

Twenty-four Spiritual Exercises
for the
New Story
of Universal Communion

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Hello! We are John English, S.J., Lois and Kuruvila Zachariah. We are members of the National Christian Life Community of English Canada. John English is the co-founder and first Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Christian Life Community of English Canada. He is the author of CLC formation manuals and has developed, with others, the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* for the Corporate Person. He has been active for many years in the personally directed retreat movement in North America. Lois and Kuruvila Zachariah are retired teachers, biologists and parents of three sons and a daughter. We have been members of the Christian Life Community in English Canada for 25 years.

Our Primary Motivation

In this *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT*, you will find a new expression of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. Our primary motivation is to help CLC have a **communal** experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Thus, instead of meeting individually with a spiritual director, members of a CLC group will come together to share their prayer with each other, with the assistance of the group's guide. We want to share our own experience of this communal process with you.

John:

For five or six years the team of the *Institute for Communal Life*, of which I was the director, led groups of teachers and their administrators through an Ignatian process to help them develop discerning communities for apostolic action. The process itself gave the participants an in-depth experience of Christian community among themselves that they could then use with other teachers and students in their local schools. Our hope was to involve, eventually, the whole school board. Each year, approximately 18 persons were guided through various Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* for two full days, four times a year. The next year a new group was selected to go through this process.

Our approach to these days followed a general pattern of *Instruction*, *Reflection on Personal Experience*, *Small Group Sharing*, and finally all

participants would assemble and share what they had learned. Within this process we covered a variety of topics including *Personal Graced History*, *Communal Graced History*, *Ignatian Discernment of Spirits*, *Instruments for Developing Community and Making Community Decisions*, *Understanding One's Own and Others Personal Responses in Conversation*, *Methods of Personal Decision-making* and *Methods of Communal Decision-making*. Over the years, we observed a deepening sense of Christian Community in the schools and within the school board. At present, various methods for developing community and discerning personal and communal decisions are in use.

Kuruvila and Lois:

Recently, over 11 months, we directed three young parents, Julie, and Marlene and Greg, a married couple, in the Communal *Spiritual Exercises* (Annotation 19). We used the Phase III Manual for CLC English Canada, designed by John English S.J. and our national formation team. The five of us will never forget this experience. We met once every two weeks because, with young families and work, this was what the retreatants could manage. As the weeks went by, it became clear that **a group** spirituality was emerging as the result of each retreatant sharing with the others. New insights into the spiritual life of families and their mission, helpful ways of praying, increasing skill in recognizing consolation and desolation, a growing relationship with Mary, assistance in pursuing a simple life, and increased efforts to make thoughtful, discerning decisions emerged as a result of this spiritual conversation. We wish this for all CLC.

The *PURPOSE* of These *Spiritual Exercises*

In these Ignatian prayers, we expand the usual meaning of the word *communal* to include all animate and inanimate matter in the cosmos. We call this the *universal community of life*. We hope that CLC groups entering into this time of prayer will be *exercised*. Just as walking, running, jumping and kicking a ball are physical exercises which benefit the body, so meditation, contemplation, examination of self, scripture reading, and spiritual conversation with others about our experience are spiritual exercises that can benefit the *whole* person. They help us attain the freedom needed to follow the

prompting of the Holy Spirit in our lives. These prayers are meant to revitalize and foster a sense that life anywhere in the cosmos and specifically, all living organisms on Earth are sacred. We hope CLC groups have an experience of the sacred in each other, family, friends, colleagues, plants, animals and ecosystems so that each CLC member expands his/her sense of community to include kinship with every living being, every stone, lake, mountain, on Earth.

