

2015 Lenten 40 Day Daily Life Retreat

Introduction

St. Ignatius designed the Exercises to clear away the things in life that accumulate and block the sound of God's voice. This **exercise** is about reconnecting to God, our source of life. He intended for people to withdraw from their usual routines for 30 days and to make this a full retreat, but taking a **daily life retreat** can also be very beneficial and more manageable for most people. In the coming 40 days you can establish some new habits, re-enforce some old ones, and maybe even break a bad one. You can better hear and see what God is doing in your life as you intentionally remove distractions and spend times reading and meditating on scripture.



The Exercise

Commit to 30 to 45 minutes a day in prayer and meditation

This is an exercise of 40 days of meditations and prayers that will require from 30 to 45 minutes a day, broken into two times each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. You can give a few more minutes to either time, they don't have to be equal. You should plan for these times and do what it takes to set them aside and remember them. Mark your calendar or set an alarm on your phone, etc.

This is a **daily life retreat**, so the idea is not to take large amounts of time from your usual routine but to simply include some directed moments within the day's normal activities. Except for the week of Ash Wednesday, these exercises will be for six days of each week, Sunday through Friday, leaving Saturdays as days to rest. And if you only manage to get in five minutes one morning or evening... **that's not a fail, it's a five minute win!**

~ Listening to the Scriptures

Each day of the retreat has a scripture to read and meditate on thru the day. If you read a scripture one day and find it still resonating the next, you do not have to move on or feel pressured to leave the passage. Move on with the scriptures or stay with one as the Spirit guides and you feel you need to respond. *Will you use a particular Bible for the whole daily retreat time? It can be helpful to choose one and stick with it!*



~ Make Some Sacred Space

You should plan for where you will spend your times in meditation and prayer. Space is important and can help or hinder your prayers, so make sure you choose a place without distractions, that has good lighting, and is comfortable and conducive to prayer. It should be a good place to keep your journal, a pen, your Bible and these materials handy.

~ Practice Composure

When your prayer times roll around, either in the morning or evening, stop and take a moment to compose yourself. Breathe for a moment. Relax. Intentionally let go of cares and distractions... close your eyes and take three or four slow, deep breaths. *Stop moving before moving on.*

~ Pray Sincerely For The Graces

Each week of these Exercises will have a **grace** which is a beginning place for your prayers during that week. Pray the grace slowly and with comprehension of what is being asked.

~ Practice Awareness

As you go through your day, keep that day's passage in mind and the grace you have prayed, and be aware of how you are feeling and what you are experiencing. Be present as much as possible so that the day doesn't just slip by with experiences internal and external going unnoticed.

Morning Reading & Prayer

After you are composed, read the day's passage slowly all the way through. Then read it one or two more times listening for the words, themes, characters or parts that resonate with you or stand out in some way. Use the passage as a beginning place for a time of prayer. Pray out of anything in the passage that is resonating with you, and pray for the coming day. Jot a note in your journal, either a question or comment relating to the passage, or a hope for the coming day. Pray for that week's grace, and consciously prepare for the experiences of the coming hours at work, school or running errands, time and with friends and family.

Evening Daily Examen & Journal

Your evening prayer time is centered on a *Daily Examen* (praying for the day past day and the day coming). Sit and compose yourself refreshing yourself with your weekly grace, and then move into the Examen. You should try to do the Examen as a prayer, a conversation between yourself and God. You can journal thoughts from the Examen, and you should consider speaking aloud as if God were present conversationally.

Here is the layout of our *Daily Examen*:



Step 1. Become aware of God's presence. Welcome God into your time of prayer and reflection as a part of composing yourself for prayer.

Step 2. Review the day with gratitude. Think back on all the activities and experiences of the day. What were the best parts of the day? What were the most challenging? What do you hope to change tomorrow?

Step 3. Be mindful of your emotions. Stop and take stock of what your interior movements are at this moment. Frustrated, happy, anxious, sad, excited? Name these and ask God to be a part of these feelings, to help you have wisdom and clarity.

Step 4. Choose one feature of the day from which to pray. It may have been a conversation, or an event, an experience or an email. Choose a feature of the day to pray over and about, let it be a conversational place of prayer between you and God.

Step 5. Look toward tomorrow. Pray for the next day, and all that you will experience. Imagine what new things you might do in God's world and ask God to go along with you on that coming day's journey.

Journal Something

You can journal any time in the day, but be sure to write something after your time of evening prayer and Examen. It really doesn't have to be a lot; *one sentence is better than nothing*. This will help you get the most from the day and will also enhance your evening Examen. For the sake of convenience and simplicity, there is space given in these materials for some very light journaling. You can use this space or a journal of your choosing. Oh, did we mention doodling yet? *Doodle in your journal!*

Have any questions about the daily life retreat?

Write them down before you forget and then email me when you can!

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The Weeks of Lent

The Week of Ash Wednesday

Theme: The Lord's Prayer

For these three days especially we are praying for this grace...

