OF DISCERNMENT (Francis Keenan sj – St. Beunos)

### DISCERNMENT PROCESS

I now begin to discern what choices and decisions I might need to make in order to be a more effective source of God's creative love for the world. In order to do this, I pray for that state of indifference so that I might be free from whatever could be blocking the above process taking place in and through me.

THE TWO STANDARDS MEDITATION begins the immediate preparation for approaching the decisions or choices I will be called to make, whether they be major decisions about my state of life, or minor ones touching on an amendment of my life. This meditation highlights the radical division of each one's mind and heart – on the one side, I am baptized into the mind and heart of Jesus Christ and so am drawn, in love, towards total submission to the Will of the Trinity by accepting my radical spiritual poverty: on the other hand, the reality of evil, still present in and around me, moves me towards self-centeredness and my own self will. If I am to make right-ordered choices, I will need to be set free from disordered tendencies towards self-centeredness and grow into true indifference – total openness to God's choices. I need to be aware of the areas in my life where I am still, even unwittingly, being guided by the power of evil rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. This involves a reflection on my use of the gifts of creation.

In the Second Week of the Exercises, we are no longer talking about the sinfulness of the First Week considerations, which referred to choices between right and wrong and centered on my weaknesses. The more subtle aspects of sinfulness which we consider in the Second Week are around choices between several possible right issues and are centered on my strengths – the right use of my gifts.

**Lucifer wants to make us the slaves of our gifts so that we will withdraw them more and more from God's service. Jesus wants to make us more and more free to be able to use our gifts for God's service.**

**THE THREE CLASSES OF PEOPLE** is an exercise which invites us to look at the next step in the process. It is to be hoped that I am now aware of how I am being subtly drawn towards a self-centered use of the gifts of creation in me. If I am to make a well-ordered choice in my Decision process, whether it be a major choice, or an amendment to my life in the light of what has been revealed to me in the Two Standards, I now need to look at the extent to which I have achieved true indifference as I approach my decision.

**PEOPLE IN THE FIRST CLASS** are at the level of mere wishing – “I would like to make a decision but I never actually get around to it.”

**THOSE IN THE SECOND CLASS** want to compromise, thinking they can combine the spirit of poverty with that of self-centeredness.

**THOSE IN THE THIRD CLASS** are the only ones who desire to achieve true indifference to the outcome of their choices.

I now move to the second exercise, which helps me to achieve the desired state of indifference.

**THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY** exercise is called a consideration, by Ignatius. I am asked to reflect on the extent to which the love of God is motivating me to achieve true indifference.

**THE FIRST DEGREE, OR LEVEL OF LOVE OF GOD**, is such that in accepting my condition of radical true poverty, I so love God that I would not deliberately do anything which I know to be seriously contrary to his Will.

**THE SECOND DEGREE OR LEVEL OF LOVE OF GOD** is such that, in all choices great or small, I will first seek to find God's preference in the particular matter and then choose, as I believe God is indicating.

**THE THIRD DEGREE OR LEVEL OF LOVE OF GOD** is not something we can work to achieve by the same means as we have been invited to achieve in the first two levels. It is an ideal to which we can aspire, should this particular Grace be offered to us. What we are invited to do is to lead a life of radical spiritual poverty, in total submission to the Will of God, striving to grow in the mind and heart of Jesus Christ, and then to accept the opposition of the spirit of the world and disgrace in its eyes to the extent that our way of life brings this opposition and disgrace upon us and the Grace of God invites us to accept this. My motivation will be my desire to be identified more and more with Jesus Christ, especially in experiences or rejection and humiliation.

**NOTES:** In each of the first five days, follow the same process as with the Incarnation and Nativity. There is the same Preparatory Prayer and Grace. The Composition of Self and the Points (see the persons, hear what they are saying, watch what they are doing) change depending on the mystery. Each day's prayer period will conclude with the Triple Dialogue.

## JESUS BUILDS A NEW COMMUNITY

### Day 1: The Call of the Apostles

( Jn 1:35-42; Lk 5:1-11 )

- Two disciples of John the Baptist hear John call the Lord “Lamb if God”; drawn by the attractive figure of Jesus, they follow him along the road.
- Jesus stops, turns and questions them.
- He invites them to “come and see” where he lives.
- Later one of them, Andrew, finds his brother Peter and brings him to Jesus.
- Another day Jesus appears at the lakeside where they are fishing without much success.
- He suggests that they throw their nets on the other side of their boat, and a school of fish is suddenly caught.
- Peter falls at the feet of Jesus.
- Jesus calls the two pairs of brothers, who leave all to follow him.

### Day 2. The Beatitudes

( Mt 5:1-16; 43-48 )

- Jesus is surrounded by so many listeners that he leads them up a mountainside, finds a grassy place for them to sit, and begins to teach them the deep mysteries of the Kingdom of God.
- The eight beatitudes are expressed in direct, simple and yet striking phrases, which run counter to worldly expectations.
- He adds a ninth blessing for those falsely persecuted on his account.
- He calls his community of disciples “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”.
- Among other mysterious sayings, he includes his basic teaching on loving one’s enemies.

### Day 3: Repetition of the previous two contemplations

### Day 4: Repetition of the previous three contemplations

### Day 5: An Application of the Senses of all the contemplations made up to now – i.e. the Infancy contemplations, the Baptism, the Temptations, the Calls and the Beatitudes.

### Day 6: Reread the Three Kinds of Humility found on Day 6, page 81.

Then read the materials on Discerning a Personal Life Decision .

## Phase 2: Considering Possibilities and Formulating a Proposition

As you move forward gradually in your search for the theme of your personal life decision, the next need is to list your actual and really feasible choices. You can usually focus upon several possibilities. You have real choices to make. What exactly are they? Are you able to write them down and look at them peacefully?

After this you are to select a single option on which you intend to make your personal life decision.

Context: Phase 2 takes place after contemplating the Call of the Apostles and the Beatitudes.

**Grace:** I begin by asking for the grace of openness and insight, as I open myself to divine initiatives (letting God make the first moves towards me), seek possible solutions and formulate one of them for discernment.

**Points:**

1. List all the possible answers to the question chosen.  
Under the subject matter already accepted for your decision, write down in any order all the various options which occur to you.
2. Eliminate the unrealistic ones.  
Select the ones which are realistic and relevant to you, and leave the others aside. Telescope and eliminate overlap.
3. Determine the order of consideration:  
List them in order of importance and of timing. Determine the order of consideration.
4. Formulate your first consideration as a proposition:  
Having selected the first answer with a sufficient feeling of rightness, proceed to express it as an affirmative statement in a complete sentence. For example: I will live my life in ... this or that way, or I will do ... this or that as a disciple of Christ. The opposite proposition is produced by adding a simple negative. For example: I will not live my life in ... this or that way, or I will not do ... this or that. Following are some added examples:
  - a) I will break off my friendship with X. -- I will not break off my friendship with X
  - b) I will join a ministry of prison-visitation. -- I will not join a ministry of prison-visitation.
  - c) I will move to another city this coming summer. -- I will not move to another city ....

Test out your proposition with your feelings. Does it focus upon the right area for yourself at this time? Is it accurately expressed? If not, try to improve it.

Once you are satisfied, close with a Dialogue with the Trinity where you commend your proposition to the Trinity for a sense of rightness.



## MEETING 24

(Week Two)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Jn 1: 35-42 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect for a few minutes on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story. Do a *second sharing*.

If you wish, after this you might indicate your progress with your Personal Life Decision.

As stated in Meeting 23, since your decision is personal, only share what you wish to share. Since the meetings are already somewhat full, your sharing should be brief.

Do a *second sharing*. Your response to others is to come from what moved you as you listened. This is not a place for problem solving or giving advice.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

***Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:*** ***The Disciples Faith / Mystery of Jesus***

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

#### **Daily prayer material:**

**Notes:** In each of the first five days, follow the same process as with the Incarnation and Nativity. There is the same Preparatory Prayer and Grace. The Composition of Self and the Points (see the persons, hear what they are saying, watch what they are doing) change depending on the mystery. They will conclude with the *Dialogue with Three Persons* described on pages 39-41.

For the *Application of the Senses* follow the contemplation method described on page 59.

## **THE MYSTERY OF JESUS – CONTEMPLATIONS -**

(Recall in Meeting 23 the aid to Gospel contemplations before the daily prayer periods.)

### **Day 1: The Calming of the Storm      (Mk 4:35-41 )**

- Jesus decides to cross the lake with his disciples.
- They take Jesus “just as he is” in their boat.
- A storm arises rather suddenly, and soon the sails are overborne and the boat is filling with water.
- But Jesus, who is exhausted, has fallen asleep.
- The disciples take down the sails and bail out the water.
- At length they awaken Jesus and shout for him to save them.
- Waking up, Jesus rebukes the wind and the sea, and at once these fall still.
- Then he looks at his disciples and speaks about their fearfulness.
- They begin to recognize the mystery of Jesus.

### **Day 2: Walking on the Water      (Mt 14:22-33 )**

- Jesus sends his disciples off in their boat while he dismissed the crowds and goes up the hillside to pray.
- By sundown the wind is blowing hard in the disciples’ faces. They struggle to make their way against the waves.
- Later in the night, as they labour on, Jesus comes toward them in the darkness, walking on the sea.
- Because he seems like a ghostly apparition, they cry out in fear.
- But Jesus calms them with his presence.
- Peter responds generously, and Jesus invites him to walk on the water.
- Peter does so, but soon notices the wind, begins to sink, and calls out to Jesus.
- Jesus restores him to the boat with a gentle rebuke.
- The disciples fall down in awe before the Son of God.

**Day 3: Repetition of the previous two contemplations.**

**Day 4: Repetition of the previous three contemplations.**

**Day 5: An Application of the Senses of all the contemplations made up to now: the Infancy contemplations, the Baptism, the Temptations, Calls, Beatitudes, Calming and Walking on Water.**

**Day 6: Read Lk 14:25-35. Then read the materials on Discerning a Personal Life Decision**

### **Phase 3: Gathering the facts at various levels of relationships**

As you move forward in your decision-making process, the next need is to gather the various elements that influence your choice -- material, interpersonal and spiritual.

You might set up a sheet of paper in 4 columns as shown here.

I will do this ... or that	I will NOT do this ... or that
Advantages to me	Advantages to me
_____	_____
_____	_____

The benefit of listing the reasons in 4 columns is that you will get in touch with all the psychological and spiritual reasons from both a positive and negative approach to the proposition. Many items from

Column 2 may be repeated in Column 3, similarly between Columns 3 & 4. The last column might answer the question: "What will I miss if I don't do this or that"?

Context: Phase 3 takes place after contemplating "Calming of the Storm" and "Walking on the Waters".

Grace: I begin by asking for the grace of openness and insight as I open myself to divine initiatives (letting God make the first moves towards me) and reasons on all sides of the proposition.

Points: Compose a fact sheet by considering your proposition in terms of 4 sets of reasons, 2 on the affirmative side of the proposition and 2 on the negative side of the proposition.

1. List all the advantages and disadvantages of the affirmative side of your proposition.
2. List all the advantages and disadvantages of the negative side of your proposition.

**The Cultural Context:**

Among the various factors to be considered, of course, will be one's social involvements and how they are to be lived out or developed (let go, altered or increased and deepened). How are we being led by the Spirit in this larger social context?

Your decision, when it comes, will need to be firmly rooted in reality. All the data should be presented with concreteness.

You might list the various advantages and disadvantages under sub-headings such as: persons affected, talents or education needed, costs both financial and personal, the teachings of the Church on the matter, moral factors, steps to be taken in carrying out the choice, etc.

**Note:** These facts are the data which bear on the proposition, but even taken together they are not what will decide the issue at this stage. What will decide it later on will be your growing awareness of God's initiatives in your life, not any facts by themselves?

Remember that this exercise does not decide the decision. It is important if others are involved in your proposition, to check with them about your reasons.

In your Dialogue with the Trinity, speak about your findings and close with the Lord's Prayer.



## **MEETING 25**

(Week Two)

### **PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Mt 14:22-33 aloud.

Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience. With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life.

Do a *second sharing*. If you wish, after this you might indicate your progress with your Personal Life Decision.

