

**Twenty-four Spiritual Exercises
for the
New Story
of Universal Communion**

BY

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FOREWORD

These exercises that we present today are a development of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius. We hope they will be an instrument for reflecting and meditating on our lives and the concerns of our times. They develop two current dimensions of Ignatian spirituality: ecology and community.

They point to ideas on the life process, on the chain of being, on the sense of evolution, and on religion integrated into ecology that goes beyond the study of relationships between ecosystems, and is converted into the relationship among ecosystems members who are creatures of God. They present a different concept of the person and bring it into harmony with all God's creatures.

What is it that unites us? What is it that causes us to relate to one another? It is the community of universal life. It is all that exists, all that lives and that gives sense to being in a relationship, from the tiniest thing to largest. It is the notion of community that transcends the sum of the individuals.

They are two crisscrossed dimensions which in turn move toward the fundamental dimension, toward the Ignatian principle and foundation which retains all its validity: everything is for God and by God. God is present in all things, and all things are present in God.

It is a challenge to assume that the world is a sanctuary that must be respected, that it is the dwelling place of everything, that it has been the dwelling place of the Son of God: He called himself the Son of Man, and that it will continue being the dwelling place of humanity and of Creation. This moves us to new options, to new visions, to new roads in order to *make an election*, which in daily living is turned into making decisions.

They are thoughts that invite reflection.

Isabel López Forges

Coordinator of the Spanish translation team

INTRODUCTION

Hello! We are John English, S.J., Lois and Kuruvila Zachariah. We are members of the National Christian Life Community of English Canada. John English is the co-founder and first Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Christian Life Community of English Canada. He is the author of CLC formation manuals and has developed, with others, the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* for the Corporate Person. He has been active for many years in the personally directed retreat movement in North America. Lois and Kuruvila Zachariah are retired teachers, biologists and parents of three sons and a daughter. We have been members of the Christian Life Community in English Canada for 25 years.

Our Primary Motivation

In this *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT*, you will find a new expression of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. Our primary motivation is to help CLC have a **communal** experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Thus, instead of meeting individually with a spiritual director, members of a CLC group will come together to share their prayer with each other, with the assistance of the group's guide. We want to share our own experience of this communal process with you.

John:

For five or six years the team of the *Institute for Communal Life*, of which I was the director, led groups of teachers and their administrators through an Ignatian process to help them develop discerning communities for apostolic action. The process itself gave the participants an in-depth experience of Christian community among themselves that they could then use with other teachers and students in their local schools. Our hope was to involve, eventually, the whole school board. Each year, approximately 18 persons were guided through various Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* for two full days, four times a year. The next year a new group was selected to go through this process.

Our approach to these days followed a general pattern of *Instruction, Reflection on Personal Experience, Small Group Sharing*, and finally all participants would assemble and share what they had learned. Within this process we covered a variety of topics including *Personal Graced History, Communal Graced History, Ignatian Discernment of Spirits, Instruments for Developing Community and Making Community Decisions, Understanding One's Own and Others Personal Responses in Conversation, Methods of Personal Decision-making and Methods of Communal Decision-making*. Over the years, we observed a deepening sense of Christian Community in the schools and within the school board. At present, various methods for developing community and discerning personal and communal decisions are in use.

Kuruvila and Lois:

Recently, over 11 months, we directed three young parents, Julie, and Marlene and Greg, a married couple, in the Communal *Spiritual Exercises* (Annotation 19). We used the Phase III Manual for CLC English Canada, designed by John English S.J. and our national formation team. The five of us will never forget this experience. We met once every two weeks because, with young families and work, this was what the retreatants could manage. As the weeks went by, it became clear that **a group** spirituality was emerging as the result of each retreatant sharing with the others. New insights into the spiritual life of families and their mission, helpful ways of praying, increasing skill in recognizing consolation and desolation, a growing relationship with Mary, assistance in pursuing a simple life, and increased efforts to make thoughtful, discerning decisions emerged as a result of this spiritual conversation. We wish this for all CLC.

The *PURPOSE* of These *Spiritual Exercises*

In these Ignatian prayers, we expand the usual meaning of the word *communal* to include all animate and inanimate matter in the cosmos. We call this the *universal community of life*. We hope that CLC groups entering into this time of prayer will be *exercised*. Just as walking, running, jumping and kicking a ball are physical exercises which benefit the body, so meditation, contemplation, examination of self, scripture reading, and spiritual conversation with others about our experience are spiritual exercises that can benefit the *whole* person. They help us attain the freedom needed to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our lives. These prayers are meant to revitalize and foster a sense that life anywhere in the cosmos and specifically, all living organisms on Earth are sacred. We hope CLC groups have an experience of the sacred in each other, family, friends, colleagues, plants, animals and ecosystems so that each CLC member expands his/her sense of community to include kinship with every living being, every stone, lake, mountain, on Earth.

Science and technology provide us with methods and instruments that save lives, help feed us, increase our life span, cure disease, provide easy and cheap mass communications and transport, and a greater understanding of the material world. Despite these advances, we detect a certain *pessimism* and scientific *fundamentalism* in the global technological culture. Many interpretations of current scientific findings tell us that life has no meaning; it is an accident, unlikely to arise anywhere else in the universe. Evolution is full of cruelty, pain and wasted effort. We are alone. Reflecting on the spirit world or encouraging a spiritual life in ourselves is nonsense. We see the *Spiritual Exercises*, illuminated by the thought of P. Teilhard de Chardin, as having the potential to redeem this view. Teilhard was a French Jesuit and paleontologist who considered the ethical, ideological and philosophical implications of evolution. He sketched a synthesis in which evolution is “a light illuminating all facts.” His work evokes praise as well as harsh criticism. Nevertheless, even those unconvinced of its validity may recognize its intellectual grandeur. His writings belong in a class by themselves. They are unique because they are his metaphysics, his synthesis of both his public and personal knowledge.

The *Spiritual Exercises* can give us an experience of the exciting mystery of life so that we are filled with a desire to pursue a life in the Spirit. A mystery is a profound truth, which is not accessible through our reason, in fact, the harder we apply reason - the more the mystery deepens. The stories, readings, reflections and analyses found herein are meant to raise awareness of the deep mystery of life, an experience of the transcendent. This is evident in our interpersonal experiences with plants, animals, ecosystems, oceans, wind, sun, moon, stars and people. It is felt most deeply in the relationship that we and all else in the cosmos have with the Trinity, who themselves are Three Divine Persons through relationship.

In praying together, we foster the emergence of a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. Emergence erupts in novel ways and is the foundation of evolution. As we reflect on cosmic evolution, which, we believe, is the Trinity’s primary action as persons, we may come to a deeper experience of sacred creation.

The *PROCESS* for Praying These *Spiritual Exercises*

Normally, Annotation 19 of the *Spiritual Exercises* is about 35 weeks long. During this time we pray one hour per day, 6 days per week. In this *SUPPLEMENT* you will find material for **eight weeks** of prayer. **In this outline for an 8-week retreat of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we suggest one-hour prayer periods, three times each week. This will allow you to read and ponder the extra materials designated as “Additional Points For Prayer and/or Extensions of The Points Above” or make a Repetition, if so inclined, on other days of the week.**

In line with the *Spiritual Exercises*, we suggest that this 8-week retreat consist of the following materials:

- Week 1 - The Warming-Up Exercises
- Week 2 - The First Exercises - Sin
- Week 3 - The First Exercises - Sin
- Week 4 - The Second Exercises - The Call of Christ, the Incarnation and Nativity
- Week 5 - The Second Exercises - The Two Standards and Three Classes of Persons
- Week 6 - The Second Exercises - Jesus' Public Ministry, The Three Kinds of Humility
- Week 7 - The Third Exercises - The Passion of Jesus
- Week 8 - The Fourth Exercises - The Resurrection and *Contemplatio*.

Ignatius has several forms of prayer, some of which are examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation and the application of the senses. There are directions for prayer in the Exercises, which follow. For example, in Week 1, the main method is consideration. In Weeks 2 and 3, the method is meditation. In Weeks 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, it is contemplation. These methods will be explained as you come to them. One of the secrets of personal prayer is to follow the lead of the Spirit on when and how to pray. So in these Exercises you may pause at any point, lift your heart to God in gratitude, amazement, praise or sorrow. In fact, you may discover that sometimes there is too much material for one hour of prayer. When this is the case, focus on what is most deeply affecting you in the Exercise constantly keeping in mind the Grace that is sought; we refer to it as *the desire of my heart*. We ask you to pray the one-hour Exercise, then reflect on your experience of the prayer and share these reflections with your community to discern your action. This process mirrors the dynamic of **conscious knowing**, described by the Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan S.J., which is:

- **experiencing**
- **reflecting so as to understand our experience**
- **judging**
- **deciding.**

We encourage you to use Lonergan's **Transcendental Precepts** in these weeks of prayer. His precepts are to be:

- **attentive**
 - **intelligent**
 - **reasonable**
 - **responsible**
 - **loving.**

Keep a journal in which you recall your prayer and mark what you wish to share at your CLC meeting, so that you share what is most important to you. You will need a Bible and a copy of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

We have a number of convictions, which are reflected in what we have written. They are our views of *knowledge, story/revelation, personhood, community, and creation*.

Knowledge

The global scientific culture recognizes mainly one form of valid knowledge, which is public and objective. Acceptance of public knowledge is based on the assumption that it is born of expertise; expertise in analysis, in designing repeatable experiments, making hypotheses and models, evaluating primary sources of data, and so on. Yet, our experience tells us that we have other ways of knowing which are subjective and personal, more integrative, acquired through an interior life and personal experience. In this second kind, everyone can be an expert. This personal knowledge comes from tradition, faith, revelation, spiritual awareness and countless everyday experiences of beauty, intuition, goodness, the witness of trusted friends, as well as our burdens and limitations. It cannot be tested by

experiment because its truth is greater than a collection of facts. Bernard Lonergan S.J. believed we integrate these two types of knowledge, public and personal, through submitting our everyday experiences to a process of reflection, judgement, decision and action. His position is that all authentic objective knowledge is subjective and all authentic subjective knowledge is objective. Objective data are acquired through our physical and imaginative senses. However, this is only the first step in appropriating knowledge. By taking my commonplace experience of love for a tree or flower through Lonergan's intentional steps to knowing, I come to the profound truth that I am in relationship with these creatures. Thus, I come to *know* the tree rather than know *about* the tree!

Story And Revelation

All religions and cultures use stories to proclaim the truth, and put us in touch with the wisdom of the elders. This is especially so with the Indigenous peoples of the earth. The most ancient and universal of all revelations is that Earth and every creature, air, soil, rock and waters are Holy and that our lives must reflect this fact. To imitate Christ today is to bring to **conscious knowing** this suppressed, sacred story.

Stories are of many kinds: sacred, historical, fictional, personal and so on. All stories can be instruments of truth that cannot be revealed in other ways. Stories express knowledge through images of beauty that bring us to truth even if they are not factual. Historians attempt to gather as much factual evidence as they can, before they tell a story. Therefore, we see history as a more objective story than fiction. But great truths are found in fiction too. Theologians speak of the creation story in Genesis. We know that the events in it are not actual ones, but nonetheless the truths proclaimed in Genesis are valid.

Universally, when humans are confronted with mystery, they tell sacred stories. These stories are the stuff of revelation in all religions. Although stories dominate the Christian scriptures, they also contain letters, hymns, historical materials and accounts of historical persons. Believers relate to these writings as divine revelations, and find in them a special expression of truth and God's presence. We pray with these scriptures in several ways. We may take the text literally and proclaim that events in the writings happened as described. Or, we may believe that though some scriptures are not factual, they transmit a significant theological message.

For us, revelation has its foundation in the stories of great spiritual events recounted by eye - witnesses: most notably, the Resurrection accounts of Jesus Christ. This witness is later expressed in communal stories. Each religion and culture has a number of sacred stories that are told and passed on from generation to generation. These become their scriptures. They carry in themselves their own authenticity. When they are read or heard, the listener enters into the communal memory of the ancestors and we are present to the story. This is the basis for **contemplations** on the scriptures. Sacred stories are more than mere words and images. They carry the astonishing promise for our mystical encounter with the persons remembered. St. Peter was able to say: "*You did not see Him, yet you love Him.*" (**1 Peter 1:8**) This is a profound spiritual experience, which conveys the memory and witness of past ages to us.

Persons in Relationship

The philosopher John Macmurray asserted that the concepts of person and personhood illuminate the dependence of knowledge upon relationship: "*All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action is for the sake of friendship*". He believed that the self is a person, not an isolated thinking thing. Persons are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. I exist only as one element of the community "You and I". It is you who tell me who I am as a person. I need you to be myself. Our awareness of common creaturehood, that we are members of the mammal class along with dogs and dolphins, gives us only a superficial connection with the rest of creation. Macmurray goes far beyond this, telling us that we are who we are, only in and through our relationships with all creatures and the planet itself! Our awareness of ourselves as persons flows to us from the interrelationship of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity. Michael Downing extrapolates from this to the interpersonal relationships in the cosmos. He writes:

“Every living being participates in some measure in the life of God. Now if God is understood as personal, as being toward and for, then every living thing is toward and for the other... in communion with God whose providential plan is not just for the salvation of the human race, but for the salvation of the whole world.”

Personhood is also fundamental in other philosophies. S. Radhakrishnan, first President of the Republic of India, wrote in 1927:

“The highest category we can use is that of self-conscious personality. We are persons (purusas) and God is perfect personality (uttama purusa). If we analyse the concept of personality, we find that it includes cognition, emotion and will, and God is viewed as the supreme knower, the great lover, and the perfect will, Brahma, Visnu, Siva. These are not three independent centres of consciousness, as popular theology represents, but three sides of one complex personality. The different pictures of God which prevailed in the country were affiliated to one or the other of this trinity.”