*"God grant me the time and energy
to pray with you in the coming weeks.
Draw me close and let me hear your voice."*

You know it as **The Lord's Prayer** and this week you will go deeper with these familiar words as presented in Matthew's Gospel, in three pieces. In the mornings, begin with the grace and the day's verses as you pray. Let the words settle in and go with you.

February 18, Ash Wednesday. Matthew 6:9&10

How is a day lived differently, if it is rooted in the idea of bringing God's will and kingdom into reality?

February 19, Thursday. Matthew 6:11&12

What are your daily needs, and can you better control your appetites to keep practice better self-control and less selfishness? What do the people around you need from you, today? Who depends on you?

February 20 Friday. Matthew 6:13

Do you really want to give up all your temptations? Are there things in your life to which you cling that you would like to give up and be **rescued** from?

Are you fasting during Lent?

If so, what are you giving up in your fast? *If not, want to give it a try?*

Journal Space...

The Week Beginning Sunday, February 22

Theme: "We Are Part of God's Good Creation"

For these six days especially we are praying for this grace...

"God you have made a wonderful world.

Help me to be worthy of it."

We do not live lives disconnected from the world around us, and neither do we prayer disconnected from the world around us! We are all inter-related as people by our human heritage, by our hurts and joys, and by our dreams and fears. And we are connected to all of God's creation in much the same way, by the air we breath and carbon dioxide we provide while breathing, by our place in the food chain, by our need for and use of water and land, and by our yearning to stand in the warm sun.

February 22, Sunday. "It Is Good" Genesis 1:27-31

February 23, Monday. "The Anger of Jonah" Jonah 4:5-11

February 24, Tuesday. "In All The Earth" Psalm 8

February 25, Wednesday. "Creation Responds" Isaiah 55:8-13

February 26, Thursday. "God Does Care For All" Matthew 6:25-27

February 27, Friday. "Have Our Being" Acts 17:24-28

How are you doing with remembering the morning and evening times?

Don't worry about missing a time or two, just think of ways to keep the practice in mind and making them special moments in each day.

Journal Space...

The Week Beginning Sunday, March 1

Theme: "We Are Redeemed People"

For these six days especially we are praying for this grace...

*"God, help me to understand and live
in your amazing forgiveness, redemption and grace."*

Redemption is forgiveness, being **bought back**, a strong sense of returning and restoration. It is the driving desire of God to be reconciled to and returned to close relationship with you, past any and all barriers that have come between you. Redemption is new starts, fresh starts, restarts and building on the graces of the past to create a path that moves forward. Redeeming love and grace is God sharing divine goodness with us and helping us realize just how precious and valuable we are. *A deep wonder of God's redeeming love is that you don't even have to be all that lost at this very moment to be completely found.*

March 1, Sunday. "God Pardons" Isaiah 55:6&7

March 2, Monday. "Be Reasonable" Isaiah 1:1:15-18

March 3, Tuesday. "Have Mercy" Psalm 86:1-7

March 4, Wednesday. "Forget Not" Psalm 103:1-6

March 5, Thursday. "A Chosen People" 1 Peter 2:9&10

March 6, Friday. "Participate In The Divine Nature" 2 Peter 1:3-9

How are you doing with the weekly graces? For some of us it will be a new experience repeating a written prayer daily like this. That's ok.

The grace is a means, not an end. It should be a spring board or a launch pad to help your prayers. Let it be as useful as it is or isn't needed.

Journal Space...

The Week Beginning Sunday, March 8

Theme: "We Are Sent People"

For these six days especially we are praying for this grace...
*"God, I want to be an emissary of your willful
love and grace in my world! I want to be light."*

And old African proverb says, *"To be called is to be sent."* It reflects the sentiment that a chief summons someone for the purpose of giving them a task, not just to share pleasantries. It's a beautiful reminder that as God calls us, God also sends us. God blesses my life so that I can bless others. God's light shines on us and is to be reflected to everyone around us, not hidden away and kept for ourselves.

March 8, Sunday. "Beautiful Feet" Isaiah 52:7

March 9, Monday. "Cold Water" Proverbs 25:25

March 10, Tuesday. "Do As I Have Done" John 13:12-17

March 11, Wednesday. "The Only True Debt" Romans 13:8-10

March 12, Thursday. "To Do Good Works" Ephesian 2:6-10

March 13, Friday. "Becoming Ambassadors" 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

How is it going with journaling a bit every day? Is it an easy thing for you or a new experience?

Have you looked back on the things written yet? Looking back on prayers and thoughts you have captured in your journal can be very enriching.

Journal Space...

The Week Beginning Sunday, March 15

Theme: "First Principle And Foundation"

For these six days especially we are praying for this grace...

*"God, I want to walk in your path and follow you,
knowing in my life what is unknowable: your peace and joy."*

St. Ignatius taught that we should be intentional about the way we identify what is at the core of our being, what guides our words and actions and sustains us in our daily walk. Having a good grip on my core being, **My Foundation**, helps keep me joyful & wise on good days and hopeful & wise on bad days.