As stated in Meeting 23, since your decision is personal, only share what you wish to share. Since the meetings are already somewhat full, your sharing should be brief.

### **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

Theme of the coming week's prayer periods: **Social Loving / Commitment**

Read and share on the following: Phase 4 of a Personal Life Decision – making the decision and offering oneself in this personal life decision to Jesus Christ.

**It is important to remember that our mysterious being is much larger than mere rationality. Human life includes more important factors than consciously devised arguments. In fact, all reasons found in the mind are meaningful only when located within personal contexts (relationships with others, love, compassion, suffering, illness, etc.) and subordinate to values and goals accepted or chosen by concrete human beings. Apart from that densely concrete context of previous choices, personal histories, communities, personality factors, languages, cultural shaping, artistic feeling, deep-down longings, etc., rational reasons are paper thin and insubstantial.**

**Accordingly, we should consider the reasons with great freedom and openness and objectivity, but take more time (when that is possible) to try them out on deeper feelings and intuitions. We need to practice looking at the various sides of any proposal with considerable impartiality.**

**All human life is surrounded by mystery. Why we are created, how long we shall live, the reality of evil, the endless spaces of galaxies, the ultimate goal of human life ... so much is left to faith and trust in God! It is not surprising, therefore, that many of our decisions (when difficulties arise in making them) are involved in mysterious factors beyond our expert knowledge, reckoning or control. While rightly respecting those in positions of authority, we must not allow them to disarm our freedom or overweigh our own sense of responsibility for making choices in Christ.**

#### **NOTES:**

##### **1. St. Ignatius writes of three times for making a good personal life decision**

**First Time** When God our Lord so moves and attracts the will that a devout soul, without any doubt or even the possibility of doubt, follows that has been revealed to it. St. Paul and St. Matthew acted thus in following Jesus Christ (Sp. Exx. # 175). This is known when a person is experiencing a pull of the heart or deep-level response (consolation without any concomitant (accompanying) cause. See #2 page 83.

**Second Time** When sufficient clarity and understanding have been derived from experiences of desolations and consolations and from the discernment of different spirits (Sp. Exx. # 176). This happens when a person is struggling with the matter and proposition, rewriting it many times and going over the reasons with various experiences of desolation and consolation. Eventually, with many petitions for clarity, the person can discern the decision as a means of true consolation. The opaque, or confused, becomes illumined from within. Peace and harmony are present with the decision (see page 84, #7, first paragraph).

**Third Time** When the person is in a time of tranquility, (a time when the person is not disturbed by different spirits, and has free and peaceful use of his/her natural faculties) s/he first reflects on the purpose for which human persons are born, that is, for the praise of God and for the salvation of humankind. With the desire before the mind to attain this praise and salvation, s/he may choose a better living of his/her life in the service of God and for the attainment of salvation (Sp. Exx. # 176).

##### **2. Preliminary to personal life decisions is the need for a perfectly open and unbiased spirit beyond ego-controls or deep-seated fears and hurts and a need of interior spiritual freedom with the issue and the proposition being considered that God may take the initiative in the matter. Ignatius**

suggests some imaginative ways of gaining distance from our spontaneous feeling over the decisions (Sp. Exx. # 185-187).

a) I imagine that I am a counselor and that another person comes to me for advice on exactly the same issue. I listen impartially to the person's explanation of the issue and reasons. I consider the advice that I would give and then take it myself.

b) I imagine myself ten years from now and I look back on the present decision I have made. What results have followed my decision?

c) I imagine that I have died and come before Christ for judgment. How does my decision look from that viewpoint? In other words, I try to place it within the longer context of my life as a whole after it shall have ended.

d) I consider other ways of obtaining a certain degree of "imaginative distance" from my present situation that might help me gain the objectivity needed for a good decision "with Jesus".

It is essential to entrust myself entirely to the Trinity and to confidently expect them to give me the grace I will need at the proper time to go forward with my decision.

#### **Offering the Decision to the Lord:**

In order to express your free intention to move towards the confirmation stage of the personal life decision, it will be helpful to choose a symbol of your (provisional) decision and then to perform an external action with it, which signifies your self-offering to Jesus the Lord in that very choice of action. There are 2 steps to make:

##### **1) Choose a symbol**

This may be a small object, or a design or simple drawing, or a coloured illustration cut from a magazine. Its significance need not be clear to anyone other than yourself. What is essential is that it can stand for your Election choice.

##### **2) Perform an act of offering**

For example, you could wear the symbol (perhaps out of sight) when you go forward to Holy Communion at the Sunday Eucharist / Service (or you could perform any other act which occurs to you as significant in your situation). During your thanksgiving prayer after communion, you should formally offer the Election-decision to Jesus Christ in a very personal way.

Remember to *identify yourself imaginatively* (your "Christic self" -- a developed disciple of Jesus, conformed interiorly to Jesus' way) as shaped by the chosen proposition. In this manner you should offer yourself to Christ's service.

#### **NOTE:**

A provisional decision is one that seems right because it brings your being into harmony with a personal relationship to Jesus. Nevertheless, it remains provisional at this point because it has not yet been confirmed.

If the weighing of motives and the moving to a choice are not as yet concluded, calmly return to Phase 2 and proceed from there with another proposition.

## **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace if an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

**Daily prayer material:** Contemplations (recall, if necessary, pages 90-91, and the Notes on pages 76-77).

### **Day 1 SOCIAL LOVING      Wedding Feast at Cana.      Jn 2: 2:1-12**

- Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a wedding guest in Cana of Galilee.
- Jesus is also invited, together with his disciples.
- When the feast is at its height, the supply of wine runs out, and Mary becomes aware of this embarrassment for the host. She says quietly to Jesus, "They have no wine."
- Jesus appears to balk: "O Woman, what has this to do with you and me? My hour has not yet come.
- All the same, Mary tells the servants, "Do whatever he says."
- Six stone jars are available, and Jesus tells them to fill them with water, which they do at once.
- Then Jesus signals them to pour some out into pitchers and bring these to the steward of the feast.
- "You've kept the best wine to the last."

### **Day 2: The Sending of the Apostles (Mt 10:1-16)**

- In Mt 9:35-37, Jesus has compassion on the crowds.
- Then Jesus not only calls the twelve but he sends them to witness to the realm of God.
- He empowers them to heal and to liberate people.
- He does not want them to rely on material resources.
- He desires them to belong peacefully to the community where they witness to him, and to present his message to the people for reception or rejection.
- He gives them a mysterious saying about combining wisdom and innocence.

### **Day 3: Repetition of the previous two contemplations.**

### **Day 4: Repetition of the previous three contemplations.**

### **Day 5: An Application of the Senses of all the contemplations made up to now: the Infancy, contemplations, the Baptism, the temptations .... Wedding Feast and Sending the Apostles.**

**Day 6:** Read the materials of Discerning a Personal Life Decision Phase 4 page 90-92, including the Notes

## **Phase 4      Making the Decision**

**Context:** “This is my prayer, that your love may flow more and more with knowledge and full insight, to help you to determine what is best.” (Phil 1:9-10)

**Composition of Self:** I imagine myself holding the results of my personal prayer as a gift in my hands.

**Grace:** I beg God to deign to move my will and bring to my mind what I ought to do in this matter, that which would be for the greater praise and glory of God.

**Points:** Proceed in one of the following ways:

1. Having gathered all the elements around the proposition, I sit quietly with the proposition and wait for an experience of “spiritual consolation without concomitant cause ( Notes, #1, page 100).
2. If such an experience is not given but there are many experiences of desolation or consolation over the proposition, then I will discern these in terms of the *Spiritual Exercises* # 316-317.

“I call it **consolation** when the soul is aroused by an interior movement which causes it to be inflamed with love of God its Creator, and as a consequence can love no created thing on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of all things. It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears, moved by the love of God, whether it be because of sorrow for sins or because of the sufferings of Christ, or for any other reason immediately directed to the praise and service of God. Finally I call consolation every increase of faith and hope and love, and all interior joy which calls and attracts the person to that which is of God and to salvation by filling it with tranquility and peace in God our Creator and in Jesus Christ.

I call **desolation** that which is entirely the opposite of what is described as spiritual consolation, such as darkness of soul, confusion of spirit, attraction to what is base and worldly, restlessness caused by many disturbances and temptations which lead us to lack of faith, hope or love. The soul finds itself completely apathetic, lukewarm, tepid, sad and as if separated from its Creator and Jesus Christ. For just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts coming from consolation are the opposite of those which come from desolation.”

3. If I continue to be tranquil, then I will weigh the reasons I have assembled on my 4-column fact sheet.

- a) I consider each list of advantages and disadvantages and select the weightier reasons in terms of my love and service of God in each list.
- b) Among these I consider the weightier set that is congruent (in accordance with) with God and make my provisional decision in terms of this rather than any selfish or sensual attractions.
- c) I rest with this decision and pay attention to my inner responses of consolation or desolation (harmony or dissonance) in relationship to my contemplations on the life of Jesus.
- d) I discern the significance of the consolations and desolations and make my final decision.

4. Then I make an offering of this myself in this provisional personal life decision and offer my provisional decision to the Lord and await confirmation of it (pages 100 – Offering the decision to the Lord).

**Dialogue with the Trinity.** Coming before the Trinity, I express my belief in their goodness and presence and my hope for the future, and conclude with the Lord's Prayer.



## **MEETING 26**

(Week Two)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Mt 10:1-16 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a *second sharing*. If you wish, after this you might indicate your progress with your Personal Life Decision.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:** **The Cost of Discipleship with Jesus and Seeking Confirmation**

Reread and share on Second Week Rules of Discernment, pages 82-84 (Interior Movement of Spirits).

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

**Daily prayer material:** Strength and Conviction

**Day 1:** Same Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self, Grace and Dialogue with the Trinity.

**Contemplations:** Recall the ways to contemplate the Gospel Mysteries, pages 90-91.

### Jesus predicts his Transfiguration and his Passion (Mk 8:27 – 9:13)

- After Peter's profession of faith that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus began to show his disciple that he would undergo great suffering ... and be killed ... and be raised.
- Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."
- Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."
- Jesus leads Peter, James and John up a high mountain.
- He is transfigured before them, his face shone like the sun and his clothes were dazzling white.
- Elijah and Moses talked to Jesus.
- Peter said, "It is good for us to be here. Let us build 3 tents.
- Then a voice from heaven was heard: "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him." And the apostles fell on their faces.
- When they looked up they saw only Jesus.

### Day 2: Second Preaching in the Temple (Jn 8:12-59)

- In the temple Jesus said: "I am the light of the world."
- "If you knew me you would know my father also."
- "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
- "Truly I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death."
- "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I AM."
- So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

### Day 3: Repetition of the previous two contemplations

### Day 4: Repetition of the previous three contemplations

### Day 5: An Application of the Senses of all the contemplations to date, from the Infancy to the Transfiguration.

### Day 6: Read the materials following on Discerning a Personal Life Decision.

### Phase 5 Seeking Confirmation (Consolation and Confirmation)

Confirmation is an experience of consolation with the decision of the person. It is experienced as a sense of fitness / congruity (agreement) / continuity with the person's graced history. It should be sought in prayer at various moments, as the decision moves towards implementation.

