

# Theological Movements of the Spiritual Exercises Part 2

Susan J. Stabile

# Kingdom Exercise: Jesus' Invitation (Fleming)

“If a human leader can have such an appeal to us, how much greater is the attraction of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, our Leader and King! Jesus' call goes out to all peoples, yet he specially calls each person in a particular and unique way. He says, ‘It is my will to win over the whole world, to overcome evil with good, turn hatred aside with love, to conquer all the forces of death – whatever obstacles there are to sharing of life between God and humankind.

Whoever wishes to join me in this mission must be willing to labor with me, and so by following me in struggle and suffering may share with me in glory.”

# Kingdom

When Jesus says "blessed is the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God...he directs their eyes to the eschatological turning point that is now coming, that will affect all and change everything."

(Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was*)

# Possible Scripture to Accompany Kingdom Exercise

- Genesis 12:1 – call of Abraham
- Exodus 3 – call of Moses
- 1 Samuel 16 - call of Samuel
- Annunciation to Mary....to Joseph

# Holiness

We should not grow discouraged by examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts, rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for him.

(Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*)



# Danielle Rose, The Saint that is Just Me (opening lyrics)

O I thought I'd be heroic and inspiring.  
I wanted to offer you the greatest sacrifice.  
Like all the saints who'd gone before me,  
I tried to prove my love for you, and so to gain the  
prize.

I thought I'd be a martyr like Cecilia.  
I hoped I'd disappear like Saint Therese,  
Or wear a hidden crown of thorns like Rose of Lima,  
To heal the sick and raise the dead.

*When you hung upon the cross looking at me,  
You didn't die so I would try to be somebody else.  
You died so I could be the saint that is just me.*

# Some Characteristics of the Standard of the World

- Emphasis on consumption and production (valuing people based on how much they make and how much they earn)
- Individualist orientation
- Tendency to think in terms of minimum standards
- Being overly concerned with our own comfort
- Others?

# Joseph Tetlow on the Two Standards

“We begin to move under Jesus’ standard when we **join him in the living conviction that everything we have and are is God’s gift.** However much or little we have, we say gratefully, “Look at all God has given me.” Then the way opens through the smoke of self-satisfaction and approval of others. **“How can I help?” becomes a daily preoccupation.** And through a life of love and service, the Spirit leads us to live as meekly and humbly as the Lord lived—whether we are a famous ballerina or an anonymous computer programmer.”



# Roger Dawson, S.J. On the Two Standards

“[Jesus] tells us that if you really want life you are going to have to lose your life and if you want genuine richness you have to be poor. It may be challenging, but once we make that step, then we begin to share in the richness of God and to see that all we have in the world is given to us by God. **When we appreciate these gifts *as gifts*, rather than something to which we are entitled, we can learn a genuine sense of gratitude, wonder and awe for these gifts, and we can begin to realize that the only possession we ever need is God.** In this relationship I see myself as I really am and more importantly know that I am loved for who I am, not because of status, title, job, money, or possessions – none of these lasts and ultimately none of these matters. This is what the Meditation of the Two Standards is showing us.”

# “A Thought And a Prayer for My Fellow Catholics and Other Christians”

[W]e ought not to be surprised by the fact that **many Catholics and other Christians are swept along by cultural trends, no matter how antithetical they are to Biblical principles and the firm and constant teaching of the Church.** 'Twas ever thus. ...And Christians who fall in line with a trend always find ways to say that the trend, whatever it is, is compatible with Christian faith--even dictated by it! It's hard for human beings to actually be countercultural...

So when Marxism is in vogue, there will be self-proclaimed Christian Marxists. When Fascism is fashionable, there will be self-identified Christian fascists. When racial subordination and segregation is the cultural norm, we'll baptize it. When eugenics is popular among the *cognoscenti*, there will be Christians claiming that eugenic practices and policies constitute Christian love in practice. If polyamory becomes the next cause embraced by the beautiful people and the cultural elite, we will start hearing about the Christian case for group marriage---"love cannot be arbitrarily confined to pairs." And on and on.

**Being human, we crave approval and we like to fit in. Moreover, we human beings are naturally influenced by the ways of thinking favored by those who are regarded in a culture as the sophisticated and important people. When push comes to shove, it's really hard to be true to Christian faith; the social and personal costs are too high.** We Christians praise the martyrs and honor their memories, but we are loath to place in jeopardy so much as an opportunity for career advancement, or the good opinion of a friend, much less our lives. So we tend to fall in line, or at least fall silent. We deceive ourselves with rationalizations for what amounts to either conformism or cowardice. We place the emphasis on whatever happens in the cultural circumstances to be the acceptable parts of Christian teaching, and soft-pedal or even abandon the parts that the enforcers of cultural norms deem to be unacceptable. We make a million excuses for going along with what's wrong, and pretty soon we find ourselves going along with calling it right.

Jesus says, "if you want to be my disciple, you must take up our cross and follow me." We say, "um, well, we'll get around to that at some point."

(Robert George)

# As Retreatant Moves Through Week 2:

- Movement from self-absorption to other-absorption
- Desire to conform one's life more and more to Jesus.'
- Deepened desire and commitment to hold fast to Christ's standard in the face of the temptation of the world.
- Increased ability to recognize the difference between the pull of God and the pull of the enemy spirit.

