

Annotated OOS - August 10, 2014 Service
Worship Leader: Jesse Anderson

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Covenant

In the love of truth and the spirit of Jesus
We unite for the worship of God and the service of all

Doxology

From all who dwell below the skies
Let songs of hope and faith arise
Let peace, good will on earth be done
Through every land, by every tongue. Amen.

Hymn #298 - Wake Now My Senses

Reflection: Ignatian Spirituality for Unitarians?

Let me begin by stating that I am not now, and never have been, a Catholic, but I do work for Catholics, taking care of all of the audio-visual systems at Holy Cross. I have been fortunate that the Jesuit Community there shares their tradition with anyone who is willing, and I have found several aspects of Ignatian Spirituality that fit well within my own faith practices. I hope to share three of these with you today: The Discernment of Spirits, Ignatian Meditation on Scripture, and The Daily Examen.

This is, by no means, a lesson on what Jesuits believe or how they act, but rather to share a few practices or tools that might be useful as part of your own faith practices. From the very beginning, Ignatius' intention was for the *Spiritual Exercises* to be adaptable - his first advice to spiritual guides is to adapt to the needs of individuals, uniquely understanding when and where they are. Many people from a great number of faith and spiritual traditions have either adapted or independently discovered these practices between then and now.

As we proceed, it will help if you know a little about St. Ignatius. The youngest of 12 children from a wealthy Spanish family, it would have been hard to imagine him becoming a saint. He was a soldier, courtier and diplomat, and was known as a womanizer, brawler and quick to take offence for the slightest reason. His life was shattered, quite literally, when his leg was broken in several places by a cannon ball in 1521.

Stories vary, but many say that one of his sisters removed all of the books on chivalry and romance from his place of convalescence, leaving him with a Bible, an illustrated history of Jesus and a collection of stories of the Saints. During this period he had a religious conversion and began to formulate the basis of his life's work, The Spiritual Exercises, the first part of which deals with what Ignatius called "The Discernment of Spirits."

One final note before we start - in keeping with the source and tradition of these practices, I will not substantially change their original "God talk." If this doesn't work for you, please feel free to substitute whatever language fits well with your practice and tradition. As I've mentioned a couple of times, the practices are intended to be adaptable.

Practice: The Discernment of Spirits

With his military background, Ignatius tended to see us surrounded by forces that could move us toward good or bad, with the outcome of following any one particular path never quite clear. Ignatius wrote of himself:

He did not consider nor did he stop to examine this difference until one day his eyes were partially opened and he began to reflect upon it. From experience he knew that some thoughts left him sad while others made him happy, and little by little he came to perceive the different spirits that were moving in him; one coming from the devil, the other coming from God. [Autobiography, no.8]

Ignatius went on to develop a number of rules to help us discern these spirits, the study of which could take a lifetime, but I'd like to share a brief summary of a few that I've found useful.

When listening to these forces, it is necessary to use both your heart and your mind. When presented with an opportunity to give to a worthy cause, often my mind will remind me of bills to be paid, work that needs to be done on the house, and of things like vacations I should be saving for. My heart tells me to give until I am happy, and perhaps a bit more. When faced with a choice between having dessert or skipping it, my mind knows that I am overweight and I should pass, but my heart tells me to reach for the pie.

In this church, we are asked to practice this most weeks in our call to Silent Meditation, when we are called to hold "in our thoughts and in our hearts all those who are in trouble and distress..."

Ignatius noted that we are creatures of habit. In the above examples I tend to give to many charities with about as much consideration as I use when I reach for that second slice of pie. Terms he used for the feelings we have from this are spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. In consolation, we feel the presence of a loving God, in desolation our souls are in turmoil and darkness.

Neither of these states are inherently good or bad, and to some extent they can coexist. After my father's heart attack, I felt desolation at my near loss. When he died several years later, I felt consolation that the warning given by his first illness had moved me to spend time with him before his eventual death. At his funeral, I felt desolation at my loss, but consolation in the friends, family and even strangers who gathered to share stories about him.

It is important to remember that even in a time of desolation, when we feel emptiness and darkness, that we are still in the presence of a loving God. Ignatius reminds us that we are always and uncategorically loved, but we are often in a state where we can or will not feel that love.

I'll share one final point that has been especially helpful for me - we are advised to strive toward indifference. Not indifference for our thoughts or actions, but indifference toward outcome. If we are actively trying to achieve some goal while trying to discern the forces acting

upon us, the cries of that “expected outcome” will be much louder than the still, small voice that dwells within us. Ignatius called the state of indifference “freedom,” and we have parallels within our own faith tradition.

I would ask you to think about this as we join in our **responsive reading, #592 in the Grey Hymnal, William Ellery Channing’s “The Free Mind”**

Anthem - All Good Gifts from Godspell

Common Prayer

Our common Prayer is a Prayer to Find God in All Things, written by Jared Kiley of St. Xavier High School. You will find it in your Order of Service. Please pray with me:

Under a leaf, in a snowflake
In a blade of grass, in a raindrop
All parts of nature

In your parents’ loving embrace
In the phone call from your grandparents
All family relationships

In working and sharing with others
In helping the unfortunate
All volunteering jobs

Where are you able to find God?

Lord, help me to find you in all ways and walks of life.