**The dominant experience of confirmation is union with Christ which results in an increase of faith, hope and love ... joy and peace. One experiences the paschal mystery of dying and rising as the decision is anticipated.**

**The costs, as well as the joys of discipleship are known and accepted. One senses that with the decision, one participates in Christ's mission from the Trinity to humanity.**

**There are the following kinds of felt experience: a sense of uplift and joy, that this decision will further Christ's work on earth, a willingness to carry out the decision in spite of possible misunderstandings and sufferings, or possibly the sense of a special union with Christ that cannot be denied. The consolidation of confirmation is more than the realization of the correctness of the decision. It is a confirmation of the person deciding. The person experiences affective unity with Christ in his enterprise of bringing forth God's realm on earth.**

**The person holds the decision in freedom in order to adjust to various outside forces and continues to discern, and if these forces change somewhat, the person also realizes that this is not opposed to the basic decision.**

**There is a sense of freedom, realism and peace along with joy and energy for the task. Realism means that the cost in carrying out the action will be recognized. Even the cost has a joyful aspect to it – the joy of discipleship in the anticipated sufferings, and burden of the work, may be experienced. And with this there are hope and energy, not only for oneself but for all humanity. This is experienced as “The love of Christ urges us on” (2Cor 5:14).**

**One has a sense of being energized and drawn into the future, in spite of one's limitations. Paul's prayer is at work: “All I want is to know Christ Jesus and the power of his resurrection if only I can share in his sufferings ...” (Phil 3:10).**

**After praying the week's contemplations proceed with “Seeking Confirmation”.**

**Context:**

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction, with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share our consolation. (2 Co 1:3-7)**

**Composition of Self:**

**I imagine myself carrying in my hands the decision I made in the Lord.**

**Grace:**

**I ask the Lord to help me discern from my interior movement of spirits whether my decision is confirmed or not confirmed.**

**Points:**

- 1. I come before the Lord united in my being with my decision.**
- 2. I recall the image of my unique consolation. Do I sense congruity (agreement) and continuity with my graced history in connection with this decision?**

**3. Do I experience, as I prayed for confirmation, the kind of consolation described above?**

**4. How will I describe the experience that I had as I prayed for confirmation?**

**Dialogue with the Trinity: I thank the Trinity for what happened to me in prayer and I ask God to help me present my experience to the group.**

I close with the Lord's Prayer.



## **MEETING 27**

(Week Two)

### **PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Mk 8: 27-37 aloud.

#### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

**Do a second sharing.**

If you wish, after this sharing you might indicate your progress with your Personal Life Decision.

### **PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**   **Implementing One's Personal Life Decision**

## **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for me that I may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

**Daily prayer material:** Living Hope / Committed Fidelity

### **Day 1: Raising of Lazarus Jn 11: 17-44**

- When Jesus arrives at Bethany, the body of his friend Lazarus has already been four days in the tomb.
- Martha goes to meet Jesus outside the town and they exchange words in a dialogue of friends.
- Jesus then says, “I am the resurrection and the life”, which provokes an inspired answer from Martha.
- Martha returns home and tells her sister Mary of Jesus’ arrival.
- Mary goes at once to meet him in her turn, and she sheds many tears before him, which moves Jesus painfully.
- Still troubled, with deep feeling, Jesus comes to the tomb, orders the stone to be removed and prays to God.
- Then he cries out, “Lazarus, come forth!” and the dead man soon appears at the mouth of the cave ... Jesus tells them to unbind Lazarus. After this has been done they bring him home again.

### **Day 2: Supper at Bethany (Jn 12: 1-11)**

- At Bethany a supper is given for Jesus and his disciples at Simon the Leper’s house.
- Lazarus and his two sisters are present; Martha is serving.
- Mary opens a jar of precious ointment and anoints Jesus.
- The fine odour spreads through the whole room.
- But Judas Iscariot criticizes her behaviour as a waste – she might better have given the price of it to the poor.
- Jesus, however, defends her action; he even sees a meaning in it which might not have been expected.
- He foretells her praise throughout the world.

### **Day 3: Repetition of the previous two contemplations**

### **Day 4: Repetition of the previous three contemplations**

### **Day 5: An Application of the Senses of all the contemplations up to now (the Infancy to Bethany).**

**Day 6:** Read the materials of Discerning a Personal Life Decision.

**Daily Prayer Materials of Discerning a Personal Life Decision, Phase 6:  
Implementation of the Decision – Planning Implementation and Further Confirmation**

**Context:**

Contemplate the Raising of Lazarus (Jn 11: 17-44) and the Anointing at Bethany (Jn 12: 1-11)  
After praying the week's contemplations on the Raising and Anointing, continue with the Grace and Points.

**Grace:** I seek from the Lord insights into the many activities what will be necessary to fulfill my decisions and the courage to proceed with them.

**Phase 6 Implementing the Decision**

The “end product” of the decision should be spelled out as concretely and specifically as possible so that all the necessary steps may be taken to assure the proper implementation of the decision.  
Phases 1 to 5 may have to be repeated for particular choices involved in the implementation of the decision.

It is helpful to consider the reasons given in columns 2 and 3, when implementing your decision (i.e. the disadvantages of doing something and the disadvantages of not doing it. The reasons may have made you hesitate and so they need to be addressed during the time of implementation.

**Points:**

1. I use my imagination to discover what would be the immediate outcome of my decision if I fulfill it in all its aspects. If a snapshot could be taken what would the “product” look like?
2. I consider what steps I will have to take to bring this about.
3. I think through a time line to achieve my goal.
4. I determine the resources, gifts, and attitudes necessary to take these steps.
5. I consider the other necessary aspect of implementing a good decision. Who needs to be informed and will help? When? How?

**Dialogue with the Trinity: I speak to the Trinity about all these matters.**



## MEETING 28

(Week Three)

### PART I

### SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of an intimate knowledge of Jesus made human for us that we may follow Jesus more closely and love Jesus more dearly.

After this, read Jn 12: 1-11 aloud.

#### *Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience*

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

If you wish, in a third round, you might indicate how you are progressing with your Personal Life Decision.

### PART II

### TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**      **Pain of Entering the Passion**

Read and share on Contemplating the Third Week Exercises. (Contemplating the Passion of Christ)

The third kind/degree of humility (page 81) in the Second Week is most fully understood while contemplating the Passion of Jesus in the Third Week. The grace of the Third Week requires a change in our whole attitude to life. It calls us to share in the sufferings of Jesus. In a paradoxical way we pray to see the cross as glory and sweetness. The grace calls us to move beyond our self-centred fears. We pray for the grace to be fully free.

This calls us to learn to contemplate in a new and humbler way. We seek something we cannot snatch by our own doing. All we can do is wait and be attentive. We can enter the Passion of Jesus only as we would keep a vigil at the bedside of a dying friend. Mary, as she stood by the cross is our great model of the compassionate one. She was there, living in her son, yet helpless, incapable of relieving Jesus' pain. She was experiencing his pain in herself, not by substitution but by extension from him. We too wish to experience what it was like for him, not for us, sharing in friendship.

In this sense, compassion is more than sympathy. The hymn expresses it well: "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" It was not "they" who crucified Jesus - it was I. Yet, there is a danger that if we concentrate on the sufferings, we miss or lay less emphasis on the love with which he bore them.

**Freely, Jesus has to will his Passion. Until Christ says ‘yes’ with his human will, the Passion cannot begin, and God cannot compel him. Unless Jesus says ‘yes’, the Passion will have no meaning.**

**Grace is not an anesthetic. Jesus had no personal love for, nor any desire to suffer. He accepted sufferings because they were the will of the Trinity, and the strength to accept them came to him from the Trinity (Heb 5: 8-9). I learn from Christ how to give meaning to my sufferings – and how to help others to give meaning to theirs.**

**Jesus suffers alone. Healthy compassion requires that we should not imagine we are alleviating or reducing what he then suffered. All is owed to Christ. Contemplation of the Passion demands self-abasement.**

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus’ Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

#### **Daily prayer material:**

**NOTES:** The Grace given above and the following points are to be used throughout the contemplations on the Passion in Meetings 28 to 31. The usual 3 Points in each mystery of the Passion are: 1) see the persons; 2) hear what they are saying; 3) watch what they are doing. Three Points are added to these: 4) consider what Jesus suffers in his humanity; 5) reflect upon how Jesus’ divinity hides itself rather than overpower his persecutors; 6) reflect that Jesus suffers all this for my sins, and ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus.

#### **CONTEMPLATIONS: Pain of Entering the Passion**

##### **Day 1: The Washing of the Disciples’ Feet (Jn 13: 1-30)**

- On the evening of the Passover, Jesus comes to the Seder-supper with his disciples.
- He gets up and washes their feet; Peter resists him in this, but Jesus insists upon it.
- Jesus tells them that one of their number will betray him.
- Under the appearances of bread and wine, Jesus gives them his body and blood (Mt 26: 26-29).

**Dialogues:** to be done with Jesus, going through his Passion, or other persons present at the events. If you wish to use the Triple Dialogue, follow the suggestions as given on pages 39-41.

**End with the Lord’s Prayer.**

## **Day 2: The Agony in the Garden (Mk 14: 26-42)**

- At the end of the meal Jesus goes out to the Mount of Olives.
- On the way, Jesus tells his disciples that they will all fall away from him.
- Jesus, who is feeling great distress, takes Peter, James and John apart with himself to be near him as he prays.
- In his prayer, Jesus asks Abba (parent) to remove “the cup”, if that is God’s will, but nonetheless he desires to do Abba’s will rather than his own.
- Once again Satan is present to tempt him to deny his humanity and call out to God to take suffering away from him. He is in such agony that he begins to sweat and his sweat becomes “like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.” (Lk 22: 44)
- Three times he makes the same petition, and then in dismay, he awakens his disciples, who are not attentive to his needs.
- At last, when he sees troops carrying torches coming near, Jesus calls his disciples to get ready to meet them.

**Dialogues:** As in the first contemplation.

**Day 3:** Repetition of the first and second contemplations with choice of Dialogue.

End with the Lord’s Prayer.

**Day 4:** Repetition of first, second and third contemplations with choice of Dialogue.

End with the Lord’s Prayer.

**Day 5:** An Application of the Senses to first, second, third and fourth contemplations, with choice of Dialogue .

End with the Lord’s Prayer.

**Day 6:** Repetition of first to fifth contemplations with choice of Dialogue.

End with the Lord’s Prayer.



## **MEETING 29**

(Week Three)

### **PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

After this, read Mk 14: 32-42 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

### **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:** **Jesus Condemned by Human Courts**

### **PART III** MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Reread and share on Contemplating the Third Week Exercises (Contemplating the Passion of Christ) on page 110.

Grace: I ask the Trinity for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

Daily prayer material:

**Day 1: Jesus is Condemned by Human Courts      Jesus before Caiaphas (Mk 14: 53-72)**

- After his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas, who comes with soldiers to arrest him, kisses Jesus.
- Jesus is bound and led before Caiaphas, the High Priest, and the whole council, while Peter waits below in the courtyard.
- Witnesses are brought forward with various accusations, but Jesus remains silent until Caiaphas conjures him to reply.
- Jesus is then brutally mocked by the guards.
- In the courtyard below, Peter is challenged and denies his Lord three times.

**Dialogues:** As in Week 28, ending with the Lord's Prayer

**Day 2:** Jesus before Pilate (Mk 15: 1-20)

- In the morning, Jesus is brought before Pilate.
- Hearing that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod's court, where he is dressed in the garment of a fool and then sent back to Pilate. (Lk 23: 5-16)
- Pilate questions Jesus closely about his kingship.
- Pilate, who knows Jesus to be innocent, tries to release him in the Jewish Passover amnesty, but the crowds call for the release of Barabbas instead.
- The Roman soldiers scourge and insult Jesus, crowning him with thorns; he is then brought out to the crowds again.
- Under renewed political pressure, Pilate condemns Jesus to death.

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord's Prayer

**Day 3:** Repetition of the previous two contemplations ending with choice of Dialogues

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord's Prayer

**Day 4:** Repetition of the previous contemplations of the Passion, (Last Supper, Agony, Before Caiaphas and Before Pilate)

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord's Prayer

**Day 5:** An Application of the Senses of days 1 to 4, ending with accompanying choice of Dialogue  
**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 6:** Repetition of contemplations days 1 to 5, ending with choice of Dialogues

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord's Prayer.



## **MEETING 30**

(Week Three)

### **PART I**

#### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

After this, read Mk 15: 1-20 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

### **PART II**

#### **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**

**Jesus Crucified for our Salvation**

### **PART III**

#### **MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Reread and share on material: Contemplating the Third Week Exercises on page 110 (Contemplating the Passion of Christ).

Grace: I ask the Trinity for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

Daily prayer material: Jesus is Crucified for our Salvation

Recall the following Notes:

The usual 3 Points in each mystery of the Passion are: 1) see the persons; 2) hear what they are saying; 3) watch what they are doing.

Three Points are added to these: 4) consider what Jesus suffers in his humanity; 5) reflect upon how Jesus' divinity hides itself rather than overpower his persecutors; 6) reflect that Jesus suffers all this for my sins, and ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus.