Science and technology provide us with methods and instruments that save lives, help feed us, increase our life span, cure disease, provide easy and cheap mass communications and transport, and a greater understanding of the material world. Despite these advances, we detect a certain *pessimism* and scientific *fundamentalism* in the global technological culture. Many interpretations of current scientific findings tell us that life has no meaning; it is an accident, unlikely to arise anywhere else in the universe. Evolution is full of cruelty, pain and wasted effort. We are alone. Reflecting on the spirit world or encouraging a spiritual life in ourselves is nonsense. We see the *Spiritual Exercises*, illuminated by the thought of P. Teilhard de Chardin, as having the potential to redeem this view. Teilhard was a French Jesuit and paleontologist who considered the ethical, ideological and philosophical implications of evolution. He sketched a synthesis in which evolution is “a light illuminating all facts.” His work evokes praise as well as harsh criticism. Nevertheless, even those unconvinced of its validity may recognize its intellectual grandeur. His writings belong in a class by themselves. They are unique because they are his metaphysics, his synthesis of both his public and personal knowledge.

The *Spiritual Exercises* can give us an experience of the exciting mystery of life so that we are filled with a desire to pursue a life in the Spirit. A mystery is a profound truth, which is not accessible through our reason, in fact, the harder we apply reason - the more the mystery deepens. The stories, readings, reflections and analyses found herein are meant to raise awareness of the deep mystery of life, an experience of the transcendent. This is evident in our interpersonal experiences with plants, animals, ecosystems, oceans, wind, sun, moon, stars and people. It is felt most deeply in the relationship that we and all else in the cosmos have with the Trinity, who themselves are Three Divine Persons through relationship.

In praying together, we foster the emergence of a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. Emergence erupts in novel ways and is the foundation of evolution. As we reflect on cosmic evolution, which, we believe, is the Trinity's primary action as persons, we may come to a deeper experience of sacred creation.

The *PROCESS* for Praying These *Spiritual Exercises*

Normally, Annotation 19 of the *Spiritual Exercises* is about 35 weeks long. During this time we pray one hour per day, 6 days per week. In this *SUPPLEMENT* you will find material for **eight weeks** of prayer. **In this outline for an 8-week retreat of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we suggest one-hour prayer periods, three times each week. This will allow you to read and ponder the extra materials designated as “Additional Points For Prayer and/or Extensions of The Points Above” or make a Repetition, if so inclined, on other days of the week.**

In line with the *Spiritual Exercises*, we suggest that this 8-week retreat consist of the following materials:

Week 1 -The Warming-Up Exercises

Week 2 -The First Exercises - Sin

Week 3 -The First Exercises - Sin

Week 4 -The Second Exercises - The Call of Christ, the Incarnation and Nativity

Week 5 -The Second Exercises - The Two Standards and Three Classes of Persons

Week 6 -The Second Exercises - Jesus' Public Ministry, The Three Kinds of Humility

Week 7 -The Third Exercises - The Passion of Jesus

Week 8 -The Fourth Exercises - The Resurrection and *Contemplatio*.

Ignatius has several forms of prayer, some of which are examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation and the application of the senses. There are directions for prayer in the Exercises, which follow. For example, in Week 1, the main method is consideration. In Weeks 2 and 3, the method

is meditation. In Weeks 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, it is contemplation. These methods will be explained as you come to them. One of the secrets of personal prayer is to follow the lead of the Spirit on when and how to pray. So in these Exercises you may pause at any point, lift your heart to God in gratitude, amazement, praise or sorrow. In fact, you may discover that sometimes there is too much material for one hour of prayer. When this is the case, focus on what is most deeply affecting you in the Exercise constantly keeping in mind the Grace that is sought; we refer to it as *the desire of my heart*. We ask you to pray the one-hour Exercise, then reflect on your experience of the prayer and share these reflections with your community to discern your action. This process mirrors the dynamic of **conscious knowing**, described by the Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan S.J., which is:

- **experiencing**
- **reflecting so as to understand our experience**
- **judging**
- **deciding.**

We encourage you to use Lonergan's **Transcendental Precepts** in these weeks of prayer. His precepts are to be:

- **attentive**
- **intelligent**
- **reasonable**
- **responsible**
- **loving.**

Keep a journal in which you recall your prayer and mark what you wish to share at your CLC meeting, so that you share what is most important to you. You will need a Bible and a copy of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

We have a number of convictions, which are reflected in what we have written. They are our views of *knowledge, story/revelation, personhood, community, and creation*.

