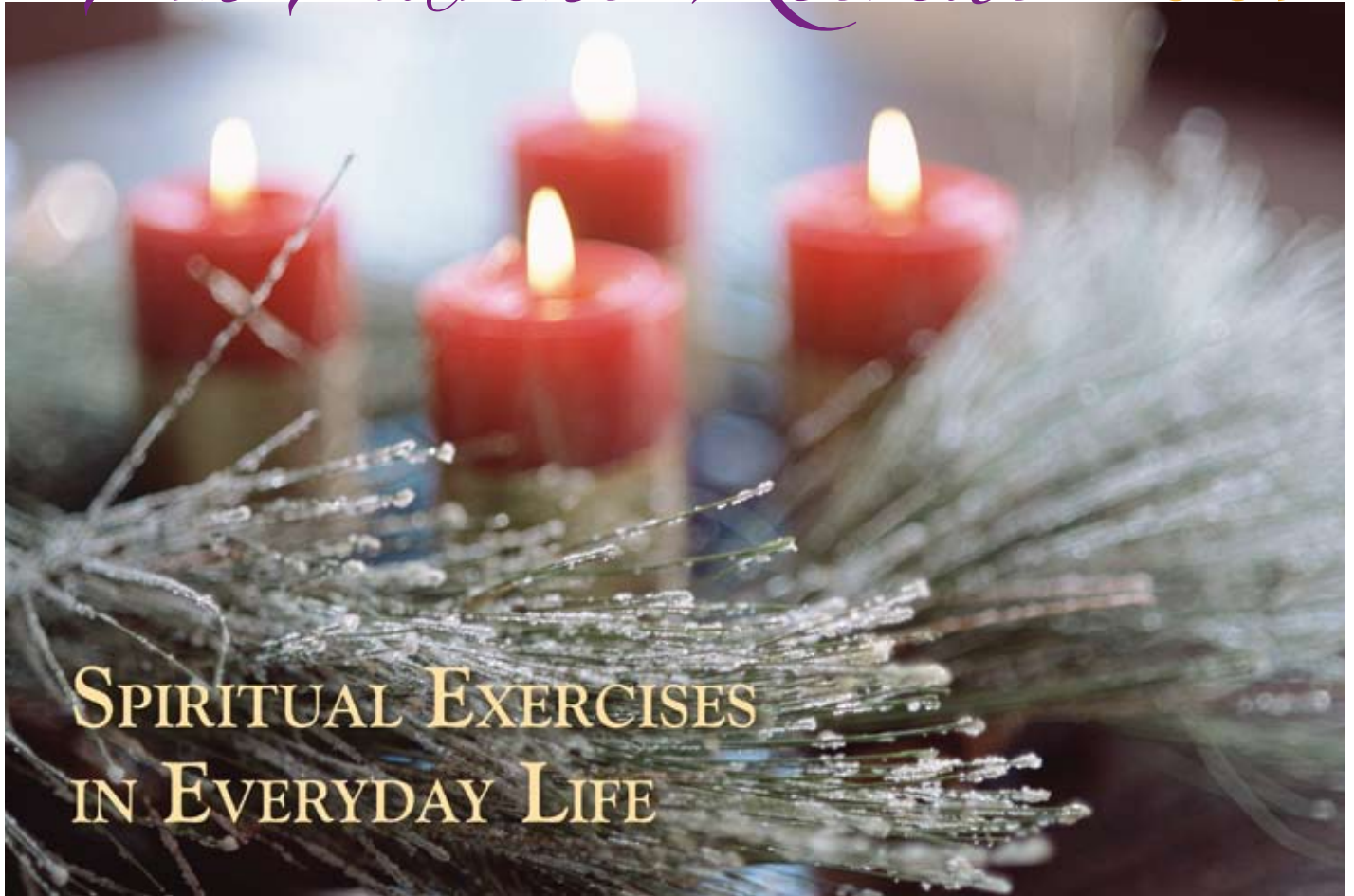


An Advent Retreat 2009



SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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A JESUIT MINISTRY





1 *Introduction to the Mystery of Christ for Advent and Christmas*

ADVENT is a time when we recall the Son of God becoming man for us, and we prepare ourselves for his second coming in glory. It is a time for active expectation, desire, prayer, communication, and joy.



CHRISTMAS is a time for joy and contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. We witness the first manifestations of his efforts to save us. Mary is especially celebrated during this season as the Mother of God.

In the method of prayer proposed by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, contemplation of the mysteries of Christ's life plays a central role. That is why, in addition to prayerful reading, we highlight what is called Ignatian contemplation on the Infancy Narratives. During this time, we ask for a very special grace to know the Lord more intimately in order to love and serve him more.

