

Second point: I become aware of the hellish deceit that existence is meaningless, because evolutionary theory seems to imply all living things came from one ancestor by a meaningless, random process.

Third point: I become aware of the diabolical lie that no Creator exists because Darwin's theory seems to make a Creator of Life unnecessary.

Fourth point: I become aware that from the loss of the sacred, flows the infernal deceit that the consumer confidence-index should be the governments' chief concern.

Fifth point: I become aware that Hell is despair, which is born of the deceit that to be worthy of existence, I must acquire more possessions than other people.

DIALOGUE

I converse with Jesus, recalling all those in the icy grip of despair about existence. I thank the Persons of the Trinity because they have saved me from this fate, given me hope, surrounded me with love, and continued to give me life.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOOR 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF HELL

1. Technology provides warm houses, well-stocked stores and an infinite variety of sports, entertainment and gadgets. There are no communities nor any trees, grass, weeds, fish, birds, animals, farms. Gene engineering allows life spans of 200 years, and generates food from growing isolated cattle parts, human replacement organs from isolated human fetuses. Everywhere there is conceit, envy, lust, anger, narcotics, prisons and police.
2. The year 2000 marks an important moment in history because in the past decade, for the first time in history, some scientists have claimed that science itself, once thought to be a limitless adventure in understanding, may be at its end; in other words, that science is close to describing a *Theory of Everything* which will give us complete understanding of the makeup and workings of the universe and of living things. One of them spoke of this goal as “knowing the mind of God”. Some ask themselves, if this knowing is possible then no mystery remains; so why take trouble to love and worship God?
3. The ancients thought we humans were at the centre of all things; then Copernicus demonstrated that the sun was at the centre, not Earth, and we became a little less important. Next, scientists found that there *is* no center; our sun is one of billions in this galaxy and next, that there are billions of galaxies, each with billions of suns; we became even less important. This year 2000, scientists got new clues to the presence of many planets near other suns. Thinking beings like us possibly exist on planets throughout the universe. We have transmitted “Hello!” through SETI, but our calls are not returned. (<http://www.seti-inst.edu/>) We are further humbled when we discover how tiny our *not* central home is. If we imagine our galaxy scaled down to the size of the USA, then our sun and the orbits of its planets would all fit on a quarter dollar coin which is dropped somewhere near Houston, Texas; we Earthlings are located in the galactic suburbs, not downtown. Because there is no special spot like a centre, we realize that all spots are equally meaningless and our

significance continues to diminish. In particular, the two special places of religion, Heaven and Hell, do *not* exist. So, many people question why they should strive to earn entrance to heaven and avoid hell if there is no destination awaiting their arrival after death.

4. In the Late Stone Age 25,000 years ago, humans carved female figures, which we think depicted God as the source of fertility. Later, 9000 years ago, people in agricultural communities worshipped God as Mother Earth, the life of vegetation. About 6000 years ago, they were invaded and their Mother replaced by a warlike male God; He dwelt in the sky, much further away from them than the Earth Mother. (*Note that God was a Person, whether male or female, a Person in relationship with persons.*) God made promises and the people trusted they would be kept. In the age of Western science, the image of God as Person was replaced gradually by the image of God as an efficient, external, impersonal force. God was seen as clockmaker, architect, or designer: a computer or energy field. The point here is that the clock is not part of the clockmaker as the Earth is part of Earth Mother. Once the clock starts to tick, the maker can leave it and depart; there is no personal relationship, no intimacy and no heart.
5. I consider that science has blessed us with knowledge, making our lives safer, more comfortable and interesting. It has also accustomed us to think of Nature as separate from us, fully understandable and devoid of mystery. In contrast, all of the world's ancient traditions believed they were a part of Nature and that its elements were their living kin. Water, air, soil, plants and animals were sacred because God was revealed in them. I ponder how during 25,000 years, our holy conversation with Nature, our source of life and meaning, has been replaced by profound despair. We are already in Hell.

HOOR 3: THE EXPERIENCE OF HELL

1. Darwin carefully gathered evidence to support his theory that existing types of living things, including humans, have arisen very gradually over long periods of time via a succession of previously existing types very different from their descendants of today. The differences between say the brain of the ancestors and of their descendants came about through changes requiring many tiny random steps. The cause of these evolutionary changes is the selection of only a few to leave descendants: a blind filtering-out of a few from many. Briefly, in any generation the many

offspring are different from each other mostly by chance; only a few, with particular favourable inherited features which promote their survival and reproduction, become the parents of the next generation and pass on the genes for the favourable adaptive features such as strength, camouflage, resistance to drought. Darwin's *Theory of Evolution* was one of the greatest of human achievements and it has deeply affected every branch of knowledge. It is now believed that no material things, whether atoms, stars, bacteria, human societies, were created as they are today but all came into being through change, as time passed, by evolution.