Knowledge

The global scientific culture recognizes mainly one form of valid knowledge, which is public and objective. Acceptance of public knowledge

is based on the assumption that it is born of expertise; expertise in analysis, in designing repeatable experiments, making hypotheses and models, evaluating primary sources of data, and so on. Yet, our experience tells us that we have other ways of knowing which are subjective and personal, more integrative, acquired through an interior life and personal experience. In this second kind, everyone can be an expert. This personal knowledge comes from tradition, faith, revelation, spiritual awareness and countless everyday experiences of beauty, intuition, goodness, the witness of trusted friends, as well as our burdens and limitations. It cannot be tested by experiment because its truth is greater than a collection of facts. Bernard Lonergan S.J. believed we integrate these two types of knowledge, public and personal, through submitting our everyday experiences to a process of reflection, judgement, decision and action. His position is that all authentic objective knowledge is subjective and all authentic subjective knowledge is objective. Objective data are acquired through our physical and imaginative senses. However, this is only the first step in appropriating knowledge. By taking my commonplace experience of love for a tree or flower through Lonergan's intentional steps to knowing, I come to the profound truth that I am in relationship with these creatures. Thus, I come to *know* the tree rather than know *about* the tree!

Story And Revelation

All religions and cultures use stories to proclaim the truth, and put us in touch with the wisdom of the elders. This is especially so with the Indigenous peoples of the earth. The most ancient and universal of all revelations is that Earth and every creature, air, soil, rock and waters are Holy and that our lives must reflect this fact. To imitate Christ today is to bring to **conscious knowing** this suppressed, sacred story.

Stories are of many kinds: sacred, historical, fictional, personal and so on. All stories can be instruments of truth that cannot be revealed in other ways. Stories express knowledge through images of beauty that bring us to truth even if they are not factual. Historians attempt to gather as much factual evidence as they can, before they tell a story. Therefore, we see history as a more objective story than fiction. But great truths are found in fiction too. Theologians speak of the creation story in Genesis. We know that

the events in it are not actual ones, but nonetheless the truths proclaimed in Genesis are valid.

Universally, when humans are confronted with mystery, they tell sacred stories. These stories are the stuff of revelation in all religions. Although stories dominate the Christian scriptures, they also contain letters, hymns, historical materials and accounts of historical persons. Believers relate to these writings as divine revelations, and find in them a special expression of truth and God's presence. We pray with these scriptures in several ways. We may take the text literally and proclaim that events in the writings happened as described. Or, we may believe that though some scriptures are not factual, they transmit a significant theological message.

For us, revelation has its foundation in the stories of great spiritual events recounted by eye - witnesses: most notably, the Resurrection accounts of Jesus Christ. This witness is later expressed in communal stories. Each religion and culture has a number of sacred stories that are told and passed on from generation to generation. These become their scriptures. They carry in themselves their own authenticity. When they are read or heard, the listener enters into the communal memory of the ancestors and we are present to the story. This is the basis for **contemplations** on the scriptures. Sacred stories are more than mere words and images. They carry the astonishing promise for our mystical encounter with the persons remembered. St. Peter was able to say: "*You did not see Him, yet you love Him.*" (1 Peter 1:8) This is a profound spiritual experience, which conveys the memory and witness of past ages to us.

Persons in Relationship

The philosopher John Macmurray asserted that the concepts of person and personhood illuminate the dependence of knowledge upon relationship: "*All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action is for the sake of friendship*". He believed that the self is a person, not an isolated thinking thing. Persons are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. I exist only as one element of the community "You and I". It is you who tell me who I am as a person. I need you to be myself. Our awareness of common creaturehood, that we are members of the mammal

class along with dogs and dolphins, gives us only a superficial connection with the rest of creation. Macmurray goes far beyond this, telling us that we are who we are, only in and through our relationships with all creatures and the planet itself! Our awareness of ourselves as persons flows to us from the interrelationship of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity. Michael Downing extrapolates from this to the interpersonal relationships in the cosmos. He writes:

“Every living being participates in some measure in the life of God. Now if God is understood as personal, as being toward and for, then every living thing is toward and for the other... in communion with God whose providential plan is not just for the salvation of the human race, but for the salvation of the whole world.”