- A** Remove yourself somewhat from the daily, habitual activities and devote at least 20–30 minutes to personal prayer.
- B** Devote a few minutes every day to the Prayer of Loving Attention (Examination of Conscience) to review the main events of your day.
- C** Try to find a friend or, better yet, a small group with whom you can share the fruit of your prayer once a week or so.



2 *Determine Your Personal Program*

Establish your schedule for daily prayer and stick to it as much as possible. Set some dates when you can share the fruits of your prayer with a friend or small faith-sharing group.

3 *Guide for Daily Prayer*

- A** Select a time and place that is best for your daily prayer.
- B** As you begin your prayer time, realize that God is really present and wants to draw close to you.
- C** Ask for the light of the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire you.
- D** At the beginning of your prayer time, say this or a similar prayer:

*Here I am, Lord, standing before you
just as I am at this moment.*

I sit in your presence, Lord, in peace and tranquility.

*I am in your presence and allow myself to be
directed by you. I open myself to you who are near.*

*You are the font of life, the force of life which
permeates my very being.*

You are my breath which maintains me in existence.

Let peace dwell within me.

*Give me the grace to let myself be cleansed by you,
to be a shell filled only with you, my God.*

*Let all my thoughts and feelings, my will and liberty,
be totally directed to your honor and service. Amen.*



E Here are two ways to pray using the suggested scriptural texts:

Ignatian Contemplation — (IC)

(can be used with either Old or New Testament Readings, but especially with events in the life of Christ)

- Recall the story and use your imagination to enter into the Gospel scene.
- Try to *see*, contemplating each person in the scene. Give a prolonged look, above all, to the person of Jesus himself (if that is the case). Just look without trying to explain or understand.
- Try to *listen*, paying attention to the spoken or implied words. What might they mean? What if they were directed to you?
- *Observe* what the people in the scene do. They have names, histories, sufferings, personal quests, joys. How do they react? Note the gestures, feelings, and attitudes, above all, of Jesus himself.
- *Place yourself actively in the scene*. Allow yourself to be involved in what is happening. Besides seeing and listening, try to touch and feel the flavor of what happens during prayer. In reflection try to benefit from everything that happened in this time of prayer.

End this time with an intimate farewell to God, using the words of the Lord's Prayer. On the completion of the time of prayer, do not forget to do a brief review. (See step 5.)

Prayerful Reading — (PR)

- Read the entire text once; reread it slowly, verse by verse. Ask yourself: *What does the text itself say?*
- Stop wherever God speaks to you interiorly. Do not rush; learn to savor things. Ask yourself: *What does the text say to me?*
- God is a Father who loves us much more than we could ever be loved by anyone else. Ask yourself: *What does the text make me want to say to God?* These can be praises, petitions, thanksgiving, adoration, or silence.
- Continue to gather whatever comes to mind, whatever touches your heart: desires, lights, appeals, recollections, inspirations. Ask yourself: *What is it that this text and everything I have experienced through it made me savor and live?*

End the prayer with a loving goodbye. Pray the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. On the completion of this time of prayer, do not forget to do a brief review. (See step 5.)



4 Texts for Each Day

Abbreviations: (IC): Ignatian Contemplation • (PR): Prayerful Reading

1st Week

DEEPEN YOUR FAITH IN THE LORD WHO GIVES US WHAT WE NEED.

Petition: Ask for the grace of entering into the spirit of Advent, a time of hope, of listening to the Word, of a universal call to spread the Good News.

11/29 Sunday: Jeremiah 33:14–16; Psalm 25;
1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2;
Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

11/30 Monday: Matthew 4:18–22 (IC)—Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.

12/1 Tuesday: Luke 10:21–24 (PR)—Happy are the eyes that see what you see.

12/2 Wednesday: Matthew 15:29–37 (IC)—They all ate and were satisfied.

12/3 Thursday: Isaiah 26:1–6 (PR)—Trust always in the Lord.

12/4 Friday: Matthew 9:27–31 (IC)—Do you believe I can do this?

12/5 Saturday: Repeat the text(s) and prayer that touched you the most this week.

2nd Week

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE LORD'S COMING.

Petition: Ask for the grace to prepare the way for the Lord in one's own heart, in the family, in the parish, and in the human community.

12/6 Sunday: Baruch 5:1–9; Psalm 126;
Philippians 1:4–6, 8–11; Luke 3:1–6

12/7 Monday: Luke 5:17–26 (IC)—My friend, your sins are forgiven.

12/8 Tuesday: Luke 1:26–38 (IC)—Be it done to me according to your word.

12/9 Wednesday: Isaiah 40:25–31 (PR)—The eternal Lord encourages the faint-hearted.

12/10 Thursday: Isaiah 41:13–20 (PR)—Transform the deserts into lakes.

12/11 Friday: Matthew 11:16–19 (IC)—Wisdom is vindicated by her works.

12/12 Saturday: Repeat the text(s) and prayer that touched you the most this week.