2. The world of life is full of marvellous examples of behaviour and design, such as the bodies of diving and swimming animals, the wings of birds, the division of labour in insect societies, the loving care of a cat for its young, the flight of winged maple seeds, and countless more. Darwin's theory explains how all such wonders have come to be, *and does so in a way which makes the need for a designer completely unnecessary*. All that is needed is chance changes in DNA, about 4 billion years of time and the blind separating-out of certain few offspring called natural selection.
3. The ancients, in every culture in the world had a single *Theory of Everything*. They believed the Cosmos was sacred and existed as different levels in a *Great Chain of Being*. At the lowest level of the Chain were minerals, next up were plants, then animals, then humans, and at the top, inaccessible and the source of all meaning, was God. Our ancestors believed that in this hierarchy, all things originate in and are informed by the highest level. They were convinced that the lower levels were the least real because they could never adequately explain the meaning of the whole Chain.

Darwin's reasoning was a massive shock to people. Even before the shock wore off, we felt an even greater one. Astronomers claimed that the universe itself came into being about 14 billion years ago in the sudden start of a vast cosmic evolution. Why is it a shock? Because it started with tiny particles of matter (the lowest order in the *Chain of Being*) and from these came all things, including life, love, mind. In other words, the lowest level in the Chain, mindless matter, not the highest, God, is held to be the most real, the most fundamental! Thus, many people believe the Chain is destroyed forever. If the starting point was mindless matter, then all that evolved from it - the universe - must also be mindless, and so is pointless and cannot carry deep spiritual meaning. Therefore this Earth,

Mars, and the moon, being meaningless, are devoid of lasting value and can be mined, exploited and desecrated at will by us.

4. The theologian John Haught asserts that it is impossible for us to exaggerate the immense, seismic impact on the world of these stages by which the *Great Chain of Being* was trashed. We must treat his words with the utmost seriousness. He describes a huge cloud of *cosmic pessimism*, which lies over all. No one escapes its weight: not religious or academic leaders, not artists and poets, not statespersons. Muller-Fahrenholz explains how our experience of the unprecedented causes the trauma of *Psychic Numbing*. It is the psyche's ability to endure conditions of "death immersion". In those with power, *Numbing* is manifested as *cynicism* towards truth, money and misuse of political power. In those who are powerless, *Numbing* is manifested in *fundamentalism*, a kind of desperation. In others it may surface in a cult of *violence*. Worst of all, the trauma of lost transcendence is simply welcomed, ignored or denied by leaders. Religions retire behind tribal exclusivity; intellectuals call it reality. In Ignatian terms, it is a communal desolation, the post-modern place of Hell.

DISCERNMENT

A FIRST SET OF GUIDELINES for the Community of Life

The following discernment guidelines apply St. Ignatius' *Rules of Discernment* [313-336] to the experience of the universal community of life. They help people understand different interior feelings and motivations when making decisions in relationship to the community of life. There are two sets of guidelines. The first set of motivations tends to come from inside us and is directed to selfish, sinful tendencies with regard to all Earth's inhabitants. The second set of motivations comes from beyond us. This set is designed to help people deal with deception when they are making decisions for the total good of life's communities.

1. In the case of those whose approach to life is one of individual pleasure, there are two interior spiritual movements: one from the evil spirit and one from the good spirit. The evil spirit intensifies the desire to use nature strictly for one's own envious pleasure and advancement and fills the imagination with sensuality and gratifications. One wilfully ignores the abuse and humiliation of nature so that an exaggerated consumer life is satisfied. In such persons, the good spirit stings the conscious and brings to awareness the pervasive evil that resides in this way of life by pointing out its absurd and antisocial structure. In addition, the good spirit intensifies a sense of kinship and a rational and loving attitude to all Earth's inhabitants. This leads the person to repentance for one's sins against our kin and a resolution to better the situation.
2. In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to develop a kinship relationship with the universal community of life and to be instruments of the Creator's loving presence in the universe, the method pursued is the opposite of that in the first guideline. In this instance, the good and evil spirit act in opposite ways. Now, the evil spirit harasses persons with anxiety and sadness at the loss of pleasure in exaggerated consumptive habits. It uses false reasoning to lead back to a destructive, wilful attitude, which attacks a reasonable and loving friendship with Earth's inhabitants. In such persons, the good spirit gives courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This movement makes one's kinship relationship with nature easy and loving so that the person is filled with peace and resolve.

