

## SELECTIONS FROM *THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

### **First Principle and Foundation**

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

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### **Fifth Exercise**

*This is a meditation on hell. Besides the preparatory prayer and two preludes it contains five points and a colloquy*

PRAYER. The preparatory prayer will be as usual.

FIRST PRELUDE. This is a representation of the place. Here it will be to see in imagination the length, breadth, and depth of hell.

SECOND PRELUDE. I should ask for what I desire. Here it will be to beg for a deep sense of the pain which the lost suffer, that if through my faults I forget the love of the eternal Lord, at least the fear of these punishments will keep me from falling into sin.

FIRST POINT. This will be to see in imagination the vast fires, and the souls enclosed, as it were, in bodies of fire.

SECOND POINT. To hear the wailing, the howling, cries, and blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against His saints.

THIRD POINT. With the sense of smell to perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth, and corruption.

FOURTH POINT. To taste the bitterness of tears, sadness, and remorse of conscience.

FIFTH POINT. With the sense of touch to feel the flames which envelop and burn the souls.

COLLOQUY. Enter into conversation with Christ our Lord. Recall to memory that of those who are in hell, some came there because they did not believe in the coming of Christ; others, though they believed, because they did not keep the Commandments. Divide them all into three classes:

1. Those who were lost before the coming of Christ;
2. Those who were lost during His lifetime;
3. Those who were lost after His life here on earth.

Thereupon, I shall give thanks to God our Lord, because He has not permitted me to fall into any of these three classes, so putting an end to my life.

I shall also thank Him for this, that up to this very moment He has shown Himself so loving and merciful to me.

Close with an *Our Father*.

### **Other Exercises**

If the one giving the Exercises judges that it would be profitable for the exercitant, other exercises may be added here, for example, on death and other punishments of sin, on judgment, etc. Let him not think it is forbidden, though they are not given here.

**Note**

The First Exercise will be made at midnight; the Second, immediately on rising in the morning; the Third, before or after Mass, at all events before dinner; the Fourth, about the time of Vespers; the Fifth, an hour before supper.

This is more or less the arrangement of hours that I take for granted is being observed in all four Weeks. But as age, condition of health, and the physical constitution of the exercitant permit,, there may be five exercises or fewer.

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**Penance**

The tenth Additional Direction deals with penance. This is divided into interior and exterior penance. Interior penance consists in sorrow for one's sins and a firm purpose not to commit them or any others. Exterior penance is the fruit of the first kind. It consists in inflicting punishment on ourselves for the sins we have committed. The principal ways of doing this are three:

The first kind of exterior penance concerns eating. In this matter, if we do away with what is superfluous, it is not penance, but temperance. We do penance when we deny ourselves something of what is suitable for us. The more we do this, the better the penance, provided only we do no harm to ourselves and do not cause any serious illness.

The second kind of exterior penance concerns sleep. Here, too, it is not penance when we do away with the superfluous in what is pampering and soft. But it is penance when in our manner of sleeping we take something away from what is suitable. The more we do in this line, the better it is, provided we do not cause any harm to ourselves, and do not bring on any notable illness. But we should not deny ourselves a suitable amount of sleep, except to come to a happy mean in case we had the habit of sleeping too much.

The third kind of penance is to chastise the body, that is, to inflict sensible pain on it. This is done by wearing hairshirts, cords, or iron chains on the body, or by scourging or wounding oneself, and by other kinds of austerities.

THE MORE SUITABLE AND SAFE FORM OF PENANCE SEEMS TO BE that which would cause sensible pain to the body and not penetrate to the bones, so that it inflicts pain, but does not cause sickness. For this reason it would seem more suitable to chastise oneself with light cords that cause superficial pain, rather than in any other way that might bring about a serious internal infirmity.

**Note**

The principal reason for performing exterior penance is to secure three effects

1. To make satisfaction for past sins;
2. To overcome oneself, that is, to make our sensual nature obey reason, and to bring all of our lower faculties into greater subjection to the higher;
3. To obtain some grace or gift that one earnestly desires. Thus it may be that one wants a deep sorrow for sin, or tears, either because of his sins or because of the pains and sufferings of Christ our Lord; or he may want the solution of some doubt that is in his mind.

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**The Second Contemplation***The Nativity*

PRAYER. The usual preparatory prayer.

FIRST PRELUDE. This is the history of the mystery. Here it will be that our Lady, being about nine months with child, set out from Nazareth, as may be piously believed, seated on an ass, and accompanied

by Joseph and a maid, leading an ox. They are going to Bethlehem to pay the tribute that Caesar imposed on those lands.

SECOND PRELUDE. This is a mental representation of the place. It will consist here in seeing in imagination the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level, or through valleys and over hills. Observe also the place or cave where Christ is born; whether big or little; whether high or low; and how it is arranged.

THIRD PRELUDE. This will be the same as in the preceding contemplation and identical in form with it.

FIRST POINT. This will consist in seeing the persons, namely, our Lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence. Then I will reflect on myself that I may reap some fruit.

SECOND POINT. This is to consider, observe, and contemplate what the persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it.

THIRD POINT. This will be to see and consider what they are doing, for example, making the journey and laboring that our Lord might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labors, after hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, after insults and outrages, He might die on the cross, and all this for me.

Then I will reflect and draw some spiritual fruit from what I have seen.

COLLOQUY. Close with a colloquy as in the preceding contemplation, and with the Our Father.

