

# Ignatian Spiritual Exercises

## Objective:

The Spiritual Exercises are a compilation of meditations, prayers, and contemplative practices developed by St. Ignatius Loyola to help people deepen their relationship with God. The Stages of the Exercises are:

- Recognition of God's boundless love for us, and his call for us to follow him. None of our past sins can stop his love and desire to be close to us
- Study the life of Christ, and live it out in our daily lives. The Passion and Eucharist are especially important.

The key elements of Ignatian Spirituality consist of:

- Awareness – Utilizing our 5 senses, being aware how God is trying to connect with us throughout our ordinary day. God is at work everywhere—in work, relationships, culture, the arts, the intellectual life, creation itself. As Ignatius put it, all the things in the world are presented to us “so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.” Ignatian spirituality places great emphasis on discerning God's presence in the everyday activities of ordinary life. It sees God as an active God, always at work, inviting us to an ever-deeper walk.
- Call and Response – God is constantly trying to connect with us, through our 5 senses as well as everyday activities. How aware are we of God's action in our lives, more importantly, how do we respond? Contemplation – the use of Imagination in our prayer life. When reading Scripture, placing ourselves into the scene. Allow our imagination to describe everything going on in the scene, including the smallest of details as well as use of our senses.
- “The heart has its reasons of which the mind knows nothing.” - Ignatian spiritual renewal focuses more on the heart than the intellect. It holds that our choices and decisions are often beyond the merely rational or reasonable. Its goal is an eager, generous, wholehearted offer of oneself to God and to his work. Notice the interior movements of our hearts to determine if we are in consolation or desolation. Discern what we are being called towards.
- Detachment and Holy Indifference – our sole goal in life is to praise, reverence and serve the Lord. Do not allow anything to get in the way. As a result, we should be indifferent to health vs. sickness, wealth vs. poverty etc... We should seek the freedom from distractions so we can always choose God first.
- Daily Examen. A review of the day's activities with an eye toward detecting and responding to the presence of God. Beyond our review of the day, ask ourselves “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?”
- Contemplatives in action - Reflective people with a rich inner life who are deeply engaged in God's work in the world. It's an active spiritual attitude—a way for everyone to seek and find God in their workplaces, homes, families, and communities. They strive to be Men and Women for Others
- Spiritual Direction – Seek the guidance of a spiritual director to help guide us along the way. Participate in a retreat

**Song Suggestion:** Come Holy Ghost (Blue 104 vs 1, 2, 3; Red 472 vs 1, 2, 4)

## Bible and Catechism Readings: –

**Psalms 139: 1-5; 13-18**

LORD, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand;<sup>2a</sup>

you understand my thoughts from afar. You sift through my travels and my rest; with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me.....You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden

from you, When I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth.<sup>3</sup> Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down my days were shaped, before one came to be.

### **John 2: 1-11**

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." [And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter."<sup>4</sup> So they took it, and when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

### **Catechism 1**

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

### **Catechism 31-35**

**31** Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments", which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These "ways" of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world, and the human person.

**32** The *world*: starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.

As St. Paul says of the Gentiles: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.<sup>7</sup>

And St. Augustine issues this challenge: Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky... question all these realities. All respond: "See, we are beautiful." Their beauty is a profession [confessio]. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One [Pulcher] who is not subject to change?<sup>8</sup>

**33** The *human person*: with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material", can have its origin only in God.

**34** The world, and man, attest that they contain within themselves neither their first principle nor their final end, but rather that they participate in Being itself, which alone is without origin or end. Thus, in different ways, man can come to know that there exists a reality which is the first cause and final end of all things, a reality "that everyone calls God".<sup>10</sup>

**35** Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.

**Saint:** St Ignatius Loyola: [https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=56](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=56)

**Vignette:** – Mark had a great life. He had a family that loved him, very successful job, and many friends. However, something was missing. At the invitation of a friend, he attended a weekend retreat – where he discovered the beauty of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. He had always gone to Church, had a good prayer life – however, did not have a personal relationship with Jesus. While on retreat, he became more aware of the presence of God in his daily life. He began to share his joys as well as sufferings with the Lord. The weekend was so eye opening, that he didn't want it to stop. So he sought Spiritual Direction. After 9 months of spiritual direction, he was better at discerning the movements of his heart, as well as the will of God for his life. While he continued to have the same everyday challenges that we all face, he simply had a conversation with the Lord on how to best handle. He continued to practice the Spiritual Exercises that he learned on retreat, and it transformed from being a good man, to a great one.

### Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

In way ways can you use each of the 5 senses to become more aware of the presence of God. For example, it is possible to find God in cup of coffee??

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What activities help you the most to connect with God???

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How often do you discern the movements of your heart? Can you tell when you are in consolation or desolation?

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### Resources:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/>

<https://www.sacredspace.ie/>

### Action Plan:

Read The Wedding Feast of Cana – John:2-1-12. With the use of your imagination, place yourself into the scene and meditate upon it. Think of yourself as being one of the servants, one of the few people aware that the wine has ran out. When Jesus tells you to fill the vessels with water – how do you react?? Do you think

this guy is out of his mind?? What type of reaction do you have when you see the wedding guests, enjoying this new found wine? Imagine yourself talking with Jesus after the miracle. What did he say to you on a personal level? The next day, after the wedding, how did you feel? Who did you share the story with?

For the next week, conduct a Daily Examen at the end of the day:

1. Prepare your heart and mind. Center yourself by lighting a candle or taking a few deep breaths. ...
2. Review the day with gratitude. Think back through the events of your day, noting the joys and delights. ... as well as your challenges. What type of connection with God did you have in these moments? What was he trying to teach you??
3. Pay attention to your emotions. ...
4. Select a part of your day to pray over. ...
5. Pray for tomorrow.

Sign up for a retreat. Prepare yourself to spend a weekend with God, listening and learning from him.

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