**Day 1: The Way of the Cross (Mk 15: 21-32)**

- After his condemnation by Pilate, the cross is brought in by the soldiers and placed on Jesus ‘back.
- Some women lament for him, and Jesus speaks to them about the future destruction of the city (Lk 23: 27-31).
- Jesus falls several times out of physical weakness and exhaustion.
- Simon of Cyrene, a man passing by on a journey, is seized by the soldiers and made to carry the cross with Jesus.
- At last, Jesus reaches Calvary; the soldiers nail him to the cross and raise it up.
- The soldiers cast lots for his clothes, people mock him, and vinegar is touched to his lips; later an inscription, which Pilate refuses to alter, is fixed above his head.

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord’s Prayer

**Day 2:** Jesus dies on the cross (Mk 15: 33-41)

- Jesus cries out to God, reciting Psalm 22.
- Those present think that he is calling upon Elijah.
- They give him sour wine to drink.
- Jesus gives a loud cry and dies.
- The Centurion says: “Truly, this man was God’s Son.”
- Jesus’ mother and other women look on from a distance.

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord’s Prayer

**Day 3:** Jesus’ Seven Last Words on the Cross (see Lk 23:34, 43, 46; Mt 27:46; Jn 19: 26-27, 28, 30).

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord’s Prayer

**Day 4** Repetition of the previous contemplations of the Passion (from the Last Supper to Jesus’ Death on the Cross)

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord’s Prayer

**Day 5:** An Application of the Senses of the four previous days

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord’s Prayer

**Day 6:** Repetition of five previous days

**Dialogues:** As in Meeting 28, ending with the Lord’s Prayer



## **MEETING 31**

(Week Three)

### **PART I**

#### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

After this, read Mk 15: 33-41 aloud.

*Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience*

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

### **PART II**

#### **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

*Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:*

**Experiencing Jesus' Death**

### **PART III**

#### **MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Reread and share on Contemplating the Third Week Exercises (Contemplating the Passion of Christ) on page 110.

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

**Daily prayer material:**

Recall the following Notes:

The usual three Points in each mystery of the Passion are: 1) see the persons; 2) hear what they are saying; 3) watch what they are doing. Three Points are added to these: 4) consider what Jesus suffers in his humanity; 5) reflect upon how Jesus' divinity hides itself rather than overpower his persecutors; 6) reflect that Jesus suffers all this for my sins, and ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus.

Dialogues follow the contemplations below - dialogues with Mary or one of the disciples (woman or man).

End with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 1:** Taking down from the Cross and Burial (Mk 15: 42-47)

- Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body of Jesus.
- Pilate checks with the Centurion and gives permission to Joseph of Arimathea.
- Joseph takes down the body and wraps it in linen cloths and lays it in a tomb.
- While the women watch, he rolls a stone against the door of the tomb.

**Day 2:** The Solitude of Mary and the Disciples (Lk 23: 50-56)

- The women return and prepare spices and ointments for the body and on the Sabbath they rest.

**Composition of Self:** I put myself in the place of Jesus' mother Mary and the disciples (men and women), as they rest on the Sabbath after the ordeal of the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

**Grace:** I ask and seek from God the grace to experience, in my own being, the utter loss of Jesus – just as Mary and the disciples experienced that loss.

**Points:**

1. I place myself with Mary, remembering the sufferings of Jesus, from his birth up to the Last Supper.
2. I place myself with Mary and the disciples, women and men, remembering the sufferings of Jesus during his Passion and death.
3. I place myself with the disciples, men and women, in their loneliness and sense of loss.

Dialogues with Mary or with one of the disciples, woman or man

**Day 3:** Repetition of Day 2 – continue your remembering with Mary and the disciples.

Dialogues with Mary or with one of the disciples, woman or man

**Day 4:** Repetition of Day 2 and Day 3.

Dialogues with Mary or with one of the disciples, woman or man

**Day 5:** Application of the Senses of Days 1 to 4.

Dialogues with Mary or with one of the disciples, woman or man

**Day 6:** Repetition of Days 1 to 5. Dialogues with Mary or with one of the disciples, woman or man.



## **MEETING 32**

**(Transitional Meeting to Week Four Beginning of Communal Decision-Making)**

### **PART I** SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we asked for the grace of deep felt knowledge of Jesus' Passion, that is, sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Jesus undergoing personal and social rejection out of love for me, for us.

After this, read Lk 23: 50-56 aloud.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

### **PART II**

TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:** **Discerning from the suffering in our graced history**

Read and share on **More Principles of Discernment During the Third Week of the Exercises**

The prayer periods following this meeting and the meetings of Week 4 of the Exercises act as a transition time for moving from a Personal Life Decision to considering a Communal Decision by the group. The steps of this decision will be explained in the prayer period of Day 6 in the week following the meeting.

1. When one contemplates the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, there are two sets of consolation and desolation that one may experience. These are dependent on one's state of being as one comes to these contemplations. One set will be connected with the self as one faces life. The other set is more related to one's role as disciples of Christ for a better world.

When one contemplates the Passion of Jesus, consolation and desolation may be experienced in different ways. These differences are dependent on the state of being one brings to these contemplations. In one set, one may experience consolation, as insights into the meaning of one's suffering and strength for the future, and desolation as the opposite. In the second set, one may experience a more radical entrance into the suffering and resurrection of Jesus. In the latter, two interior movements of consolation may take place, movements that might be named "spiritual death" and an "elevated life." These are experienced as a sense of union with Jesus: in one instance as a loss of the experiences of peace and joy, in the other as a sense of new life.

As one prays the Third Week Exercises, one continues to be concerned about true and deceptive consolation, as at the time of decision-making in the Second Week, but now one should be ready for an almost reversed experience of true consolation yet a consolation in keeping with Ignatius' statement: "I call consolation every increase of faith, hope and love" (Sp. Exx. #316), page 49.

## ***2. Spiritual Consolation during the third week***

One can enter into the discipleship experience in ever deepening levels. One might experience consolation as heavy and dark, as one moves to accept interiorly the historical sufferings of Jesus, with an openness and in one's own life, to experience blame, condemnation, mockery and personal rejection even to death on the cross. The darkness consists in enduring a total failure of one's hopes of success in serving God, somewhat as Jesus experienced in his agony. Such an experience appears somewhat absurd and there is an absence of felt-knowing ("sentire") of the presence of God, but continuing faith.

If the direction is still toward God, such experiences appear to be opposite to the true consolations desired and given in the Second Week of the Exercises. These experiences are the grace of a mystical union with Jesus in his suffering – as if the desire of one's heart were stopped (spiritual death) or one's heart were broken.

## ***3. Spiritual Desolation during the Third Week***

For disciples, these experiences of desolation are any trends of feeling which tend to distract the one doing the Exercises from union with Jesus in his passion and death, such as "Easter feelings", persistent levity, moral indignation, defensive self-preoccupation, theorizing or argumentative efforts, in short, any way of withholding oneself from spiritual dying and any denial of its necessity. These trends do not lead to any stoppage of the heart, but rather to confusion, or to alienation from Jesus or perhaps to a regressive longing to renew earlier kinds of consolation.

Even "sweet tears of compassion", if unrealistic in tendency, may provide avenues of escape. One is to move against the distractive and escapist character of these desolations once they have been discerned.

4. As the acceptance of one's physical death takes some time to accept, so the experience of "spiritual death in Jesus" takes time. Such consolation may take a long time to recognize. A

certain quietude that comes at the end of the process will signal a fuller reception of this death in the Lord.

5. Such an experience of “dark consolation” is usually shorter rather than long and the person moves into a state of renewed generosity and strength, unless there is a deeper resistance of some kind to a more complete surrender.

### **PART III** MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Grace:** I ask the Trinity for the grace to be present to the suffering elements of my life story, as it is lovingly told by God, and I pray that I may respond more generously to God’s love flooding my heart.

**Daily prayer material:** Principles of Discernment (Page 102-103)

#### **CONTEMPLATIONS:**

**Day 1:** Preparatory Prayer and Composition of Self as usual

**Grace;** I pray for further insight and knowledge concerning those discernment principles helpful in the Week III of the Exercises.

**Context:** Read: More Principles for Discernment During Week 3 – pages 102-103 above.

**Dialogues:** With Jesus going through his Passion, or with other persons present. If you wish to use the Triple Dialogue, follow the Notes given on pages 76-77. End with the Lord’s Prayer.

**Day 2:** Discerning from the Suffering in my History , recall *Ways of Praying with Graced History*, pages 26-27.

**Context:** My own life in the light of John 12: 23-28

**Grace;** I ask the Trinity for the grace to be present to the suffering elements of my life story, as it is lovingly told by God, and I pray that I may respond more generously to God’s love flooding my heart.

**Remembering:** I recall my life story in terms of the suffering moments of my background: parents– grandparents – relatives - friends – male / female companionship – incidents of childhood –school – mature years – recent years – experiences of church – baptism – Eucharist – reconciliation– health – positions I have held.

I look over my life story, searching out those special times when I have experienced union with Jesus in his sufferings.

I dwell in those which most impress me at this time.

**Pondering:** After this time of remembering my suffering history, in company with Jesus, I spend some time reflecting on these questions:

- Do I perceive any pattern in my suffering history?
- How has God brought me through my suffering history?
- Do I have any sense of consolation from my suffering history?

**Dialogue with the Trinity:** Throughout my prayer period, I unite myself with Jesus in his suffering.

I close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 3:** As in Day 2, but begin with Phil 3: 4-11.

**Day 4:** I review my life once again in terms of Day 2 and Day 3.

**Day 5:** Reread Principles of Discernment from Third Week and do another repetition of Day 4.

**Day 6:** Read the following materials in preparation for the Fourth Week: Community in the Risen Jesus and Communal Decisions and Actions.

In the Spiritual Exercises, we experience the normal stage of growth in the spiritual life.

- 1) In Week I, we become aware of our sinfulness and respond to God's call to repentance and conversion. It is a time of purification.
- 2) In Week II, more aware of our attachments and tendencies toward sin in our lives, we turn to putting on the mind and heart of Christ.
- 3) In Week III, we are tested in our fidelity to Christ and his way of life. Meditating on the passion and death of Jesus helps us to confirm our decision to live under Jesus' standards, which call us to combat evil in our lives and in our environment. This is a time of confirmation in election.
- 4) In Week IV, in contrast to the passion of Jesus, we note how much the divinity shines through the person of Christ in all his appearances. The peace and joy which he wants to share with us can only be a gift of God. *This presence and consolation which Christ is in each of his resurrection appearances is the same gift he is now in our daily lives.* It is why we are enabled to live our lives with a true Christ optimism.

### **Community in the Risen Jesus**

We are bonded with the Risen Jesus in proclaiming and witnessing the Good News in a new kind of faith community. As such, we are called to do communal discernment together. This will involve choices for growth in love and communion with one another and command Christian apostolic decisions.

## **New Kind of Faith Community**

**1. A human community is much more than its structures. It is also a high-level interpersonal organism with goal-oriented drive. The substance of living community is an unknown spiritual reality of great potential value.**

We can exist without a good community, but we rarely flourish without one. Loving relationships, like marriages and families, need a social context in which to find and express their true meaning. To turn inward and attempt to live apart from others is an illusion which leads fairly quickly to deadly boredom, to neurotic outbreaks, or to active dislike.

**2. A healthy community develops interior life structures which go beyond individualism or a parasite attitude. It comes together to share faith, to reach out to others and to pray together. It achieves a corporate sense of self with an identity and purpose. It becomes an “organism” which is greater than the sum of individual members. The development of a new way of life or renewal of life is a gift – a release of energy from the Spirit of God within the community. This Spirit helps us to live in the present and try to be open to changes that lead us into the future.**

## **DISCERNING A COMMUNAL DECISION**

A communal decision will be discerned during Week IV of the Spiritual Exercises. Much of the explanations given in Week II, concerning a Personal Life Decision, apply at this time. (see pages 87-88 (Phase 1), pages 93-94 (Phase 2), pages 96-97 (Phase 3), pages 102-103 (Phase 4).

When necessary, additional explanation will be given as each phase of the Communal Process is dealt with.