3. *Spiritual Consolation.* Ignatius describes consolation as an interior movement in persons so that they are inflamed with love of Jesus Christ as Creator of all that is. As a consequence, their kinship with all creatures takes them to the Creator of all. It is likewise consolation when the love of the Trinity leads people to shed tears because of sorrow for sins, or because Christ suffers in the suffering of all Earth's inhabitants, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of Christ in the universe. Finally, consolation is every increase of faith, hope, and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts one to a deeper appreciation of the interrelationship of all created beings. This gives people a sense of kinship so that they are filled with peace and quiet in Jesus Christ.
4. *Spiritual Desolation.* Ignatius describes desolation as an interior movement opposite to that in the third guideline. It discourages kinship with the community of life. It produces a sense of confusion, inner turmoil, destructive desires, a refusal of the Trinity's invitations to take part in the evolution of body, mind and spirit. It leads to a loss of faith, hope and love in the evolving complexity of life and matter. People give up the struggle and become sad and separated from Jesus Christ their Creator. For, just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts springing from consolation are the opposite of those that spring from desolation.
5. In a time of desolation, we should never make changes in our way of life, but remain firm and constant in the resolution and decision that guided us before the desolation, and continue to respect and befriend matter and living beings. We should adhere to decisions made in (the preceding) consolation. For just as in consolation we are prompted by the good spirit, a correct and benevolent counsel - so in desolation we are prompted by the evil spirit, an incorrect and destructive counsel. In times of desolation, we seldom make a right decision.
6. Though in desolation, we must never change our former resolutions. It will be advantageous to call forth the interior joy we possess when we befriend Earth and its inhabitants. This acts as a means to overcome desolation. As we meditate on these friendships, and we recall the Trinity's love for every bit of cosmic matter, we can examine our attitudes and actions and change our life style to reflect our resolve and consoling decisions.

7. When we are in desolation, we should be aware of our separation from life. We feel left alone to resist our discouragements and destructive tendencies. This can be an opportunity to mature in our relationship to the cosmos. We can resist desolation with the constant help of our common Creator, though we may not clearly perceive it. Even though we have lost our sense of kinship and the abundance of commitment and overflowing love for Jesus, nevertheless, we have the Creator's love to help us in this endeavour.
8. When we are in desolation, we should strive to persevere in patience. This acts to diminish the vexations that have overtaken us. Let us consider, too, that consolation will soon return. In the meantime, we must diligently counteract desolation, using the means in the sixth guideline.
9. There are three principal reasons for desolation.
 - I. We have deliberately turned away from our commitment to act justly towards all life, or to have a prayerful life in the Spirit, or we have failed to follow the suggestions given in the sixth guideline. Thus, through our own actions, spiritual consolation is taken away from us.
 - II. The Trinity wishes to draw us into a more mature relationship with all life and matter. In desolation, we discover how strong our commitment is and how much we will cooperate with the rest of creation and the Trinity's love by having to overcome a lack of desire or hope for right relationship with all creation.
 - III. The Trinity wants us to have a true knowledge and understanding that we need to depend and cooperate with them. We realize that it is not within our power to acquire and attain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation in our relationship with the community of life. All is a gift of Jesus Christ. We do not build our own edifice, or take all the credit for the love and devotion described in the third guideline.
10. When we enjoy consolation, let us consider how we will conduct ourselves during the desolation that will follow, and gather renewed strength for that moment.

11. Those who enjoy consolation should take care to humble themselves as much as possible. Let them recall how little they were able to do in time of desolation, when left without the assurances and consolation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, in desolation they should remember that by drawing strength from our Creator sufficient grace is given to resist all our sinful, disordered tendencies.
12. In our efforts to bring justice to all life and matter, we find that the evil spirit can act in us like someone spoiled and selfish. If we are firm with such people, they will give up their petulant ways of acting and their focus on getting their own way. Our tactics must include firmness in dealing with such an interior spirit in our lives as we work for the completion of the universal community of life.
13. At other times, we find that the evil spirit acts upon us somewhat as a false lover. This spirit wants its actions to remain hidden. It may act to seduce us with promises of power, possessions or the selfish use of people, living beings and matter. If we are assailed in this way, it helps to share our struggles with those who can help us recognize the sophisticated deceits operating in us and bring them to light.
14. In other situations, the evil spirit can act by using the tactics of a military leader. In order to capture or seize a position he desires, he will explore the fortifications and defences of our spiritually healthy convictions about our relationships with all life. He will attack where we are weakest. These interior forces of fear and discouragement prevent us from acting justly, with compassion towards all Earth's inhabitants. We may experience an interior attack from every side through loss of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love or the cardinal virtues that guide our daily life or the moral virtues that assist us to deal with our sinful tendencies. We need others in the community of life to help us resist these self-deluding attitudes and activities.

