

## Checklist

- In the Preparation Step, have I invited the receiver to enter the presence of God and given 20 seconds silence for this?
- In the Preparation step, have I invited the receiver to make a sign of reverence and humility, and given 20 seconds silence for this?
- Have I allowed 20 seconds silence between reading each prayer text to allow the receiver to absorb it's story and meaning?
- Have I prayed the Opening Prayer and given 20 seconds silence after it for the receiver to make it his or her own?
- Have I read the Desire clearly and slowly, even repeated it. Have I allowed 20 seconds silence for it to settle into the receiver's heart.
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- In the Prayer step, have I placed silence between each new idea, instruction or consideration? This could be 20-60 seconds.
- In the Prayer Step, with imaginative contemplation, have I placed silence between each new imagining of the place, for the receiver to build the scene for her or himself? This could be 20-60 seconds.
- In the Prayer Step, with imaginative contemplation, have I given silence for him or her or to play out the action and conversations of a Gospel event, to meet Jesus? These could be 1-10 minutes.
- In the Prayer Step, with meditation or consideration, have I given silence for the receiver to ponder meanings and find relish in what is being considered? These could be 1-10 minutes.
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- When I invite the receiver to enter into Conversation with God, have I given him or her 3 minutes silence for this.
- After giving the exercise, have I given 1 minutes silence for the receiver to transition from the intimacy of prayer to daily life.
- Have I invited the receiver to record in his or her Listening Book the fruit of the exercise, and given 5-10 minutes for this?



### A Practical Guide

#### to Giving an Ignatian Spiritual Exercise

The simplest instruction is that you just read the exercise as printed in the book of *The First Spiritual Exercises*. Add nothing, remove nothing. You need no special introduction, nor does the one receiving the exercise. Simply begin, without explanation, the sign of the cross and go.

But you will need to plan out how to use the prayer time beforehand so that your receiver is able to enter the structure and dynamic of that exercise as written. You will need to estimate both the reading time and the time needed for silence in the exercise.

You are not just a time keeper, but a holder of sacred space and time for your receiver, that he or she may receive the exercise well and may dwell in the presence of God without distraction.

The relationship between you and your receiver is one of giver and receiver only. You are not a teacher, expert, evangelist, friend or even one sharing an amazing grace you found in the same exercise. Ignatius advises:

Let your receiver discover for themselves what it is the Spirit wishes to give them. He or she will value their discovery so much more.

Do not get between your receiver and God. The exercise brings them together, you are a voice out of sight, one mostly silent, that fades from consciousness, as your receiver prays for the desire and meets her or his personal God in it.

## The Structure of an Ignatian Spiritual Exercise

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|--------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Preparation</b>    | I consider where I am going now and why.<br>I make a gesture of reverence and humility.<br>I read the prayer texts. |
| <b>2. Opening Prayer</b> | I ask for the grace to direct and offer my whole self to God.   |
| <b>3. Desire</b>         | I desire ...  |
| <b>4. Prayer</b>         | Using my imagination, I ...   |
| <b>5. Conversation</b>   | I have a short conversation with God, talking as to a friend.<br><br>Our Father.                                    |

The five steps above, given in this order, define the prayer method.

The Ignatian spiritual exercise is a structured, guided and shaped prayer form. It is structured by the five steps. It is guided by the prayer step and the prayer texts. It is shaped by the given desire, the life experience of the one receiving the exercise and God's response to both.

Ignatius insisted on all five steps. Why? The answer is in their depth and relationship to one another.

Each step is a prayer in itself. But received together, in order, they create a powerful dynamic:

- from offering to desire and receiving;
- from solitude to intimacy and friendship with God;
- from grace to gratitude and helping others.

## The Five Steps of Explained

### 1. The Preparation

is for focus and sacred space. Your receiver takes an inner journey from an ordinary place to a holy place. Ignatius asks your receiver to consider where she or he is going and why. This preparation can be a potent union of reverence, body, sacred space, and imagination.

### 2. The Opening Prayer

is about the surrender of the whole self. It is a response to the presence of God. It is an act of love. In the original longer text, Ignatius adds, "I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of his Divine Majesty"

### 3. The Desire

gives the exercise its purpose. It is essential. Your receiver directs his or her desire to God, just as Jesus instructs, to ask, knock, and search. And like Jesus, Ignatius asks your receiver to keep asking until it is answered.

### 4. The Prayer

is the structure that brings your receiver fully into relationship with God. It is where she or he enters into a gospel scene, meditates, or takes the steps through a consideration. It is the main body of the whole exercise.

### 5. The Conversation

is a spiritual conversation between your receiver and God. It is a time to talk about feelings arising from prayer, to receive help, advice, and encouragement, as with a friend. The Our Father returns your receiver to the ordinary place, to the reality of "thy kingdom come" in daily life.