### **Phases in Making and Implementing a Communal Decision**

**Phase 1: researching the topic and formulating an open question**

**Phase 2: formulating the possible answers**

**Phase 3: gathering the data and praying over them**

**Phase 4: making the decision**

**Phase 5: seeking confirmation**

**Phase 6: implementing the decision**

There are two aspects to this process: private prayer (given the Day 6 exercise) and community sharing, described on the (following) pages 123-127.

## **CHOICES FOR COMMUNION WITHIN AND BEYOND COMMUNITY**

There can be two basic sets of decisions facing a group of people who come together to do communal discernment. The first involves the process of these people and the way they wish to relate with each other. The second is concerned with the task, or apostolic endeavour, they wish to perform. To discover the basic issue and open question, consider the following materials with regard to the group’s interior life and apostolic activity.

#### **A. With respect to one's interior communal life**

**1. Loving relationships cannot easily survive within a local faith-community whose institutions foster materialistic lifestyles, manipulative pressures and coercion in the decision process.**

**Whenever disciples of the Lord are graced to enter into their Christic selves, and to commit their lives to the service of the reign of God on earth, the false structures in their own midst must be reformed. They have no alternative.**

**On the other hand, such reforms often tend to be cosmetic (superficial) as long as the Pascal Mystery has not yet been realized in most members.**

**2. What comes upon us with the gift of a new life in Christ risen is the prospect of a new kind of faith-community which strives both (a) to live realistically in the contemporary situation, and (b) to avoid the false institutions or processes of the world in which we live. It is essential for us to reflect, then, on the types of new community structuring which might make sense in today's conditions.**

**We are compelled, then, to examine our own community structures. “See how they love one another” is the key to our witness. How do we make decisions together? How do we actually treat one another? What is our real attitude towards income, purchasing what we require, and using commodities?**

**3. Jesus' teaching on poverty is called “spiritual freedom” in the Two Standards. In our world of relatively high material resources, people are usually influenced by consumerist drives to acquire possessions of all sorts. At the same time, they often tend to act irresponsibly in their financial arrangements and to be accountable personally for what they do. How might we assist each other in our use of money?**

**Jesus teaches us to relate to one another with acceptance, forgiveness and a deep respect for the mysterious worth of each person, especially the marginal members of society. How might we incorporate those values in our community without competitive tensions and without scape-goating individuals?**

**4. Jesus' teaching on obedience to God is called “discerning love” in the Two Standards. Clearly, in his Gospel, Jesus wants us to build communities in which leaders are truly the servants of the other members. How shall we do this today? How shall we design ongoing structures of decision-making which rightly dispose of the social power in our community? Must we become polarized into opposed parties, or is it possible to do otherwise?**

#### **B. With respect to involvement beyond ourselves**

**1. One set of decisions and actions will concern communal involvement in ministry in the parish.**

**2. A second set of decisions might refer to our activity of witnessing to our faith by encouraging the development of other faith communities.**

**3. Another set of decisions might consider ways to perform communal corporate acts of mercy.**

**4. A number of decisions might be made that involve the promotion of faith and justice. These could concern unjust structures in society, or immediate activities with refugees and the homeless.**

**Proceed as follows with Phase 1:** discovering and formulating an open question concerning the community's life or a communal apostolic action that the group should discern.

**Context:** Phase I takes place after Discerning from our Suffering History.

**Grace:** We begin by asking for the grace of spiritual insight to consider ways God is calling us in our community's life or apostolic mission.

**Points:**

- Begin by considering different items of concern.
- Gather your hopes and dreams over these concerns.
- Formulate an open-ended question which accurately reflects all the issues raised (e.g. "How can we most effectively .... ?")

**1.** Put down on paper – in a phrase or a few words – the general way in which you feel the group is called to follow Jesus more closely (e.g. a change in life style, becoming more committed to the CLC way of life, or giving ourselves to a significant apostolate. This does not mean giving any solution, nor any arguments about it, but merely the area or topic of your search in your present situation. It may take a little time for you to settle on the right area. Write down several possibilities, and mull these over until you feel fairly sure you have found the "growing edge", the place where the Lord is drawing you forward. What do you suspect is the area in the group's life-situation where you imagine that "the next step" should be taken by it? Where do you think the group in God's service should make a new development at this time? You may sense that one (or many) of the Personal Life Decisions shared earlier applies to the whole group.

**2.** Complete the question: "What would it be like if...? Then let your heart and mind consider your deepest dreams and desires in the Lord.

**3.** An open question allows for many answers, as distinct from a closed question, which is answered by "yes" or "no". For example: "Should I do such and such?" is answered by "Yes, I should" or "No, I should not". A question such as "How can I better serve God?" admits many answers.

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests.

**Close with the Lord's Prayer.**

## **DISCERNING A COMMUNAL DECISION**

### **Procedure when sharing Phase 1 of Communal Discernment**

- 1. List issues and open questions.**
- 2. Listen to each other's reasons.**
- 3. After the discussion, take one of the issues and use it to express and focus the group on one issue.**
- 4. Write this issue in an “open question” that can be answered by many propositions.**
- 5. Members of the group will take this issue and open question to their Day 6 prayer period (if doing the Ignatian Exercises) and gather possibilities, as directed in the Prayer Materials.**

### **Procedure when sharing Phase 2 of Communal Discernment**

- 1. Each member shares his/her answers to the open question in his/her ordered list of priority.**
- 2. The group then lists 3 or 4 answers.**
- 3. After this, the group decides the order in which it will consider the answers.**
- 4. Members of the group take the first of these answers to prayer and gather the data around it, according to the 4-column method given on pages 96-97.**

### **Procedure when sharing Phase 3 of Communal Discernment**

- 1. Each member makes a 4-column composite of the reasons discovered by the whole group. This is done simply by going around the circle, one reason at a time, until all the reasons have been stated. Complete column one then go to column 2, then 3, then 4.**
- 2. Each member takes this composite home and prays to discover a Provisional Decision, according to the Day 6 Prayer Materials, pages 96-97. This should be kept confidential until the next meeting so that true discernment in the group may take place.**

### **Procedure when sharing Phase 4 of Communal Discernment**

- 1. Going in a circular fashion, each person indicates his/her provisional decision come to in prayer.**
- 2. If there is unanimity: in a circular fashion, each person now shares his/her main reason for the decision. After this, another round of sharing the reasons that made each one hesitate. These hesitations are very important for the later implementation of the decision in Phase 6.**
- 3. If there is not unanimity, but a high degree of agreement, another procedure is followed, with the hope that *consensus* may be reached. This consists in surfacing the reasons for the minority vote. Then, with a certain amount of give and take, different aspects of the decision may be**

changed, or assurances made that the concerns voiced will be dealt with in the implementation phase.

4. With a low degree of agreement, it is wise to revisit the issue and look for another proposal and go through another discernment process.

#### **Procedure when sharing Phase 5 of Communal Discernment**

1. Going in a circular fashion, each person indicates whether consolation was given and, if so, describes the consolation briefly.
2. If there is not unanimity, the group will listen to the opposing reasons and decide if further changes are needed or suggestions for the implementation to be added.
3. A continuation of number 2 requires that, after praying with the implementation phase, each person will once again seek the consolation of confirmation.

#### **Procedure when sharing Phase 6 – Implementation of the Decision**

Many a well-discerned decision has been lost in the implementation. This is usually the result of poor implementation procedures. Two initial concerns of implementation are communication and delegation. It is important that these be dealt with soon after the discerned decision has been made.

Again, it is helpful to consider the reasons against the decision found in the second and third column of Phase 3.

As a group works through the various items of implementation, it will become aware of the costs to the group. When the group faces these costs in union with Christ suffering and still wishes to implement the decision, this is a further experience of the consolation of confirmation.

#### **Procedure when sharing Phase 6 of Communal Discernment**

1. Share the results of prayer.
2. By means of interchange, determine who will take responsibility for the various needs given in the prayer period on implementation. (found in Week 37, Day 6)



## **MEETING 33**

**(Week Four)**

### **PART I**

#### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we sought the grace to be present to the suffering moments of our life story as it is lovingly told by God, and we prayed that we may respond more generously to God's love flooding our hearts.

After this, read Jn 19:38-42 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

#### **Procedure when sharing Phase 1 of Communal Discernment**

1. List issues and open questions.
2. Listen to each other's reasons for the choices presented.
3. After the discussion, take one of the issues and use it to express and focus the group on one issue.
4. Write this issue in an "open question" that can be answered by many propositions.
5. Members of the group will take this issue and open question to their Day 6 prayer period and gather possibilities.

### **PART II**

#### **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods: The Women Come to Believe**

Read and share:

**Notes: (Contemplating Jesus' Appearances)**

The grace common to the Resurrection is given in Day 1. Two Points are added to the usual three Points in each mystery of the Resurrection which Points are: 1) see the persons, 2) hear what they are saying, 3) watch what they are doing.

These two additional Points are: 4) to reflect upon how Jesus' divinity, almost hidden during the Passion, now appears and is revealed so marvelously in the risen and glorified Christ and 5) to reflect on how Jesus acts as our consoler, and to compare this with the way in which friends console one another. Except for the details of the events of each apparition, Jesus' appearance to his Mother serves as a model for all the mysteries of the Fourth Week.

This is not any usual sort of natural rejoicing or happiness that we seek. Rather, it is a surprising joy, one that breaks in upon us beyond expectation. It is a joy over what we had not conceived or imagined would come about.

What has now been done by the Trinity is not even what Jesus, at first, had sought and desired in his historical life, namely, the conversion of Israel. It is much more than that, and quite impossible for human dreams to imagine. It is the glory of God revealed in human form. Jesus is now seen to be Divine.

The grace that we seek can be received by us only when our natural hopes have been shattered and broken completely, and we have surrendered to this. If we are graced to let go our own plans and receive this gift, it will tend to pull us into the experience of a rather new kind of life in the Risen Jesus.

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Daily prayer material: Contemplations: The Women Come to Believe**

Read again the NOTES given in Part II.

**Day 1: Jesus appears to Mary, his mother (Sp. Exx. #218-225)**

**Composition of Self: I find an inconspicuous place in the room where Mary is, and I attend to what is taking place between her and her son.**

**Grace; I ask for the grace that is common to all apparitions of the risen Christ, namely, to ask and seek from God that I may individually and with the group be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and glory of Jesus Christ.**

**Points:**

**1. Summary of the mystery**

- After the death of her son on the cross and after his burial in the sepulcher, Mary struggled to reach the grace of accepting God's mysterious will; she found the power within herself to believe without any human evidence or feeling to support her, to hope when all human hopes were utterly defeated.
- Now it is nearly dawn on the next day, and perhaps she is awake and at prayer in her little room in Bethany.
- As the first dim light of the new day begins to appear on the horizon, Mary notices another light in her chamber, a light which cannot be accounted for by the dawn alone.
- To her amazement, she is aware that Jesus is standing nearby; he is very different, but she knows him for certain.
- His look is peaceful and calms her.
- His presence invades her spirit in a way she has never experienced before.
- Mary is filled with a joy similar to the joy she experienced when visiting Elizabeth, but now it is in union with the great joy and happiness of Jesus.

**2. Reflect on Christ's divinity which seemed almost to be hidden during the Passion, but which now appears and is revealed so marvelously in the risen and glorified Lord.**

**3. Reflect on how Christ acts as our consoler, and compare this with the way in which friends console one another.**

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests. End with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 2: Jesus Appears to the Holy Women (Mt 28: 1-10)**

- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Salome (mentioned in Mk 16:1) and other women, "who had followed Jesus from Galilee" (Mt 27:55), come to the sepulcher early in order to anoint his body for burial.
- They are uncertain about how they might open the tomb, but as they approach they see that the stone is rolled away.
- An angel of God presides over the scene, clothing shining with light; the guards have fallen senseless.
- The angel speaks to the women.

- They look into the tomb, see the shroud and napkins and are filled with “fear and great joy”.
- They hurry off to find the disciples, but on the way the Risen Jesus meets them.
- They embrace his feet. At length Jesus confronts them and tells them to bring his message to the disciples.