The Communal

Spiritually, we grow in appreciation of the Trinity as we recognize our interdependence and share our inner life with each other. Thus, a whole new being - *a community* - evolves. In it, we realize that we belong to the cosmic community of life as it is created and sustained by God. John Macmurray’s position is that to *do* what is right is a greater good than to *know* what is right. We do not act alone, but as part of a community and all meaningful relationships depend on meaningful actions within community. Bernard Lonergan, too, thought that responsible action is what we are made for; it is the meaning of being created in the image of God. To decide to work for the good co-operatively with others is to evolve towards becoming fully human; it flows from a conversion. Without it, we are less than fully human and our evolution is blocked. Likewise, our evolution unfolds when we act in communion with all living beings. The act of remembering helps us with this. How do we act cooperatively with a tree? We remember that the primates, the group to which we belong, evolved in the treetops; the trees were our nurseries. The anthropologist Katharine Milton believes that our hands, vision and brain evolved mainly through foraging behaviour in forests. From this ancient association trees have a deeply personal relationship with us; they too are in our community. Communal life is the instrument of evolution for our minds and spirits. Our dependence on all creatures calls us to act for and with the Earth community. The *Ignatian Exercises for the Twenty-First Century* has a communal component throughout. They can be a means for increasing our awareness of kinship with the personhood of all creatures.

The Trinity

We strive for a modern understanding of the Trinity, which bestows an appreciation of divine action in evolving communities, whether of molecules, stars, planets, ants or humans. Eminent theologians struggle with this shift today: Moltmann considers the Trinity a divine community of persons in relationship, not a plurality but a unity. He uses a concept of their interrelating, which some have called a dance of the Three Divine Persons. There is one being and all three are in relationship. The Three Persons are intimately linked to one another and dwell in one another. Thus, we understand the Trinity as a divine community rather than an individual divine substance. Bracken believes that the metaphysical reality of persons in community is higher than the individual substance. For him, community represents a unity, which is greater than the sum of its parts, that is to say - a deep mystery.

The image of the divine dance helps us understand that *all* Three Divine Persons are involved in Creation, Redemption, Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery and the Eucharist. Thus, Christ can be named Creator and Christ can be in all things, animate and inanimate. J.J. O’Donnell expresses the paradox of an all-powerful, invulnerable God identifying, through the Cross, with human God-forsakenness; God does not come to the rescue of Jesus, who stood in solidarity with the God-forsaken and then becomes God-forsaken Himself. So, we are challenged to think of God anew. This is an urgent immediate need; we often expect God to be what we ourselves would like to be - omnipotent and immune. These

expectations are shattered on the Cross. Instead of a detached and distant God, we experience the Three Divine Persons as dancers in their evolving cosmos, thus enduring and transforming its suffering as it groans to give birth to a new and glorious ecology.

To cooperate with God's loving purpose, we must overcome our morbid tendency towards exclusivity. In turn, this is fostered by the Trinitarian image of a communal, inclusive Divinity whose cosmos tends continuously towards increasing diversity and novelty. The ecology of highly evolved communities is characterized by this complexity. Inclusivity is their hallmark. Jesus is their paradigm; He was the friend of losers as well as the rich. He was radically inclusive, the mirror of the vulnerable Trinity. (**Wisdom 7:25-26**)

Creation

The Trinity, as perfect personality, is constituted by relationship, and relationship depends on meaningful action. Our Creation Story is that the Trinity's great loving action is cosmic evolution. The Three Divine Persons are intimately involved in and their Spirit expressed in the beginnings and evolution of our universe. Contemplating the story of our universe, we go beyond a series of chronological events to a sense of the Trinity's love evolving beyond themselves into creation.

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now.”
(**Romans 8:19-23**)

For us, *evolution* means the gradual, sustained process of change over fifteen billion years, by which the universe and all its furnishings are emerging. The furnishings are matter, life, ecosystems and societies, which we believe to exist throughout the cosmos. Their origin was an explosive emergence of particles and light in an instant when time and space were born. Next, atoms evolved and later huge clouds of hydrogen appeared and condensed during billions of years into stars. In early stars, some of the hydrogen was converted into the elements, which compose living organisms like nitrogen, carbon, sulphur. The stars later exploded and spewed out these elements, which became other stars and planets like our sun and Mars and Earth, about five billion years ago.

Evolutionary events are interrelated; life could not have appeared until cosmic evolution provided the delivery rooms, namely appropriate planets. Also, evolution is getting faster; human evolution happened in a flash compared to biological evolution, and cosmic evolution took much longer. Moreover, what is emerging is continually becoming more surprising, novel, diverse, interesting, intense and beautiful. Two billion years ago there was DNA, but no orchids, no trees, no Bhagavad Gita, no microchip, no eyes to see nor ears to hear.

On Earth, the first one to two billion years were too hot for life. As the surface cooled, continuous rain for thousands of years formed oceans of hot water in which, perhaps, life arose. For the first 85% of the planet's history the creatures were simple: bacteria, early plants and sea animals without backbones, many even with no shells. A very significant trend in evolution started half a billion years ago: animals with backbones appeared. It was in this group that, with ever increasing speed, successive animal forms gained greater freedom from slavery to their environment. The trend culminated in human mastery over the environment. First, our vertebrate ancestors evolved to freedom from the water, through lungs and circulating blood, which resembled sea-water: next, eggs, within which their young lived in a bag of water. Later, they evolved to become less dependent on good weather, and could keep cool in the heat and warm in cold weather. Also, the baby grew inside the mother instead of an egg. Warmth for incubation of an egg became unnecessary. So they evolved still further towards total freedom.

In the next, ten to three million years ago, they took a huge step towards freedom and walked

upright! It was an evolution, which permanently changed the biosphere and the universe. Walking upright had fantastic consequences. The hands were freed to create the first tools and gestures. They could throw missiles or be held up in wonder or in prayer. The tools could be used as teeth so the mouth no longer had to be an organ of defence. Muscles for chewing moved lower from an anchorage on the temples making room available in front for the brain to enlarge. The brain grew in other directions too. Because the head did not hang in front, the neck muscles became lighter and the bone pan supporting the brain enlarged. This exquisite evolution happened in our African ancestors we call “Southern Apes” or Australopithecii; we inherited their genes and skeletons with relatively few, small changes. They gave us not only their freedom from nature’s burdens, but the potential for unlimited freedom.

The clear trend in the last few million years has been the lightning speed of cultural evolution, which has rapidly given our species its autonomy. Walter Ong S.J. writes: “*All major advances in consciousness depend on technological transformations and implementations of the word.*” They are six: speech, writing, mathematics, science, computers and cyberspace. For the first time in four billion years, they have enabled one species to direct its own evolution and to direct or interfere with the evolution of all living organisms. We might conclude from this that our evolution has no further to go, that we are fully human now. Emphatically, this is not so. In spite of five hundred million years of vertebrate evolution towards autonomy, we are not free.

Jean Vanier asserts that we today are un-free because we are imprisoned by fear: fear of losing our wealth, fear of infection, fear of aliens from another planet, fear of trees, dandelions, weeds and most of all, fear of those who are different: immigrants, the poor, the weak, the sick, the elderly. In St. Paul’s vision, evolution is incomplete and therefore the cosmos is still imperfect and groaning to give birth to a future fulfillment. Our responsibility, as John Haught says, is to so live and die that the evolutionary promise unfolds in complete accord with the love of the Trinity.

This is why we are writing these *Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for CLC*.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO PRAY: *THE IGNATIAN WAY*

OUTLINE OF EACH *ONE HOUR* PRAYER EXERCISE

Below is the outline of a typical prayer time of the *Spiritual Exercises*. We suggest a *Preparatory Prayer*, but you may wish to compose your own. The other elements in an exercise change with the subject matter.

PREPARATORY PRAYER

In each prayer period I begin with a gesture of humility and a prayer of offering of myself to the Trinity in acknowledgement that I am in their presence, e.g., I might make a prayer of this sort: *O Holy Trinity, give me the grace to direct all my intentions, actions and operations solely to your praise and service.*

SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS EXERCISE

I read and consider the subject matter for this time of prayer, either a topic for consideration and meditation or a mystery of the life of Christ presented in scripture.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

This is an imaginative effort to put myself into the situation suggested by the subject matter for prayer and by the grace being sought.

GRACE, THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

Depending on the purpose and context of the prayer materials, I ask for what I deeply want and desire. Another word for **grace** is gift. In our spiritual lives, we pray for the gift of deep relationship with the Trinity, a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit. We pray for a grace because we do not have what we want and desire and we realize that we cannot achieve it by our own effort.

Someone has said the longest journey in this world is that from the head to the heart. Our intellect tells us about our faith and desires. But this is not enough. So we pray to the Trinity for a deep-felt belief in, and knowledge and conviction of our faith. When we pray for a grace, we recognize that the Trinity can give us what we ourselves cannot.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

(Ways of disposing oneself for the grace sought)

This is the material from scripture or from our life experience, which we use for meditation or contemplation, in order to obtain the grace we desire. There are additional points for reflection and consideration at the end of each week of prayer. You may like to read or pray over these at any time during the week, if they are helpful to you.

DIALOGUES

During the prayer period and especially at its end, it is important to speak with the persons of the Trinity. Here are Ignatius' words: *"The [dialogue] is made by speaking exactly as friends speak to one another, or as servants speak to the ones over them, now asking for a favour, now blaming themselves for some misdeed, now making known their affairs and seeking advice in them."* (*Sp.Ex.* [54])

I end each prayer period with the prayer Jesus taught us, the *Our Father*.

REVIEW OF PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

After each prayer period I look back over the experience of prayer to see how it went with me and I make some notes in my journal.

PRAYER OF A LISTENING HEART

1. I find a suitable place of quiet and comfort.
2. I offer my time of prayer to the praise and glory of the Trinity and make an act of recognition that I am in the presence of the Trinity.
3. I focus on the harmony of my body and spirit and take a peaceful and relaxed physical position.
4. I spend a few moments quieting myself - becoming aware that I am in the presence of the Trinity in a special way.
5. I ask for the grace that my heart desires during this time.
 - a. I approach the text of scripture as the word of God spoken to me. I make an effort to realize that through it, God is speaking to me in my present situation. I try to be present to the words and scene given in the text.
6. I read all the verses of the text 2 or 3 times. Then I read a verse and pause to meditate on it for a few moments. I let the Spirit pray through me as in **Romans 8:26-27**. If it impresses me, I stay with that verse and respond to God's word in thanks, amazement or petition. When I am satisfied with this verse I move on to the next verse. I read it. I pause and meditate on it. I stay with it and respond to the words of God in thanks, amazement or petition.

I continue in this way until I have completed all the verses. Then I pause for a considerable length of time and appreciate what has been given to me, pondering within my heart as Mary did.
7. Throughout this process of prayer I respond with my heart entering into a *Dialogue with the Persons of the Trinity*, especially at the end of the prayer period.
8. In this way I have **Read** (*Lectio*), **Meditated** (*Meditatio*), **Responded** to the Word (*Oratio*) and **Contemplated** (*Contemplatio*) - the four steps of sacred reading (*Lectio Divina*).

REVIEW OF PRAYER

After the prayer period is over I change my position and place, and do a *Review of Prayer*. What happened during my time of prayer? From this review, I learn what is important for my day and for the next prayer period. This review helps me reflect upon interior movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, and so on - perhaps something about my distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. It helps me *notice* my interior *experiences* rather than my *ideas*. Thus, I can be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and go with the flow of experience. If I monitor myself during the period of prayer, I interfere with the Trinity's communication. When my prayer period is *over*, however, I take a look to see what the Trinity has been saying to me.

The following questions may help:

- What went on during the period of prayer? Was it distressing, satisfying, dismal, inviting, probing, insightful?
- What impressed me?
- How did I feel about what went on?
- What was my mood, or change in mood?
- What did the prayer show me?
- Did I receive the grace I was seeking?
- Is there some point I should return to in my next prayer?

I thank the Trinity for favours granted and ask pardon for my own negligence.

SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

During my review of prayer, I will record in my journal a few reflections that strike me so that I can more easily prepare for my next period of prayer. The Trinity may be inviting me to go back to a point where I was moved. St. Ignatius says, "*I should remain quietly meditating upon a point until I have been satisfied*" (*Sp.Ex.* [76,2]), i.e., until the movement has been completed (the insight completed, the struggle resolved, the consolation ended, the meaningfulness finished...for now). Recording my reflections during the review will assist me at the community's weekly sharing.

A spiritual journal is a form of diary. It is a way of recording the spiritual experiences of one's day. The spiritual experiences can occur at the time of formal prayer or at any other time during the day and in any situation.

A simple way to keep such a journal is to use the *Daily Awareness Exercise* and/or the *Review of Prayer*. Use the *Daily Awareness Examen*, if you choose to use only one of these prayer exercises. This exercise covers your whole day and can include your formal time of prayer. If you choose to use two exercises then add the results of the *Review of Prayer*. During these awareness exercises, or after you complete them, you can write briefly what the Trinity has revealed to you.

You may record experiences of the presence of a person of the Trinity as a companion, spouse, family, friend, or while working or driving home. You may record experiences of dryness, joy, or special insights given to you about Jesus or yourself in prayer. Sometimes you may experience anguish over a decision or action. Experiences of this sort make up the spiritual journal. As you grow in awareness of the interior life, you will find more experiences to write about. Choose the more significant ones and write them briefly by means of a word or phrase.

REPETITION

Repetition is an important aspect in one's prayer life.

Repetition does not mean:

- I. repeating of the prayer material as one repeats a study assignment for more thorough understanding,
- II. returning to the same subject matter for prayer to find something new or different,
- III. returning to **all** the subject material of the last prayer period.

Repetition does mean:

I return to those points where I have experienced "greater consolation, desolation or greater spiritual appreciation". (*Sp.Ex. #62*) Hence, I use the discoveries given to me in the *Review of Prayer* and return to those places in the prayer where I have experienced significant movement of my spirit. Repetition is a focussing exercise.

