



Session 7

Lord Jesus Christ,
I want to be with
you in the joy of
resurrection.

SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION/SPIRITUAL DESOLATION (REVIEW)

It is common for people who pray to have what St. Ignatius calls “consolations” - experiences that open our hearts to God or fill them with peace, experiences that seem to increase our sense of the Presence of God.

Consolation is any experience that opens us more fully to God. These experiences may be joy-filled and pleasant or they may be painful and we may experience them as suffering. What is important is not the feeling tone of the experience but where the experience orients us, where the experience takes us...more deeply into God, or more deeply into our ego-self.

Desolation is simply the experience that takes us more deeply into our ego selves.

- My fear sends me into a helplessness that borders on despair.
- My anxiety opens into a vast sea of negative possibilities that I must somehow negotiate on my own.
- My anger results in self-righteousness that convinces me of my superior insight.
- My responsibility results in action taken without prayerful grounding and I find myself being “helpful” where “help” is only meddling.

How would you describe your own experience of consolation and desolation? What words describe your experience?

One woman described consolation as the experience of having a very tight corset taken off her soul and the experience was happiness that she could breathe.

Another person described desolation as the experience of being in the hell of no possibilities, isolation from hope, suffocating for lack of relationship.

Decision Making the Ignatian Way

In the Principle and Foundation Ignatius says, *"Our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life within me."* Ignatius tells us that decision-making is an important part of our spiritual journey. God is active in our lives and is available to us as we make decisions. Decision-making grows from the daily practice of the Examen Prayer that helps us to recognize the differences between those movements that open us to God (consolation) and those that close us in ourselves (desolation). Making choices based on this awareness helps to free us from our attachments.

- **We are our most authentic selves when we align ourselves (our desires, attitudes, and actions) with God's desires. We do this by consciously "choosing God."**
- **We are created to receive God's self-communication. We want to use those gifts (intellect and discerning heart) to help us access God's desire/will for us.**
- **When making a decision, awareness of/attention to where our heart is drawing us (consolation/desolation) is important in helping us discern God's will. Ignatius recommended this use of heart-knowledge in decision-making.**
- **And, it is also important to have an "informed" heart, which makes use of our intellect.**
- **Why not use all the gifts God gave us in making decisions that will help us to grow in discipleship w/ Christ?**

Before Making a Decision:

Ignatius suggests the following:

- Pray with Scripture (Mk 1:16-20, Jn 1:35-51, Jn 20:11-18, Gen 12:1-5, Ex 3:1-15)
- Reflect on the life of Jesus.

- Pray for openness to God's guidance and to be aware of all available options.

- Pray for the gift of freedom to choose what will "better lead to God's deepening life within,"

Situation 1: "No Doubt About It"

Ignatius discovered that some decisions can be made with a clear conviction that leaves no doubt. God makes it unmistakably clear that a certain choice is the one that will be more conducive to deepening relationship with Christ. We just know what to do.

Situation 2: Discerning Spiritual Movements

Ignatius discovered some decisions need to be made by understanding our interior movements of consolation and desolation.

Situation 3: Calm Deliberation

In the third kind of decision, in times of tranquility and little interior movements, God acts primarily on our reasoning. Ignatius learned that God sometimes desires that we make decision,

by using our minds to reason and analyze.

After Making a Decision, Notice Signs of a Fruitful Decision

Offer the decision to God and notice signs of confirmation of the decision.

- It is made in freedom.
- There is a growing sense of peace with God, one's heart and with the world.
- It is a spiral into deeper self-knowledge.

Remember: If you freely do your best to discern God's will for you and are truly open to the Holy Spirit, you can be certain that God will lead you to that choice which is more for God's glory and is also better for you. In decision-making or *discernment*, God can lead you to the better choice even if you struggle to read your interior movements and to use your reasoning. God will bring good out of our efforts and will enlighten us as we learn from the outcomes of our decisions. We are not often shown complete clarity as God will not render God obsolete! We are asked to be offer sincere decisions giving our relative best efforts in light of our varying abilities and experiences.

Sources: Stefan Kiechle, [The Art of Discernment, Making Good Decisions in Your World of Choices](#); Jules Toner, S.J., "Discernment in the Spiritual Exercises;" and David L. Fleming, S.J., [Draw Me Into Your Friendship](#). J Michael Sparough, S.J., et al, [What's Your Decision?](#); Joan Carney for SIHS, and the retreat team at the Cleveland Jesuit Retreat House.

PRAYING WITH IGNATIUS-SAINT IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL
HOME PRAYER SELECTIONS

Week 7

PREPARE: Choose Place, Posture, Prayer Time, Prayer Passage, and become mindful of the Presence of God.

GRACE SOUGHT: Lord Jesus Christ, I want to be with you in the joy of resurrection.

Pray:

Use your Imagination

Appearance to Mother Mary

John 20:11-18

Appearance to Mary Magdalene

Luke 24:13-35

Emmaus and Disciples

Gift of Nature

(All handouts)

Gift of Memories and Others

Gift of This Retreat

Review of Prayer:

1. What did you like? What resonated with you?
2. What didn't you like? Where did you feel resistance?
3. Did you experience and spiritual insight? Delight?

1. What was revealed of God?
2. What was revealed of yourself?

What is being revealed of your relationship with God

THE GIFT OF NATURE

FOCUS: How God reveals and speaks to me in my natural surroundings

WAYS OF DISPOSING FOR THIS GRACE:

A. Take a nature walk

B. Just sense and enjoy:

1. **See** the squirrels, chipmunks, the silhouette of the sunset, the color of leaves, the flowers.
2. **Smell** the breeze, the hay, the flowers.
3. **Taste** the grass, the water, a dandelion.
4. **Hear** the wind, the water, the chipmunks.
5. **Feel** the dirt, the grass, a rock, a tree.

