

Structure and Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises: Assignment 4

George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Greater Glory*: 117-126

1. The Second Week virtually ended with the meditation on the Three Kinds of Humility. What is the relationship of this meditation with the Second Week? with the Third Week?

The Three Kinds of Humility is the last of the three pre-election meditations of the Second Week which are meant to assist a retreatant in discerning the specific form of her discipleship. It thus plays a pivotal role in the Second Week. In the third (and “most perfect”) kind of humility, the retreatant so desires to be with Jesus that she desires to be poor, insulted, and humiliated as Jesus was. This is so very important as the retreatant is honestly with Jesus during the Third Week.

2. The Third Week is devoted to Jesus’ passion and death. What grace is the retreatant asked to pray for during the Third Week? Why is this grace so very important?

The retreatant asks to experience “sorrow with Jesus in sorrow and anguish with Jesus in anguish” as a way of expressing her desire simply to be “with Jesus” during his passion and death.

3. How might you respond to a retreatant who has received many graces throughout her retreat, but now finds herself dry, empty, and tense during her Third Week contemplations?

It is quite possible that in experiencing herself dry, empty, and tense during her Third Week contemplations, the retreatant is receiving the grace she asked for (“sorrow with Jesus in sorrow and anguish with Jesus in anguish”).

4. When Jesus is arrested in the Garden, he says to those arresting him, “If you are looking for me, let these men [his disciples] go” (John 18:8). On the way to Calvary, he stops to comfort some women (Luke 23:27-31). As he hangs on the cross, he tells one of the criminals who has been crucified with him that he will be with him in paradise that very day (Luke 23:42). What do these three passages say about Jesus during his passion?

At a time when almost anyone else would be concerned only for herself, Jesus expresses concern and compassion for others. It says something very noteworthy about Jesus.

5. It is not uncommon for a retreatant to find praying the Third Week contemplations very difficult. What suggestions about prayer might you offer a retreatant beginning the Third Week?

The difficulty could be that the retreatant is simply experiencing “sorrow with Jesus in sorrow and anguish with Jesus in anguish,” although it might also be that the very nature of Jesus’ sufferings so repels the retreatant that she finds it difficult to contemplate.

6. As a facilitator, what do you look for in the retreatant’s prayer experience to determine if there is a deepening of the grace of the Third Week? What are the signs of resistances that you would be looking for?

I would look for an honest willingness to prayerfully enter into Jesus’ sufferings. The most obvious sign of resistance would be to avoid this. As a director, I would inquire about the specifics of the retreatant’s contemplations.