

Grace of the First Week: a deep awareness that one is a sinner, yet loved and forgiven by God

An important shift: As the retreat moves into the Second Week, its focus shifts from oneself to Jesus:

- Grace of the Second Week: a growing awareness of being loved by Jesus gradually transforms the person: sparking (1) a developing love of Jesus which, in turn, gives rise to (2) a desire to share in Jesus' mission
- Jesus: not simply a teacher, but an exemplar as well
- Jesus' life: grounded in fidelity to his Father: "I have come to do, not my will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38)
- True life in Jesus Christ: grounded in surrender to God, not only of what one has and does, but of who one is

Ignatius understood "Jesus" to be the risen and glorified Christ, God with us and for us. Thus, the goal of contemplating the Gospel stories is not simply to relive the luminous past, but rather to allow, by means of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, the glory of Christ to burst forth in one's life (see Gilles Cusson, *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises*, 225-226).

The Call of the King [91-100]

- the real meditation on God's mercy
- a second Principle and Foundation: the Christological orientation of the Exercises is now made explicit
- it allows the retreatant to share in Ignatius' conversion at Loyola: he asked for some books. The only books available were Ludolph of Saxony's *The Life of Christ* and a book of stories about the saints. Ludolph of Saxony's *The Life of Christ* invited the reader to imaginatively put herself into a Gospel scene which she would visualize. This became the inspiration for Ignatius' imaginative contemplation.
- At this stage of the retreat, the retreatant has become deeply aware of her own sinfulness, yet with God's grace, she also understands herself as loved and forgiven by God. This two-fold awareness provides the setting to enter upon the Call of the King. The retreatant now moves from being the shamed sinner of the First Week to one called to friendship and companionship with Jesus Christ.

Introductory Parable [92-94]

- to understand how human leaders can attract and inspire others to generosity, even to giving their lives for a cause.
- the human leader (a temporal "king"): an idealized person: a God-centered person who lives (or lived) a life of dedication and service to others.
- focus: not on the actual person but on the ideals this person embodies: ideal leadership and a willingness to totally and unselfishly commit oneself
- call of the human leader: not simply to do something, but also to open oneself to developing a strong (and even loving) relationship with the human leader: "He appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message" (Mark 3:17).
- call: the call is personal; it is made to a specific person (called by name)
- The introductory parable reflects Ignatius' experience of dreams and fantasies during his conversion.
- The purpose of the introductory parable is simply to set the stage for what follows.

Ignatius invites the retreatant to imagine some great hero or heroine: a God-centered person who lives (or lived) a life of dedication and service to others: e.g., Mother Teresa (she died in 1997, but is imagined at about 65 years of age). The parable needs to be developed slowly: You learn that Mother Teresa will soon visit Orange County and speak in a large hall. Since she has been a great inspiration to you, you purchase a ticket to her talk. The day arrives and you are seated among 1500 people. Mother Teresa enters the hall along an aisle along its far side; you are surprised at how small she is. But for the next hour, you are captivated as she tells of how God has worked in her and through her for the poor all over the world. When the talk is over, you imagine that she will leave by the same aisle by which she entered. But you are delighted to realize that she is exiting by the aisle next to your seat. As she walks down the aisle, she graciously acknowledges the clapping as she passes. But as she nears the place where you are seated, she stops, walks over to you, and addresses you by name. You are stunned, but are even more stunned by what follows. “I would like to speak with you, but I must first meet with some reporters and photographers; it shouldn’t be more than about 45 minutes. Would you be willing to wait?” Numbly, you nod yes, and she continues out of the hall. The hall empties as you sit there, your head spinning. Suddenly, you hear a door behind you open and close. Mother Teresa has returned. “Thank you so very much for waiting. You know who I am, but I know who you are as well. I want you to work with me, not with my sisters, please understand, but with me. I want you to join me and work closely with me. But I must warn you that the food and the accommodations will be poor and the work difficult, but God’s work will be accomplished through us.” You realize that she is inviting you not simply to do something. You will get to know her almost as no other. Implied in her invitation is an invitation to a deep friendship. If such a person were to extend such an invitation, Ignatius asks, who could refuse? How could anyone not accept such a noble invitation? The parable sets the stage for the second part of the contemplation.