The reasons for making repetitions:

1. *Repetition allows spiritual movements to develop*, which helps me discern my interior movements. This is one of the goals of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Scampering from one scripture passage to another, even within the same theme, tends to prevent these developments.
2. *Repetition is a help to notice interior movements*. Since many of our interior reactions at prayer happen without our noticing them, repetition provides time for the interior reaction to be experienced distinctly.
3. *Repetition is the way we can respect the Trinity's communication*. Just because a prayer period has ended, we should not suppose that the Trinity has nothing more to say to us through the passage we have been using. Repetition respects the Trinity's communication until we sense that they want us to move on.
4. *Repetition may be the occasion for desolation to become consolation*. Repetition is used where there has been struggle, distraction, discomfort, ennui. Often these difficulties indicate that the Spirit is trying to communicate with us at a deeper level and we are resisting. When we return to those points, which were experienced negatively, we often discover that the Spirit overcomes barriers so that desolation gives way to consolation; darkness to light; struggle to surrender.
5. *Finally, repetition helps one to experience Mystery more deeply*. When Ignatius writes: "I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire without any eagerness to go on until I have been satisfied" (*Sp.Ex. [76,2]*), he means not only **within** the one period of prayer, but also **over** several periods of prayer, or even days of prayer. (*Sp.Ex. [130,6]*) Through repetition we allow the mystery of Jesus' life to touch our mystery at deeper levels of our being. Through repetition a kind of simplification of our own activity takes place as we become increasingly receptive to the Spirit's activity. Through the use of repetition, meditation can become contemplation and stillness.

Some Examples of Repetition:

1. I pray over the Baptism of Jesus at the Jordan. In my review afterwards I notice that I was with Jesus in my prayer, but His back was to me and I had a feeling of sadness. So in the next period of prayer, I return to the place where Jesus had turned away from me and I felt sad.
2. I pray over the hidden life of Jesus. In the review after my prayer, I notice that I could not get settled. I was filled with distractions and anxiety. So in the next period of prayer, I return to the same material.
3. I pray over my sin history and ask the Trinity for a deeper awareness of the effects of sin on my life. It is given to me. In my review, I sense that the Trinity desires to show me more. I return to the same material in the next prayer period.

GUIDELINES FOR SHARING YOUR PRAYER WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

*“Those who feared God spoke with one another,
and God listened attentively.”* (Malachi 3:16)

During these weeks of prayer, the community meeting has the following two main parts.

•The *FIRST* round of sharing

This sharing has four purposes:

- to heighten awareness of one’s own prayer experience by listening to other members in your CLC,
- to recognize the communal dimension in individual prayer,
- to deepen CLC bonds,
- to assist each other in discerning actions arising from prayer.

Listening is especially important and the prime purpose of sharing. Listening to these prayer experiences of others gives us a sense of awe and gratitude toward the Spirit and a respect and trust towards other members of the group. It helps us recognize our unity in our diversity. It goes beyond hearing. One’s whole self is involved. Listening requires humility and self-forgetfulness. It is self-gift. This spiritual conversation is a form of group prayer and deeply rooted in a spiritual life - humble, poor, and open, willing to learn or teach, to forgive and be forgiven, to be loved and to love. Some simple guidelines for sharing are listed below.

- ◆ Grateful listening is the most important component of the meeting.
- ◆ Everyone is an expert on his/her own experience.
- ◆ All sharing is voluntary. If you don’t wish to share, you can pass.
- ◆ It is important that all have their fair share of the time available.
- ◆ Describe your prayer experiences *briefly*, using your journal entries.
- ◆ Confidentiality is essential.
- ◆ Don’t attempt to solve problems or judge or debate what another has shared.

•The *SECOND* round of sharing

After those who wish to share have done so, the group takes a few minutes of silence to reflect on what has been heard in the light of the following questions. Where did I experience harmony with the others as they shared? What new insights were given to me about my community and me? How will this help my prayer and spiritual life? Then, *briefly*, usually in two minutes or less, each member shares their thoughts or insights. This second round is important for it gives group members an experience of emergence, where the group takes on a communal identity larger than its individual members. Knowledge of this identity is essential when, in the weeks to come, the group may wish to make a communal decision. After the second round of sharing, the group can end with the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary or Soul of Christ.

THE DAILY AWARENESS EXERCISE

INTRODUCTION

The Daily Awareness Exercise is a brief spiritual exercise, which helps us to be constantly present to the activity of the Trinity in our lives. It helps us live a reflective life in the presence of the Trinity and discern the continual movement of spirits in our lives. In the context of our evolving universe, this daily exercise demands two things: a new spiritual perspective on our experiences and knowledge of the discernment of spirits.

The new spiritual perspective is a belief that the created universe is a focus for the Trinity's love. It also includes the evolutionary direction of all creation towards relationship. It acknowledges our interconnectedness and interrelating with all beings of the universe.

The discernment of spirits is an activity directed towards the understanding of one's spiritual, interior movements. Ignatius classifies these as spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. To have an intimate knowledge of such movements, Ignatius recommends that we do a simple 10 to 15 minute awareness exercise once or twice a day. This exercise keeps us aware of what is happening to us each day and assists us to gain the necessary reflective knowledge for discerning serious decisions.

Ignatius has a five-step process. By following his steps, outlined below, our connection with and experience of the universal community of life will emerge.

1. GRATITUDE

I begin by placing myself in the presence of the Trinity. I try to become aware of the Trinity **beholding** me, as their beloved. I experience the love of the Trinity embracing all members of the universal community of life. I enter into the great mystery of my existence with all the other creatures of the universe and I thank the Trinity for including me in their great evolving love that brought about the universe.

2. PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR LIGHT

At this moment I ask for what I seek and desire. With the Spirit leading me, I try to get in touch with what has been happening in and through me today. I ask the Spirit for an **interior** knowledge of the Trinity's presence coming to me through various aspects of the universal community of life, that is, through ordinary material things, animate beings, and other human beings.

3. ACTIVITY OF AWARENESS

I go through my day looking for occasions of the Trinity's presence in all things and in my interior life. I also look for occasions when I did not respond to this presence.

- ◆ Where have I experienced the creative, sustaining activity of the Trinity in the material events of my day, from the time of rising until now?
- ◆ What material things have caused joy or frustration in my being today?
- ◆ What various energies have dominated my mind and heart today? For instance:
 - experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work,
 - experiences of interpersonal relationship with others whether of love or rejection.
- ◆ Where have I been inattentive to the sense of oneness, beauty, truth, and goodness in creation?

- ◆ Where have I failed to respond to the cry of plants, animals and humans today?
- ◆ Where do I experience regret about this day?
- ◆ For what am I most grateful to the Trinity in this day?

As I contemplate my day in communion with the rest of creation, what experiences of intimacy with the Trinity, whether of consolation or desolation, were given to me?

4. APPRECIATION OF THE DAY

With my new awareness I have a dialogue with the Trinity.

- ◆ I speak to the Trinity seeking understanding and the meaning of these experiences, as well as the ability to recognize the Trinity's constant companionship with me in the universal community of life.
- ◆ I make further responses to the Trinity of gratitude or sorrow.

5. RESOLVE FOR THE FUTURE

In the final step I look to the future.

- ◆ I recall the great hymn to Jesus Christ as Creator in Colossians, "*The Father... has transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves... He is the image of the unseen God the first-born of all creation, for in Him were created all things in heaven and one earth.*" (Col 1:12-16) I express awe and amazement that I am part of the universal community of life brought into existence in and through Jesus Christ.
- ◆ I ask, "*What return can I make for all God's goodness to me?*" (Ps 116:12) I ask for what I need as I continue my journey.
- ◆ I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

THE LIFE OF IGNATIUS

It is important to have some knowledge of St. Ignatius Loyola's life as a basis for understanding his *Spiritual Exercises* and their impact over the last five centuries.

Ignatius of Loyola was a Basque member of the lower nobility of Spain in the 16th century. He was a warrior and a brave one at that. He encouraged the Spanish troops at Pamplona to resist the French against all odds. They did this until he was wounded in both legs by a canon ball.

As he recuperated from his wounds in the Loyola castle, he asked his sister-in-law for some novels to read. All she could give him was *A Life of Christ* and *The Lives of the Saints*. These impressed him a great deal, especially in his daydreams.

The first set of daydreams focussed on great military feats he would perform for a Princess he admired greatly. The second set focussed on the lives and examples of St. Francis and St. Dominic. Both kinds of daydreams filled him with satisfaction and purpose. Yet, when he reflected on the after effects of these daydreams, he noticed that the first set disturbed his inner self whereas the second set continued to fill him with satisfaction and purpose. He wrote that this was his first experience of the discernment of spirits: spiritual desolation and spiritual consolation. These experiences and his discernments inspired him to become a pilgrim and to go to Jerusalem to wash the feet of the pilgrims to the Holy Land.

He set off from Loyola, made a three-day confession of his sinful life at the Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, and then prayed for many months in a cave on the outskirts of a village called Manresa. He spent as many as seven hours a day in prayer. This experience of prayer is the basis for his *Spiritual Exercises*. During this time at Manresa, Ignatius had important visions on the Trinity, the Eucharist, and Mary. These confirmed him in his new life. After many trials and tribulations, Ignatius arrived in Jerusalem but was not allowed to stay and perform his humble services for the pilgrims.

He returned to Spain to learn Latin. He did university studies in Alcala and Salamanca. During this time he guided a number of people through his Exercises. This got him into trouble with the Inquisition. He left Spain for Paris where he studied for and attained a Master's degree in theology. He spoke often of spiritual matters and gave his *Exercises* to a number of young men, Francis Xavier, Peter Favre and others, who joined him in forming the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus. These young men guided others through the *Exercises* and so the ministry of the giving of the *Exercises* began. The *Exercises* attracted many young men to the Jesuits. At the time of Ignatius' death the Society numbered about 1,000.

Ignatius' method of guiding the *Exercises* involved one-to-one personal direction. Eventually, in order to reach more people, a custom arose where one Jesuit presented the *Exercises* in a church while some of his colleagues did the personal direction. Later the ministry of the preached *Exercises* lost this personal direction component. In the 1960's, Jesuit spiritual directors included this component once again. Since this time, the personally directed *Exercises* have returned to prominence.

Today, in many countries, there are religious and lay-people directing the 30-day *Exercises*. In addition, other ways of presenting the *Exercises* have evolved, such as the *Exercises* in everyday life. The *Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for the Twenty-First Century* is one way, among others, for praying the *Exercises* in everyday life. They follow the pattern and method of the Ignatius' original exercises.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius states that the purpose of the Exercises is:

[1] ...[as] every way of preparing and disposing one's soul to rid herself of all disordered attachments, so that once rid of them one might seek and find the divine will in regard to the disposition of one's life

for the good of the soul.

[21] SPIRITUAL EXERCISES HAVE AS THEIR PURPOSE THE OVERCOMING OF SELF AND THE ORDERING OF ONE'S LIFE IN THE BASIS OF A DECISION MADE IN FREEDOM FROM ANY ILL-ORDERED ATTACHMENT.

(Munitiz, Joseph, A. and Endean, Philip: *St Ignatius of Loyola, Personal Writings*, London, Penquin Books, 1996, pp.283 and 298)

INTRODUCTION TO THE WARMING-UP EXERCISES

The purpose of the Disposition Week is to help those praying these *Exercises* gain the perspective and commitment needed to enter into this prayer experience. Jesus' image of God will be the basis for prayer. Jesus' life and teachings give us a God who is a Trinity of persons. (see **John 14:15-17**) Jesus presents a benevolent God, one he calls Abba, who is merciful, kind and encouraging to all. The image of God in the prayers that follow is a loving community of persons (Trinity), who have created all things and who are continually present to their creation, sustaining, energizing, and making all things new.

The Disposition Week calls us to a creative understanding of the universe and our responsibilities as part of its community of life, within the framework of Ignatius' "First Principle and Foundation". This week is also a time of instruction and practice in various methods of prayer, all of which can be used to help us achieve our deep, spiritual desires. Some of the practices we have included in the next section are the basic steps in Ignatian prayer, preparation for prayer, review of prayer, keeping a spiritual journal, and making prayer repetitions. We hope this will be a fruitful experience for those who undertake these *Spiritual Exercises*.

FIRST WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE WARMING-UP EXERCISES

We dispose ourselves to the love of God

PRAYER HOUR 1 THE LOVE STORY OF THE CREATOR WITH OUR UNIVERSE

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

Scripture tells us that “God is love” and this love is a love between the three persons of the Trinity. This love, according to our sacred story, continues in the creative and sustaining activity of the Trinity in Jesus Christ. We will return to these next week.

We can enter into the great mystery of cosmic evolution through telling and listening to our creation stories. Stories have great significance in our culture. They can be used for entertainment and amusement. Elie Weisel, in one of his rabbinical stories wrote, “*God made humans because God loves stories*”. Because creation stories attempt to explain how chaos becomes cosmos, how something comes from nothing, they can help us enter into the mystery of life. They present truths to us in ways that concrete facts or data cannot.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Trinity for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations of my body, mind, and heart may be directed purely to their praise and service.

PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Today, we consider the vast expanse of the universe from the viewpoint of planet earth and we reflect on the various sacred stories about the beginnings of planet earth.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read one or more of the following: **1 John 4:8, Luke 10:21-22, John 15:9, Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 3:14-19, Colossians 1:15-20**. I enter into the mystery at the heart of the origin of the cosmos with the sense of wonder and awe of a child.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace to appreciate the beauty and truth of the interconnectedness of all created things in the universe.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

For millennia there have been many stories of the earth told by human beings of many races, nations and creeds. Today, I will read and ponder on the **POINTS FOR THE DAY**, as ways of disposing myself for the *desire of my heart*.

First Point: Many creation stories and one Creator. For earthlings, planet earth’s great story is God’s love for the earth and its inhabitants. This one great story has many versions. Every society and tradition, whether ancient or modern, has such stories. They point to a reality beyond them, which cannot be directly symbolized. P. Ricoeur refers to this as a “surplus of meaning”. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist, was fascinated by the idea that the same stories have a way of appearing in diverse communities from India to the Middle East, from China and Japan to South America. Joseph Campbell suggested that there was one story shared by everyone as part of our universal human experience. These stories incorporate conceptions of sacred space and sacred time, images of the hero and patterns of communal identity. Many include the history of great religious leaders. They come from indigenous Aboriginal peoples, Buddhist and Hindu sources, from Hebrew, Christian and Moslem sources.