March 15, Sunday. "Justice, Love, Humility" Micah 6:8

March 16, Monday. "Walking in Step" Psalm 1

March 17, Tuesday. "Like a Tree" Jeremiah 17:7&8

March 18, Wednesday. "Led By The Spirit" Galatians 5:13-18

March 19, Thursday. "Remain In My Love" John 15:9-17

March 20, Friday. "Aiming to Please" 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Welcome to the fourth full week of this daily life retreat!

Have you begun to feel or hear themes and big ideas emerging from our daily passages? Are you feeling moved to make any responses to God?

Journal Space...

For your consideration this week, here is the full First Principle and Foundation as St. Ignatius wrote it for himself. The language is a bit stilted, though we surely get the feel for his devotion to God.

He's better known for the short version... *"We are created to share in God's love and life for eternity."*

First Principle and Foundation

The human person is created to praise, reverence, and serve God Our Lord, and by doing so, to save his or her soul.

All other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings in order to help them pursue the end for which they are created.

It follows from this that one must use other created things, in so far as they help towards one's end, and free oneself from them, in so far as they are obstacles to one's end.

To do this, we need to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, provided the matter is subject to our free choice and there is no other prohibition.

Thus, as far as we are concerned, we should not want health more than illness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one, and similarly for all the rest, but we should desire and choose only what helps us more towards the end for which we are created.

The Week Beginning Sunday, March 22

Theme: "The Kingdom of Heaven"

For these six days especially we are praying for this grace...
*"God, help me to value and desire your kingdom
as the precious treasure that it is."*

God's Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Heaven, is for us a state of being within the will of God, and it is an expression of God's will at work in creation. It is ultimately unavoidable, and yet may be so much more richly chosen and experienced in our lives with intentionality.

March 22, Sunday. "Everlasting Kingdom" Psalm 145:1-13

March 23, Monday. "Branches for Shelter" Matthew 13:31&32

March 24, Tuesday. "Yeast In Dough" Matthew 13:33

March 25, Wednesday. "Treasure!" Matthew 13:44

March 26, Thursday. "A Precious Pearl" Matthew 13:44&46

March 27, Friday. "Endless Days" Psalm 93

St. Ignatius was serious about us being mindful for our feelings. How have you been feeling during the daily life retreat? Grateful? Disappointed? Can you sum up your general feeling of the last four weeks in one or two words?

Bring those feelings to God and ask for wisdom in all situations.

Journal Space...

The Week Beginning Sunday, March 29, **Palm Sunday**

Theme: "The Kingdom of Christ"

For these six days especially we are praying for this grace...

"Christ, help me follow well.

I give myself to you and to your Way."

The Kingdom of Christ is not different or separate from God's Kingdom, but as we enter into this Holy Week, the week before Easter, ***you will look at passages in which Jesus gives his personal touch to kingdom life.*** He becomes the focus. Different from the parables of last week, you are looking for the way Jesus leads and directs you to think about things. The last three days of this week's reading focus on the last days before the crucifixion of your Lord, when he moves through those memorable moments of sharing, betrayal and death.

March 29, Sunday. "Not of This World" John 18:28-37

March 30, Monday. "Greatest Commands" Matthew 22:34-40

March 31, Tuesday. "Wave of Forgiveness" Matthew 18:21-30

April 1, Wednesday. "In My Father's Kingdom" Matthew 26:17-30

April 2, Thursday. "Here Comes My Betrayer" Matthew 26:36-46

April 3, Friday. "Surely He Was the Son of God" Matthew 27:45-56

This is a great week to look around see what services are offered in the area at local churches... have you ever been to a Maundy Thursday service? Do you have plans to be at a Good Friday service? This year the Western and Eastern calendars differ by a week, which means on the Sunday most Western Christians are celebrating Easter, the Eastern Orthodox churches are celebrating Palm Sunday... you might want to find a local Orthodox Church to visit and experience their Holy Week services if you have never attended with them before!

Journal Space...

Easter Sunday, The Final Day of Our Retreat, April 5 This Day Is All About The Resurrection!

For this day especially we are praying for this grace...

"Christ, you have risen!

Let your light shine in the world and make it glad!"

We are here! Easter Sunday! On this final day of the retreat you should stop and just revel in the wonder and mystery of the day. Christians have always know the resurrection to be pivot point in the way we view and experience history and life. Be sure to journal one more time today. In fact, you might practice the Daily Examen with the whole retreat in mind, reviewing and praying over the Lenten weeks as you would review and pray over a day!

The Apostle Paul lays out an idea in today's passage... ***the idea of compelling love***. He believed that if Jesus could be driven, born, lived, died and raised by such love, *so could he and so can you*. And we now live for the one who set such an example for us. Living for Christ! Living as the Servant King's people in the world!



April 5, Sunday. "Compelling Love!" 2 Corinthians 5:14&15

Can you summarize the last 40 days? What have you seen, heard and experienced?

What do want to remember from this journey? Final notes? Final thoughts? Final doodling?

Journal Space...