Silent Meditation

In these moments of Silent Meditation, we seek to listen to the still, small voice of God that dwells within us. We also invite you to hood in your thoughts and in your hearts all those who are in trouble and distress, whose names we speak softly now.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Offertory

Reflection: Ignatian Meditation on Scripture

I don’t tend to get sick often, so that may be part of the reason I’m not good at being sick. When I do take the rare sick day, I usually find myself glued to the television, mindlessly flipping through ‘80s sitcoms.

This wasn't an option for Ignatius during his long convalescence. While reading the Bible during his recovery, Ignatius became convinced that God speaks to us through our imagination as well as through thoughts and experiences. In the Exercises, this is called Contemplation, and it is especially well-suited for use on scripture.

We are asked to accompany God's workers by imagining ourselves in the scene, experiencing it as if we are there. Use all of your senses: what are the sights, the sounds, the textures, the tastes and smells? Ignatius asks us to trust God and let ourselves get lost in the story, only discerning afterward if we have gone too far.

There is no need to be biblically literal as you do this - the scenes from the film adaptation of Webber's *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, where the Romans had submachine guns and rode convertibles rather than chariots, would fit in well with this practice. The important thing is to let the forces at work on you fill your imagination to help you draw closer to God, the truth, and ultimate reality.

Let's try this now with a reading from Luke

Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus[a] to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. **37** And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. **38** She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. **39** Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." **40** Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." **41** "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii,[b] and the other fifty. **42** When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" **43** Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus[c] said to him, "You have judged rightly." **44** Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. **46** You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. **47** Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." **48** Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." **49** But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" **50** And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Practice: Ignatian Meditation on Scripture

Think about the story I just read, and remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

What was the Pharisee's house like? What did you smell being cooked for dinner?

What was her hair like? How did the ointment smell?

Where were you as Jesus told the parable? Who else was there? How did they react to his questions?

Think about these things and anything else that comes to mind as I read through once more....

[repeat scripture]

Reflection: The Daily Examen

After his convalescence, Ignatius spent the next 22 years codifying his thoughts and collecting them into a document that is now known as The Spiritual Exercises. During much of this time he was a layperson and student, and was actually jailed on at least one occasion for suspected heresy.

Originally conceived as a 30-day retreat, Ignatius realized, in the 1530's no less, that most people would not be able to stop their lives for a month to complete them. Notes were added for conducting the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life, spreading the contents of the retreat out over several months. I've had the privilege to participate in this form of the retreat several times.

The Daily Examen is perhaps the most widely known practice in the Exercises. A gentle, contemplative form of meditation and prayer, it asks us to look back at our day, practicing discernment and imagining outcomes, good and bad. Ignatius asked his followers to conduct an examine twice a day - at noon and before bed, but in my personal practice I use it to start my day, looking back at what I did yesterday and dreaming for the day ahead. As I've mentioned a few times, these practices were intended to be adaptable.

The first two practices I've shared today feed into and support the practice of The Examen. An additional practice, and for me the single most important part of the Examen, is that we are asked to look back with a spirit of gratitude - opening ourselves to recognize the gifts we have been given, gently moving more and more toward a spirit of consolation if we are in desolation, deepening our relationship with God, the Spirit of Life, or whatever name or lack of name speaks to you personally. As we heard in our anthem, "No gifts have we to offer for all Thy love imparts, But that which thou desirest, our humble thankful hearts."

It should be obvious that in our hour today we will only have a brief glimpse of the material from The Exercises, but I'll share a spoiler - the fundamental tenet of Ignatian Spirituality is that you can have a unique, individual relationship with whatever name or not name you give to God. Whatever you do and whomever you are, God knows you - all of you, the good, the bad, the things you'd like to remember, and the things you'd rather forget, and despite what you might do, or think, or believe, you are loved and never alone.

As I mentioned in the beginning, while I apply many of these practices, I am by no means an expert. If you would like to learn more about Ignatian Spirituality, please see me after the service and I will share some references with you. In the mean time, lets practice The Daily Examen together....

Practice: Daily Examen

Please make yourselves comfortable. Relax, close your eyes if you wish, and feel attentive and open to God.

Recall that you are in the presence of God. We are always in the presence of God, but in prayer we consciously place ourselves in God's presence. Ask God to help you look at your life with love this day.

Look back at your day with gratitude. Think about your gifts of the day and thank God for them. Take special care to notice what you have received and what you have given. As you complete the review of the day, pause to thank God for all of these.

Ask for help from God. Look at the way you have responded to God's gifts. Open your heart to look at your actions clearly with an understanding of your limitations. Do not judge what comes to you - it is a gentle look with the Lord on how you have responded to God's gifts.

Review your day, notice the details. What is the context of what has happened? How did you act? What were your motives, your feelings?

Where did you not feel at your best. Where was there a barrier to God's presence?

When did you give genuine love and charity?

Notice your habits, did any interfere with your freedom?

Where has God helped you have a positive response to life? Have there been opportunities to accept help that you overlooked or refused?

Are there other signs of God's grace that have come to you?

Remember all of these things, and ask God for help with the things that trouble you and thank God for the things that make you glad. Feel sorrow in your heart for things you may have done wrong but remember that God loves you.

Take a few moments and think about tomorrow - what are your needs? What should you accomplish? What should you let go of?

[bring people out of meditation with Spirit of Life played softly and slowly - during second repetition, invite them to join in during the next round]

Closing Hymn - Spirit of Life

Benediction

As you go forth, remember that you are always loved and never, ever alone. Amen.

Postlude

Selected Resources

Ignatian Spirituality - <http://jesuit.org/spirituality>

Online Daily Examen - <http://www.sacredspace.ie/>