3rd Week

REJOICE, BECAUSE THE LORD IS NEAR!

Petition: Ask for the grace to live in the joyous expectation of the Lord's coming, who comes to bring us the grace of salvation.

12/13 Sunday: Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Isaiah 12:2–3, 4, 5–6; Philippians 4:4–7; Luke 3:10–18

12/14 Monday: Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17a (PR)—A star arises from Jacob.

12/15 Tuesday: Matthew 21:28–32 (PR)—Publicans and prostitutes precede you in the reign of God.

12/16 Wednesday: Luke 7:18b–23 (PR)—The poor have the good news preached to them.

12/17 Thursday: Matthew 1:1–17; Psalm 72 (PR)—Justice will flourish and peace will last forever.

12/18 Friday: Matthew 1:18–25 (IC)—Joseph was not afraid to receive Mary as his wife.

12/19 Saturday: Repeat the text(s) and prayer that touched you the most this week.

4th Week

THE MYSTERY OF GOD BURSTS INTO OUR LIFE.

Petition: Ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit's fruitfulness in our life, just as the Spirit made the womb of Mary fruitful in the person of Christ.

- 12/20 Sunday: Micah 5:1–4a; Psalm 80; Hebrews 10:5–10; Luke 1:39–45
- 12/21 Monday: Luke 1:39–45 (IC)—Blessed is the fruit of your womb.
- 12/22 Tuesday: Luke 1:46–56 (PR)—He cast the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
- 12/23 Wednesday: Luke 1:57–66 (IC)—Was not the hand of the Lord upon him?
- 12/24 Thursday: Luke 1:67–79 (PR)—Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel.
- 12/25 Friday: **Christmas**, Luke 2:1–20 (IC)—Let us go to Bethlehem and see what has occurred.
- 12/26 Saturday: Matthew 10:17–22 (PR)—You will be brought to trial before rulers and kings, to give witness before them and before the Gentiles on my account.

Christmas Time

1st Week

JESUS IS LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

Petition: Ask for the grace to receive Jesus, the Savior, as the light of our path.

- 12/27 Sunday: **The Holy Family**—Sirach 3:2–7, 12–14; Psalm 128; Colossians 3:12–21; Luke 2:41–52
- 12/28 Monday: Matthew 2:13–18 (IC)—Rise, take the child and his mother.
- 12/29 Tuesday: Luke 2:22–35 (IC)—Your soul will be pierced by a sword.

- 12/30 Wednesday: Luke 2:36–40 (IC)—The child grew in wisdom and grace.
- 12/31 Thursday: John 1:1–18 (PR)—The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
- 1/1 Friday: **New Year 2010**, Luke 2:16–21—**Mary, the Mother of God**
- 1/2 Saturday: John 1:19–28 (IC)—I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord.”

2nd Week

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

Petition: Ask for the grace to be led by the star, the light from above, and to take this light to others.

- 1/3 Sunday: **The Epiphany of the Lord**—Isaiah 60:1–6; Psalm 72; Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6; Matthew 2:1–12
- 1/4 Monday: Matthew 4:12–17, 23–25 (PR)—The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light.
- 1/5 Tuesday: Mark 6:34–44 (IC)—Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples.
- 1/6 Wednesday: Mark 6:45–52 (IC)—Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!
- 1/7 Thursday: Luke 4:14–22a (PR)—The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.
- 1/8 Friday: Luke 5:12–16 (IC)—Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean.
- 1/9 Saturday: John 3:22–30 (IC)—He must increase; I must decrease. [Alternate: Review the entire Advent retreat.]
- 1/10 Sunday: **The Baptism of the Lord**—Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34–38; Luke 3:15–16, 21–22

[Evaluate the entire Advent Retreat, if possible, with a faith-sharing group.]



5 *Review of Prayer*

When you complete each period of prayer, ask yourself how it went:

- What word of God touched me the most?
- What feeling, sentiment, emotion, or effect predominated?
- Did I feel some calling, a desire, or an inspiration?
- Did I experience some difficulty or resistance?

If possible, write in a journal about the answer that seems most significant. Formulate it in a prayer of petition or thanksgiving. These same questions can be used in the faith-sharing group or in spiritual conversation with another.

6 *The Prayer of Loving Attention* (Also known as *Examen of Consciousness*)

At the end of the day, give a few minutes of loving attention, making yourself present to the Lord as someone who was graced by him during the day.

Thank God for everything that was good for you and for your brothers and sisters.

Invoke the power of the Holy Spirit, asking for light to discern how to use your liberty, how to decide wisely.

Take note of the situations, circumstances, and events of your day in which you allowed God to act, to be present in your life. Review your actions that were signs of God's presence and love for others.

Ask for forgiveness from Jesus, your faithful friend, for the good you did not do and for not allowing yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Entrust yourself and the coming day to the Lord and experience the joy and hope that come from putting all these matters into his hands.