Second point: I reflect on the creation story of my own tradition, e.g., **Genesis 1:1, 2:4**, and on one of another tradition. Where are the similarities in both traditions that inspire me or increase my sense of well-being?

Third point: Stories of the original ordering of the universe, with significant religious ceremonies, arise everywhere in the Islands of South Pacific, the Tibetan Mountains, the Plains of India, the jungles of Africa, the lush valleys of the Americas, the deserts of Arabia. These stories helped our ancestors give meaning to the different experiences they faced. They helped them face various natural phenomena. They can include great heroes who have both human and divine qualities. Some people believed that there was a Supreme Being with many consorts and many expressions of power and intelligence in the natural world. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Supreme Being is a person and Krishna is the one through who all else is created. Greek stories dealt with a demiurge, which brought order, *kosmos*, into the universe. The *Gilgamesh Epic* helped the peoples of Mesopotamia to find meaning in the midst of harsh climatic conditions, such as floods and earthquakes. They saw these events as chaotic and flowing from the anger of God over the sinfulness of humanity. Yet, each time their gods brought order out of *chaos*. Some creation stories picture a savage and merciless fight between two gods, one good and one evil. This seems to be the basis of many other stories among the peoples of the mid-east including the Hebrews. Many creation myths include the stories of humans in a garden and the disastrous flooding of the earth.

Some are written as a journey with God and demonstrate the reasons why we tend to go from chaos of sinfulness to the order of understanding and repentance. The flood stories, which are common to many people, are an example of going from order to chaos. Creation stories tell us who we are before God and the universe. They give us a sense of direction and a way of living a truly human life in the ever-changing experience of life. They deal with the big issues of birth, initiation, marriage, family and death as well as sin and virtue. As part of your prayer, reflect on these stories or others you may know of. Where do you sense mystery? Where do you sense God's presence?

DIALOGUE

Throughout the time of prayer let your sense of kinship with the rest of creation emerge in various images, sounds, gestures. Complete your prayer with expressions of awe, wonder, insight, appreciation, gratitude, etc in words such as these:

“O Community of the Godhead, You have knit us together in a kinship of connectedness and relationship with all the great universes in space and all the minutiae of atoms in ourselves. We pray that we will always appreciate Your unconditional love, expressed in our communal oneness with all creatures and out of this sense of kinship love and serve You and Your creation in all things and events of our lives.”

I pray with the Lord's Prayer of the Maori of New Zealand:

“Eternal Spirit, Earth Maker, pain bearer, life-giver, source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, loving God in whom in heaven the hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the earth!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth!

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.”

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer (Review) and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SPECIAL BEAUTY THAT SCRIPTURE GIVES TO THE CREATION STORY OF THE UNIVERSE.

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

We are transformed by beauty whether it is the beauty of the senses that we experience in art, music or food or the beauty in the goodness of another person. Beauty carries us to another level of being which is that of the divine. It is one of the four transcendental precepts (beauty, oneness, truth and goodness). We are called to recognize the beautiful in all things and praise the Creator for the beauty in all things of the universe. During this week we will open ourselves up to the beauty in the new expression of our creation story given by the New Testament.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg of the Trinity the grace that all my intentions, actions and operations of my body, mind and heart may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

John Haught, in *God after Darwin*, says that, “*God wants to maximize cosmic beauty*” through evolution (p 130). Jesus’ life and actions are a new expression of this cosmic beauty. Let us consider the place of all things in our evolving universe in the light of Jesus Christ.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Colossians 1:15-20** and I open my heart to experience the beauty and mystery of Jesus Christ as the beginning and end of creation in our story of the universe.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace to appreciate the beauty of the interconnectedness of all created things in the universe.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

Today we will be praying with some New Testament creation stories. In the **POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION**, parts of these stories are given for prayer.

First point: To appreciate the beauty of the creation story in the New Testament, we can focus on the significance of the Trinity in our Christian faith. The centre of our Christian faith is the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity, who form a community in the godhead. Eventually, in our creation story, the Trinity looked beyond themselves and acted to bring Jesus Christ into being through the evolution of the universe. St. Paul thought that without the historical existence of Jesus Christ we would have no knowledge of the Trinity or the purpose of our own existence. For St. Paul, Jesus Christ as the Child (Son) of God is the beginning of our story and the love story between the Trinity and our planet. The earth, with all its human, plant and animal inhabitants, is the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the beginning and end of our creation story; he is *Alpha* and *Omega*. This is most clearly expressed in St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians. Ponder **Colossians 1:15-20**, as a way to continue with your prayer.

Second point: The creative power of the Word (i.e. Jesus Christ), brings about our creation story. Another element of our creation story is given in St. John’s gospel. There we are told about the life of Jesus Christ with the Trinity before creation. What a difference this makes in the way we approach our universe. It is the free expression of the Trinity’s love. So we can ponder this mystery as part of our prayer period. (Read **John 1:1-18**, if you wish)

Third point: Jesus is the expression of the vulnerability of the Trinity in the universe. In the Christian tradition, questions about God and the spiritual in the world are referred to the experience of Jesus Christ and His relationship to the Trinity, other humans and the world at large. There is a huge difficulty in projecting an image of the perfect God and all that it connotes. If we go to our reflective experience of Jesus and the Trinity, we get an understanding of God and God's relationship to humans and the cosmos. It is in Jesus' own sense of personal relationship with the Trinity, and other humans and the world, that we discover spiritual meaning. Our creation story gives us an awareness of the attitude of the Trinity to their creation. In Jesus Christ, we are made aware of the connection of all of us in this universe and the cost of this action to the Trinity, which was to send the second Person to us to experience the human condition. Praying with the reading from Philippians helps us to appreciate a new image of the Trinity and their relationship with the universe. (Read **Philippians 2:1-11**, if you wish)

DIALOGUE (See DAY 1)

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER (See DAY 1)

PRAYER HOUR 3
THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION
PROPHETS OF A FREE AND LOVING TRINITY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

Throughout the ages there have been prophets of the community of life. In this week, we will pray over the “**First Principle and Foundation**” of St. Ignatius by recalling the many prophets who, following in the footsteps of Christ, call us to appreciate the free loving expression of the Trinity in the creation and sustaining of the universe.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Trinity for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations of my body, mind and heart may be directed purely to their praise and service.

PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

In his “**First Principle and Foundation**”, which follows, Ignatius brings before us four basic points: our sense of creaturehood before the Creator, our relationship with other creatures in the universe, our need to be spiritually free and the focus of our decision-making.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I ponder the “**First Principle and Foundation**” and its message for my life. I will consider the witness of prophetic individuals and communities especially in the light of Ignatius’ words. I will not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to dishonour, a long life to a short life, but instead, love and work for the Trinity’s universal community of life.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace to take on the mind and heart of the Trinity’s prophets, and thus aspire to a new level of being.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First Point: Our prayer will focus on Ignatius’ Principle and Foundation. As an introduction, please read the following expression of the *First Principle and Foundation* in terms of the four points given in the Preface to the Mystery.

ST. IGNATIUS’ FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

We humans are created in union with all other creatures of the universe to praise, reverence and serve the Trinity and in this united activity to appreciate our kinship with each other and to discover the fullness of our own lives on earth.

We are to respect all other creatures even as we use them for our own livelihood and unite with them in praise, reverence and service. This requires true spiritual freedom on our part. Such freedom extends to our relationship with everything. This is the basic attitude toward all members of the community of life and is necessary for true love. So we need to find this freedom in order to develop a right relationship with creatures, human, plant, and animal. This gives us freedom to live our lives in honour or dishonour, poverty or riches, sickness or health, a short life or a long life, whether for honour or dishonour, poverty or riches, long or a short one, in sickness or in health, and in all other matters.

Our one desire is to choose what will better help us be united in love and gratitude with all of creation for the greater praise, reverence and service of the Trinity.

Second Point: The Principle and Foundation brings to our minds our sense of creaturehood and

connectedness with the rest of creation so we see ourselves as dependent beings. This calls us to personal gratitude for our finite existence and a desire to choose the better good for the sake of God and the universal community of life in which we live. With this in mind we can exclaim with the psalmist: “I praise you, for I am so fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Ps 139:14)

Yet, we tend to be proud and aggressive toward other living beings. Our scientific culture explains human evolution and physical-chemical composition. This is not the same, however, as the interior sense that we have of our existence and our experiences of contingency, fragility and dependence.

Reflecting on Psalm 139 can help us appreciate our creaturehood.

*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them - they are more than the sand; I come to the end - I am still with you. (Ps 139:13-16)*

Third Point: This sense of dependency with other creatures in the universal community of life calls us to a healthy friendship with them. Spiritual freedom is a basic attitude in our relationship with all life as well as a deep desire to be an instrument of the Trinity's goodness and love in our universe. We are faced with the many challenges of Ignatius' statement and our one desire and choice should be to join the rest of creation for the greater praise, reverence and service of the Trinity.

DIALOGUE

I have a conversation with the Three Divine Persons. For example: “*I thank you for my existence and for sustaining me in life*”, or I pray to relate to all other beings in the universe as my kin, or I ask Jesus to give me His spirit of freedom and love for all things great and small, or I carry on my own conversation with the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity.

I end with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER (See DAY 1)

**THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER
AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE**

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOOR 1: THE LOVE STORY OF THE CREATOR FOR OUR UNIVERSE

1. I consider the following abbreviated rendition of the Hebrew story of creation from The Book of Genesis. (**Gen 1:1, 2:4**)

*“This is an account of the creation of heaven and earth and all their inhabitants in seven days:
The first day the creation of light and division of day and night;
The second day the creation of the vault of heaven from the waters below;
The third day the creation of dry land with seed and fruit bearing plants;
The fourth day the creation of the lights in the heavens: sun, moon and stars;
The fifth day the creation of fish and living beings in the waters of the sea;
The sixth day the creation of every kind of living creatures on the earth including humans;
The seventh day the creation of rest for God and for all things.”*

2. There are many elements in the Genesis story that ask us to consider God’s relationship to the universe. As you proceed with your prayer recall the words: “*And God saw that it was good*” with all the elements of creation, and also God’s words “*multiply and fill the earth*”.
3. Pray with **Psalm 104** to discover the personal ways in which the Creator is with us and with the rest of creation, reflecting on: “*God saw that it was good*”, and “*In their own image, male and female God created humans*”, and “*May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works*”. (**Ps 104:31**)
4. Modern scientists are also in the business of telling stories that will include their theories and experiences of the microcosm (minutiae of the atom) and the macrocosm (the expanding universe). Teilhard de Chardin S.J. gave us a new appreciation of evolution by seeing, as its purpose, the spiritual benefit of humanity and the universe. He writes: “*By virtue of creation and still more of the Incarnation, nothing is profane here on earth.*” (*Le Milieu Divin*) Also, “*By His Incarnation He inserted Himself not just into humanity but into the universe which supports humanity.*” (*La vie cosmique*, (ET), p.47) “*The Incarnation is a renovation of all the forces and powers of the universe, Christ is the instrument, the centre, the end of the whole of animate and material creation, through Him all is created, sanctified, vivified.*” (*La vie cosmique*, 1916, oeuvres, V, 396)

Present-day cosmologists propose the **big bang** story to explain the beginnings of the universe. Unlike other creation stories, scientific stories take a *solely* objective viewpoint of life and do not include questions about the meaning of life or the forming of right relationships with humans, other living beings, our Earth and the divine. Rather, the focus is on the interplay of subatomic particles, atoms, gravity and electromagnetism in the formation of the universe. It is also important for us to reflect on these scientific stories of creation.

5. In the following passage, Paul suggests the whole universe is yearning for the completion of evolution: “*For us our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will transfigure our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which He brings all things under His rule.*” (**Phil 3:20-21**) Jesus is aware of this hope when He says: “*And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself.*” (**John 12:32**) We can pray with these scripture texts and join Jesus in His declaration for the universe: “*Look, I am making the whole of creation new.*” (**Revelations 21:5**)

6. Spend some time with these words of St. Paul.

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope, that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole of creation has been groaning in labour pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we await adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:19-23)

HOOR 2: JESUS CHRIST, THE SPECIAL BEAUTY OF SCRIPTURE

1. **The personal care of the Three Divine Persons for the smallest of things.** Creation stories in which there is an interplay between a Supreme Being, the earth and humans are implanted in the human unconscious. They play a part in telling and understanding the gospel stories of the Church. Our stories come from remembering our experiences of life. As Christians, we remember the experience and words of Jesus in the gospel stories. In Jesus’ experience and His revelation of the Three Divine Persons, we receive *the Great Love Story of planet earth and all its inhabitants*. Thus, we can pray with the words of Jesus in the reading for today and in the light of the Trinity’s recognition of even the smallest things of the earth. (Read **Luke 12:6, 24-25, 27**, if you wish)
2. **The creation story expresses the suffering of the Three Divine Persons.** The love story of the Three Divine Persons for planet earth does not end with the existence of Jesus. It is most fully expressed in the Crucifixion of Jesus, a love expressed by the Trinity for all humanity and the universe. It is not the story of a triumphant hero but of a lover who suffers and dies for the beloved. This suffering part of the story is only possible because Jesus was composed of the various elements of the universe and the earth. We can pray with Psalm 40 and the passage from Hebrews, in an awareness of the universe suffering with Jesus. (Read **Psalm 40:8-10** and **Hebrews 10:5-7** if you wish)
3. **The full creation story is given in Jesus’ resurrection.** In the resurrection of Jesus we realize the great action of the Three Divine Persons to be with all Creation in its beginnings, through its evolution and the growing pains of coming to its fulfilment. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we are given deep insights into the creative action of the Three Divine Persons for planet earth and its life. We sense the compassion of the Trinity for all things great and small in Jesus’ life. So in His resurrection we realize the future direction of all creation towards a fulfilment that surpasses all understanding. All creation is filled with hope as it recognizes the fulfilment of its constant efforts to grow into something new, as given in Romans: *“The entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free.” (Romans 8:22-23)*

HOOR 3: THE PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

1. Continue to consider the “First Principle and Foundation”. Ignatius uses the words indifference or detachment to express the necessary freedom we need to respond with generosity, love and hope, to the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Ignatius sees this as a necessary state of being in our relationship with all creatures and with God. His *Spiritual Exercises* bring us to the sacrificial love of Jesus for all members of the community of life, including us. In this experience of unconditional love, we find the freedom Ignatius desires for us.
2. Ignatian freedom generates respect for plants, animals, humans and ecosystems. It is the basis for a change in our disposition so that we desire the well-being of the community of life and see all in it, as a gift from God. Ignatius is not writing about the necessary freedom to avoid sin and

faults but the freedom we need to relate, in healthy ways, with the diverse beings and entities on our Earth and beyond. It is fundamental to our ability to love and act with the mind and heart of Christ. Such freedom evolves in each of us, as we experience the Trinity's love and develop a disposition allowing us to recognize and desire such a state.