INTRODUCTION to the SECOND EXERCISES

The purpose of the Second Part of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to become a disciple of Jesus for the renewal of the universal community of life. Ignatius asks us to pray by using our imagination with the scripture accounts of Jesus' life. Ignatian contemplation uses our dynamic faith memory, i.e., the memory of the believing community (church), to help us recall these eternal mysteries. The source of this memory is the Holy Spirit "*recalling all things to our minds*". (**John 14:26**) When we use our imagination to be personally present to the events of Jesus' life, we have a subjective awareness of their significance for us.

These contemplations help us to better answer the Call of Jesus Christ [91-98] and join Christ in the great enterprise of encouraging beauty, diversity and peace in the world. They help us achieve the desire of our hearts. "*To gain intimate knowledge of Jesus become human for me that I may better love and follow Him.*" [104] We use our faith memory and imagination to see the persons in the event, to hear what they are saying and to be attentive to what they are doing.

Although there are only three days of prayer for each week of these eight weeks of prayer, if you have the time and inclination, a repetition or a prayer on the **APPLICATION OF THE SENSES** will deepen your prayer experience. The **APPLICATION OF THE SENSES** is a special form of contemplation where we enter more deeply into the mystery by savouring and relishing the sense of the divine give in the previous contemplations.

FOURTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE SECOND EXERCISES

Contemplating Jesus' Life

PRAYER HOUR I

CHRIST OUR EXEMPLAR CALLS US TO CONSIDER OUR ROLE IN THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNITY OF LIFE

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a transition meditation. As Ignatius came from an experience of the great kindness, compassion and mercy in the First Part of his Exercises, his heart was filled with gratitude, desire and generosity and he wondered what he might do in response to such love. As a generous and faithful knight, he entered into the myth of knightly service and compared this to the service and following of Christ, the King.

To discover our own response to the call of Christ, Ignatius suggests that we set up this meditation in two parts: **Part A** - concerns serving an ideal human leader in a worthwhile endeavour for the ecological well-being of our planet. **Part B** - concerns serving Christ in His love and work for the universal community of life. We are invited to create our own story and myth of service to an ideal leader with all that entails. Then, we are to compare this to the service of Christ and His enterprise for the universal community of life. We will approach these topics through a series of meditations. In each one, we will keep in mind Ignatius' instructions.

The meditation of Christ, as the exemplar for our role in the universal community of life, gives us a hopeful challenge to work with Christ for a better world. There are scientific models of the universe in which God draws us, every moment, into a future of intensifying beauty, diversity and complexity. This counteracts what John Haught calls "cosmic pessimism" with "cosmic optimism" and lead to our vocation, which is to bring "cosmic hope".

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations of my body, mind and heart may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Imagine yourself on a journey with Jesus discussing the mystery of our cosmos. In this imaginary situation, consider Christ's invitation to you to promote a cosmic spirituality.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

As I walk with Jesus and, perhaps, some of our mutual friends (**Lk 8:1-3**), I listen attentively to the inspiring desires expressed by Christ for the universe (cosmos). I open myself to His call to promote a spirituality of the universe (cosmos).

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace to respond wholeheartedly to the call of Christ and to join Him in His enterprise for the universal community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

This meditation has two parts: **Part A** is the call of an ideal leader for help in a cause that will benefit all members of the community of life. **Part B** builds on this sense of call and issue, and applies it to a *call from Jesus Christ*.

Part A: *The call of an ideal human leader to help bring ecological health to the community of life*

First Point: I recall the writings, words and actions of those who inspire in me feelings and thoughts of love, compassion, justice and mercy towards all of Earth's inhabitants and ecosystems. I use my imagination to create my own vision of service to a leader and cause, bringing justice, protection, and ecological health to our planet.

Second Point: I consider what the answer of good persons would be to such a generous and noble-minded leader. Consequently, if I were to refuse the invitation of such a leader, how justly I would deserve to be reproved by people of good will.

Part B: *My response to the call of Jesus Christ for the total well being of the community of life*

First Point: I consider joining and serving Christ in His healing work for the universal community of life. If the invitation of the leader in Part A deserves my full attention, how much more worthy of consideration is Jesus, our divine leader, who encompasses and is the universal community of life.

Second Point: Jesus invites me to join Him and says:

“It is my deep desire to develop the beauty of our earth and bring all our kin to freedom and fulfilment. I ask you to appreciate all members of the community, matter and living beings, and to co-operate with them to bring about this deep desire. If you want to accompany me in this enterprise, you must be willing to labour and suffer with me. I hope all persons of heart, judgement and reason will offer themselves entirely to be with me in this work. I ask you to show love and humility. Work to bring about beauty and true kinship with all the community of life.”

