
The Exercises in Daily Life

What do you take with you away from the Ignatian Exercises? You will have your own answer, of course, and you will know better than you can tell anyone. But here are some thoughts of others.

- One very experienced director says that you take from the Ignatian Exercises everything you need if—besides any election or decision the Lord gave to you—you finish effectively determined to pray every day, read some spiritual writing, and take a long time once a month for reflection and musing. Anyone can see that such a program would keep you faithful to the Lord.

- Prayer every day? You might tend to hope that you could continue giving to mental prayer as much time as you have given it during the Exercises. You may well be free to do that, and choose to. You would do very wisely, then, to keep in touch with a spiritual director. For spiritual direction offers special helps to one who prays consistently.

- Most of us, however, had to make a very special effort to set aside time for the Ignatian Exercises every day. We need to recognize that daily life will not long allow that.

- However, you know now that praying does not require monastic life-styles. You know several ways of praying: consideration, contemplation, meditation, fantasizing, and others. And you have engaged in many different spiritual exercises: examining, speaking to God, petitioning, reflecting on yourself in the light of the gospel truths, and so on.

- Two ways of praying you can keep up without having to block off any large amount of

time. First, speak with God all the time, trying to keep aware of God's love burning creatively at the core of your life. You can easily use the Three Little Ways of Praying, even in crowds or driving down the expressway.

And second, you can continue examining your days and hours in the Examen of Conscience. You would need to set aside five or ten minutes, or even better, a quarter of an hour, to do this. You will know when to do it: Most do it in the evening, though some do it when they wake in the morning.

- The experience of the Ignatian Exercises brings you in touch with the revelation of God in Christ at a mature level. You are no longer an adolescent in your religious life, or a child in your interior life. Recognize that if you do not nurture your adult Christian life, you will suffer frustration and desolation. You need spiritual discourse, serious dialogue on serious matters. One of the early spiritual writers said that when we pray we talk to God, and when we read spiritual writing, God talks to us. How can an adult expect to continue happy in the interior life with a child's learning, or an adolescent's self-absorption?

- Most of us need the support of others in any great enterprise. Not all of us, it is true; some go to hermitages and some are such total self-starters that others distract them. Most of us need companionship. You will do very well to find spiritual companionship. As instances: scripture study groups, prayer groups, Christian Life Communities, Marriage Encounter.

- Perhaps, having received the gifts God gave you during the course of these Ignatian Exercises, you now feel called on to go and share them with others. Gather a group. ❖