#### **Day 3:** Peter and John at the tomb (Jn 20: 1-10)

- Peter and John run to the tomb after hearing the women.
- Seeing the empty tomb and the linen cloths, John believes.
- Peter ponders what he sees.

#### **Day 4:** Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20: 11-18)

- While the other women run off, Mary remains behind weeping, perhaps too overcome to take it all in; her relationship with Jesus has been so special that she is too bewildered to know what to do.
- Remaining fixed on her desire to find Jesus’ body, she looks into the tomb again; two angels ask her why she is weeping.
- Turning around, she sees dimly through her hair and tears that someone is standing nearby; it is Jesus, but she takes him for the gardener and asks him where Jesus’ body may be found.
- Jesus says her name in a special way that is unmistakable to her.
- Mary then clings to his feet for a long time.
- At length Jesus says, “You mustn’t go on holding me,” and sends her to the disciple with a special word for them.
- Mary goes, meets the other disciples and tells them, “I have seen the Lord.”

#### **Day 5:** Application of the Senses on Days 1, 2, 3 and 4.

- Focus on those experiences where you sensed the presence of the Risen Jesus in your own heart and direct these consolations not only towards the other members of your community but to the world itself to which we are being sent.

#### **Day 6:** Continue Communal Decision

Proceed as follows with Phase 2: Considering possibilities and formulating a proposition.

**Context;** Note that Phase 2 takes place after the contemplation: Women Come to Believe (Days 2 and 4).

**Grace:** I begin by asking for the grace of openness and insight as I open myself to divine initiatives (letting God make the first moves towards me) and seek possible solutions, and I formulate one of them for discernment.

**Points:**

1. List all the possible answers to the question. Under the subject matter already accepted for your decision, write down in any order all the various options which occur to you.
2. Eliminate the unrealistic ones. Select the ones that are realistic and relevant to the group and leave the others aside.
3. Choose ONE to bring to the next meeting.
4. Formulate it as a proposition.
5. Express it as an affirmative statement in a complete sentence and also as a negative statement.
6. Test out your proposition with your feelings. Is the proposition accurately expressed? If not, try to improve on it.

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies as the subject matter

suggests. End with the Lord's Prayer.

**NOTE:** Once you are satisfied, commend your proposition to the Trinity for a sense of rightness.



## MEETING 34

(Week Four)

### PART I SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we, individually and as a group, asked for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory and joy of our Risen Lord.

After this, read Lk 24: 1-11 aloud.

#### *Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience*

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

#### Procedure when sharing Phase 2 of Communal Discernment:

1. Each member shares his/her answers to the open question in his/her ordered list of priority.
2. The group then lists 3 or 4 answers.
3. After this, it decides the order in which it will consider the answers.
4. Members of the group take the first of these answers to prayer and gather the data around it, according to the 4-column method given on page 98.

(This information should be written out before the meeting)

### PART II TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

*Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:* *Jesus Consoles His Disciples*

### PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

Grace: Individually and as a group, we ask the Trinity for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory and joy of our Risen Lord.

**Daily prayer material:** Jesus Consoles His Disciples.

Contemplations: read and share NOTES in Meeting 33 on page 119.

**Day 1:** Appearance to Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Lk 24: 13-35)

- Two disciples, Cleopas and his wife Mary (see Jn 19:25) decide to walk to Emmaus, a little towns even miles from Jerusalem; they are heavy of heart and talk about all that has happened to overthrow their hopes.
- A stranger joins them on their journey; it is the Risen Jesus, but their eyes are held from recognizing him; he asks them what subject of conversation is making them look so sad.
- They begin to tell him about recent events.
- Jesus chides them for their lack of faith; he recalls the many prophecies about the Christ and his way to glory.
- As they reach the town, Jesus attempts to continue, but they constrain him to stay and eat with them.
- During the meal, they recognize him and he vanishes from their sight.
- They remember how their hearts were burning while he spoke to them along the way.
- At once they return to the city and tell their story to the other disciples.

Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests. End with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 2:** Jesus appears to Peter (Lk 24: 12, 14)

- Peter ran to the empty tomb.
- He went home amazed.
- "The Lord has appeared to Simon".

Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests.

**Day 3:** Appearance of Jesus in the Upper Room in Luke 24: 35-49

- After Cleopas and Mary tell their story, Jesus appears.
- Those assembled think it is a ghost.
- Jesus asks for something to eat to prove that he is not a ghost.
- Then he repeats the message he gave to those on the road to Emmaus, that Scripture indicates that the Messiah must first suffer before entering into his glory.
- He tells them to remain in Jerusalem, awaiting the Holy Spirit.

**Day 4:** The First Point of the Contemplation to Obtain the Love of God (Sp. Exx. # 230-234).

**NOTE:** Before presenting this Exercise, it will be helpful to call attention to two things:

- First, love ought to be manifested in deeds, rather than in words.
- Second, love consists in a mutual sharing among persons, for example, as a lover gives and shares with the beloved, what he or she possesses, or has to give (and vice versa) the beloved shares also with the lover. Thus, if one has knowledge, it should be shared with one who has it not, and so also with honours, or riches, so that one is always sharing with others.

**Preparatory Prayer:** As usual

**Composition of Self:** This is the composition, which here is to behold myself standing in the presence of God, our Lord, and of all the angels and saints who intercede for me.

**Grace:** This is to ask for what I desire. In this instance, it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the gifts I have received that, filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve God.

**Points**

1. This is to recall the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special graces I have received.
2. I will ponder with great feeling on how much God has done for me, and how much God has given me, and finally how much the same God desires to love and give Godself to me.
3. Then I will reflect upon myself and consider, according to all reason and justice. what I ought, on my part, to offer to God, that is, all I possess and myself as well. Moved with great love, I will make this offering of myself.

**Prayer:** *Take and Receive*

Take, dear God, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O God, I return it. All is Yours. Dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

**Day 5:** Application of the Senses of Day 1 and Day 2

**Day 6:** Proceed then with Phase 3: Gathering the Data Influencing the Proposition.

**Context:** Phase 3 takes place after contemplating Jesus Consoling His Disciples.

**Grace:** I begin by asking for the grace to recognize all the reasons – material, psychological and spiritual that might influence the discernment of the group's decision.

**Points:**

1. I set up the proposition that I sense the group is to do, as a positive and a negative statement. Use white 4-column sheet.
2. I compose a data sheet by considering my proposition in terms of 4 sets of reasons, 2 on the affirmative side of the proposition (advantages and disadvantages) and 2 on the negative side of the proposition (advantages and disadvantages). I spend about an hour listing (concretely and with complete impartiality) the 4 sets of reasons.

(You might do this under headings such as persons affected, talents, social involvements, costs both financial and personal, the teachings of your Church traditions on the matter, etc.)

3. At the next group session, all members will again be asked to call on the reasons which came to them, so that a community composite can be made by all.

**Dialogues;** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests. End with the Lord's Prayer.

**NOTES:** Remember that this exercise does not decide the decision. These facts are the data which bear on the proposition, but even taken together do not determine the decision.

What will decide the decision later on will be a growing awareness of God's initiatives in the life of the group, not in any facts by themselves?



**MEETING 35**

(Week Four)

**PART I**

**SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

In this instance we, individually and as a group, asked for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory and joy of our Risen Lord.

After this, read Lk 24: 36-49 aloud.

Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience.

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second sharing*.

Read: Phase 3 of Discerning a Communal Decision

1. Each member makes a 4-column composite of the reasons discovered by the whole group. This is done simply by going around the circle one reason at a time until all the reasons have been stated. Complete column one then go to column 2, then 3, then 4.

2. Each member takes this composite home and prays to discover a Provisional Decision, according to the Day 6 Prayer Materials, pages 96-97. This should be kept confidential until the following meeting so that true discernment in the group may take place.

## **PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

### **Jesus Consoles His Community**

*Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:*

Read and share: Deciding: Confirmation and Consensus

A significant experience both at the time of decision and when seeking confirmation is *Consensus*. The following describes a process for discovering consensus in a group and the consolation of consensus.

**Consensus:** Consensus in a group is a special form of confirmation in decision-making. As a group moves to final decision, it looks for full agreement or union, a sense of consensus. A group might say that a majority vote gives a consensus. This would mean that every member in the group is committed to the decision so reached by this majority vote. Such an agreement may be enough for a united commitment to action. Others might say that only unanimity is the experience of consensus that expresses full agreement and union. I believe that consensus means more than either of these; only after a group dynamic in which everyone has fully participated can such agreement and union be termed consensus. While majority rule works in parliamentary procedure, discerning faith communities usually hope for unanimity in their decisions.

**Description of the Consolation of Consensus:**

- Everyone in the group will be satisfied that s/he and the others have been listened to. Everyone will realize that the gifts of each member have been acknowledged. Everyone will be at rest with the outcome of the process. Everyone will sense that a free and effective process has been followed.
- The group will know itself as beloved of God. It will recognize this love actually working in the group and be surprised. A sense of wonder will be experienced.
- The group will have a sense of being energized and drawn into the future in spite of its limitations and past sufferings.

- The consolation will be experienced as gift coming from beyond the group (from the Holy Spirit).
- Part of the experience of consensus will include the sense that carrying out any decision will be an expression of “Finding God in all things in order to better love and serve God in all things.”
- When the group reflects on these experiences, it may have an awareness of transcendence. It may sense that its unity is in the unity of the Godhead, that its sense of beautiful persons is in the beauty of God, its sense of rightness is in the truth that is God, its sense of goodness is in the goodness of God, and its knowledge that its human gifts are an extension of Jesus Christ.

### **The Fruits of Consensus:**

- The group is given the consolation of insight into its own experiences of the paschal mystery and its own willingness to consider suffering with the body of Christ in the future.
- The group has realized that the decision might well lead them into experiences of rejections similar to those found in their communal graced history. It has faced this in a mature way, with equanimity and willingness to face such pain in the future for the sake of the body of Christ.
- The group knows that suffering will be involved in the implementation, yet the group is united and may even experience a special sense of its wholeness.
- The members realize that the experience of the consolation of consensus is more than a sense of union in the group.
- Everyone is committed to the decision and its implementation.
- The group recognizes love working in the group and sees how this love frees everyone, so that creative gifts get expressed; the creative action of the group as a whole takes place before its eyes.
- The group enters the effort of implementing the decision with a realistic hope and a certain joy in the power of the Risen Christ.
- The group may experience a creativity it did not know it had, hope in the face of obstacles, or a sense of universal compassion.

### **Process:**

- Consensus is always present in a group. The process over an issue is one of discovery. It is a method of finding the consensus in the group.

**Unanimity;** when there is unanimity with a decision, it is important to check if there is a true sense of consolation in the group. This is done when the group reflects on the process of decision-making with a sense of satisfaction, and describes its sense of consolation with the decision reached. Even with unanimity, it is important for the members of the group to share what reasons exercised them (i.e. what made them hesitate and what convinced them).

**High degree of agreement:** When a high degree of agreement is reached, it is important to try and achieve full agreement, so that all will commit themselves to implementation. This can be done by asking the minority to indicate their objections to the decision and discover what will satisfy the minority in implementing the decision. Even then it is important for all in the group to revisit the reasons against the decision and to face these in the implementation. After this, it is important to describe once more the overall consolation with the decisions reached.

**Low degree of agreement:** Where there is a low degree of agreement in the group, it is wise to revisit the “issue” and look for another proposal and go through another discernment process.

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** Individually and as a group, we ask for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory and joy of our Risen Lord.

**Daily prayer material:** Recall Notes at the beginning of Part II, Meeting 33.

**CONTEMPLATIONS: Jesus Consoles His Community**

**Day 1: Appearances in the Upper room (Jn 20: 19-29)**

- On the evening of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples are gathered in the Upper Room, behind closed doors – out of fear.
- Then the Risen Lord comes into the room and stands among them.
- Jesus says, “Peace be with you,” and he shows them his hands and his side; they rejoice his presence.
- He gives peace to them again, breathes the Spirit into them, commissions them and gives them as a community, the power to forgive sins.
- After his absence, Thomas returns and hears the news of Jesus' appearance to the others, but he refuses to believe.
- Thomas even goes so far as to lay down conditions for believing: to place his finger into the wounds of Christ.