DIALOGUE

I pray that I will respond with generosity to such a leader who promotes ecological well-being. I make a total offering of myself to Christ and His program in words such as these:

Eternal Source of all things created, in the presence of your infinite goodness, and of your Mother, and of all the saints of heaven, I offer myself to you with your favour and help. I earnestly desire and choose to...(and write it in my journal). I mark what I would like to join you in, in bringing about an increase in beauty and kinship in the universal community of life. I know this may involve experiences of insults, abuse and poverty. I ask for this grace provided I can be of greater service to you and provided it is your wish to admit me to this way of life.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer I think of what I wish to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

THE INCARNATION

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

As in the *Introduction to the Second Exercises*.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

I call to mind how The Three Divine Persons bring about cosmic evolution, including the emergence of life on our planet. They are with and in our Earth as the first primitive cell emerges, four billion years ago. They see our first Ice Age, two point three billion years ago; the many mass extinctions of life occurring over millions of years, each one resulting in the disappearance of 70 to 95% of Earth's living beings. They embrace, in all their colours, shapes, sizes and activities, the many plants, animals, and humans who have appeared, lived and died on Earth. They enter the joys and sufferings of these beings, and the destruction now wrought by human greed on those who live in Earth's community of life.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **John 1:1-5** and **Luke 1:26-56** and enter into the mystery of the Trinity's action through Jesus who takes on creaturehood and humanity.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life, that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: The Three Divine Persons listen to all the sounds of Earth's community, the buzzings, growls, barking, chirping, splashing, the rustling

of leaves in the wind. They listen to humans speak with one another and hear the sounds of singing, anger, fear, love, joy, despair, weeping. They speak among themselves and say, *“Let us work for and love this Earth community”*.

Second point: I see with the imagination what people around the globe are doing to Earth’s community of life. Some are encouraging and healing the community, some are destroying it. Consider what the Three Divine Persons do, which is to bring about an Incarnation. In the light of this, I see and listen to Mary and Gabriel.

Third point: I see Mary in her home and the angel Gabriel as he appears to her. I hear Gabriel telling Mary that she will conceive and give birth to a holy child who will be called the Son of God. I listen to Mary’s reply and watch what Mary does and what Gabriel does.

DIALOGUE

I talk to Mary as to a friend and tell her I desire a sense of awe for the vastness and scope of cosmic evolution and for the Trinity’s love for Earth’s community. I go with Mary to Jesus to ask for the same sense. I go with Mary and make the same request of the Three Divine Persons. I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3

THE NATIVITY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

As in the Introduction to the Second Exercises.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Call to mind what you have read or seen on television about the trials of occupied peoples around the world. They, like Mary and Joseph before them, live under a political power imposed on them, culturally foreign to them, with oppressive laws and policies. Consider the bigotry and illnesses they suffer, how they suffer overwhelming loss. For aboriginal and other occupied peoples, this means a disregard for their customs and beliefs, dispossession of land, loss of culture, languages, religions and oral traditions, as well as illness and death. Mary and Joseph are forced to go to Bethlehem to register for a census decreed by a roman emperor and enforced by an occupying army.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Luke 2:1-20**. I join Mary and Joseph as Jesus is born.

DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life, that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: This is to be with Mary throughout her labour and delivery, and with Joseph, who is helping her. I come upon them as they take shelter in a stable and I help them in anyway I can. I see and hear what they are doing

and saying. I keep in mind that Mary is in pain, wondering what to expect, and that they are far from home and far from the support and assistance of their family. I reflect on this experience and draw fruit from it.

Second point: I see Mary wrap Jesus in swaddling clothes and put Him in a manger. (A manger is a box or trough in a stable for horses and cattle to eat from.) I consider that any of us who are parents do not wish to experience the hardships that Mary and Joseph experience. I reflect on this experience and draw fruit from it.

DIALOGUE

I have a conversation with Mary and Joseph about their experience of Jesus' birth. "*Did you feel fear?*" "*What are your hopes for your newborn son?*" Then I ask them or the Three Divine Persons to help me see how I might assist young families in my community who are strangers or who have few resources.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOOR 1: CHRIST, OUR EXEMPLAR, CALLS US