Note: The parable is meant to elicit great desires in the retreatant, desires which are meant to develop in the Call of Christ.

Call of Christ [95-100]

- call of Christ: the call issued in the introductory parable is issued again, but this time it is Jesus who issues it... perhaps on a hillside in Galilee, or on the shore of the lake...
- call of Christ: a call not simply to do something, but rather to enter into the heart and soul of the Person who calls: an invitation to “put on the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- goal: that Christ become the central figure in one’s life
- “to come with me ... to labor with me”: to be a companion with Jesus and to labor with Jesus in his mission: “He appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message” (Mark 3:17).
- It is not uncommon for a retreatant to experience both a desire to follow Christ and a fear about where Christ may lead her.

Concluding Prayer [98]: “Eternal Lord of all things, I make my offering, with your favor and help... I wish and desire, and it is my deliberate decision, if this be for your greater service and praise, to imitate you in bearing all injuries and affronts, and any poverty, actual as well as spiritual, if your Most Holy Majesty desires to choose and receive me into such a life and state.”

- “with your favor and help”: a graced offering made only with God’s favor and help
- “if this be for your greater service and praise” ... “if your Most Holy Majesty desires to choose and receive me”: a discerned offering
- “to imitate you in enduring every kind of insult and abuse”: meant to elicit great desires in the retreatant; if she lacks the desire, can she express the desire for the desire?

- The Call of Christ: “It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision...” (reflection of Bishop Ken Untener)

Second Week [101-189]

dynamic of the entire Spiritual Exercises: a progressive movement toward a greater involvement with Jesus...

while, at the same time, it becomes increasingly simplified, even passive, under the movements of the Spirit. Note: the preludes, points, and colloquies suggested for the contemplations become increasingly shorter and simpler.

Imaginative Contemplation [101-117]

great desires: Ignatius Loyola was a man of great desires, and his Spiritual Exercises has been described as a “school of great desires.” In his Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius continuously urged the retreatant to give expression to what she most deeply desired so that this attitude of desire might be fostered and promoted. This attitude of desire was meant to assist the retreatant in becoming more and more open to God and to God’s transformative power. But what is remarkable was how Ignatius sought to do this: he invited the retreatant to imagine herself with Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem, with Jesus preaching on a Galilean hillside, with Jesus healing the man born blind, with Jesus on the way to Jerusalem, with Jesus at the Last Supper, with Jesus at prayer in the Garden, with Jesus on the way to Calvary, and with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. It was by means of her imagination that Ignatius sought to evoke in her great desires.

imagination: The renown Swiss psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung observed that we experience profound personal transformation primarily through what we imagine. What we imagine, he tells us, far more than any idea or concept, is able to touch the depths of our person and gives rise to a great personal transformation. What we imagine may be evoked by means of a story, a song, an image, a play, a movie, or a dream. Ideas and concepts affect us, but they have limited power to change us. They tend simply to keep us in our head, bringing us to judge whether we agree or disagree with the idea, the wording, who said it, or how he or she said it. Only what we imagine, he said, is able to touch our heart and truly transform us.

imaginative contemplation: In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius Loyola introduced many forms of prayer, but the best known is imaginative contemplation. In this form of prayer, we imaginatively immerse ourselves in a Gospel story as an active participant: as a person in the crowd, a disciple of Jesus, the person being healed. We allow the story to come alive for us as if we were there: we see the people; we hear what they are saying; we share in the action. But throughout our prayer, our focus is primarily on Jesus. We wish, however, to do more than simply ‘see’ Jesus; we wish to feel all that he feels in his heart so that he might truly touch us just as he touched those who saw and heard him 2000 years ago.

a caution: In imaginative contemplation, we do not theologize (“Jesus did this for me”) or make resolutions (“I should be more loving like Jesus”) in our prayer. Such things serve only to clutter the prayer and ultimately impede the God’s action. Imaginative contemplation is the product both of what we do and of what God does in us. It thus functions at a level in which we are commonly unaware of God’s action.