- 3.** I consider this freedom in terms of those prophetic people or communities that inspire and move me. I recall the names of communities or individuals whose work inspires me. I reflect on the qualities they possess that make them attractive to me.

INTRODUCTION to the FIRST EXERCISES

After considering the purpose of our existence before God, Ignatius asks us to pray over our personal sins and the broader, structural sins of the human community in five spiritual exercises, which are repeated for five weeks until we obtain the desire of our hearts. These “First Week” exercises fill us with gratitude and amazement for our existence, for the love of the Trinity and for the universal community of life, which sustains us. In this eight-week retreat, two weeks of prayer are dedicated to the “First Week” exercises. As we pray we realize that we have not responded to the goodness and constant evolutionary love of the Trinity for the cosmos. We pray for the gift of sorrow for our abuse of the Trinity’s beautiful creation and to become instruments of God’s justice on Earth. These two weeks of prayer can deepen our relationships with all creation and give us a sense of community that expands to include kinship with Earth and the cosmos. Our sense of sin expands also and cannot be limited to sins against humans only, but will include abuses against all life.

SECOND WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE FIRST EXERCISES

We are sinful yet beloved

PRAYER HOUR 1 THE REVOLT OF THE ANGELS

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This meditation is based on St. Ignatius' First Exercise on the mystery of Structural Sin. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

As a preface to this meditation, it is important to consider the mystery of the evil forces that exist in our universe. (see **Eph 6:10-13**) Part of our consideration will be to compare the three sins of scripture with the cosmic evil forces. How does the "I will not serve the Word Incarnate" of the angels re-appear in our cosmos? (**2 Pet 2:4**) How does the unwillingness of Adam and Eve to be creatures re-appear in our cosmos? (**Gn 3:4-6**) How does the abuse of power by individuals re-appear in our cosmos? (**2 Sam 13-14**)

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I make an imaginative effort to put myself into a place or situation of physical and psychological helplessness as suggested by the scripture on the Prodigal in the foreign land (**Lk 15:14-16**) and I enter into the helpless state of many other creatures in our universe.

I may wish to ponder **Isaiah 24:4-6** as an aid for this.

"The earth mourns and withers, The world languishes and withers, The heavens languish together with the earth, The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.

Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few people are left."

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of confusion and embarrassment, as I consider my sinful irreverence towards and complicity against life in me and in the cosmos. I ask, "Why have I not destroyed myself?" and as I consider the many destructive meteorites our universe, "Why have I not been destroyed with the rest of the earth?"

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First Point: Human conceit is the result of the sin of the angels. (**2 Pet 2:1-22**) Structural Sin is part of the larger mystery of evil forces let loose in the universe, which St. Paul warns us of in **Ephesians 6:10-13**.

Second Point: The Earth is an insignificant speck of dust in the vast cosmos. In order to realize the foolishness of human pride, I begin this point by using my imagination to enter a guided tour of a planetarium or, if it is dark outside, I could glance up at the moon and stars in the heavens.

Third Point: Why has pride, the sin of the angels, not led to our extinction? I ask why we have been allowed to evolve in this dangerous but wonderful universe, so as to attain our lofty level of intelligence, self-awareness and wisdom? We give thanks that we are alive. (**Rom 7:24-25**)

Fourth Point: The sin of Adam and Eve is the refusal to see the goodness of our finiteness. Therefore, falling into despair, we see ourselves as worthless and we see Creation as a commodity.

Fifth Point: Through our greed, we have harmed people and the biosphere.

Sixth Point: We have adopted habits of sin, which have taken root in nearly everyone and about which we are scarcely aware. I consider how structural sin leads us to harm the planet. It manifests as our failure to take responsibility for directing evolution for the good of the whole sacred family of Life.

DIALOGUE

Imagine Jesus present before you on the cross. Ask Jesus: *“How is it that, though you are the Creator, you have become human and are now dying for all your creatures?”* Then, to reflect with these questions: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What am I being called to do for Christ? As I behold Christ in this plight, nailed to the cross, I shall ponder upon what presents itself to my mind.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER WITH MY COMMUNITY

As I recall my prayer (Review) and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

INTERPERSONAL SIN

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a meditation on the mystery of the Three Sins. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

My sinful complicity in the destruction of the community of life: My daily rejection of God-given opportunities reach out to those excluded from biological, social and political life. Thus, I sinfully shun the invitation to evolve to human maturity; by this neglect I hinder the world's evolution in freedom. **(Matthew 25:31-46)**

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I make an imaginative effort to put myself into a place suggested by the scripture reading of the Final Judgement. It might be an immense Supreme Court hall. It might be my return to loving parents and kin in the childhood home, which I ran away from as a sinner long ago.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of a deep-felt awareness of my sinful irreverence towards and complicity against life in me and in the cosmos, and embarrassment before the patient love of the Trinity towards me in spite of my involvement in this evil.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: Jesus tells me that my relationship with Him is described by how I treat His Creation and my fellow creatures.

Second point: I ponder the words of St. Paul (**Rom 7:14-25**), which express how I, as a member of the human species, am unable to do what is good even when I want to; on my own, I cannot resist doing what is wrong.

Third point: I reflect on the parable of Lazarus begging at the gate. (**Luke 16:19-31**) My ecology consists of relationships with people and all creatures. By neglecting to sustain relationships, I reject the friendship of Jesus Himself.

DIALOGUE

I end by extolling the mercy of the Trinity, pouring out my thoughts to Jesus:

“You gave me the opportunity of evolving each day towards perfect freedom and of aiding others to be fully human like you; I rejected your love. You sent Lazarus to my gate many times but I avoided looking him in the eye. I imprisoned myself in loneliness, with a wall of fear. I avoided befriending the creatures around me. Yet you do not let me destroy myself, and those I love through my sin. I thank you and resolve to cooperate with your grace”.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3 PERSONAL SHADOW HISTORY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a meditation on our sins. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation. (**Mark 1:40-42**)

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

A leper came to Jesus begging, and kneeling said, "*If you choose you can make me clean*". Moved with pity Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, "*I do choose. Be made clean*". Immediately the leprosy left him and he became clean.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I imagine myself trapped between many destructive evils such as the violence which my society, my knowledge, my investments, my recreations, my conveniences, my job, inflict on the poor and weak, on vulnerable creatures and on soil, water, air. I see no way out: no solution. It is an impasse like a dark night of the soul. I imagine myself with St. Paul, a slave to sin, doing the very things I hate, acting against my will. (**Rom 7:14-23**)

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of deep awareness that Jesus was with me throughout my painful history. I pray for the grace of sorrow and healing. I seek forgiveness and the grace to forgive.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I call to mind all the sins of my life, reviewing year-by-year and period-by-period. Three things will help me in this: First, I consider the places where I lived; second, my dealings with others; third, the jobs I had.

Second point: I consider how faithfully the sun has given light to the Earth to let life grow and multiply for eons; how faithfully the rotation of our planet brings me nightfall and repose. I recall how each day, clean water, pure air, good food have sustained me; how the wood of trees has sheltered me from harsh weather, how the fibre from plants and animals have given me clothing; I remember how microbes give me antibiotics to heal me. I am amazed at the generosity of nature in providing me with every good thing in abundance. So too the love, care, sacrifices of many persons and creatures have made my life comfortable and filled it with glory. Angels and countless persons in the *Communion of Saints* have protected me from harm and prayed each day for me.

Third point: I consider how I have repaid all their fidelity by polluting and defacing the home we all share as kin. Why do they still patiently and humbly nourish me? I am filled with confusion and shame that they have kept me alive.

DIALOGUE

I extol the mercy of the Trinity. I pour out my thoughts and thank the Three Divine Persons that, to this moment, they give me life. I resolve, with the grace of the Trinity, to turn from my destructive ways and serve only them.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the Mystery.

HOOR 1:THE REVOLT OF THE ANGELS

1. The *Book of Enoch* was used by the first Christians. It contains the fullest account of the myth of angelic rebellion and cosmic sin. It also highlights a “Great Oath” entrusted to the Archangel Michael. Through the oath, all the structures of the cosmos are bound and kept on their course and the safety of Earth is assured. Forces, which could destroy Creation, will be released if it is broken by deliberate destruction of the natural order.
2. I feel lonely and unimportant in this Universe. The immensity is awesome. If the Sun were represented by a grocery orange, on the same scale, Earth would be a grain of sand placed about twenty-five feet from it. The giant planet Jupiter would be the size of a pea orbiting the orange about 130 feet away, the distance I would cover in half a minute of walking. Pluto would be a tiny sand grain one thousand feet away about the distance a car travels in the city in half a minute. It is a shock to realize that, on this scale, the nearest orange (the star Alpha Centauri) would be placed 1400 miles away. That is roughly the distance between Toronto and Saskatoon or between London and Istanbul. I consider how Earth is a planet in just one of billions of solar systems in our galaxy; consider that there are billions of galaxies with many planetary homes with evolving creatures.
3. Planet Earth is a target in a cosmic shooting range. The beauty of the heavens masks a terrifying violence. I ponder the widespread assumption that our technology gives us control over nature’s power and immunity from its danger. The antidote is the awareness that we must never take our safety for granted. It is believed that our very existence as humans happened probably because a huge meteor crashed into Earth 65 million years ago near Mexico. This destroyed many creatures including the dinosaurs and so gave tiny mammals the opportunity to evolve, resulting in our appearance. It was one of several mass extinctions on Earth. Another chance impact with a comet might kill all of us and no technology can protect us. Astronomers believe that these impacts would be more frequent except that the giant planet Jupiter has immense gravity and so acts like a vacuum cleaner sucking up most of the asteroids and comets that could destroy life here. The first such collision ever seen was when Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 struck Jupiter, 16th to 22nd July 1994 www.jpl.nasa.gov/sl9/sl9.html; it was spectacular yet violent beyond all expectations. Over billions of years there have been many planetary impacts. The moon and Mars are covered with the craters of immense bombardments. Our globe also had many scars but they have, for the most part, been worn away by Earth’s special erosion.

Why have we too not gone the way of the dinosaurs and countless animals and ecosystems before them?

In his vision, Enoch saw the Son of Man restoring the great bonds of creation thus healing the cosmos. In this mystery, the infinite became finite and the beloved died to atone for all sin on Earth and in the universe. It is Jesus nailed to the cross: the Trinity’s complete outpouring of themselves into the suffering of evolution, which permitted life to appear on Earth and everywhere. We give thanks that we are alive. **(Rom 7:24-25)**

4. I consider how we humans have evolved to a state of almost complete power and security in the 21st century. The only threats are our suicidal madness or a cosmic impact. This freedom is bestowed through consciousness, speech and all the developments of culture, culminating in a worldwide infrastructure of technology on which civilizations depend. All around us are the benefits of engineering from the level of synthetic DNA, to computers, to interplanetary travel. We assume that no task is impossible; that our technology always has solved and will solve all problems. This great freedom should make us humbly, gratefully aware of our absolute dependence on our genetic kin:

trees, herbs, microbes, worms, and on air, water and soil.

5. We humans are just coming to the mystical awareness that our primary place of belonging is the universe and that our Earth is one tiny community among thousands. Our Earth is one, but not the world. Each culture, each nation strives for affluence with little regard for its effect on others; yet, one biosphere sustains all of us. The wealthy consume resources at a rate that will deprive their descendants. The poor consume too little and face disease, squalor and early death. A North American consumes more than 70 times as much water as a West African and affects the release of more than three times as much carbon dioxide. Child mortality, a measure of affluence, is ten times higher in poor nations than in rich ones. Our selfishness also harms soil, air, water and all the other communities of creatures on whose well-being our existence depends. *“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”* (Aldo Leopold)
6. Of course, it is shocking when we realize that the structural sin of our benign society flows from these habits of sin, which we seldom question. They are like the air we breathe. I become aware of how I develop habits; they are inescapable. The problem with habits is that to a degree, we are not conscious of what we are doing. Some of this happens because, in our upbringing, we are moulded by our pervasive cultural institutions all of which are influenced by sin. In all our political, economic and social structures, there are deep-rooted human fears and selfish anxieties. Examples are consumerism, apartheid, caste systems, arrogance flowing from delusions of intellectual superiority and piety, exploitation of children, and worship of technology. The gifts of cultures, such as medicine, poetry, agriculture, architecture, dance, and engineering, also come from the same source; so we tend to overlook the dark side. The Pharisees of Jesus’ time assumed they were above this structural sinfulness. The Ignatian Exercises guide us to desire and seek the grace to become aware of these morbid realities in ourselves, and to move away from them towards health.