1. This time of prayer invites us to consider the intensifying movement of the *beauty of life* in all things (animate and inanimate) and the developing awareness of my participation in this evolving beauty. Beauty is one of the four transcendental precepts, part of all things. The others are oneness, truth and goodness. Beauty's deep significance is gaining new prominence through the findings and writings of scientists such as Thomas Berry, John Haught and others. Teilhard de Chardin writes, "*In all things there is a Within, co-extensive with their Without.*" The "without" beauty of all things beckons us to the interior beauty of all things, as Haught writes in *God after Darwin*.
2. I use my senses to see, hear, touch, taste and smell the beauty of our earth and its location in the cosmos, e.g., the colours in rocks and in the sky at dawn and twilight, the perfumes from flowers and soil, the taste of honey, the songs of birds. Chapters 42 and 43 of the *Book of Ecclesiasticus* highlight this beauty. You might wish to read **Sirach 43:9-20**.
3. I notice how such beauty is never spent but keeps changing and intensifying, e.g., the Northern Lights, a growing child, plant or animal, and I recall Keat's phrase, "*A thing of beauty is a joy forever.*" I consider my connection to this beauty and how it changes my appreciation of the Trinity's love of the evolving cosmos. I consider the new sense of wonder that develops in my heart, and how this brings new life to the Call of Christ. What does this do for my *Offering of Self* to bring about increasing beauty in our universe?
4. In the Disposition Week, we prayed with our sense of creaturehood and connectedness with other creatures. This prayer for DAY 1 calls us to another level of being, a kinship with all matter and beings in the universe and the significance of this kinship for the enterprise of Christ.

Kinship usually refers to genetic relationships based on our DNA. For our purposes, kinship is an experience of personal relationship. We know that we are materially connected because we are all made of the same kinds of atoms and molecules. We are also aware that from our relationships

emerges another dimension of kinship - one of personhood. We are who we are because of our relationships. The sense of kinship that is the experience of personhood is a mystery that transcends our material similarities and it is this that we wish to promote in these *Spiritual Exercises* on the universal community of life. We are called to appreciate this and see the implications of it for our lives. Our position is supported by the experience and writings of many people.

5. Kinship is an experience of another's personhood. It begins with communication through the five senses. We heighten our awareness of kinship with inanimate matter when we reflect on our communication with inanimate matter, e.g., a thunderstorm, the ocean, falling stars and falling rocks. Recall some experiences of inanimate matter. Teilhard sees these as personal:

“Blessed be you, harsh matter, barren soil, stubborn rock; you who yield only to violence, you who force us to work if we would eat. ... You who batter us and then dress our wounds, you who resist us and yield to us, you who wreck and build, you who shackle and liberate, the sap of our souls, the hand of God the flesh of Christ: it is you, matter that I bless.” (Hymn of the Universe, pp. 68-69)

Recall your experiences of communicating with plants and animals that have a personal component to them, e.g. experiences of response by plants, of affections from pets, of being protected or understood by an animal, etc.

6. Teilhard also writes about consciousness in a surprising way:

“We might be tempted to say that consciousness manifests itself indubitably only in man ... but we must correct this, and say rather, that Consciousness manifests itself indubitably in man and there, glimpsed in this one flash of light, it reveals itself as having a cosmic extension and consequently as being aureoled by limitless prolongations in space and time.” (Hymn of the Universe, p. 83)

We deepen our sense of kinship by recalling the times when we have been aware that other creatures of the universe communicate with each other over vast ranges of water, air and space.

HOOR 2: THE INCARNATION

1. Reflection on cosmic evolution

I reflect on the evolution of the universe; God sees all created, finite matter as very *good*, all plants, humans, animals, rocks, water, stars and galaxies that have come into existence, died and been transformed over the course of this evolution. The initial event, bringing the universe into being, was not an explosion in the usual sense, since, before it occurred, space and time did not exist. Instead, *spacetime* and energy were combined, not separate. There were no particles. In the few instants after the universe's birth, all the energy and matter we are able to observe came into being. Spacetime unfolded, inflating and expanding at speeds faster than the speed of light. From these beginnings have come 100 *billion* galaxies, each containing many billions of stars. At the heart of this process is a question. Did the universe always exist? If yes, then it is infinite in time. If no, then it arose from nothing - something emerges from nothing.

As I contemplate this vast, awe-inspiring evolution, I remember that The Trinity, source of being, loves creation so much, they deem it worthy of the Incarnation – the Divinity present in a living, breathing human, with eyes to see the stars and galaxies in the night sky.

2. Reflection on the conscious source of all creation

I consider the mind in all matter; dark matter, living matter, solar systems, galaxies. I recognize that for me, the model of divine mind and relationship is found in the Three Divine Persons, whose consciousness and love permeates the cosmos and its universal community of life.

Rupert Sheldrake, the British biologist, thinks that consciousness is only possible with relationships. We are conscious beings because we are able to interact with and love other humans, animals, plants, and inanimate matter. Sheldrake sees the cosmos, its solar systems and galaxies as alive and in relationship with each other, and therefore capable of consciousness. He writes in the *Rebirth of Nature, the Greening of Science and God* that:

“The Christian conception of God is as a creative trinity...” (p. 195)
“In the context of evolutionary cosmology, the Spirit underlies the onward flow of energy and the expansive impulse of the universe; the Word is in the patterns of activity and meaning expressed through fields.” (p. 198)

The Three Divine Persons are the conscious source of all creation.

