

Ignatius Loyola began to open himself to God when he became aware of interior movements – desires, feelings, impulses – which, upon reflection, he realized had their origin in God. Thus we can say that Ignatius' spiritual journey began, not simply by his having experienced God's action in his life, but also by his having reflected on it. It seems, then, that reflection on God's action in our prayer-life is almost as important as our prayer-life itself. In other words, it is important that we not only seek God in prayer, but also, upon completing it, that we reflect on how we were being moved interiorly during the prayer. Did we experience feelings such as love, peace, and joy that seemed to draw us toward God? Or did we feel that the prayer lacked the affections we had hoped for?

When we experience interior movements in our prayer that seem to draw us toward God or, on the other hand, we feel that the prayer lacked the affections we had hoped for, Ignatius invites us to return to the subject matter of that prayer for what he calls a 'repetition.' A repetition is a return to an earlier period of prayer, not to replicate the prayer, but rather to direct our prayerful attention to those moments in the prayer in which we experienced interior movements that seemed to draw us toward God, or in which we felt that the prayer had more to offer us than what we actually experienced. Our purpose in making the repetition is that we might more thoroughly immerse ourselves in the subject matter of the prayer so that we might more deeply assimilate and take to heart the graces we found, or hoped to find, there. Ignatius observed that "it is not abundance of knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but rather the inner sense and taste of things." This "inner sense and taste of things" – this affective, intuitive knowing; this felt-knowledge – is what we seek to achieve through our repetition. The repetition is meant to draw us into prayer that is more focused and more affective, as some of the external structure of the earlier prayer is no longer needed and is allowed to fall away, but also, and more importantly, simpler and deeper.

Ignatius introduces 'repetition' very early in the Spiritual Exercises, just after describing what he calls 'meditation' (essentially *lectio divina*), and he directs that it be used following every meditation. Later in the Exercises, he introduces 'imaginative contemplation.' and he then directs that repetition be used following every imaginative contemplation as well. It seems that repetition can be used following any form of prayer. It thus seems that repetition is not so much a form a prayer as it is an attitude toward prayer: a desire to be truly open to and responsive to the grace which God gives us, or wishes to give us, in our prayer.