- A week later, when all are together again in the Upper Room and Thomas is with them, Jesus comes and stands among them.
- He wishes them peace, and then he speaks to Thomas, inviting him to place his finger in his wounds.
- Thomas responds, “My Lord and my God.”
- Jesus then speaks a consoling word to everyone.

### **Day 2: Appearance at the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21: 1-19)**

- During the time following the resurrection, many of the disciples are in Galilee. Peter decides to go fishing again, and he is joined by Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two others.
- As had happened when the Lord first called them, they spend the entire night fishing without any success.
- When dawn is breaking, a figure is seen standing near them on the beach; it is Jesus, but the disciples do not recognize him.
- Jesus calls out to them, asking for some news of their catch; they shout back that they have none.
- He tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat; they do so and suddenly find it overwhelmed with fish.
- The beloved disciple, who remains unnamed, says to Peter, “It is the Lord!”
- Peter hurriedly puts on his outer clothes, dives into the water and swims ashore and stands in awe before Jesus.
- The other disciples bring the heavy net, which is not torn through, laden with 153 fish, safely to shore; they say little.
- Jesus gives them bread and fish; they take breakfast together without many words; they know that it is the Lord, but they do not dare ask him questions.
- After their meal is over, Jesus asks Simon Peter three times if he loves him more than the others do; Peter affirms his love vehemently but will not boast; Jesus responds by confiding his shepherd’s task to Peter.

### **Day 3: Appearance on the Mountain (Mt 28: 16-20)**

- The eleven go up the mountain in Galilee, as Jesus had directed.
- When they see him, they worship him.
- Jesus commissions them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them what I have taught.”
- “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Day 4:** The Second Point of the Contemplation to Obtain the Love of God (Sp. Exx # 230-235)

Recall the two pre-notes, Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self, Grace, the First Point and the *Take and Receive* given for the First Point as found on Day 4 of Meeting 34, page 135.

Continue with the Second Point, as follows:

**Second Point:** I reflect on how God dwells in creatures, in the elements, giving them existence, in the plants giving them growth, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in human beings giving them understanding. So the Lord dwells in me as in a temple, since I am created in the image and likeness of God. Then I will reflect upon myself again in the manner described in the First Point, or in some other way that may seem better.

Once again, I pray the *Take and Receive* of page 135. I close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 5:** An application of the Senses on Day 1 to Day 4

**Day 6:** Continue as follows, with the process of Communal Decision – Phase 4: Making the Decision and offering oneself to the greater praise and glory of God. Note that this process takes place after the contemplations on Jesus consoling his community.

**Context:** "And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with the knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best." (Phil 1: 9-10)

**Composition of Self:** Imagine yourself, within the group, holding the results of your personal prayer as a gift in your hand.

**Grace:** I beg from God, our Lord, to deign to move my will and bring to my mind what we ought to do in this matter that would be for the greater praise and glory of God.

Then I use my understanding to weigh the matter with honesty and care, and decide what we should do in this matter, in conformity with God's desire, and congruent with our graced history.

**Points:** I recall the manner of discerning a decision as described on pages 86-87.

In terms of the three occasions presented on page 88. I proceed in one of the following ways:

1. I sit quietly with the proposition and wait for an experience of *consolation without proportionate cause*. (this consolation is described on page 84)
2. If such an experience is not given, I will discern this matter in terms of the weightier movements of my reason, and not because of any sensual attractions. In a moment of prayer, I simply tell the Lord that I have made a provisional choice which I will present to the group.

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests.

**End with the Lord's Prayer.**

**Next Meeting Sharing:** In preparation for the sharing of the decision on the communal decision read pages 126-127 and 137-138 (Communal Decision and Consensus). The process of sharing will attempt to find consensus in the group over the communal decision.



## **MEETING 36**

**(Week Four)**

### **PART I**                   **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

**The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.**

**Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.**

**In this instance, individually and as a group, we asked for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory and joy of our Risen Lord.**

**After this, read Mt 28: 16-20 aloud.**

### **Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a *second sharing*.

#### **Read: Phase 4 of Discerning a Communal Decision:**

1. Going in a circular fashion, each person indicates his/her provisional decision come to the prayer.
2. If there is unanimity: in a circular fashion, each person now shares his/her main reason for the decision. After this, another round of sharing the reasons that would have made someone hesitate. These hesitations are very important for the later implementation of the decision in Phase 6.
3. If there is not unanimity, but a high degree of agreement, another procedure is followed, with the hope that *consensus* may be reached. This consists in surfacing the reasons for the minority vote. Then, with a certain amount of give and take, different aspects of the decision may be changed, or assurances made that the concerns voiced will be dealt with in the implementation phase.
4. With a low degree of agreement, it is wise to revisit the issue and look for another proposal and go through another discernment process.

## **PART II            TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

### **Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**                      **Jesus Consoles the World**

Read share “Seeking Confirmation” below – this reading was presented earlier in Meeting 26 (pages 105-106).

### **Phase 5: Seeking Confirmation (Consolation and Confirmation)**

Confirmation is an experience of consolation with the decision of the group. It is experienced as a sense of fitness / congruity / agreement (continuity) with the charism of the group and its history. It should be sought in prayer at various moments, as the decision moves towards implementation.

The dominant experience of confirmation is union with Christ which results in an increase of faith, hope and love ... joy and peace. One experiences the Paschal Mystery of dying and rising as the decision is anticipated.

The costs, as well as the joys of discipleship are known and accepted. One senses that with the decision, one participates in Christ’s mission from the Trinity to humanity.

There are the following kinds of felt experience: a sense of uplift and joy, that this decision will further Christ's work on earth, a willingness to carry out the decision in spite of possible misunderstandings and sufferings, or possibly the sense of a special union with Christ that cannot be denied. The consolidation of confirmation is more than the realization of the correctness of the decision. It is a confirmation of the person deciding. The person experiences affective unity with Christ in his enterprise of bringing forth God's realm on earth.

The person holds the decision in freedom in order to adjust to various outside forces and continues to discern, and if these forces change somewhat, the person also realizes that this is not opposed to its basic decision.

There is a sense of freedom, realism and peace along with joy and energy for the task. Realism means that the cost in carrying out the action will be recognized. Even the cost has a joyful aspect to it – one may experience the joy of discipleship in the anticipated sufferings and burden of the work. And with this there is hope and energy, not only for oneself but for all humanity. This is experienced as “The love of Christ urges us on” (2Cor 5:14).

One has a sense of being energized and drawn into the future, in spite of one's limitations. Paul's prayer is at work: “All I want is to know Christ Jesus and the power of his resurrection if only I can share in his sufferings ...” (Phil 3:10).

### **PART III MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

**Grace:** Individually and as a group, we ask the Trinity for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory and joy of our Risen Lord.

**Daily prayer material:** Recall Note at the beginning of Part II of Meeting 33.

**Day 1:** The Ascension (Lk 24: 50-53 and Acts 1: 1-14)

- For forty days after the resurrection, the Risen Lord appeared to his followers in order to confirm and strengthen them, and to speak of the Kingdom of God, preparing them for the Holy Spirit promised to them in Jerusalem.
- On the Mount of Olives, after speaking of such things, Jesus is raised up to the Trinity.
- When this experience of Jesus' personal reassurance is finished the disciples are informed by divine messengers, of their need to re-enter the city to prepare for the Second Coming.
- They gather in the Upper Room, and there they persevere in prayer, deeply united with women disciples, and with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests.

End with the Lord's Prayer.

## **Day 2: Appearance to St. Paul (Acts 9:1-22. see Gal 1:13-17, 1Cor 15:5-8 and Col 4:5-6)**

- This conversion story is a paradigm, or model, for other adult conversions or renewals of the structures of an earlier life break down and a new form of life is given to one.
- Saul is a strict member of the Pharisee party in Israel. He has dedicated his life to wipe out the followers of Jesus' "Way", by persecution and killing. (Phil 3:5-6)
- At this time he is heading a group to search for disciples of Jesus in Damascus, to arrest them and bring them to trial in the city.
- Near Damascus, on the road, an intense light from heaven overwhelms him; he hears a voice saying, "Why are you persecuting me?"
- Saul answers, "Who are you, Lord?"
- The voice replies, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," and instructs him to enter Damascus to receive directions there.
- Blinded by Jesus' presence, Saul is led into the city.
- Ananias, a member of the "Way of Jesus" in Damascus, receives a vision which orders him to assist Saul.
- When Ananias lays hands on Saul and prays over him, the scales fall from Saul's eyes so that he can see; he is baptized, takes food and regains his strength.
- Later Saul (the name of the tall first king of Israel) changes his name to Paul (meaning "little one").

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests.

End with the Lord's Prayer.

## **Day 3: Presence of the Holy Spirit – Pentecost (Acts 2- 1-14)**

- Jesus' mother Mary and his disciples are together when a sound like a violent wind fill the house.
- Divided tongues of fire rest on each of them.
- The Holy Spirit fills them and they begin to speak in other languages.
- Devout Jews from around the world are present in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. hear the sound and hear their own language being spoken.
- Some suggest that the babble indicates that the disciples are drunk with new wine.
- Then Peter addresses the crowd and witnesses to Jesus of Nazareth as both Lord and Messiah.

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests. End with the Lord's Prayer.

## **Day 4: The Third Point of the Contemplation (Sp. Exx. # 230-236)**

Recall the two pre-notes, Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Self, Grace, the First Point, and the *Take and Receive* as found on Day 4 of Meeting 34.

Continue with the Third Point, as follows:

**Third Point:** This is to consider how God works for me in all creatures on the face of the earth, that is, acting as one who is labouring. Thus in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, and animals, and so on. Then I will reflect on myself.

Once again, I pray the “Take and Receive” and close with the Lord’s Prayer.

**Day 5:** An application of the Senses on Day 1 to Day 4.

**Day 6:** Re-read: Phase 5: Seeking Confirmation (Consolation and Confirmation), pages 143-144, noting that this process follows the contemplations on Jesus consoling the world.

**Consolation and Confirmation:** Confirmation is experienced as a sense of fitness/congruity/continuity with the charism of the group and its history. It should be sought in prayer at various moments, as the decision moves towards implementation, which will be met in Phase 6 of Communal Discernment.

**Context:** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction, with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. Just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share our consolation. (2Co 1:3-7)

**Composition of Self:** I imagine myself with my group, carrying in my/our hands the decision we made in the Lord.

**Grace:** I seek from the Lord an experience of the consolation of confirmation as described above.

As in our Personal Life Decision, so in our Communal Decision confirmation will consist of personal encounters with Christ suffering and in glory, and the effect this has on our specific Communal Proposal.

**Points:**

1. I come before the Lord united in my being with our decision.
2. I recall the image of our communal consolation. Do I sense congruity and continuity with our graced history, charism and mission in connection with this decision?
3. Do I experience the kind of consolation described above with this decision?
4. How will I describe the experience that I had as I prayed for confirmation?

**Dialogue with the Trinity:**

I thank the Trinity for what happened to me in prayer, and I ask them to help me present my experience to the group.

I close with the Lord's Prayer.



**MEETING 37**

(Week Four)

**PART I**

**SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

Individually and as a group we asked for the grace to be happy and rejoice deeply in the glory of our Risen Lord.

After this, read Acts 1: 1-14 aloud.

**Sharing the highlights of your prayer experiences**

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly.

Do a second sharing.

**Procedure when sharing Phase 5 of Communal Discernment:**

1. Going in a circular fashion, each person indicates whether consolation was given and, if so, describes the consolation briefly.
2. If there is not unanimity, the group will listen to the opposing reasons and decide if further changes are needed or suggestions for the implementation to be added.
3. A continuation of number 2 requires that, after praying with the implementation phase, each person will once again seek the consolation of confirmation.

**PART II** TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME

*Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:* Discerning from the Hope in our Graced History

**PART III** MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Grace:** I seek the grace to be present to the hopeful elements of my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and I pray that I may respond more generously to God's love flooding my heart.

**Daily prayer material:**

**Day 1:** More principles of discernment during the Fourth Week (see below under Context).

**Grace:** I pray for further insight and understanding concerning those Discernment Principles helpful during the Fourth Week.