the human Jesus: Imaginative contemplation focuses on the human Jesus: the Jesus who valued friendships, enjoyed dinner parties, told spellbinding stories, wept at the death of loved ones, and probably laughed at the incongruity of life – the Jesus who, just as we do, loneliness, frustration, uncertainty, disappointment and failure. This is the Jesus who will touch our heart, the Jesus who is so very much like us: the human Jesus.

put yourself “into character”: In bringing a passage to prayer, it is important to put yourself “into character” of the person you have chosen to be before proceeding. If, for example, you wish to be

a blind person, it is important that you imaginatively “become” such a person before imaginatively contemplating the gospel story.

affections: It is important to allow your affections to develop during your prayer. Thus, it is often helpful to frequently pause during the prayer and to stay with an imaginative scene, allowing your affections to slowly rise within you. Imaginative contemplation thus bears a closer resemblance to a slide show (a sequence of discrete images) than a movie (a continually changing image).

see the place: If, for example, you wish to contemplate Jesus’ baptism by John, briefly imagine the Jordan River and the land around it: Is the river wide or narrow, deep or shallow, slow or fast-moving? Is the land around it fertile or dry, flat or hilly? What the scene actually looked like is unimportant. What does it look like to you?

“what I desire”: often a deep heartfelt-knowledge of Jesus who became human for you so that you may love him more and follow him more closely

subject matter: Since this form of prayer is meant to personally engage you with Jesus, it is best employed in passages which involve actions – a healing, for example.

suggestion: If the Gospel passage includes anyone speaking, you need not imagine what he/she may actually be saying. You can approach your imaginative prayer as if the sound was turned off. You need only to be attentive to emotions you sense in the person speaking, to the reactions of the people listening, and to all that you experience within yourself.

Repetition [118-119]

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 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 a person 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.

Application of the Senses [121-126]

The retreatant must have thoroughly immersed herself in the subject matter of the prayer, first by contemplation, and then by repetitions, and is in a place of calm and composure when she can peacefully pull together the threads of her earlier periods of prayer, when she is most able to realize the truth of Ignatius' dictum that "it is not abundance of knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the inner sense and taste of things."

Ignatius explains the application of the senses as follows:

- with the gaze of imagination, to see the people concerned...
- with the hearing, to listen to what they say or might be saying ...
- with the senses of smell and taste, to taste and smell the infinite fragrance and sweetness of the divinity...
- with the sense of touch, to embrace and kiss the places where the persons walk or sit ...

The application of the senses begins in a manner similar to imaginative contemplation – by applying one's senses of sight and hearing to the gospel passage, which allows the retreatant to settle into her prayer.

But as she moves into the third stage, a subtle shift takes place: Ignatius is no longer speaking of her bodily senses – the senses by which she sees and hears – but rather of what mystics have called the 'spiritual senses.'

In suggesting the application of the senses, Ignatius invites the retreatant to enter into a simpler, quieter, more passive form of prayer in which what began in her imagination gradually gives way to our savoring and pondering them in her heart, finally culminating in that 'heavenly sensuality,' when her relationship to the divine realities can only be expressed in terms of the infinite fragrance she smells, the infinite sweetness she tastes, and the infinite presence she touches.

Perhaps the most beautiful expression of the spiritual senses is the immortal passage by St. Augustine:

"But what am I loving when I love my God? Not beauty of body nor transient grace, not this fair light which is now so friendly to my eyes, not melodious song in all its lovely harmonies, not the sweet fragrance of flowers or ointments or spices, not manna or honey, not limbs that draw me to carnal embrace: none of these do I love when I love my God. And yet I do love a kind of light, a kind of voice, a certain fragrance, a food and an embrace, when I love my God: a light, voice, fragrance, food and embrace for my inmost self, where something limited to no place shines into my mind, where something not snatched away by passing time sings for me, where something no breath blows away yields to me its scent, where there is savor undiminished by famished eating, and where I am clasped in a union from which no satiety can tear me away. This is what I love, when I love my God." (*Confessions*, X, 8)

The application of the senses is the culmination of imaginative contemplation and seems to be the essence of Ignatius' own first-hand experience of prayer, a simple way of making understandable what is utterly beyond understanding.

It is, in brief, all that is implied by that lofty word 'contemplation.'

(See Hugo Rahner, "The Application of the Senses," *Ignatius the Theologian* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1968], 181-213)