

## PRAYING OVER THE RETREAT – ANOTHER APPROACH TO THE *EXAMEN*

Take about 20 minutes for this prayer, longer if you wish, to look back over the days of the retreat at what God has been doing in and around you.

Take time to come to a still point using whatever has been helpful this week.

Ask God to show you whatever it would be most helpful to see. Ask for God's light as you review the days of retreat. What does God want you to notice as you look back, and to take forward into daily life?

Read through the following passage. How has what St Paul speaks of been true for you in the retreat?

*May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers.*

(Ephesians 1:17–19)

Gently let the days of the retreat re-play before your mind's eye.

What do you notice?

Where did you feel closest to God?

Where did you feel most challenged?

Where did you feel yourself to be most fully alive, most completely the person that God has created you to be?

Are there any biblical passages, words or phrases, or images, which capture something important for you to remember from these days, things that you can come back to in your prayer in the coming days and weeks?

End by speaking to God, as one friend speaks to another, about all that you have seen and felt in this prayerful review. Let this part of the prayer go where it will, leading you into thanksgiving, or asking for further gifts that you need from God, or perhaps simply into a companionable silence.

### The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through to illuminate a small field for a while, and gone my way and forgotten it.

But that was the pearl of great price, the one field that had the treasure in it.

I realize now that I must give all that I have to possess it.

Life is not hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past.

It is the turning aside like Moses to the miracle of the lit bush. To a brightness that seemed as transitory as your youth once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

(R.S. Thomas)



*The Virgin Mary is a tender mother to all who love her son: we can turn to her and rest in her love at any time. (T-07930-CW)*

# REMEMBER!

## Is this spiritual desolation?

- ♦ God is not part of my consciousness in my activities
- ♦ Turned in on self
- ♦ I feel sad, separated from God
- ♦ Lack of caring, everything seems hard
- ♦ Feel hyper and happy, but there is a lack of delicacy, a fanatical quality to it with my disordered tendencies influencing my actions
- ♦ I feel alone and separated while at the same time desiring to be with God
- ♦ I am not experiencing the flow of happenings with clarity or perspective
- ♦ It is a cover-up for seeking myself
- ♦ Experience moves me away from God

## Is this spiritual consolation?

- ♦ The experience moves me towards God
- ♦ Delicate and gentle
- ♦ Leading to an interior acceptance of others and of self
- ♦ Leading to a realistic knowledge of self
- ♦ A sense of God's presence with a deeper faith perspective
- ♦ Meaningfulness and a sense of hope
- ♦ Not turned in on self
- ♦ If painful or dry or sad it is because of God, or appropriate to my life right now, there is a sense of faith, hope or love
- ♦ Tension may still exist but underneath there is a sense of 'rightness'

*(From Orientations by John Veltri SJ)*

## Modern commentators on Ignatian discernment

I must learn to pay attention to the movements of my heart and mind, to reflect on them wisely and carefully with the help of others, especially my spiritual director, and to test them over time. In this process I must learn two equally difficult and seemingly incompatible attitudes: to trust myself and my reactions and to recognize how easily I can delude myself. Discernment requires that I believe that God will show himself in my experience and that I yet be wary of mindless credulity toward that same experience.

*(William Barry SJ Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God p.82)*

The ultimate purpose of discernment is to open the self to be led and guided by the Holy Spirit and to reject any influence contrary to his, whatever the source.

*(Jules Toner SJ A Commentary on the Rules for Discernment of Spirits p.35)*

(Discernment) can be broadly defined as the wisdom which enables a person to distinguish by inner sense (as well as by objective criteria) between the spiritually authentic and its opposite, between what is and is not of the Spirit. Its operation presupposes particular qualities and dispositions, which include psychological balance, self-knowledge and good judgement.

*(Michael Ivens SJ Understanding the Spiritual Exercises p.205)*