**Context:** Discernment: Interior Movements of Spirits

1. Again it is helpful to remember that there are two sets of consolation and desolation that we may experience in the Fourth Week contemplations.

In the first set we may experience consolation from the viewpoint of the resurrection as insight into the meaning of life and hope for our eventual life with the Trinity. Desolation may be experienced as an attack on these, such as fatalism or passivism. In the second set, we may experience a more radical entrance into the resurrection of Jesus. This radical entrance results in a new perspective and awareness of living that transforms our sense of life itself – “I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.” This new sense of an “elevated life” contains elements of a sense of union with Jesus. Desolation will be a denial of such a sense of life and term it as unreal, wishful thinking.

## **2. Spiritual Consolation during the Fourth Week**

Another way consolation is manifested may rightly be called “bright consolation” because they act as like the “of course” of insight. They banish all doubts with perfect assurance because they penetrate to the depths of intuitive understanding. They give us a higher standpoint for viewing the whole of reality.

## **3. Spiritual Desolation during the Fourth Week**

Desolation often appears as trends of felt-knowing which displace the “bright consolation”. These come from human judgment and wariness. Such obstacles are rooted in forms of

“false-dying” during the passion. Consequently there follows a false Risen Jesus – one who takes away all responsibility and solves all problems for us. There can be a tendency to repeat expected responses in a superficial way.

**4. I may take a long time to appropriate and appreciate the experience of bright consolation.** This is partially due to our slowness in reviewing all the data from our prayer experiences and our tendency to respond without decisive action. It is also possible that spiritual gifts of this time can be misunderstood or frittered away in insubstantial, or even egotistical, plans.

**5. “Jesus died an individual but rose as a community.”** Before the completion of the Spiritual Exercises it is very important to reflect upon and make significant choices around how we continue our Christian discipleship with others – in a new kind of communal life. As time permits, such a question should be raised or continue to be raised in the Third and Fourth Weeks (see the communal life decision process given in the preceding meetings). During this time therefore, we discern how to live this new kind of love for each other, in community and beyond community.

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests.

**End with the Lord’s Prayer.**

**Day 2: Discerning From the Hope in my Graced History – hopeful elements in my Personal Graced History (Recall *Ways of Praying with Graced History*)**

**Context:** My own life in the light of Rom 5:1-11.

I imagine myself on a journey with the Lord as my companion throughout my life. I pay special attention to the hope-filled movements in my life.

**Grace:** I seek the grace to be present to the hope-filled elements of my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and pray that I may respond more generously to God’s love flooding my heart.

**Points:**

I consider the hope-filled elements of my history in terms of my family background, childhood, school years, work years, my years up to the present.

I remember different persons, places and responsibilities I have had, situations and the historical state of the world at the different times I am remembering.

After this time of remembering, I look for elements of transcendence in my life story (e.g. compassion and insight flowing out of sin and disorder, isolation and loneliness leading to healing, forgiveness, belonging and freedom, humility in times of success; courage in times of failure.

**Dialogue** with the Trinity – throughout my prayer, I unite myself with Jesus, in appreciation and anticipation.

I close with the Lord's Prayer..

**Day 3:** A repetition of Day 2.

**Day 4:** The Fourth Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God (Sp. Exx. # 230-237)

**Preparatory Prayer:** As usual

**Composition of Self:** To behold myself standing in the presence of God, our Lord, and of all the angels and saints who intercede for me.

**Grace:** This is to ask for what I desire. In this instance, it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the gifts I have received that, filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve God.

**First Point of the Contemplation**

This is to recall the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special graces I have received. I will ponder with great feeling on how much God has done for me, and finally how much the same God desires to love and give Godself to me. Then I will reflect upon myself and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought on my part to offer to God, that is, all I possess and myself as well. Moved with great love, I will make this offering of myself.

Continue with the Fourth Point as follows:

**Fourth Point:** This is to reflect that all blessings and gifts are given by God. Thus my limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power of God, and so too, justice, goodness, pity, mercy and so on are from God, poured out upon humankind as the rays of light descend from the sun, and as the water sprays from a fountain. Then I will reflect on myself, as has been said above.

I pray the *Take and Receive* and close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 5:** Reread the material on Discernment: Interior Movements of Spirits (nos. 1-5 found on pages 148-149)

I pray the *Take and Receive* and close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 6: Read: Implementation of the Decision below. Note that Phase 6 takes place after Discerning with our Joyful History.**

### **Phase 6 – Implementation of the Decision**

- 1. Many a well-discerned decision has been lost in the implementation. This is usually the result of poor implementation procedures. Two initial concerns of implementation are communication and delegation. It is important that these be dealt with soon after the discerned decision has been made.**
- 2. Again, it is helpful to consider the reasons against the decision found in the second and third column of Phase 3.**
- 3. As a group works through the various items of implementation, it will become aware of the costs to the group. When the group faces these costs in union with Christ's suffering and still wishes to implement .**
- 4. The decision, this is a further experience of the consolation of confirmation.**

**Grace:** I seek from the Lord insights into the many operations that will be necessary to fulfill my decisions and the courage to proceed with them.

### **Points:**

- 1. I use my imagination to seek how my decision will look if the group fulfills it in all its aspects.**
- 2. I consider what the group will have to do to bring this about.**
- 3. I think through a time-line to achieve the goal of the group.**
- 4. I consider the other necessary aspects of implementing a good decision: Who? (needs to be informed and will help); When? How?**

**Dialogues:** Close with one or more colloquies, as the subject matter suggests. End with the Lord's Prayer



## **MEETING 38**

(Week Four)

### **PART I**

#### **SHARING OF THE PAST WEEK**

**Begin the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.**

The prayer includes a reference to God's loving presence, giving thanks and asking for light and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

Following this, the leader recalls the grace of last week's prayer.

I seek the grace to be present to the hopeful elements of my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and I pray that I may respond more generously to God's love flooding my heart.

After this, read Jn 17:20-26 aloud.

#### ***Sharing the highlights of your prayer experience***

With your journal to help, reflect on the experiences of your prayer life since our last meeting and share your story briefly. Do a *second and third round sharing*.

#### **Procedure when sharing Phase 6 of Communal Discernment**

1. Share the results of prayer.
2. By means of interchange, determine who will take responsibility for the various needs given in the prayer period on "implementation".

### **PART II**

#### **TRANSITION FROM LAST WEEK'S PRAYER THEME TO THE COMING WEEK'S PRAYER THEME**

**Theme of the coming week's prayer periods:**

**To Love and Serve in All Things**

**Read and share: A Contemplation to Attain the Love of God**

#### **1. Transition into ongoing spiritual life:**

The four weeks of the Spiritual Exercises have now been completed. We now enter upon the implementation stage. It is a time for trying to put our graced decisions into practice. We will face new data arising from our efforts, new moments of deepening prayer and reflection and new kinds of decisions to make. That, of course, is what constitutes a mature Christian life.

In order to assist our transition from the Spiritual Exercises into this implementation stage, St. Ignatius gives us a “gentle push” forward by means of a “Contemplation to Attain Love”. A few notes on this concluding exercise may be useful.

## 2. To attain love:

This expression means both to *receive* God’s love more and more fully into our lives and to enable our own powers of loving to move more effectively into action. Fr. John Futrell puts it this way:

The goal of this contemplation is to plunge us into the reality that is love and to learn in the concrete here and now of our lives how to serve and love God in all things. We do not seize this love nor arouse it in ourselves. We pray to receive it, this love that “must descend from above and which penetrates our hearts. We pray to recognize it in the circumstances of our daily lives, ...

This Contemplation is the heart of apostolic spirituality; to be contemplative in action, finding God in all things: to be able always to recognize the Love that surrounds us, the Love in which we are immersed, the Love from which everything comes and to which everything goes.”

Evidently, in our graced condition at the end of the Spiritual Exercises, we are now being moved forward into apostolic action under the driving power of Divine love. In the Fourth Week, the compassionate Lord uplifted his disciples and consoled them as a friend consoles friends. At the Ascension they sensed the completion of that “time of loving friends together” when they must return to the city - to the busy occupations of human beings on earth, getting on with their lives in the world. Our projects should certainly be realistic and concrete, but as we begin them, it helps to renew our contact with the powers of Divine love which first initiated them.

## FALL IN LOVE

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

Attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ (1907-1991)

## PART III

## MATERIAL FOR PRAYER FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**Daily prayer material:** Re-read The Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, above, shared at the meeting.

**Day 1: A NEW KIND OF LOVE –**

**NOTE:** Before presenting this Exercise, it will be helpful to call attention to two things:

- First, love ought to be manifested in deeds, rather than in words.
- Second, love consists in a mutual sharing among persons, for example, as a lover gives and shares with the beloved, what he or she possesses, or has to give and, vice versa, the beloved shares with the lover. Thus, if one has knowledge, it should be shared with one who has it not, and so also with honours, or riches, so that one is always sharing with others.

**Preparatory Prayer:** As usual

**Composition of Self:** This is the composition which, here, is to behold myself standing in the presence of God, our Lord, and of all the angels and saints who intercede for me.

**Grace:** This is to ask for what I desire. In this instance, it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the great gifts I have received that, filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve God.

**The First Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God:** This is to recall the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special graces I have received. I will ponder with great feeling on how much God has done for me, and how much God has given me, and finally how much the same God desires to love and give “Godself” to me. Then I will reflect upon myself and consider, according to all reason and justice. What I ought, on my part, to offer to God, that is, all I possess and myself as well. Moved with great love, I will make this offering of myself.

**Take and Receive**

*Take, dear God, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O God, I return it. All is Yours. Dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me your love and your grace. That is enough for me.*

I close with the Lord's Prayer.

## **Day 2: The Second Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God.**

**NOTES:-** Love ought to be manifested in deeds, rather than in words.

Love consists in a mutual sharing among persons, for example, as a lover gives and shares with the beloved, what he or she possesses, or has to give (and vice versa) the beloved shares with the lover. Thus if one has knowledge, it should be shared with one who has it hot, and so also with honours, or riches, so that one is always sharing with others.

**Recall** the First Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, found in Day 1.

**Preparatory Prayer:** As usual

**Composition of Self:** This is the composition, which here is to behold myself standing in the presence of God, our Lord, and of all the angels and saints who intercede for me.

**Grace:** This is to ask for what I desire. In this instance, it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the great gifts I have received that, filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve God.

**The Second Point** of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God; This to reflect on how God dwells in creatures, in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them growth, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in human beings giving them understanding. So God dwells in me as in a temple, since I am created in the image and likeness of God. Then I will reflect upon myself again, in the manner described in the First Point, or in some other way that may seem better.

Pray the *Take and Receive* prayer. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

## **Day 3: The Third Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God.**

**Recall** the First and Second Points, found in Days 1 and 2.

**Preparatory Prayer:** As usual

**Composition of Self:** This is the composition, which here is to behold myself standing in the presence of God, our Lord, and of all the angels and saints who intercede for me.

**Grace:** This is to ask for what I desire. In this instance, it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the great gifts I have received that, filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve God.

**The Third Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God:** This is to consider how God works for me in all creatures on the face of the earth, that is, acting as one who is labouring. Thus, in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits and animals, and so on. God gives existence, protects, gives growth and feeling, and so on. After this I will reflect on myself.

Again, I pray the Take and Receive prayer and close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 4: The Fourth Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God**

Recall the First, Second and Third Points of Days 1, 2 and 3.

**Preparatory Prayer:** As usual

**Composition of Self:** This is the composition, which here is to behold myself standing in the presence of God, our Lord, and of all the angels and saints who intercede for me.

**Grace:** This is to ask for what I desire. In this instance, it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the gifts I have received that, filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve God.

**The Fourth Point of the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God:** This is to reflect that all blessings and gifts are given us by God. Thus, my limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power of God, and so too, justice, goodness, pity, mercy and so on are from God, poured out upon humankind as the rays of light descend from the sun, and as the water sprays from a fountain. Then I will reflect on myself, as has been said above.

I pray the *Take and Receive* and close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 5: An application of the Senses on Days 1 to 4.**

I pray the *Take and Receive* and close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day 6: An Application of the Senses on Days 1 to 5.**

I pray the *Take and Receive* and close with the Lord's Prayer.