3. Reflection on the development of Jesus *in utero*

I consider the humility of Jesus, how the second Person of the Trinity enters into and becomes subject to a developmental process that is the result of millions of years of evolution. I reflect on the different stages of Jesus' development during His nine months *in utero*.

The early development of a human embryo has some general steps in common with other vertebrate embryos. Vertebrates include the bony fishes, reptiles and amphibians, birds and mammals. Jesus' body begins as a fertilized egg, called a zygote. Cleavage, the first cell divisions of the zygote, follows. These cell divisions lead to a solid ball of cells. This solid ball becomes hollow and the centre becomes filled with fluid. Some of these cells will become the embryo, and all Jesus' organs, such as His healing hands or His sacred heart, will develop from these few cells. Some cells will become part of the placenta, thus allowing the exchange of substances between the mother's circulation and the baby's. By the end of the first month in utero, His heart forms and starts beating. By the end of the third month, His limbs are formed and He begins to move. Halfway through her pregnancy, Mary will feel the baby move and, as the weeks go by, she will feel Jesus kick her or shift His position. By the end of the fifth month, there is a rapid development of all His body's organs. As Mary goes about her daily tasks and devotions, as she spends time visiting Elizabeth, both she and Jesus are forming a close physiological connection. Her body and the embryo, which will become Jesus, make hormones which help establish and maintain the placenta, the structure that is attached to the inside wall of the uterus and which provides oxygen and nutrients to the fetus. Mary's circulation and respirations change to accommodate the needs of the fetus. The two are physiologically adapted to form a relationship. This elegant process first appeared 114 million years ago in the placental mammals. I think of the humility of Jesus, who enters into and becomes subject to this developmental process, the result of millions of years of evolution.

HOUR 3: THE NATIVITY

1. Reflection on communion with creation

Tradition has it that there were domesticated animals in the shelter where Mary gave birth to Jesus. They were the only witnesses to Jesus' birth. We do not know which animals were present, but most of them would have been mammals, as humans are. They have the same general process of development in utero as Jesus had. By this, Jesus is in the **fullness of communion** with all creation. I will reflect on myself, and the significance of the humility of the Incarnation. The following account of Jesus' birth from the Holy Qur-an is a reflection on being in **communion with all creation**.

“So she (Mary) conceived Him, and she retired with Him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree; she cried (in her anguish): ‘Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten.’ But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): ‘Grieve not! For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee; and shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye.’” (Surat 19: Maryam, Ayat 22 - 25)

2. Reflection on childbirth

Childbirth is difficult. For most women it is a time of painful effort and calls forth every bit of physical and psychic strength available to the labouring mother. For women living in poverty or under physical or psychological stress, childbirth carries considerable risk for the mother and baby. Mary, like other women of her time, was at risk of dying in childbirth from hemorrhage, infection or obstructed labour. In addition, she was forced to deliver Jesus in trying and unhygienic circumstances without help from her family, since she and Joseph were forced to go to Bethlehem. The intense struggle of the human birth experience is reflected in the birth of other living organisms and also in the birth of the universe and its galaxies. For example, there was a massive destruction of the early universe, so that stars and galaxies could be born. The violent collapse of a star over millions of years to form a pulsar or a black hole creates the conditions to form a supernova, the material of which eventually converges to form a new star system, perhaps with planets and life. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, in their book *The Universe Story*, write that the universe has a sacrificial dimension. So does the process of childbirth.

Jesus, by coming into the community of life, is part of that sacrificial dimension. In addition by becoming matter, the atoms and molecules that He

breathed out, excreted, sloughed off from His epithelium, are now part of other life, both human and non-human.

3. Application of the senses

Ignatius writes that this prayer exercise will consist in applying the five senses to the matter of the first (Incarnation) and the second (The Nativity) contemplations. From this point in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius incorporates the Application of the Senses into the contemplations on Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Implicit in his frequent use of this process is the importance he attaches to it.

Here are his directions for prayer. (*Spiritual Exercises* [122-125])

- a. This consists in seeing in imagination the persons, and in contemplating and meditating in detail the circumstances in which they are, and then in drawing some fruit from what has been seen.
- b. This is to hear what they are saying, or what they might say, and then by reflecting on oneself to draw some profit from what has been heard.
- c. This is to smell the infinite fragrance, and taste the infinite sweetness of the divinity. Likewise to apply these senses to the soul and its virtues, and to all according to the person we are contemplating, and to draw fruit from this.
- d. This is to apply the sense of touch, for example, by embracing and kissing the place where the persons stand or are seated, always taking care to draw some fruit from this.

FIFTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE TWO STANDARDS AND THREE TYPES OF PERSONS

Choosing Christ's Standard of Humility

PRAYER HOUR I

THE EVIL STANDARD OF SUPERIORITY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

At this time in the *Exercises* Ignatius presumes that we have responded to the call of Christ and are eager to be Christ's disciples. Ignatius assumes that all of us wish to be instruments of truth and goodness in our world. In these two meditations, Ignatius presents our situation as a struggle between good and evil forces both outside us and within us. Ignatius sees the struggle as a personal one between Jesus Christ (our friend and example) and Satan (the deadly enemy of our human nature). The personal component helps us with the affective side of our struggle, but we can understand the struggle in other ways also. For instance, we can recognize two basic approaches to nature: one that relates to nature subjectively and sees nature as a companion, and one that relates to nature as something to be dominated and used. These two approaches have a deep impact on our way of living. The first approach assists me to live an intelligent, constructive, caring life that honours other creatures and humans and leads me to a sense of cosmic hope. The second approach leads me to a destructive attitude towards other creatures and humans and a sense of cosmic pessimism.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Let us imagine two groups of people in every culture on earth. One group approaches life *solely* objectively and materially. The people in this group are convinced that science and technology will give them and others a life of pleasure and comfort without having to resort to a spiritual life or belief in anything divine. Enlightened self-interest, which can be communal also, is the only governing principle in their decision-making. They see evolution as an indication that all comes from and returns to matter and the spirit is

irrelevant. Consumption and acquisition of material goods are an important task, for they provide security and a certain happiness and satisfaction.

The second group in every culture believes that, in addition to objectivity, a personal and spiritual way of life is important. They realize that science and technology can be beneficial to the total community of life. They try to constantly discern correct ways to assist all members of the community of life so that a fuller expression of peace, justice and love will evolve. Evolution is seen as the process of a loving Trinity.

As we reflect on the human history on planet earth, we realize a duality in two approaches to nature: one, which takes a gracious benevolent approach and one, which takes a stance of dominance and use. This is a conflict between truth and falsehood.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

Place yourself in the midst of these two groups of people. Observe their attitudes toward each other and see the end of their efforts. Where is truth found? Where are lies found?

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I seek for all the members of my community, and for myself in particular, two graces:

- I. to recognize the strategy and deceptions of the falsehoods that destroys our community of life (other creatures and ourselves), and strength to avoid them;
- II. to know and appreciate the true way and strategy for affirming and building of the community of life, and the courage to follow this way unreservedly.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: Focus on the strategy of the leader of the first group of persons. This group is convinced that science and technology will provide a life of pleasure and comfort. The program of the people in this group promotes a materialistic and consumptive approach towards the non-human community; enlightened self-interest is the only governing principle in their decision-making.

Second point: Consider the following strategy of this first group of persons.

1. Encourage others to approach the rest of nature as something to be used and dominated. Convince others to develop a materialistic understanding of life, where the gifts of creation are used to develop comfortable, pleasant life styles in competition with other peoples and the rest of creation.
2. Suggest to others that honours will come to those who acquire and use an increasing amount of wealth. Suggest that the use of creatures for food, clothing, or drug testing creates a wealthier, easier lifestyle in comparison to those who approach our plant and animal kin and inanimate matter as subjects, not just objects. Suggest that poorer nations desire this materialistic lifestyle.
3. Eventually, control over nature, pride and isolation result in cosmic pessimism. After all, life is simply an expression of our genetic inheritance and nothing is holy.

Third point: The destructive standard of superiority encourages a threefold movement: first, a superior approach to living beings based on dominance and usage: second, a movement towards abuse of other living creatures for the sake of honours: third, pride.

Fourth point: In order to grow in knowledge and wisdom for the future, I look over my life and recognize how this way has influenced my life in the past.

DIALOGUE

Conclude your meditation with the *Triple Dialogue*.

- **To Mary, who represents the feminine element of our universe:** I ask Mary to ask Jesus, her Son for the grace to be chosen and received under the Standard of Humility (Christ's) that I may follow Jesus more closely: first in a sense of kinship with the rest of creation, so that I may be in the truth, and thus grateful for the gifts the Trinity has given to me in and through creation. Second, I ask for a desire to be vulnerable and poor with the rest of creation as Christ was. Third, I ask for the grace to bear insults and contempt such as my fellow creatures bear and thus be with Christ poor and humble, on condition that no sin on the part of another is desired.