Personhood is also fundamental in other philosophies. S. Radhakrishnan, first President of the Republic of India, wrote in 1927:

“The highest category we can use is that of self-conscious personality. We are persons (purusas) and God is perfect personality (uttama purusa). If we analyse the concept of personality, we find that it includes cognition, emotion and will, and God is viewed as the supreme knower, the great lover, and the perfect will, Brahma, Visnu, Siva. These are not three independent centres of consciousness, as popular theology represents, but three sides of one complex personality. The different pictures of God which prevailed in the country were affiliated to one or the other of this trinity.”

The Communal

Spiritually, we grow in appreciation of the Trinity as we recognize our interdependence and share our inner life with each other. Thus, a whole new being - *a community* - evolves. In it, we realize that we belong to the cosmic community of life as it is created and sustained by God. John Macmurray's position is that to **do** what is right is a greater good than to **know** what is right. We do not act alone, but as part of a community and all meaningful relationships depend on meaningful actions within community. Bernard Lonergan, too, thought that responsible action is what we are made for; it is

the meaning of being created in the image of God. To decide to work for the good co-operatively with others is to evolve towards becoming fully human; it flows from a conversion. Without it, we are less than fully human and our evolution is blocked. Likewise, our evolution unfolds when we act in communion with all living beings. The act of remembering helps us with this. How do we act cooperatively with a tree? We remember that the primates, the group to which we belong, evolved in the treetops; the trees were our nurseries. The anthropologist Katharine Milton believes that our hands, vision and brain evolved mainly through foraging behaviour in forests. From this ancient association trees have a deeply personal relationship with us; they too are in our community. Communal life is the instrument of evolution for our minds and spirits. Our dependence on all creatures calls us to act for and with the Earth community. The *Ignatian Exercises for the Twenty-First Century* has a communal component throughout. They can be a means for increasing our awareness of kinship with the personhood of all creatures.

The Trinity

We strive for a modern understanding of the Trinity, which bestows an appreciation of divine action in evolving communities, whether of molecules, stars, planets, ants or humans. Eminent theologians struggle with this shift today: Moltmann considers the Trinity a divine community of persons in relationship, not a plurality but a unity. He uses a concept of their interrelating, which some have called a dance of the Three Divine Persons. There is one being and all three are in relationship. The Three Persons are intimately linked to one another and dwell in one another. Thus, we understand the Trinity as a divine community rather than an individual divine substance. Bracken believes that the metaphysical reality of persons in community is higher than the individual substance. For him, community represents a unity, which is greater than the sum of its parts, that is to say - a deep mystery.

The image of the divine dance helps us understand that *all* Three Divine Persons are involved in Creation, Redemption, Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery and the Eucharist. Thus, Christ can be named Creator and Christ can be in all things, animate and inanimate. J.J. O'Donnell expresses

the paradox of an all-powerful, invulnerable God identifying, through the Cross, with human God-forsakenness; God does not come to the rescue of Jesus, who stood in solidarity with the God-forsaken and then becomes God-forsaken Himself. So, we are challenged to think of God anew. This is an urgent immediate need; we often expect God to be what we ourselves would like to be - omnipotent and immune. These expectations are shattered on the Cross. Instead of a detached and distant God, we experience the Three Divine Persons as dancers in their evolving cosmos, thus enduring and transforming its suffering as it groans to give birth to a new and glorious ecology.