HOOR 2: INTERPERSONAL SIN

1. I consider whether my lifestyle is built on cynicism or on hope. I consider how I treat my person, my body; how I regard the soil, water, air and the communities they are home to. I weigh how much effort I make to be informed, to teach others the truth about the ecology of the global market. In the 21st century, the profound question we face is biological; can we evolve to become fully human, or will we remain less than fully human? Jean Vanier argues with passion, that to be human is to commit ourselves as individuals and as a species to an evolution that will be for the good of all. This requires that we follow the way of the heart. What prevents us is fear. Fear starves our hearts. Vanier gradually came to know how fear is a terrible motivating force in all lives. We are frightened of those who are different, of foreigners, of those who are needy, those who challenge our authority and certitudes. We are fearful of failure and rejection, and of change. *“I suspect we are even more frightened of our own hearts”*. Fear is what prevents us from being most human; it is the abyss, which separates people.

Reflect on these words of a hero: *“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.”* (Nelson Mandela)

2. I consider how I came to be enslaved in this way. It has its roots in childhood. Home should be a safe place of belonging for a child, but in every child the shadow area in the unconscious develops. She may experience this as a parent’s lack of love or possessiveness or even anger, and feelings of depression or revolt appear in her. She learns early from grownups whether those who are different, immigrants, the poor, the disabled, are to be feared or not. If she feels that she has to earn the love of her parents through good behaviour, she may grow up striving always to be perfect so compulsions to win, to be attractive, develop. So do fears: fears of conflict, of relationships. When we accept

children as they are, listening to them with respect, they will grow up able to accept others. At home as children, we learn too, whether creatures, snakes, insects, trees, grass, are to shunned or befriended. We sin when our fear blocks the love flowing from the Trinity into all creatures and all matter. To be free of the compulsion, which St. Paul describes, I must accept the grace to see the goodness of my finite existence. Through this grace, I am able to shed despair and cynicism. I evolve towards becoming fully human, fully mature; it is the compassionate acceptance of our own imperfections and those of others. This is the basis of evolutionary freedom.

3. The heart, not intellect, is what is deepest in each human being. Through the bonding of my heart with another's, a relationship grows. Loneliness is a normal attribute of being human. It is the yearning of my heart to be fully bonded with God, a need that cannot be fully met in this life. It drives some people to devote their lives to seeking God; in most cases it is a destructive anguish, a longing for death. This is often the experience of the sick, the elderly, those burdened by shame, and all persons we exclude. Jean Vanier shows us that in excluding Lazarus at our gate, we condemn ourselves to loneliness; we remain less than fully human. In so doing, we reject God's loving invitation to be truly liberated, to promote diversity and inclusiveness in the Earth community, and to fully enter into the evolutionary adventure.

Think on Vanier's words:

"I suspect that we exclude Lazarus because we are frightened that our hearts will be touched if we enter into a relationship with him. If we listen to his story and hear his cry of pain, we will discover that he is a human being...and where will that lead us...we risk entering into an adventure... if we do, we risk our lives being changed."

HOOR 3: PERSONAL SHADOW HISTORY

I carefully read the account below and note how we are part of the sins of others, against innocent creatures. I make an imaginative effort to put myself into a place or situation suggested by the following story and the scripture reading **Rom 7:14-23**.

On 16th April 1999 a nurse who spent fifteen years in Rwanda with Christian Blind Mission International spoke at a conference in Kitchener, Ontario (Canada). She told us that every minute of every day in Africa, a child goes blind. In many cases among the poor, the cause is lack of Vitamin A. This vitamin is in any red or orange vegetable and the cost of enough of it to prevent blindness in one child is \$3 each year. This is roughly the cost of two large cups of coffee. Yet many cannot afford it, or through poverty, are deprived of the knowledge, which could save their children's sight. She told us of a father who brought his young son to their clinic because his sight was failing. Their examination showed that the damage to the child's eyes was so serious that he would go blind. She told us that when the father learned of this he fell to the ground!

Then, on 21st May 1999, I saw this newspaper headline: "Big vitamin makers admit to price-fixing conspiracy". Large pharmaceutical companies pleaded guilty to price fixing. They agreed to pay a record fine of \$US 725 million; a director of worldwide marketing was jailed. They were rich but had plotted in secret to make sure that vitamin sales would bring in even more profits.

I was outraged. I wanted to cast the first stone. But I know that somehow, I am the guilty one. I found that I have money invested in the very same companies. So, I feel trapped, helpless, numbed.

THIRD WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE FIRST EXERCISES

We are sinful yet beloved

PRAYER HOUR 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF HELL

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a meditation on Hell. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Existence after choice of self and rejection of God. (**Luke 12:16-21**)

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I recall the hellish situation of our daily life portrayed by television.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for a deep sense of the infernal pain caused by my selfish abuse of the community of life so that, horrified, I will break my sinful patterns and not forget the Trinity's love for the community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I make an imaginative effort to put myself in a place suggested by the scripture reading where we live in isolation, not in relationship, isolated from each other by barriers of fear and complacency.

Second point: I imagine the hellish emptiness of life in which I am deceived into thinking I can know all things; that existence is devoid of mystery.

Third point: I imagine the hopelessness of existence in a universe, which has no meaning. I consider the bleak words of a scientist, "*man at last knows he is alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he has emerged only by chance*".

Fourth point: I imagine the desolate cosmos managed by a supercomputer.

Fifth point: I imagine the journey we traveled from the sacred Earth of Neolithic times to the infernal, meaningless universe of today.

DIALOGUE

I converse with Jesus, recalling all those in the icy grip of despair about existence. I thank the Persons of the Trinity because they have saved me from this fate, surrounded me with love, and continued to give me life.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

A REPETITION OF THE EXERCISES ON SIN

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

A repetition of three previous prayer periods. I will use the reviews of prayer to help me focus on those thoughts and feelings in the last three prayers where I experienced greater consolation, desolation or greater spiritual appreciation.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I quietly recall that I am in the presence of the Trinity and in my gratitude for their constant love, I re-enter the significant experiences of consolation and desolation of the three previous prayer periods.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of more intense sorrow over my sinful irreverence towards and complicity against life, in me and in the cosmos; embarrassment before the patient love of the Trinity towards me in spite of my involvement in this evil.

DIALOGUE

I ask Mary that she may obtain grace for me from her Son for three favours:

- ◆ *A deep knowledge of my sins, and horror of how they harm persons and communities of creatures.*
- ◆ *An understanding of the disorder of my actions that filled with horror of them, I may amend my lifestyle.*
- ◆ *An insight into our human species' capacity for violent knowledge in engineering, genetics, politics, business and so on; insight into our despair which leads us to use knowledge to bring extinction on living communities.*

I go with Mary to her Son and ask for the same three graces to be given to me. Afterwards, conclude by saying the *Soul of Christ*.

I go with Mary and Jesus to the Trinity and ask for the same three graces. End by saying the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3

THE EXPERIENCE OF HELL

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a meditation on Hell. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Human existence after choice of self, and rejection of God. (**Luke 12:16-21**)

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I recall the hellish situation of our daily life portrayed by television.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for a deep sense of the infernal pain caused by my selfish abuse of the community of life so that, horrified, I will break my sinful patterns and not forget the Trinity's love for the community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I make an imaginative effort to put myself in a place suggested by the scripture reading, where we live in isolation, not in relationship, isolated from each other by barriers of fear and complacency. Technology provides warm houses, well-stocked stores and an infinite variety of sports, entertainment and gadgets. There are no communities nor any trees, grass, weeds, fish, birds, animals, farms. Gene engineering allows lifespans of 200 years, and generates food from growing isolated cattle parts, human replacement organs from isolated human fetuses. Everywhere there is conceit, envy, lust, anger, narcotics, prisons and police.

Second point: I become aware of the hellish deceit that existence is meaningless, because evolutionary theory seems to imply all living things came from one ancestor by a meaningless, random process.

Third point: I become aware of the diabolical lie that no Creator exists because Darwin's theory seems to make a Creator of Life unnecessary.

Fourth point: I become aware that from the loss of the sacred, flows the infernal deceit that the consumer confidence-index should be the governments' chief concern.

Fifth point: I become aware that Hell is despair, which is born of the deceit that to be worthy of existence, I must acquire more possessions than other people.

DIALOGUE

I converse with Jesus, recalling all those in the icy grip of despair about existence. I thank the Persons of the Trinity because they have saved me from this fate, given me hope, surrounded me with love, and continued to give me life.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF

THE POINTS ABOVE

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOUR 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF HELL

1. Technology provides warm houses, well-stocked stores and an infinite variety of sports, entertainment and gadgets. There are no communities nor any trees, grass, weeds, fish, birds, animals, farms. Gene engineering allows life spans of 200 years, and generates food from growing isolated cattle parts, human replacement organs from isolated human fetuses. Everywhere there is conceit, envy, lust, anger, narcotics, prisons and police.
2. The year 2000 marks an important moment in history because in the past decade, for the first time in history, some scientists have claimed that science itself, once thought to be a limitless adventure in understanding, may be at its end; in other words, that science is close to describing a *Theory of Everything* which will give us complete understanding of the makeup and workings of the universe and of living things. One of them spoke of this goal as “knowing the mind of God”. Some ask themselves, if this knowing is possible then no mystery remains; so why take trouble to love and worship God?
3. The ancients thought we humans were at the centre of all things; then Copernicus demonstrated that the sun was at the centre, not Earth, and we became a little less important. Next, scientists found that there *is* no center; our sun is one of billions in this galaxy and next, that there are billions of galaxies, each with billions of suns; we became even less important. This year 2000, scientists got new clues to the presence of many planets near other suns. Thinking beings like us possibly exist on planets throughout the universe. We have transmitted “Hello!” through SETI, but our calls are not returned. (<http://www.seti-inst.edu/>) We are further humbled when we discover how tiny our *not* central home is. If we imagine our galaxy scaled down to the size of the USA, then our sun and the orbits of its planets would all fit on a quarter dollar coin which is dropped somewhere near Houston, Texas; we Earthlings are located in the galactic suburbs, not downtown. Because there is no special spot like a centre, we realize that all spots are equally meaningless and our significance continues to diminish. In particular, the two special places of religion, Heaven and Hell, do *not* exist. So, many people question why they should strive to earn entrance to heaven and avoid hell if there is no destination awaiting their arrival after death.
4. In the Late Stone Age 25,000 years ago, humans carved female figures, which we think depicted God as the source of fertility. Later, 9000 years ago, people in agricultural communities worshipped God as Mother Earth, the life of vegetation. About 6000 years ago, they were invaded and their Mother replaced by a warlike male God; He dwelt in the sky, much further away from them than the Earth Mother. (*Note that God was a Person, whether male or female, a Person in relationship with persons.*) God made promises and the people trusted they would be kept. In the age of Western science, the image of God as Person was replaced gradually by the image of God as an efficient, external, impersonal force. God was seen as clockmaker, architect, or designer: a computer or energy field. The point here is that the clock is not part of the clockmaker as the Earth is part of Earth Mother. Once the clock starts to tick, the maker can leave it and depart; there is no personal relationship, no intimacy and no heart.
5. I consider that science has blessed us with knowledge, making our lives safer, more comfortable and interesting. It has also accustomed us to think of Nature as separate from us, fully understandable and devoid of mystery. In contrast, all of the world’s ancient traditions believed they were a part of Nature and that its elements were their living kin. Water, air, soil, plants and animals were sacred because God was revealed in them. I ponder how during 25,000 years, our holy conversation with Nature, our source of life and meaning, has been replaced by profound despair. We are already in

Hell.

HOOR 3: THE EXPERIENCE OF HELL

1. Darwin carefully gathered evidence to support his theory that existing types of living things, including humans, have arisen very gradually over long periods of time via a succession of previously existing types very different from their descendants of today. The differences between say the brain of the ancestors and of their descendants came about through changes requiring many tiny random steps. The cause of these evolutionary changes is the selection of only a few to leave descendants: a blind filtering-out of a few from many. Briefly, in any generation the many offspring are different from each other mostly by chance; only a few, with particular favourable inherited features which promote their survival and reproduction, become the parents of the next generation and pass on the genes for the favourable adaptive features such as strength, camouflage, resistance to drought. Darwin's *Theory of Evolution* was one of the greatest of human achievements and it has deeply affected every branch of knowledge. It is now believed that no material things, whether atoms, stars, bacteria, human societies, were created as they are today but all came into being through change, as time passed, by evolution.
2. The world of life is full of marvellous examples of behaviour and design, such as the bodies of diving and swimming animals, the wings of birds, the division of labour in insect societies, the loving care of a cat for its young, the flight of winged maple seeds, and countless more. Darwin's theory explains how all such wonders have come to be, *and does so in a way which makes the need for a designer completely unnecessary*. All that is needed is chance changes in DNA, about 4 billion years of time and the blind separating-out of certain few offspring called natural selection.
3. The ancients, in every culture in the world had a single *Theory of Everything*. They believed the Cosmos was sacred and existed as different levels in a *Great Chain of Being*. At the lowest level of the Chain were minerals, next up were plants, then animals, then humans, and at the top, inaccessible and the source of all meaning, was God. Our ancestors believed that in this hierarchy, all things originate in and are informed by the highest level. They were convinced that the lower levels were the least real because they could never adequately explain the meaning of the whole Chain.

Darwin's reasoning was a massive shock to people. Even before the shock wore off, we felt an even greater one. Astronomers claimed that the universe itself came into being about 14 billion years ago in the sudden start of a vast cosmic evolution. Why is it a shock? Because it started with tiny particles of matter (the lowest order in the *Chain of Being*) and from these came all things, including life, love, mind. In other words, the lowest level in the Chain, mindless matter, not the highest, God, is held to be the most real, the most fundamental! Thus, many people believe the Chain is destroyed forever. If the starting point was mindless matter, then all that evolved from it - the universe - must also be mindless, and so is pointless and cannot carry deep spiritual meaning. Therefore this Earth, Mars, and the moon, being meaningless, are devoid of lasting value and can be mined, exploited and desecrated at will by us.

