

MONTH ONE/WEEK FOUR

Theme: *Nothing to Fear*

MORNING EXERCISES

(About 30 minutes)

1. WISDOM FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

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

A prerequisite for healthy discernment is what Ignatius calls holy indifference. Indifference doesn't mean I don't care, it does mean that I remain open to going in the direct opposite of the direction in which I might really want to go this moment. This requires a spirit of openness. Indifference is a disposition that creates a state of heart that remains open to discernment especially in major life decisions. But the Exercises are not only about discerning big decisions, they are more interested in discerning our interior movements underneath our decisions and listening to which ones I trust. For example, do I trust (and therefore act on) the guilt that I'm feeling? Without making any decisions, I can listen to what the guilt is telling me. So a good question for discernment might be: Is the guilt in this case the 'predator'—meaning, if I'm someone who's grown up with being shamed all my life, discerning where the shame comes from and what does it do to me would be important. If decisions are made which are shame-based, discerning (catching) this predisposition can be liberating and will change my behavior even if it does not change the decisions I make.

Jack Kennedy

2. QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

Consider journaling the week by noting 'what arises in you' as you consider any of these questions for discernment:

-Consider what 'holy indifference' would look like/feel like regarding a decision you are considering.

-Identify an 'interior movement' underneath a decision you are considering. How could the Exercises support you in exploring more unconscious dispositions like guilt, fear and shame?

-How does the term 'predator' fit with your experience of times when you were anxious and fearful?

3. ENNEAGRAM INSIGHT

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

In terms of discernment, the Enneagram asks, how can we maintain soulfulness in the presence of that which we seek to avoid? The Enneagram teaches that when we regularly notice our outer habits (also called: addictions or lenses) and recognize them as distortions of the Truth, we can become free to do something different. In this

place we wait for God and encounter the spiritual freedom necessary in order to prepare for the discernment we seek.

George Gurdjieff

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 each day.

-Consult the Enneagram Chart of Characteristics (cf. Enneagram References #1; also note that there is an associated document (Enneagram References #2) that defines each of the terms listed in the chart of characteristics).

-Put your finger at the top of the descending Characteristics of your Type. Note the developmental unfolding from VIRTUE to PASSION (say the words out loud). Follow down to the lines from AVOIDANCE to TRAP (which moves us away from our HOLY IDEA) and say these terms out loud. Now notice how the OBJECT OF ATTENTION triggers our CHIEF FEATURE and say these two terms aloud. Notice how it feels to say, 'this is what I do.' Next notice and say out loud your IDEALIZATION followed by your TALKING STYLE and a DEFENSE MECHANISM which create a DICHOTOMY within yourself. All the while your ESSENCE is like a diamond in the rough waiting to emerge with enhanced self awareness. Finally, how could you remind yourself today that your ESSENCE is the True Self which you neither create nor work toward. It is the never-changing YOU created in the Divine Image.

5. DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION: *Deeply listening*

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: When my soul grows weary, lead me away from deceitful paths; may I come to know the ways that lead to freedom and peace. Psalm 119: 29-30

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

- Recall a time when your soul was weary? What were the circumstances?
- Recall a time when choosing a 'deceitful path' caused you or another suffering?
- Offer gratitude for any place in you that is presently free and at peace; savor the experience.

POETRY OPTION

From Mary Oliver: Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift. The Uses of Sorrow.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

- Recall a time when you received a 'box of sorrow' from someone you once loved.
- How/did you come to discover that the sorrow, too, was also a gift?
- Offer gratitude for a deep sorrow that also became a blessing. Savor the experience.

6. INTENTION FOR THE WEEK

Make an intention to notice when the AVOIDANCE of your Ennea-style appears. Though you may be tempted to judgment or self criticism, try just to notice and not judge.

DAILY 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:

Continue noticing when the AVOIDANCE of your Ennea-style appears. Try just to notice and not judge. Then bring back to mind your ESSENCE which is the DIVINE LIGHT within.

2. GRATITUDE

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

-Breathe a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. Trust that there is nothing you can do that would compromise or destroy your ESSENCE... we just forget from time to time.

-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 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 you might choose the memory of a beloved friend.

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR TODAY'S EXAMEN:

- Walk back through your day identifying emotion by emotion.
- Choose the strongest emotion of your day and consider the way you responded to that emotion. Review the impact that emotion had on you. Did you even acknowledge the emotion at the time or were you unaware of it?

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.