To cooperate with God's loving purpose, we must overcome our morbid tendency towards exclusivity. In turn, this is fostered by the Trinitarian image of a communal, inclusive Divinity whose cosmos tends continuously towards increasing diversity and novelty. The ecology of highly evolved communities is characterized by this complexity. Inclusivity is their hallmark. Jesus is their paradigm; He was the friend of losers as well as the rich. He was radically inclusive, the mirror of the vulnerable Trinity. **(Wisdom 7:25-26)**

Creation

The Trinity, as perfect personality, is constituted by relationship, and relationship depends on meaningful action. Our Creation Story is that the Trinity's great loving action is cosmic evolution. The Three Divine Persons are intimately involved in and their Spirit expressed in the beginnings and evolution of our universe. Contemplating the story of our universe, we go beyond a series of chronological events to a sense of the Trinity's love evolving beyond themselves into creation.

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now.”
(Romans 8:19-23)

For us, *evolution* means the gradual, sustained process of change over fifteen billion years, by which the universe and all its furnishings are emerging. The furnishings are matter, life, ecosystems and societies, which we believe to exist throughout the cosmos. Their origin was an explosive emergence of particles and light in an instant when time and space were born. Next, atoms evolved and later huge clouds of hydrogen appeared and condensed during billions of years into stars. In early stars, some of the hydrogen was converted into the elements, which compose living organisms like nitrogen, carbon, sulphur. The stars later exploded and spewed out these elements, which became other stars and planets like our sun and Mars and Earth, about five billion years ago.

Evolutionary events are interrelated; life could not have appeared until cosmic evolution provided the delivery rooms, namely appropriate planets. Also, evolution is getting faster; human evolution happened in a flash compared to biological evolution, and cosmic evolution took much longer. Moreover, what is emerging is continually becoming more surprising, novel, diverse, interesting, intense and beautiful. Two billion years ago there was DNA, but no orchids, no trees, no Bhagavad Gita, no microchip, no eyes to see nor ears to hear.

On Earth, the first one to two billion years were too hot for life. As the surface cooled, continuous rain for thousands of years formed oceans of hot water in which, perhaps, life arose. For the first 85% of the planet's history the creatures were simple: bacteria, early plants and sea animals without backbones, many even with no shells. A very significant trend in evolution started half a billion years ago: animals with backbones appeared. It was in this group that, with ever increasing speed, successive animal forms gained greater freedom from slavery to their environment. The trend culminated in human mastery over the environment. First, our vertebrate ancestors evolved to freedom from the water, through lungs and circulating blood, which resembled sea-water: next, eggs, within which their young lived in a bag of water. Later, they evolved to become less dependent on good weather, and could keep cool in the heat and warm in cold weather. Also, the baby grew inside the mother instead of an egg. Warmth for incubation of an egg became unnecessary. So they evolved still further towards total freedom.

In the next, ten to three million years ago, they took a huge step towards freedom and walked upright! It was an evolution, which permanently changed the biosphere and the universe. Walking upright had fantastic consequences. The hands were freed to create the first tools and gestures. They could throw missiles or be held up in wonder or in prayer. The tools could be used as teeth so the mouth no longer had to be an organ of defence. Muscles for chewing moved lower from an anchorage on the temples making room available in front for the brain to enlarge. The brain grew in other directions too. Because the head did not hang in front, the neck muscles became lighter and the bone pan supporting the brain enlarged. This exquisite evolution happened in our African ancestors we call “Southern Apes” or Australopithecii: we inherited their genes and skeletons with relatively few, small changes. They gave us not only their freedom from nature’s burdens, but the potential for unlimited freedom.

The clear trend in the last few million years has been the lightning speed of cultural evolution, which has rapidly given our species its autonomy. Walter Ong S.J. writes: “*All major advances in consciousness depend on technological transformations and implementations of the word.*” They are six: speech, writing, mathematics, science, computers and cyberspace. For the first time in four billion years, they have enabled one species to direct its own evolution and to direct or interfere with the evolution of all living organisms. We might conclude from this that our evolution has no further to go, that we are fully human now. Emphatically, this is not so. In spite of five hundred million years of vertebrate evolution towards autonomy, we are not free.