4. The theologian John Haught asserts that it is impossible for us to exaggerate the immense, seismic impact on the world of these stages by which the *Great Chain of Being* was trashed. We must treat his words with the utmost seriousness. He describes a huge cloud of *cosmic pessimism*, which lies over all. No one escapes its weight: not religious or academic leaders, not artists and poets, not statespersons. Muller-Fahrenholz explains how our experience of the unprecedented causes the trauma of *Psychic Numbing*. It is the psyche's ability to endure conditions of "death immersion". In those with power, *Numbing* is manifested as *cynicism* towards truth, money and misuse of political power. In those who are powerless, *Numbing* is manifested in *fundamentalism*, a kind of desperation. In others it may surface in a cult of *violence*. Worst of all, the trauma of lost transcendence is simply

welcomed, ignored or denied by leaders. Religions retire behind tribal exclusivity; intellectuals call it reality. In Ignatian terms, it is a communal desolation, the post-modern place of Hell.

DISCERNMENT

A FIRST SET OF GUIDELINES for the Community of Life

The following discernment guidelines apply St. Ignatius' *Rules of Discernment* [313-336] to the experience of the universal community of life. They help people understand different interior feelings and motivations when making decisions in relationship to the community of life. There are two sets of guidelines. The first set of motivations tends to come from inside us and is directed to selfish, sinful tendencies with regard to all Earth's inhabitants. The second set of motivations comes from beyond us. This set is designed to help people deal with deception when they are making decisions for the total good of life's communities.

1. In the case of those whose approach to life is one of individual pleasure, there are two interior spiritual movements: one from the evil spirit and one from the good spirit. The evil spirit intensifies the desire to use nature strictly for one's own envious pleasure and advancement and fills the imagination with sensuality and gratifications. One wilfully ignores the abuse and humiliation of nature so that an exaggerated consumer life is satisfied. In such persons, the good spirit stings the conscious and brings to awareness the pervasive evil that resides in this way of life by pointing out its absurd and antisocial structure. In addition, the good spirit intensifies a sense of kinship and a rational and loving attitude to all Earth's inhabitants. This leads the person to repentance for one's sins against our kin and a resolution to better the situation.
2. In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to develop a kinship relationship with the universal community of life and to be instruments of the Creator's loving presence in the universe, the method pursued is the opposite of that in the first guideline. In this instance, the good and evil spirit act in opposite ways. Now, the evil spirit harasses persons with anxiety and sadness at the loss of pleasure in exaggerated consumptive habits. It uses false reasoning to lead back to a destructive, wilful attitude, which attacks a reasonable and loving friendship with Earth's inhabitants. In such persons, the good spirit gives courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This movement makes one's kinship relationship with nature easy and loving so that the person is filled with peace and resolve.
3. *Spiritual Consolation.* Ignatius describes consolation as an interior movement in persons so that they are inflamed with love of Jesus Christ as Creator of all that is. As a consequence, their kinship with all creatures takes them to the Creator of all. It is likewise consolation when the love of the Trinity leads people to shed tears because of sorrow for sins, or because Christ suffers in the suffering of all Earth's inhabitants, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of Christ in the universe. Finally, consolation is every increase of faith, hope, and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts one to a deeper appreciation of the interrelationship of all created beings. This gives people a sense of kinship so that they are filled with peace and quiet in Jesus Christ.
4. *Spiritual Desolation.* Ignatius describes desolation as an interior movement opposite to that in the third guideline. It discourages kinship with the community of life. It produces a sense of confusion, inner turmoil, destructive desires, a refusal of the Trinity's invitations to take part in the evolution of body, mind and spirit. It leads to a loss of faith, hope and love in the evolving complexity of life and matter. People give up the struggle and become sad and separated from Jesus Christ their Creator. For, just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts springing from consolation are the opposite of those that spring from desolation.
5. In a time of desolation, we should never make changes in our way of life, but remain firm and constant in the resolution and decision that guided us before the desolation, and continue to respect

and befriend matter and living beings. We should adhere to decisions made in (the preceding) consolation. For just as in consolation we are prompted by the good spirit, a correct and benevolent counsel - so in desolation we are prompted by the evil spirit, an incorrect and destructive counsel. In times of desolation, we seldom make a right decision.

6. Though in desolation, we must never change our former resolutions. It will be advantageous to call forth the interior joy we possess when we befriend Earth and its inhabitants. This acts as a means to overcome desolation. As we meditate on these friendships, and we recall the Trinity's love for every bit of cosmic matter, we can examine our attitudes and actions and change our life style to reflect our resolve and consoling decisions.
7. When we are in desolation, we should be aware of our separation from life. We feel left alone to resist our discouragements and destructive tendencies. This can be an opportunity to mature in our relationship to the cosmos. We can resist desolation with the constant help of our common Creator, though we may not clearly perceive it. Even though we have lost our sense of kinship and the abundance of commitment and overflowing love for Jesus, nevertheless, we have the Creator's love to help us in this endeavour.
8. When we are in desolation, we should strive to persevere in patience. This acts to diminish the vexations that have overtaken us. Let us consider, too, that consolation will soon return. In the meantime, we must diligently counteract desolation, using the means in the sixth guideline.
9. There are three principal reasons for desolation.
 - I. We have deliberately turned away from our commitment to act justly towards all life, or to have a prayerful life in the Spirit, or we have failed to follow the suggestions given in the sixth guideline. Thus, through our own actions, spiritual consolation is taken away from us.
 - II. The Trinity wishes to draw us into a more mature relationship with all life and matter. In desolation, we discover how strong our commitment is and how much we will cooperate with the rest of creation and the Trinity's love by having to overcome a lack of desire or hope for right relationship with all creation.
 - III. The Trinity wants us to have a true knowledge and understanding that we need to depend and cooperate with them. We realize that it is not within our power to acquire and attain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation in our relationship with the community of life. All is a gift of Jesus Christ. We do not build our own edifice, or take all the credit for the love and devotion described in the third guideline.
10. When we enjoy consolation, let us consider how we will conduct ourselves during the desolation that will follow, and gather renewed strength for that moment.
11. Those who enjoy consolation should take care to humble themselves as much as possible. Let them recall how little they were able to do in time of desolation, when left without the assurances and consolation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, in desolation they should remember that by drawing strength from our Creator sufficient grace is given to resist all our sinful, disordered tendencies.
12. In our efforts to bring justice to all life and matter, we find that the evil spirit can act in us like someone spoiled and selfish. If we are firm with such people, they will give up their petulant ways of acting and their focus on getting their own way. Our tactics must include firmness in dealing with such an interior spirit in our lives as we work for the completion of the universal community of life.
13. At other times, we find that the evil spirit acts upon us somewhat as a false lover. This spirit wants its actions to remain hidden. It may act to seduce us with promises of power, possessions or the selfish

use of people, living beings and matter. If we are assailed in this way, it helps to share our struggles with those who can help us recognize the sophisticated deceits operating in us and bring them to light.

14. In other situations, the evil spirit can act by using the tactics of a military leader. In order to capture or seize a position he desires, he will explore the fortifications and defences of our spiritually healthy convictions about our relationships with all life. He will attack where we are weakest. These interior forces of fear and discouragement prevent us from acting justly, with compassion towards all Earth's inhabitants. We may experience an interior attack from every side through loss of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love or the cardinal virtues that guide our daily life or the moral virtues that assist us to deal with our sinful tendencies. We need others in the community of life to help us resist these self-deluding attitudes and activities.

INTRODUCTION to the SECOND EXERCISES

The purpose of the Second Part of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to become a disciple of Jesus for the renewal of the universal community of life. Ignatius asks us to pray by using our imagination with the scripture accounts of Jesus' life. Ignatian contemplation uses our dynamic faith memory, i.e., the memory of the believing community (church), to help us recall these eternal mysteries. The source of this memory is the Holy Spirit "*recalling all things to our minds*". (**John 14:26**) When we use our imagination to be personally present to the events of Jesus' life, we have a subjective awareness of their significance for us.

These contemplations help us to better answer the Call of Jesus Christ [91-98] and join Christ in the great enterprise of encouraging beauty, diversity and peace in the world. They help us achieve the desire of our hearts. "*To gain intimate knowledge of Jesus become human for me that I may better love and follow Him.*" [104] We use our faith memory and imagination to see the persons in the event, to hear what they are saying and to be attentive to what they are doing.

Although there are only three days of prayer for each week of these eight weeks of prayer, if you have the time and inclination, a repetition or a prayer on the **APPLICATION OF THE SENSES** will deepen your prayer experience. The **APPLICATION OF THE SENSES** is a special form of contemplation where we enter more deeply into the mystery by savouring and relishing the sense of the divine give in the previous contemplations.

FOURTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE SECOND EXERCISES

Contemplating Jesus' Life

PRAYER HOUR 1

CHRIST OUR EXEMPLAR CALLS US TO CONSIDER OUR ROLE IN THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNITY OF LIFE

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a transition meditation. As Ignatius came from an experience of the great kindness, compassion and mercy in the First Part of his Exercises, his heart was filled with gratitude, desire and generosity and he wondered what he might do in response to such love. As a generous and faithful knight, he entered into the myth of knightly service and compared this to the service and following of Christ, the King.

To discover our own response to the call of Christ, Ignatius suggests that we set up this meditation in two parts: **Part A** - concerns serving an ideal human leader in a worthwhile endeavour for the ecological well-being of our planet. **Part B** - concerns serving Christ in His love and work for the universal community of life. We are invited to create our own story and myth of service to an ideal leader with all that entails. Then, we are to compare this to the service of Christ and His enterprise for the universal community of life. We will approach these topics through a series of meditations. In each one, we will keep in mind Ignatius' instructions.

The meditation of Christ, as the exemplar for our role in the universal community of life, gives us a hopeful challenge to work with Christ for a better world. There are scientific models of the universe in which God draws us, every moment, into a future of intensifying beauty, diversity and complexity. This counteracts what John Haught calls "cosmic pessimism" with "cosmic optimism" and lead to our vocation, which is to bring "cosmic hope".

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations of my body, mind and heart may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Imagine yourself on a journey with Jesus discussing the mystery of our cosmos. In this imaginary situation, consider Christ's invitation to you to promote a cosmic spirituality.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

As I walk with Jesus and, perhaps, some of our mutual friends (**Lk 8:1-3**), I listen attentively to the inspiring desires expressed by Christ for the universe (cosmos). I open myself to His call to promote a spirituality of the universe (cosmos).

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace to respond wholeheartedly to the call of Christ and to join Him in His enterprise for the universal community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

This meditation has two parts: **Part A** is the call of an ideal leader for help in a cause that will benefit all members of the community of life. **Part B** builds on this sense of call and issue, and applies it

to a *call from Jesus Christ*.

Part A: *The call of an ideal human leader to help bring ecological health to the community of life*

First Point: I recall the writings, words and actions of those who inspire in me feelings and thoughts of love, compassion, justice and mercy towards all of Earth's inhabitants and ecosystems. I use my imagination to create my own vision of service to a leader and cause, bringing justice, protection, and ecological health to our planet.

Second Point: I consider what the answer of good persons would be to such a generous and noble-minded leader. Consequently, if I were to refuse the invitation of such a leader, how justly I would deserve to be reproved by people of good will.

Part B: *My response to the call of Jesus Christ for the total well being of the community of life*

First Point: I consider joining and serving Christ in His healing work for the universal community of life. If the invitation of the leader in Part A deserves my full attention, how much more worthy of consideration is Jesus, our divine leader, who encompasses and is the universal community of life.

Second Point: Jesus invites me to join Him and says:

"It is my deep desire to develop the beauty of our earth and bring all our kin to freedom and fulfilment. I ask you to appreciate all members of the community, matter and living beings, and to cooperate with them to bring about this deep desire. If you want to accompany me in this enterprise, you must be willing to labour and suffer with me. I hope all persons of heart, judgement and reason will offer themselves entirely to be with me in this work. I ask you to show love and humility. Work to bring about beauty and true kinship with all the community of life."

DIALOGUE

I pray that I will respond with generosity to such a leader who promotes ecological well-being. I make a total offering of myself to Christ and His program in words such as these:

Eternal Source of all things created, in the presence of your infinite goodness, and of your Mother, and of all the saints of heaven, I offer myself to you with your favour and help. I earnestly desire and choose to...(and write it in my journal). I mark what I would like to join you in, in bringing about an increase in beauty and kinship in the universal community of life. I know this may involve experiences of insults, abuse and poverty. I ask for this grace provided I can be of greater service to you and provided it is your wish to admit me to this way of life.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer I think of what I wish to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2 INCARNATION

THE

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

As in the *Introduction to the Second Exercises*.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

I call to mind how The Three Divine Persons bring about cosmic evolution, including the emergence of life on our planet. They are with and in our Earth as the first primitive cell emerges, four billion years ago. They see our first Ice Age, two point three billion years ago; the many mass extinctions of life occurring over millions of years, each one resulting in the disappearance of 70 to 95% of Earth's living beings. They embrace, in all their colours, shapes, sizes and activities, the many plants, animals, and humans who have appeared, lived and died on Earth. They enter the joys and sufferings of these beings, and the destruction now wrought by human greed on those who live in Earth's community of life.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **John 1:1-5** and **Luke 1:26-56** and enter into the mystery of the Trinity's action through Jesus who takes on creaturehood and humanity.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life, that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: The Three Divine Persons listen to all the sounds of Earth's community, the buzzings, growls, barking, chirping, splashing, the rustling of leaves in the wind. They listen to humans speak with one another and hear the sounds of singing, anger, fear, love, joy, despair, weeping. They speak among themselves and say, "*Let us work for and love this Earth community*".

Second point: I see with the imagination what people around the globe are doing to Earth's community of life. Some are encouraging and healing the community, some are destroying it. Consider what the Three Divine Persons do, which is to bring about an Incarnation. In the light of this, I see and listen to Mary and Gabriel.

Third point: I see Mary in her home and the angel Gabriel as he appears to her. I hear Gabriel telling Mary that she will conceive and give birth to a holy child who will be called the Son of God. I listen to Mary's reply and watch what Mary does and what Gabriel does.

