

Ignatius' First Spiritual Exercises

The story begins in 1521 when Ignatius found himself in a fortified tower in the Basque country. He was recovering after a cannon ball shattered his lower leg in a battle. The only reading matter available to him during his convalescence was a book on the lives of the saints. He had long held the desire to become a knight and he allowed his imagination to drift between heroic feats in battle and dedicated service to God. He noted that the former left him restless and dissatisfied and the latter brought peace and a sense of well-being. So began his journey of discovery into the movement of the Spirit within.

The Spiritual Exercises began life as a set of structured exercises woven with a particular dynamic into a retreat by St Ignatius. They are not a loose collection of prayers. Rather, they are integrated exercises that work powerfully together—each day builds on the next, and each week is crafted into a thematic whole. Similarly, each week builds on the previous so that the whole four-week retreat is a single, progressive, and powerful experience of grace.

The Spiritual Exercises began life as the prayer journal of St Ignatius. In the beginning this journal charted his reflections, graces, questions, feelings and favourite scripture texts and prayer notes. This was the material that Ignatius shaped into an instruction manual.

There are no pre-requisites for participation in the First Spiritual Exercises, all you need is a willing heart and 25 minutes a day. You will need to bring your imagination as well. If you feel a little hesitant about using your imagination don't worry. As I feel sure that you will learn as the days progress. Once I read that Ignatius said that Jesus taught him like a school boy, I knew I wanted to try the Spiritual Exercises. It is a good idea to have a candle nearby that you can light at the beginning of each session. You need an exercise book or a group of pages that you can fasten together by bulldog clip or the like. You will write your reflection each day. This book is called your Listening Book.

These are the steps in each session: with a suggested time of 25 minutes in total

Preparation 5 minutes

Opening Prayer 1 minute

Desire 1 minute

Prayer 15 minutes

Conversation (with Jesus) 3 minutes.

Listening Book 3 minutes

Beginning on October 4th at 11 am I will be on the Zoom link that is attached to this email. From Monday to Thursday inclusive, I will guide you through an exercise. We won't talk with each other about our experience. You are asked to participate in the Eucharist on-line each Sunday. At 4pm each Sunday afternoon during the month I will be on the same Zoom link. This will be an occasion to share our thoughts and reflections on the week just concluded. We don't analyse each other's experience. I include my mobile number here 0408561964 should you wish to talk individually with me about what you are experiencing.

So to recap; starting on Monday next, October 4th there will be a daily session of a Spiritual Exercise on the Zoom link sent out with this email. Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday there will be an exercise at 11am. Nothing on Friday and Saturday. Attend Sunday's Eucharist on-line and join a group reflection on Sunday afternoon at 4pm. The First Spiritual Exercises will continue daily throughout October. Do call me if you would like more information.

Wishing you grace and peace,

Linda