

WEEKLY EXERCISES

WEEK ONE

September 11th 2023

Theme: *From Unfreedom to Freedom*

MORNING EXERCISES

(About 30 minutes)

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Take a few moments to quiet your mind and welcome the following teaching.

The whole purpose of The Exercises is about gaining spiritual freedom. Spiritual freedom will involve the whole person—penetrating the biological and psychological spheres of our existence as well as our spiritual selves. Spiritual freedom is to discover the freedom *not* to have to get rid of our unfreedoms.

Spiritual Freedom, John English, SJ

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

Consider journaling each day this week....

Journal just for today by noting 'what arises in you' as you consider any of these questions for discernment:

- Identify an insight from the teaching: 'to embrace freedom is NOT to have to get rid of your unfreedoms.'
- How could this paradox offer greater peace in your life?
- How could this wisdom contribute to being more loving to yourself?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

Simply observe how the following Enneagram insight complements this week's teachings.

Reality moves with direction and follows the laws of nature; it flows with a certain force. The easiest way to deal with this force is to move with it. This is true freedom.

Oscar Ichazo, Enneagram Pioneer

4. ENNEAGRAM AWARENESS

Spend a few minutes with today's Enneagram insights; consider making a journal entry which you could return to at the end of the day.

- Read the RELEASES of your Ennea-Style in Enneagram Transformations (cf. Enneagram references #3).
- Identify which ones echo areas of un-freedom in your life.
- Which one may especially be asking for attention?

5. DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION: *The freedom to soar*

Choose one of the following passages and one of its points for reflection as a way to enter into a period of prayerful intention. This is not so much a time for analysis but for reflection. Choose whatever form of devotional prayer or meditation you like to complement the passages. Always end your reflection time with a moment of gratitude and 'savoring.'

SCRIPTURE OPTION A

From the Hebrew Scriptures: Be patient as you are continually being renewed by the promise of your Beloved. You will soar in freedom on the wings of eagles. You will run but not grow weary; wherever you shall walk, you will not grow tired. Isaiah 40:31

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Consider a time when you felt 'lifted up' by someone/something greater than yourself.
- When do you feel most free?
- Offer gratitude for a time when you found the strength 'to keep on going even when the going was tough?' Savor the experience.

POETRY OPTION B

From the Sufi Poet, Rumi: Physical existence is so cramped. We grow old and are bent over like embryos. Nine months pass and it is time to be born... but there are ways of being born twice, of coming to where you fly, not individually like birds but as the sun moves across the sky with its bride. *From Another City*

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

- Consider how Rumi describes what it is like to be born.
- How have you experienced being 'born twice'?
- Offer gratitude for a time when you felt the freedom to soar and move 'together with your beloved.' Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE DAY

Make an intention to notice where you feel most free and unfree today. Try just to notice and not judge.

MID DAY EXERCISES

(5-10 minutes)

1. MINI-EXAMEN: HOLY NOTICING

Take a few quiet moments to remember your intention for the day

-Is there an observation from the morning worth noting?

-Renew your intention for the remainder of the day:

Notice where you feel most free or unfree today. Try just to notice and not judge.

2. GRATITUDE

Identify at least one experience so far today for which you are grateful

-Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Recall the Merton teaching, "How I pray is breathe.'

-You might try a traditional spiritual breath practice of inhaling on the count of three and breathing out on the count of six. Try this for about one minute.

END-OF-THE-DAY EXERCISES

(About 20 minutes)

1. THE EXAMEN

The daily Examen is the heart of the Spiritual Exercises. This is an opportunity to take a long, loving look back over your day where, 'We recognize the Beloved in the nitty gritty of life and we bring the nitty gritty back to the Beloved.' This exercise is an examination of consciousness (clear awareness) NOT an examination of conscience which is focused on faults and failings. By being faithful to this practice and journaling your insights, patterns will emerge over thirty days including awareness from your unconscious that would normally have been missed in everyday activity.

-The EXAMEN should take about fifteen minutes. During this reflection time, you can use the following five R's to help guide your time:

REQUEST the presence of Spirit (however you imagine it) to lead you through the review of the day

RELISH the moments that went well and gifts received today

REVIEW (walk back through your day) using the suggested focus questions* as your guide. What would it be like to talk to God about this... or imagine doing this with someone you love.

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR TODAY'S EXAMEN:

- Where did I most find freedom today?
- Where did I least find freedom today?

REPENT for any mistakes or failures by simply acknowledging them without drama or self-loathing. If you feel called to *at-one-ment* with another, the Beloved or yourself, note that desire for whenever an appropriate time arises.

RESOLVE with a concrete intention to live tomorrow consciously and freely.

2. DISCERNMENT JOURNAL

Without a daily journal it would not be possible to track the sometimes subtle spiritual movements in every day experiences. Spend a few minutes making entries that reflect today's experiences and learnings. Here everything belongs, both the gifts and the challenges.

3. POINTS FOR TOMORROW

The Spiritual Exercises recommend that, before retiring, we consider the spiritual geography for the next day. As we settle into deeper rest we prepare our unconscious for the next day's exercises. This is not a time for study and analysis but a gentle pointer towards our next movement and direction.

DAY TWO THEME:

Discerning Our Strongest and Deepest Desires

WISDOM FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:

To trust your affective experiences and desires

ENNEAGRAM TEACHING:

We grow in spiritual freedom when we become more aware of disordered attachments that get in the way of love. The 'work' is to re-member and affirm our essential gift and goodness.