Jean Vanier asserts that we today are un-free because we are imprisoned by fear: fear of losing our wealth, fear of infection, fear of aliens from another planet, fear of trees, dandelions, weeds and most of all, fear of those who are different: immigrants, the poor, the weak, the sick, the elderly. In St. Paul’s vision, evolution is incomplete and therefore the cosmos is still imperfect and groaning to give birth to a future fulfillment. Our responsibility, as John Haught says, is to so live and die that the evolutionary promise unfolds in complete accord with the love of the Trinity.

This is why we are writing these *Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for CLC*.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO PRAY: *THE IGNATIAN WAY*

OUTLINE OF EACH *ONE HOUR* PRAYER EXERCISE

Below is the outline of a typical prayer time of the *Spiritual Exercises*. We suggest a *Preparatory Prayer*, but you may wish to compose your own. The other elements in an exercise change with the subject matter.

PREPARATORY PRAYER

In each prayer period I begin with a gesture of humility and a prayer of offering of myself to the Trinity in acknowledgement that I am in their presence, e.g., I might make a prayer of this sort: *O Holy Trinity, give me the grace to direct all my intentions, actions and operations solely to your praise and service.*

SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS EXERCISE

I read and consider the subject matter for this time of prayer, either a topic for consideration and meditation or a mystery of the life of Christ presented in scripture.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

This is an imaginative effort to put myself into the situation suggested by the subject matter for prayer and by the grace being sought.

GRACE, THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

Depending on the purpose and context of the prayer materials, I ask for what I deeply want and desire. Another word for **grace** is gift. In our spiritual lives, we pray for the gift of deep relationship with the Trinity, a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit. We pray for a grace because we do not have what we want and desire and we realize that we cannot achieve it by our own effort.

Someone has said the longest journey in this world is that from the head to the heart. Our intellect tells us about our faith and desires. But this is

not enough. So we pray to the Trinity for a deep-felt belief in, and knowledge and conviction of our faith. When we pray for a grace, we recognize that the Trinity can give us what we ourselves cannot.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

(Ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought)

This is the material from scripture or from our life experience, which we use for meditation or contemplation, in order to obtain the grace we desire. There are additional points for reflection and consideration at the end of each week of prayer. You may like to read or pray over these at any time during the week, if they are helpful to you.

DIALOGUES

During the prayer period and especially at its end, it is important to speak with the persons of the Trinity. Here are Ignatius' words: "*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.Ex.* [54])

I end each prayer period with the prayer Jesus taught us, the *Our Father*.

REVIEW OF PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

After each prayer period I look back over the experience of prayer to see how it went with me and I make some notes in my journal.

PRAYER OF A LISTENING HEART

1. I find a suitable place of quiet and comfort.
2. I offer my time of prayer to the praise and glory of the Trinity and make an act of recognition that I am in the presence of the Trinity.
3. I focus on the harmony of my body and spirit and take a peaceful and relaxed physical position.
4. I spend a few moments quieting myself - becoming aware that I am in the presence of the Trinity in a special way.
5. I ask for the grace that my heart desires during this time.
 - a. 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.
6. I read 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. I let the Spirit pray through me as in **Romans 8:26-27**. 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. Then I pause for a considerable length of time and appreciate what has been given to me, pondering within my heart as Mary did.
7. Throughout this process of prayer I respond with my heart entering into a *Dialogue with the Persons of the Trinity*, especially at the end of the prayer period.
8. In this way I have **Read** (*Lectio*), **Meditated** (*Meditatio*), **Responded** to the Word (*Oratio*) and **Contemplated** (*Contemplatio*) - the four steps of sacred reading (*Lectio Divina*).

REVIEW OF PRAYER

After the prayer period is over I change my position and place, and do a *Review of Prayer*. What happened during my time of prayer? From this review, I learn what is important for my day and for the next prayer period. This review helps me reflect upon interior movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, and so on - perhaps something about my distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. It helps me *notice* my interior *experiences* rather than my *ideas*. Thus, I can be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and go with the flow of experience. If I monitor myself during the period of prayer, I interfere with the Trinity's communication. When my prayer period is *over*, however, I take a look to see what the Trinity has been saying to me.

