

# The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola

## Brief Biography

- 1491 – Born in Azpeitia, Spain (youngest of 13 children)
- 1517-21 – Served as a soldier in the Spanish army
- 1521 – Wounded in battle (cannon ball broke his leg severely)
- 1522 – Experienced great conversion while waiting for leg to heal
- 1523 – Set out for Holy Land
- 1524-27 – Studied at Barcelona and Alcalá
- 1528-35 – Studied at University of Paris; earned M.A.
- 1537 – Ordained a priest
- 1540 – Founded the Society of Jesus
- 1548 – Spiritual Exercises published (written between 1522-1541)
- 1556 – Dies in Rome
- 1609 – Beatified by Pope Gregory XV
- 1622 – Canonized together with St. Francis Xavier



## Preliminaries

### I. Affectivity & Reverence

“What fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly” (2).

“In all the following Spiritual Exercises we use the acts of the intellect in reasoning and of the will in eliciting acts of the affections. In regard to the affective acts which spring from the will we should note that when we are conversing with God our Lord or his saints vocally or mentally, greater reverence is demanded of us than when we are using the intellect to understand” (3).



“The persons who receive the Exercises will benefit greatly by entering upon them with great spirit and generosity toward their Creator and Lord, and by offering all their desires and freedom to him so that his Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatsoever way is according to his most holy will” (5).

## II. Timeframe & Expectations

“The Exercises ought to be completed in thirty days, more or less” (4).

“The Spiritual Exercises should be adapted to the disposition of the persons who desire to make them, that is, to their age, education, and ability...A person who is involved in public affairs or pressing occupations but educated or intelligent may take an hour and a half each day to perform the Exercises...Ordinarily, in making them an exercitant will achieve more progress the more he or she withdraws from all friends and acquaintances, and from all earthly concerns” (18, 19, 20).

“It is helpful for a person receiving the Exercises of the First Week to know nothing about what is to be done in the Second, but to work diligently during the First Week at obtaining what he or she is seeking, just as if there were no anticipation of finding anything good in the Second” (11).

## III. Principle & Foundation

“Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in working toward the end for which they are created...I must make myself indifferent to all created things...On my own part I ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters. I ought to desire and elect only the thing which is more conducive to the end for which I am created” (23).



## IV. Examination of Conscience

“I assume that there are three kinds of thoughts in myself. That is, one kind is my own, which arises strictly from my own freedom and desire; and the other two come from outside myself, the one from the good spirit and the other from the evil” (32).

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- Sins are to be accounted for in thoughts, words, and deeds.

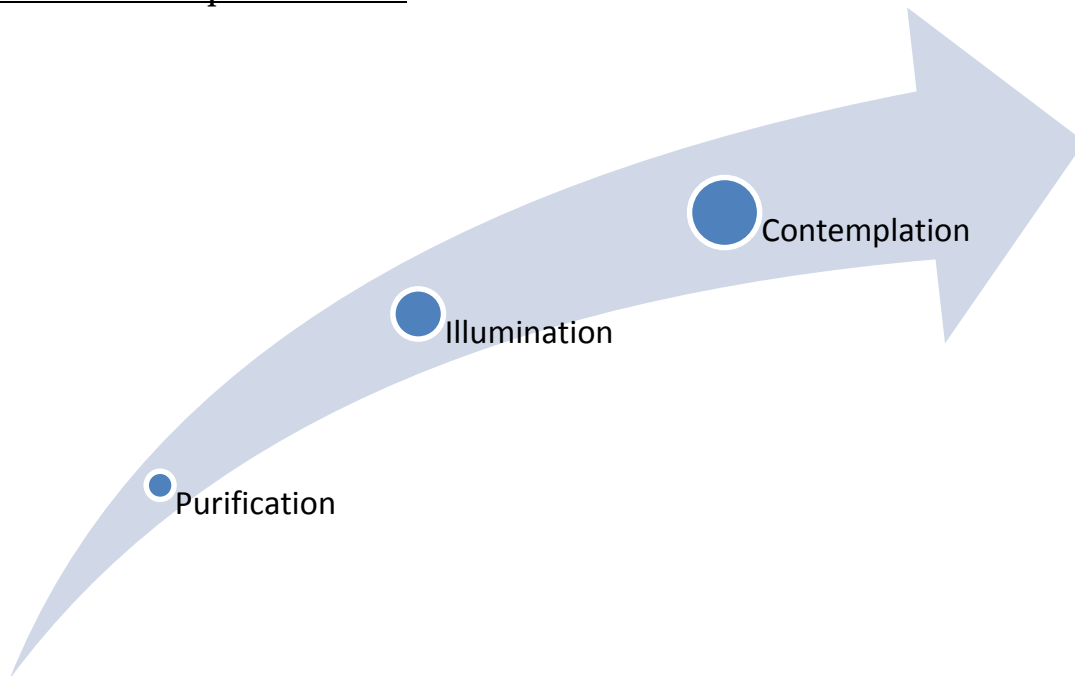
## V. Preparatory Prayer

“God our Lord, I ask for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of your Divine Majesty” (46).

