

DOMINICAN CENTER at MARYWOOD
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION PRACTICUM
YEAR 1, MODULE 1,
NOVEMBER, SESSION 1

**Transformation of the Human Person: Ignatius of Loyola and
The Spiritual Exercises**

Video: Ignatius Loyola: The Story of the Pilgrim

Part I: In Search of Glory

Conversion

As Ignatius Loyola reflects on his youth, he remembers his quest for personal glory. This quest led him to a life in court and the desire to be a soldier and find glory in battle. It resulted in his being severely wounded. During his recovery, Ignatius read the life of Christ and lives of the saints and realized that he would be happier proclaiming the glory of God.

Commitment

Ignatius struggled to open himself to God's love but found it difficult to let go of his past desires and habits. Throughout this time of confusion, Ignatius was guided by an image of God: "All I know is that Christ, my King, beckons me to do great deeds of love for him."

God's Presence and Love

Ignatius became aware of God's love for him while recovering from a serious battle wound. Then later, while walking down a riverbank, Ignatius had a vision in which he discovered that God is present in all things.

Reflection:

1. What image of God is helpful to you in carrying out a commitment to live for God and others?
2. How is your image of God similar to or different from the image Ignatius used?
3. In what circumstances have you found it easy to discover the presence of God in your life? In what circumstances have you felt abandoned by God? Ignatius was aware of his interior movements toward God and away from God – do you pay attention to your inner nudging and urgings? Do you spend time reflecting on your feelings and where they are leading you?
4. What is it in yourself that needs to change in order to discern the presence of God in all things?

Part II: The Spiritual Journey, Fixing our eyes on Jerusalem

Searching for God through Prayer

Ignatius took notes on his spiritual journey. He developed these notes into a set of prayers and reflections called the Spiritual Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises guide a person to follow in his or her own way, the same process that Ignatius used to learn how to live more completely with God and others.

Searching for Christ in Your Life

In one of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius imagines himself standing in front of Christ on the cross and asking, "What have I done for Christ, what am I doing for Christ, what will I do for Christ?"

The Support and Challenge of Friends

Ignatius went to Paris not only to study, but also to find friends who would make a commitment with him to become pilgrims to Jerusalem. He gathered six companions who were willing. Of these, Francis Xavier went on to become Ignatius's best friend and fellow pilgrim, willingly accepting a mission to Asia.

Reflection:

1. Think about the ways people exercise their physical bodies in life. Now think about the ways a person could "exercise" his or her spiritual self in life. In what ways do you practice a spiritual exercise in your life? Do you write in a journal, take time for daily prayer, sing to God, make regular visits to church, meditate on Scripture?
2. Ignatius's three questions review the essentials of your relationship with God and others. The first asks: Have I, in general, been living my life for God or for myself? How in the past have you been seeing and loving others as Christ would see and love them?
3. Where does Christ fit into your life today? Do you remember him just during times of community worship? Does Christ guide you in your daily relationships with your money, with daily choices, with decisions? How much of this is more a concept than a lived reality?

Part III: To Cast Fire on the Earth

Service and Compassion

Ignatius saw many needs among women and children who were beggars in the streets of Rome, and he immediately took steps to help them.

Leadership

Throughout his life Ignatius found he was serving God in ways he had not expected. Responding to the call from God through his companions, he let go of his dream of being a missionary in Jerusalem and accepted his election as the leader of the Society of Jesus. He prayed, "Then by your grace I will limp along and serve as you have me."

Education

Ignatius realized that in order to be more faithful members of the church, people needed access to education. As there were no schools available for laymen, Ignatius opened schools and began the Jesuit tradition of commitment of education and lifelong learning.

Reflection

1. What experiences and education have you had that God can call upon in a leadership position?
2. Ignatius said he would "limp along" and serve in the way God wanted him to. In what way do you see yourself as "limping along" when you think of serving God? What specific graces do you need to ask for in order to better serve God and others?