The following questions may help:

- What went on during the period of prayer? Was it distressing, satisfying, dismal, inviting, probing, insightful?
- What impressed me?
- How did I feel about what went on?
- What was my mood, or change in mood?
- What did the prayer show me?
- Did I receive the grace I was seeking?
- Is there some point I should return to in my next prayer?

I thank the Trinity for favours granted and ask pardon for my own negligence.

SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

During my review of prayer, I will record in my journal a few reflections that strike me so that I can more easily prepare for my next period of prayer. The Trinity may be inviting me to go back to a point where I was moved. St. Ignatius says, “*I should remain quietly meditating upon a point until I have been satisfied*” (*Sp.Ex.* [76,2]), i.e., until the movement has been completed (the insight completed, the struggle resolved, the consolation ended, the meaningfulness finished...for now). Recording my reflections during the review will assist me at the community’s weekly sharing.

A spiritual journal is a form of diary. It is a way of recording the 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 the *Daily Awareness Exercise* and/or the *Review of Prayer*. Use the *Daily Awareness Examen*, if you choose to use only one of these prayer exercises. This exercise covers your whole day and can include your formal time of prayer. If you choose to use two exercises then add the results of the *Review of Prayer*. During these awareness exercises, or after you complete them, you can write briefly what the Trinity has revealed to you.

You may record experiences of the presence of a person of the Trinity as a companion, spouse, family, friend, or while working or driving home. You may record experiences of dryness, 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 experiences to write about. Choose the more significant ones and write them briefly by means of a word or phrase.

REPETITION

Repetition is an important aspect in one's prayer life.

Repetition *does not* mean:

- I. repeating of the prayer material as one repeats a study assignment for more thorough understanding,
- II. returning to the same subject matter for prayer to find something new or different,
- III. returning to **all** the subject material of the last prayer period.

Repetition *does* mean:

I return to those points where I have experienced "greater consolation, desolation or greater spiritual appreciation". (*Sp.Ex. #62*) Hence, I use the discoveries given to me in the *Review of Prayer* and return to those places in the prayer where I have experienced significant movement of my spirit. Repetition is a focussing exercise.

The reasons for making repetitions:

1. *Repetition allows spiritual movements to develop*, which helps me discern my interior movements. This is one of the goals of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Scampering from one scripture passage to another, even within the same theme, tends to prevent these developments.
2. *Repetition is a help to **notice** interior movements*. Since many of our interior reactions at prayer happen without our noticing them, repetition provides time for the interior reaction to be experienced distinctly.
3. *Repetition is the way we can respect the Trinity's communication*. Just because a prayer period has ended, we should not suppose that the Trinity has nothing more to say to us through the passage we have been using. Repetition respects the Trinity's communication until we sense that they want us to move on.
4. *Repetition may be the occasion for desolation to become consolation*.

Repetition is used where there has been struggle, distraction, discomfort, ennui. Often these difficulties indicate that the Spirit is trying to communicate with us at a deeper level and we are resisting. When we return to those points, which were experienced negatively, we often discover that the Spirit overcomes barriers so that desolation gives way to consolation; darkness to light; struggle to surrender.

5. *Finally, repetition helps one to experience 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 until I have been satisfied*” (*Sp.Ex.* [76,2]), he means not only **within** the one period of prayer, but also **over** several periods of prayer, or even days of prayer. (*Sp.Ex.* [130,6]) Through repetition we allow the mystery of Jesus’ life to touch our mystery at deeper levels of our being. Through repetition a kind of simplification of our own activity takes place as we become increasingly receptive to the Spirit’s activity. Through the use of repetition, meditation can become contemplation and stillness.