- Exercitant must use his or her imagination to vividly perceive the place in which the meditation or contemplation is taking place.
- Exercitants must specifically ask God for what they desire to receive in every meditation or contemplation.
- Exercitants must meditate by engaging their memory, understanding, and will.
- Exercitants often pray in the form of a colloquy at the end of each meditation and contemplation. A colloquy is a spontaneous conversational prayer between the exercitant and God the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Blessed Mother.

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### Classic Form of Spiritual Ascent



### Structure of Spiritual Exercises

“By the term Spiritual Exercises we mean every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities...For, just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul” (1).

### Week I: **Purification**

- \*Examination of Conscience
- \*Exercise 1: A meditation by using the three powers of the soul about the first, second, and third sins.
- \*Exercise 2: A meditation on our own sins.
- \*Exercise 3: A repetition of the first and second exercises.
- \*Exercise 4: A résumé of the third exercise.
- \*Exercise 5: A meditation on hell.

### Week II: **Illumination**

- \*Exercise 1: The call of the temporal king, as an aid toward contemplating the life of the eternal king.
- \*Exercise 2: Several contemplations on the incarnation, nativity, presentation in the temple, flight to Egypt, Jesus' obedience to his parents at Nazareth, and the finding of Jesus in the temple. Contemplations include an application of the five senses in imagination.
- \*Exercise 3: A meditation on two standards, the one of Christ, our supreme commander and Lord, the other of Lucifer, the mortal enemy of our human nature.
- \*Exercise 4: A meditation on three classes of persons.
- \*Exercise 5: Several contemplations on the baptism of Jesus, the temptations of Christ, the calling of the apostles, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus walking on water, Jesus preaching in the temple, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, Palm Sunday.
- \*Appendixes: (1) Three ways of being humble; (2) Introduction to the making of an election.

### Week III: **Purification & Illumination**

- \*Exercise 1: Contemplation on how Christ our Lord went from Bethany to Jerusalem for the Last Supper.
- \*Exercise 2: Contemplation on the time between the Last Supper and Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- \*Exercise 3: Contemplations on the events from the Garden to the houses of Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, and on the Way of the Cross.
- \*Exercise 4: Contemplation of all the passion taken as a whole.

### Week IV: **Contemplation**

- \*Exercise 1: Contemplation on how Christ our Lord appeared to our Lady.
- \*Exercise 2: Contemplation to attain love.





## Highlights from the Spiritual Exercises

Week I:

“If in any point I find what I am seeking, there I will repose until I am fully satisfied, without any anxiety to go on” (76).

Week II:

“Eternal Lord of all things, I make my offering, with your favor and help. I make it in the presence of your infinite Goodness, and of your glorious Mother, and of all the holy men and women in your heavenly court. I wish and desire, and it is my deliberate decision, provided only that it is for your greater service and praise, to imitate you in bearing all injuries and affronts, and any poverty, actual as well as spiritual, if your Most Holy Majesty desires to elect and receive me into such a life and state” (98).

“There will be three steps: the first, poverty in opposition to riches; the second, reproaches or contempt in opposition to honor from the world; and the third, humility in opposition to pride...I desire to choose poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth; contempt with Christ laden with it rather than honors; a useless fool for Christ, who before me was regarded as such, rather than as a wise or prudent person in this world” (146, 167).



“This is a way in which many are in error; for they take up a predisposed or bad choice and then regard it as a divine vocation. For every vocation from God is something pure, stainless, and without mingling of the flesh or any other disordered affection” (172).

“For everyone ought to reflect that in all spiritual matters, the more one divests oneself of self-love, self-will, and self-interests, the more progress one will make” (189).

Week III:

“Consider what Christ our Lord suffers in his human nature, or desires to suffer, according to the passage being contemplated. Then one should begin here with much effort to bring oneself to grief, sorrow, and tears, and in this manner to work through the points which follow” (195).

Week IV:

“Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words. Love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover. Thus, if the one has knowledge, one gives it to the other who does not; and similarly in regard to honors or riches. Each shares with the other” (231).

“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for that is enough for me” (234).



### Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, heal me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
Good Jesus, hear me.  
In your wounds shelter me.  
From turning away keep me.  
From the evil one protect me.  
At the hour of my death call me.  
Into your presence lead me,  
To praise you with all your saints  
Forever and ever.  
Amen.

English translations taken from: Ignatius of Loyola, *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George E. Ganss (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