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### **The Fifth Contemplation**

*This will consist in applying the five senses to the matter of the first and second contemplations*

After the preparatory prayer and three preludes, it will be profitable with the aid of the imagination to apply the five senses to the subject matter of the First and Second Contemplation in the following manner:

FIRST POINT. 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.

SECOND POINT. 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.

THIRD POINT. This is to smell the infinite fragrance, and taste the 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.

FOURTH POINT. 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.

COLLOQUY. Conclude with a colloquy and with an Our Father as in the First and Second Contemplations.

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### **Rules for Thinking with the Church**

*The following rules should be observed to foster the true attitude of mind we ought to have in the church militant*

1. We must put aside all judgment of our own, and keep the mind ever ready and prompt to obey in all things the true Spouse of Jesus Christ, our holy Mother, the hierarchical Church.
2. We should praise sacramental confession, the yearly reception of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and praise more highly monthly reception, and still more weekly Communion, provided requisite and proper dispositions are present.

3. We ought to praise the frequent hearing of Mass, the singing of hymns, psalmody, and long prayers whether in the church or outside; likewise, the hours arranged at fixed times for the whole Divine Office, for every kind of prayer, and for the canonical hours.
4. We must praise highly religious life, virginity, and continency; and matrimony ought not be praised as much as any of these.
5. We should praise vows of religion, obedience, poverty, chastity, and vows to perform other works of supererogation conducive to perfection. However, it must be remembered that a vow deals with matters that lead us closer to evangelical perfection. Hence, whatever tends to withdraw one from perfection may not be made the object of a vow, for example, a business career, the married state, and so forth.
6. We should show our esteem for the relics of the saints by venerating them and praying to the saints. We should praise visits to the Station Churches, pilgrimages, indulgences, jubilees, crusade indulgences, the lighting of candles in churches.
7. We must praise the regulations of the Church with regard to fast and abstinence, for example, in Lent, on Ember Days, Vigils, Fridays, and Saturdays. We should praise all works of penance, not only those that are interior but also those that are exterior.
8. We ought to praise not only the building and adornment of churches, but also images and veneration of them according to the subject they represent.
9. Finally, we must praise all the commandments of the Church, and be on the alert to find reasons to defend them, and by no means in order to criticize them.
10. We should be more ready to approve and praise the orders, recommendations, and way of acting of our superiors than to find fault with them. Though some of the orders, etc., may not have been praiseworthy, yet to speak against them, either when preaching in public or in speaking before the people, would rather be the cause of murmuring and scandal than of profit. As a consequence, the people would become angry with their superiors, whether secular or spiritual. But while it does harm in the absence of our superiors to speak evil of them before the people, it may be profitable to discuss their bad conduct with those who can apply a remedy.
11. We should praise both positive theology and that of the Scholastics.  
It is characteristic of the positive doctors, such as St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Gregory, and others, to rouse the affections so that we are moved to love and serve God our Lord in all things.  
On the other hand, it is more characteristic of the scholastic doctors, such as St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, the Master of the Sentences, and others, to define and state clearly, according to the needs of our times, the doctrines that are necessary for eternal salvation, and that help to refute and expose more efficaciously all errors and fallacies.  
Further, just because scholastic doctors belong to more recent times, they not only have the advantage of correct understanding of Holy Scripture and of the teaching of the saints and positive doctors, but, enlightened by the grace of God, they also make use of the decisions of the Councils and of the definitions and decrees of our holy Mother Church.
12. We must be on our guard against making comparisons between those who are still living and the saints who have gone before us, for no small error is committed if we say: "This man is wiser than St. Augustine," "He is another St. Francis or even greater," "He is equal to St. Paul in goodness and sanctity," and so on.
13. If we wish to proceed securely in all things, we must hold fast to the following principle: What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical Church so defines. For I must be convinced that in Christ our Lord, the bridegroom, and in His spouse the Church, only one Spirit holds sway, which governs and rules for the salvation of souls. For it is by the same Spirit and Lord who gave the Ten Commandments that our holy Mother Church is ruled and governed.
14. Granted that it be very true that no one can be saved without being predestined and without having faith and grace, still we must be very cautious about the way in which we speak of all these things and discuss them with others.

15. We should not make it a habit of speaking much of predestination. If somehow at times it comes to be spoken of, it must be done in such a way that the people are not led into any error. They are at times misled, so that they say: "Whether I shall be saved or lost, has already been determined, and this cannot be changed whether my actions are good or bad." So they become indolent and neglect the works that are conducive to the salvation and spiritual progress of their souls.

16. In the same way, much caution is necessary, lest by much talk about faith, and much insistence on it without any distinctions or explanations; occasion be given to the people, whether before or after they have faith informed by charity, to become slothful and lazy in good works.

17. Likewise we ought not to speak of grace at such length and with such emphasis that the poison of doing away with liberty is engendered.

Hence, as far as is possible with the help of God, one may speak of faith and grace that the Divine Majesty may be praised. But let it not be done in such a way, above all not in times which are as dangerous as ours, that works and free will suffer harm, or that they are considered of no value.

18. Though the zealous service of God our Lord out of pure love should be esteemed above all, we ought also to praise highly the fear of the Divine Majesty. For not only filial fear but also servile fear is pious and very holy. When nothing higher or more useful is attained, it is very helpful for rising from mortal sin, and once this is accomplished, one may easily advance to filial fear, which is wholly pleasing and agreeable to God our Lord since it is inseparably associated with the love of Him.