## *For Me*

Ignatius “is more concerned that the redemptive act of Jesus not be drawn in cosmic terms, to the detriment of the unique and personal love for the particular retreatant that moves Jesus to spend his life for this one person in the face of his or her sin rejection.”

(David Fleming)



# Week 3 As a Time for Confirmation

The Third Week is also what Ignatius calls a time of confirmation. You made a decision in the Second Week about how you are going to follow Jesus. Now Ignatius invites you to take that decision before Christ on the cross, to stand before the crucified Christ and say, “This is my decision.” You stand at the foot of the cross and ask, “Can I be, am I going to be, a suffering servant the way Jesus is a suffering servant?”

*Discovering Your Dream: How Ignatian Spirituality Can Guide Your Life* by Gerald M. Fagin, SJ



# Third Week Confirmation

“Through compassion with Christ, in the literal sense of 'suffering with', the quality of the retreatant's election is deepened beyond a point possible at the end of the second week. For, in attending to the positive good chosen, the election has left open the possibility of seeking, together with the service of the Lord, the satisfaction of other desires, normal as well as inordinate. Compromise is possible, and beyond that, renunciation of the original choice. **The Passion involves the exercitant implicitly in a continuous and deepening choice of Christ, even though it may entail the loss of all other goods, life itself included; it brings him to that anterior affective renunciation characteristic of the third class of [persons], who have in effect left all they desired.** The last two weeks of the Exercises ground the election in the living Paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ; they strengthen the exercitant through the experience that the loss of all things for him, and death with him, lead to a share in his risen life; and that, by following Christ in suffering, the retreatant shall follow him in glory as well.”

(Peter Fennessy, *The Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises*)

# Being Present to Jesus

We don't need to make any big promises or figure out answers to timeless existential questions about the meaning of suffering. We just need to be present to Jesus and continue to have our hearts schooled about what compassion is all about. In this school of the heart, the cross becomes an extension of Jesus' ministry of loving presence, a love that is with us to the end.

(Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*)

# Dyckman et al on Week 3

To know, love and follow Jesus gains new meaning in light of the Third Week: the call to compassion with Jesus' suffering. Following Jesus draws the seeker into the drama of the cross, for she goes up to Jerusalem and engages in the conflict that leads to death. Being with Jesus means entering into *his* perspective, focusing not on personal experience of the passion, but willingly sharing his: his choices, his anguish, his truth, his desires, his aloneness, his sense of the absence of God.

# Resistance to Week 3

[T]he Third Week can also be extraordinarily difficult. Having had so many expectations and aspirations stirred during the Second Week, it is not uncommon for retreatants to find themselves unable to let go, unable to make the shift to the Third Week without considerable frustration. They may, like the apostle Peter, simply not want Jesus to suffer; they may be wedded to memories of Second Week consolations; they may be incapable of facing the reality of negativity, opposition, suffering, and death.

(Joseph Cassidy, S.J.)



# Suffering with Consciousness and Love (Louis Savary)

Humans are the bearers of consciousness and free choice. Thus, we can endure unavoidable suffering with consciousness and hatred, or we can endure it with consciousness and love. When you are conscious of your suffering, you can take the energy of your suffering and direct it either into anger and resentment, or into compassion and healing.

In his passion and death, Jesus teaches us how to suffer with consciousness and love....

Until we can get beyond seeing nothing more on the cross than Jesus as an individual in excruciating agony, we can never grasp the conscious creative and redemptive force of his suffering and death.



# Living with Suffering

If Christianity is to be any more than an interesting explanatory system for those who enjoy the diversions of metaphysical philosophy, then it must open in us a way to live abundantly in and with our suffering, give us hope, empower us to live with others in their suffering, and discern the difference between the suffering characteristic of human existence and suffering that demands alleviation or resistance.

(James Farwell, *This is the Night: Suffering, Salvation and the Liturgies of Holy Week*)

# Victimization vs. Victimhood

Bad things, I am afraid, happen to everyone. This we can't change. If you look at your birth certificate, does it say life will be easy? It does not. But so many of us remain stuck in trauma or grief, unable to experience our lives fully. This we can change.

Suffering is universal. But victimhood is optional. There is a difference between victimization and victimhood. We are all likely to be victimized in some way in the course of our lives.... caused by circumstances or people or institutions over which we have little or no control. This is life. And this is victimization. ...

In contrast, victimhood comes from the insider. No one can make you a victim but you. We become victims not because of what happens to us but when we choose to hold on to our victimization. We develop a victim's mind.

No matter how frustrating or boring or constraining or painful or oppressive our experience, we can always choose how we respond. And I finally begin to understand that I, too, have a choice.

(Edith Eva Eger, The Choice)

# Some Questions for Reflection

As I think about my experience with my own directees or retreatants, what have I learned about the challenges some experience...

.....in knowing they are called to take a role in God's plan

.....in deepening their relationship with Christ

.....in staying wedded to Christ in the midst of difficulties and temptations

.....in praying with the suffering Jesus

What did I hear today that....

.....challenged me

.....resonated with me

.....that might be helpful in my accompaniment of my directees or retreatants