C. Take in the whole scene and enjoy it – if any feelings or movements emerge, then let them surface.

D. When the experiences of the senses or feelings fade, you may want to reflect upon any of the following:

1. God made all this for you.
2. God is working in nature and through nature for you.
3. God is revealing Himself through nature.
4. This is God's gifting to you.
5. In all this, He is loving you.

E. Feel free to respond to any of the reflections above – in your own words.

J. Lewis, S.J.
2007

THE GIFT OF MEMORIES AND OTHERS

FOCUS: How God has been working in my life, in my memories

WAYS OF DISPOSING FOR THIS GRACE:

A. Individual Memories

1. Take a trip down memory lane.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to let the significant or heartfelt memories from your life bubble up into your consciousness – whether they be positive or negative.

2. Enjoy or experience these memories; live in them.
 - Feel free to talk to Jesus about these memories.
 - Ask His help with difficult memories.

B. Individuals

1. Recall and enjoy the presence of those special and important people in my life – friends, loved ones, family, teachers, directors, students, associates, etc.

2. Recall how He has gifted me through these others, their presence, care, love, wisdom, etc.

3. Those in counseling, directing, working with, praying with, sharing with, guided by, meeting with on busses, trains, etc.

4. Let any response flow which naturally surfaces.

C. Groups

1. Recall how I have been gifted through various groups or communities – family, co-workers, groups of friends, community, co-prayers, team members, etc.

2. Recall also how I have been gifted and nourished by various group experiences, activities, events – picnics, retreats, parties, baseball games, pizza and beer, liturgies, prayer groups, bull sessions, etc.

D. Your Salvation History

1. View your life as a whole, as your STORY
 - Through these memories, do you notice:
 - + How you have grown and developed as a person.
 - + How you have been protected or cared for.
 - + Your call from God
 - + How you have responded and how your relationship with Him has grown or developed.
2. When these memories have faded, you might reflect:
 - How this is your salvation history; your personal revelation by the Spirit.
 - How God is working in your life and in your memories.
 - That these memories are His gift.
 - That in these, He is loving you.
3. Feel free to respond – in your own words.

THE GIFT OF THIS RETREAT

FOCUS: How God has been working in my life through this retreat.

WAYS OF DISPOSING FOR THIS GRACE:

- A. Prayerfully review your retreat journal and notice:
 - 1. The moments you felt you grew in a heartfelt knowledge of Jesus
 - 2. The times you felt the presence of God
 - 3. When God answered your prayers
 - 4. The times you struggled
 - 5. Scripture passages that touched you

- B. Prayerfully recall the people in your faith sharing group and notice:
 - 1. Their individual beauty and gifts
 - 2. How they helped you during this retreat
 - 3. What you learned about God from them
 - 4. How you may have gifted them with your words and your presence

- C. Prayerfully acknowledge what you learned:
 - 1. A new way to pray
 - 2. How to share spiritual conversation with others
 - 3. How to find God in Scripture and in the events of your life

- D. As you have grown in your awareness and appreciation of God's goodness, in what practical ways will you-
 - 1. Stay grounded in the awareness of who you are in relation to God?
 - 2. Stay open to God's continuing faithful love for you?
 - 3. Stay focused on serving God and God's people?

- E. Journal your reflections. (Fill out your evaluation.)

SPIRITUALITY PROGRAM FOR ADULTS RETREAT DONATIONS

F. Close by praying "Take and Receive"

TAKE AND RECEIVE

Take, Lord and receive all my liberty,
My memory, my understanding
And my entire will-
all that I have and call my own.
You have given it all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me.

(St. Ignatius Loyola)

**Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?**

We certainly hope that you have been touched in some way by the Spirit of Christ thus far in your retreat experience. Our goal in SPA is to offer that experience to as many people in our community as possible. We believe the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are a great treasure and we need your help to enable us to continue to share that treasure.

We make every effort to offer these retreats as efficiently as possible but the program still has significant expenses. We are committed to sharing our cost of facility usage, office supplies, books, mailings, and program management. SPA should never be part of our students' tuition burden.

We are able to offer this retreat without a fee because we ask those -with more resources to care for those who have few resources. So we ask you now to consider a donation that will allow us to offer this retreat to those who follow. Our operating expenses equate to about \$150 per person. Some will be unable to contribute that much, others will generously offer to pay for those who can't. There is no donation that is inappropriately small or inappropriately large. Perhaps this is an opportunity to spend your money on what does satisfy.

To whatever extent you are able to help we thank you.

Please makes checks payable to Saint Ignatius High School — SPA

Checks can be dropped off at next week's retreat sessions or mailed to Colleen Wyszynski, Saint Ignatius High School — SPA, 1911 West 30th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44113.

If you wish to donate on line click on the "Giving" tab on our home page the on "Give Now." To designate the gift for this retreat simply type in "SPA" in the "in honor of" - "Tribute" box at the end of the on-line form.

Thank you again for your generous consideration in assisting with the material needs of this program.

IGNATIAN DECISION-MAKING

The Principle and Foundation articulates our purpose/goal for life:
True Discipleship

Prayer (especially Gospel Contemplation) builds our awareness of
what true discipleship looks like.

The Examen helps us to appreciate the challenge (successes and
failures) of discipleship in context.

Decision-making in the Ignatian tradition happens at the point
where all three intersect.

IGNATIAN DECISION-MAKING

Decision-Making