Some Examples of Repetition:

1. I pray over the Baptism of Jesus at the Jordan. In my review afterwards I notice that I was with Jesus in my prayer, 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 had turned away from me and I felt sad.
2. I pray over the hidden life of Jesus. In the review after my prayer, I notice that I could not get settled. I was filled with distractions and anxiety. So in the next period of prayer, I return to the same material.
3. I pray over my sin history and ask the Trinity for a deeper awareness of the effects of sin on my life. It is given to me. In my review, I sense that the Trinity desires to show me more. I return to the same material in the next prayer period.

GUIDELINES FOR SHARING YOUR PRAYER WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

“Those who feared God spoke with one another, and God listened attentively.” (Malachi 3:16)

During these weeks of prayer, the community meeting has the following two main parts.

• The *FIRST* round of sharing

This sharing has four purposes:

- to heighten awareness of one’s own prayer experience by listening to other members in your CLC,
- to recognize the communal dimension in individual prayer,
- to deepen CLC bonds,
- to assist each other in discerning actions arising from prayer.

Listening is especially important and the prime purpose of sharing. Listening to these prayer experiences of others gives us a sense of awe and gratitude toward the Spirit and a respect and trust towards other members of the group. It helps us recognize our unity in our diversity. It goes beyond hearing. One’s whole self is involved. Listening requires humility and self-forgetfulness. It is self-gift. This spiritual conversation is a form of group prayer and deeply rooted in a spiritual life - humble, poor, and open, willing to learn or teach, to forgive and be forgiven, to be loved and to love. Some simple guidelines for sharing are listed below.

- Grateful listening is the most important component of the meeting.
- Everyone is an expert on his/her own experience.
- All sharing is voluntary. If you don’t wish to share, you can pass.
- It is important that all have their fair share of the time available.
- Describe your prayer experiences *briefly*, using your journal entries.
- Confidentiality is essential.
- Don’t attempt to solve problems or judge or debate what another has shared.

- **The *SECOND* round of sharing**

After those who wish to share have done so, the group takes a few minutes of silence to reflect on what has been heard in the light of the following questions. Where did I experience harmony with the others as they shared? What new insights were given to me about my community and me? How will this help my prayer and spiritual life? Then, *briefly*, usually in two minutes or less, each member shares their thoughts or insights. This second round is important for it gives group members an experience of emergence, where the group takes on a communal identity larger than its individual members. Knowledge of this identity is essential when, in the weeks to come, the group may wish to make a communal decision. After the second round of sharing, the group can end with the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary or Soul of Christ.

THE DAILY AWARENESS EXERCISE

INTRODUCTION

The Daily Awareness Exercise is a brief spiritual exercise, which helps us to be constantly present to the activity of the Trinity in our lives. It helps us live a reflective life in the presence of the Trinity and discern the continual movement of spirits in our lives. In the context of our evolving universe, this daily exercise demands two things: a new spiritual perspective on our experiences and knowledge of the discernment of spirits.

The new spiritual perspective is a belief that the created universe is a focus for the Trinity's love. It also includes the evolutionary direction of all creation towards relationship. It acknowledges our interconnectedness and interrelating with all beings of the universe.

The discernment of spirits is an activity directed towards the understanding of one's spiritual, interior movements. Ignatius classifies these as spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. To have an intimate knowledge of such movements, Ignatius recommends that we do a simple 10 to 15 minute awareness exercise once or twice a day. This exercise keeps us aware of what is happening to us each day and assists us to gain the necessary reflective knowledge for discerning serious decisions.

Ignatius has a five-step process. By following his steps, outlined below, our connection with and experience of the universal community of life will emerge.

1. GRATITUDE

I begin by placing myself in the presence of the Trinity. I try to become aware of the Trinity **beholding** me, as their beloved. I experience the love of the Trinity embracing all members of the universal community of life. I enter into the great mystery of my existence with all the other creatures of the universe and I thank the Trinity for including me in their great evolving love that brought about the universe.

2. PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR LIGHT

At this moment I ask for what I seek and desire. With the Spirit