DIALOGUE

I talk to Mary as to a friend and tell her I desire a sense of awe for the vastness and scope of cosmic evolution and for the Trinity's love for Earth's community. I go with Mary to Jesus to ask for the same sense. I go with Mary and make the same request of the Three Divine Persons. I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community

PRAYER HOUR 3 THE NATIVITY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

As in the Introduction to the Second Exercises.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Call to mind what you have read or seen on television about the trials of occupied peoples around the world. They, like Mary and Joseph before them, live under a political power imposed on them, culturally foreign to them, with oppressive laws and policies. Consider the bigotry and illnesses they suffer, how they suffer overwhelming loss. For aboriginal and other occupied peoples, this means a disregard for their customs and beliefs, dispossession of land, loss of culture, languages, religions and oral traditions, as well as illness and death. Mary and Joseph are forced to go to Bethlehem to register for a census decreed by a roman emperor and enforced by an occupying army.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Luke 2:1-20**. I join Mary and Joseph as Jesus is born.

DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life, that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: This is to be with Mary throughout her labour and delivery, and with Joseph, who is helping her. I come upon them as they take shelter in a stable and I help them in anyway I can. I see and hear what they are doing and saying. I keep in mind that Mary is in pain, wondering what to expect, and that they are far from home and far from the support and assistance of their family. I reflect on this experience and draw fruit from it.

Second point: I see Mary wrap Jesus in swaddling clothes and put Him in a manger. (A manger is a box or trough in a stable for horses and cattle to eat from.) I consider that any of us who are parents do not wish to experience the hardships that Mary and Joseph experience. I reflect on this experience and draw fruit from it.

DIALOGUE

I have a conversation with Mary and Joseph about their experience of Jesus' birth. "*Did you feel fear?*" "*What are your hopes for your newborn son?*" Then I ask them or the Three Divine Persons to help me see how I might assist young families in my community who are strangers or who have few resources.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community

THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOOR 1: CHRIST, OUR EXEMPLAR, CALLS US

1. This time of prayer invites us to consider the intensifying movement of the *beauty of life* in all things (animate and inanimate) and the developing awareness of my participation in this evolving beauty. Beauty is one of the four transcendental precepts, part of all things. The others are oneness, truth and goodness. Beauty's deep significance is gaining new prominence through the findings and writings of scientists such as Thomas Berry, John Haught and others. Teilhard de Chardin writes, "*In all things there is a Within, co-extensive with their Without.*" The "without" beauty of all things beckons us to the interior beauty of all things, as Haught writes in *God after Darwin*.
2. I use my senses to see, hear, touch, taste and smell the beauty of our earth and its location in the cosmos, e.g., the colours in rocks and in the sky at dawn and twilight, the perfumes from flowers and soil, the taste of honey, the songs of birds. Chapters 42 and 43 of the *Book of Ecclesiasticus* highlight this beauty. You might wish to read **Sirach 43:9-20**.
3. I notice how such beauty is never spent but keeps changing and intensifying, e.g., the Northern Lights, a growing child, plant or animal, and I recall Keat's phrase, "*A thing of beauty is a joy forever.*" I consider my connection to this beauty and how it changes my appreciation of the Trinity's love of the evolving cosmos. I consider the new sense of wonder that develops in my heart, and how this brings new life to the Call of Christ. What does this do for my *Offering of Self* to bring about increasing beauty in our universe?
4. In the Disposition Week, we prayed with our sense of creaturehood and connectedness with other creatures. This prayer for DAY 1 calls us to another level of being, a kinship with all matter and beings in the universe and the significance of this kinship for the enterprise of Christ.

Kinship usually refers to genetic relationships based on our DNA. For our purposes, kinship is an experience of personal relationship. We know that we are materially connected because we are all made of the same kinds of atoms and molecules. We are also aware that from our relationships emerges another dimension of kinship - one of personhood. We are who we are because of our relationships. The sense of kinship that is the experience of personhood is a mystery that transcends our material similarities and it is this that we wish to promote in these *Spiritual Exercises* on the universal community of life. We are called to appreciate this and see the implications of it for our lives. Our position is supported by the experience and writings of many people.

5. Kinship is an experience of another's personhood. It begins with communication through the five senses. We heighten our awareness of kinship with inanimate matter when we reflect on our communication with inanimate matter, e.g., a thunderstorm, the ocean, falling stars and falling rocks. Recall some experiences of inanimate matter. Teilhard sees these as personal:

"Blessed be you, harsh matter, barren soil, stubborn rock; you who yield only to violence, you who force us to work if we would eat. ...You who batter us and then dress our wounds, you who resist us and yield to us, you who wreck and build, you who shackle and liberate, the sap of our souls, the hand of God the flesh of Christ: it is you, matter that I bless." (*Hymn of the Universe*, pp. 68-69)

Recall your experiences of communicating with plants and animals that have a personal component to them, e.g. experiences of response by plants, of affections from pets, of being protected or understood by an animal, etc.

6. Teilhard also writes about consciousness in a surprising way:

“We might be tempted to say that consciousness manifests itself indubitably only in man ... but we must correct this, and say rather, that Consciousness manifests itself indubitably in man and there, glimpsed in this one flash of light, it reveals itself as having a cosmic extension and consequently as being aureoled by limitless prolongations in space and time.” (Hymn of the Universe, p. 83)

We deepen our sense of kinship by recalling the times when we have been aware that other creatures of the universe communicate with each other over vast ranges of water, air and space.

HOOR 2: THE INCARNATION

1. Reflection on cosmic evolution

I reflect on the evolution of the universe; God sees all created, finite matter as very *good*, all plants, humans, animals, rocks, water, stars and galaxies that have come into existence, died and been transformed over the course of this evolution. The initial event, bringing the universe into being, was not an explosion in the usual sense, since, before it occurred, space and time did not exist. Instead, *spacetime* and energy were combined, not separate. There were no particles. In the few instants after the universe's birth, all the energy and matter we are able to observe came into being. Spacetime unfolded, inflating and expanding at speeds faster than the speed of light. From these beginnings have come 100 *billion* galaxies, each containing many billions of stars. At the heart of this process is a question. Did the universe always exist? If yes, then it is infinite in time. If no, then it arose from nothing - something emerges from nothing.

As I contemplate this vast, awe-inspiring evolution, I remember that The Trinity, source of being, loves creation so much, they deem it worthy of the Incarnation – the Divinity present in a living, breathing human, with eyes to see the stars and galaxies in the night sky.

2. Reflection on the conscious source of all creation

I consider the mind in all matter; dark matter, living matter, solar systems, galaxies. I recognize that for me, the model of divine mind and relationship is found in the Three Divine Persons, whose consciousness and love permeates the cosmos and its universal community of life.

Rupert Sheldrake, the British biologist, thinks that consciousness is only possible with relationships. We are conscious beings because we are able to interact with and love other humans, animals, plants, and inanimate matter. Sheldrake sees the cosmos, its solar systems and galaxies as alive and in relationship with each other, and therefore capable of consciousness. He writes in the *Rebirth of Nature, the Greening of Science and God* that:

“The Christian conception of God is as a creative trinity...” (p. 195) *“In the context of evolutionary cosmology, the Spirit underlies the onward flow of energy and the expansive impulse of the universe; the Word is in the patterns of activity and meaning expressed through fields.”* (p. 198)

The Three Divine Persons are the conscious source of all creation.

3. Reflection on the development of Jesus *in utero*

I consider the humility of Jesus, how the second Person of the Trinity enters into and becomes subject to a developmental process that is the result of millions of years of evolution. I reflect on the different stages of Jesus' development during His nine months *in utero*.

The early development of a human embryo has some general steps in common with other vertebrate embryos. Vertebrates include the bony fishes, reptiles and amphibians, birds and mammals. Jesus' body begins as a fertilized egg, called a zygote. Cleavage, the first cell divisions of the zygote, follows. These cell divisions lead to a solid ball of cells. This solid ball becomes hollow and the centre becomes filled with fluid. Some of these cells will become the embryo, and all Jesus' organs, such as His healing hands or His sacred heart, will develop from these few cells. Some cells will become part of the placenta, thus allowing the exchange of substances between the mother's circulation and the baby's. By the end of the first month in utero, His heart forms and starts beating. By the end of the third month, His limbs are formed and He begins to move. Halfway through her pregnancy, Mary will feel the baby move

and, as the weeks go by, she will feel Jesus kick her or shift His position. By the end of the fifth month, there is a rapid development of all His body's organs. As Mary goes about her daily tasks and devotions, as she spends time visiting Elizabeth, both she and Jesus are forming a close physiological connection. Her body and the embryo, which will become Jesus, make hormones which help establish and maintain the placenta, the structure that is attached to the inside wall of the uterus and which provides oxygen and nutrients to the fetus. Mary's circulation and respirations change to accommodate the needs of the fetus. The two are physiologically adapted to form a relationship. This elegant process first appeared 114 million years ago in the placental mammals. I think of the humility of Jesus, who enters into and becomes subject to this developmental process, the result of millions of years of evolution.

HOUR 3: THE NATIVITY

1. Reflection on communion with creation

Tradition has it that there were domesticated animals in the shelter where Mary gave birth to Jesus. They were the only witnesses to Jesus' birth. We do not know which animals were present, but most of them would have been mammals, as humans are. They have the same general process of development in utero as Jesus had. By this, Jesus is in the **fullness of communion** with all creation. I will reflect on myself, and the significance of the humility of the Incarnation. The following account of Jesus' birth from the Holy Qur-an is a reflection on being in **communion with all creation**.

“So she (Mary) conceived Him, and she retired with Him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree; she cried (in her anguish): ‘Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten.’ But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): ‘Grieve not! For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee; and shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye.’”
(Surat 19: Maryam, Ayat 22 - 25)

2. Reflection on childbirth

Childbirth is difficult. For most women it is a time of painful effort and calls forth every bit of physical and psychic strength available to the labouring mother. For women living in poverty or under physical or psychological stress, childbirth carries considerable risk for the mother and baby. Mary, like other women of her time, was at risk of dying in childbirth from hemorrhage, infection or obstructed labour. In addition, she was forced to deliver Jesus in trying and unhygienic circumstances without help from her family, since she and Joseph were forced to go to Bethlehem. The intense struggle of the human birth experience is reflected in the birth of other living organisms and also in the birth of the universe and its galaxies. For example, there was a massive destruction of the early universe, so that stars and galaxies could be born. The violent collapse of a star over millions of years to form a pulsar or a black hole creates the conditions to form a supernova, the material of which eventually converges to form a new star system, perhaps with planets and life. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, in their book *The Universe Story*, write that the universe has a sacrificial dimension. So does the process of childbirth.

Jesus, by coming into the community of life, is part of that sacrificial dimension. In addition by becoming matter, the atoms and molecules that He breathed out, excreted, sloughed off from His epithelium, are now part of other life, both human and non-human.

3. Application of the senses

Ignatius writes that this prayer exercise will consist in applying the five senses to the matter of the first (Incarnation) and the second (The Nativity) contemplations. From this point in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius incorporates the Application of the Senses into the contemplations on Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Implicit in his frequent use of this process is the importance he attaches to it.

Here are his directions for prayer. (*Spiritual Exercises* [122-125])

- a. This consists in seeing in imagination the persons, and in contemplating and meditating in detail the circumstances in which they are, and then in drawing some fruit from what has been seen.
- b. This is to hear what they are saying, or what they might say, and then by reflecting on oneself to draw some profit from what has been heard.
- c. This is to smell the infinite fragrance, and taste the infinite sweetness of the divinity. Likewise to apply these senses to the soul and its virtues, and to all according to the person we are contemplating, and to draw fruit from this.
- d. This is to apply the sense of touch, for example, by embracing and kissing the place where the persons stand or are seated, always taking care to draw some fruit from this.

FIFTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE TWO STANDARDS AND THREE TYPES OF PERSONS

Choosing Christ's Standard of Humility

PRAYER HOUR 1 THE EVIL STANDARD OF SUPERIORITY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

At this time in the *Exercises* Ignatius presumes that we have responded to the call of Christ and are eager to be Christ's disciples. Ignatius assumes that all of us wish to be instruments of truth and goodness in our world. In these two meditations, Ignatius presents our situation as a struggle between good and evil forces both outside us and within us. Ignatius sees the struggle as a personal one between Jesus Christ (our friend and example) and Satan (the deadly enemy of our human nature). The personal component helps us with the affective side of our struggle, but we can understand the struggle in other ways also. For instance, we can recognize two basic approaches to nature: one that relates to nature subjectively and sees nature as a companion, and one that relates to nature as something to be dominated and used. These two approaches have a deep impact on our way of living. The first approach assists me to live an intelligent, constructive, caring life that honours other creatures and humans and leads me to a sense of cosmic hope. The second approach leads me to a destructive attitude towards other creatures and humans and a sense of cosmic pessimism.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Let us imagine two groups of people in every culture on earth. One group approaches life *solely* objectively and materially. The people in this group are convinced that science and technology will give them and others a life of pleasure and comfort without having to resort to a spiritual life or belief in anything divine. Enlightened self-interest, which can be communal also, is the only governing principle in their decision-making. They see evolution as an indication that all comes from and returns to matter and the spirit is irrelevant. Consumption and acquisition of material goods are an important task, for they provide security and a certain happiness and satisfaction.

The second group in every culture believes that, in addition to objectivity, a personal and spiritual way of life is important. They realize that science and technology can be beneficial to the total community of life. They try to constantly discern correct ways to assist all members of the community of life so that a fuller expression of peace, justice and love will evolve. Evolution is seen as the process of a loving Trinity.

As we reflect on the human history on planet earth, we realize a duality in two approaches to nature: one, which takes a gracious benevolent approach and one, which takes a stance of dominance and use. This is a conflict between truth and falsehood.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

Place yourself in the midst of these two groups of people. Observe their attitudes toward each other and see the end of their efforts. Where is truth found? Where are lies found?

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I seek for all the members of my community, and for myself in particular, two graces:

- I. to recognize the strategy and deceits of the falsehoods that destroys our community of life (other creatures and ourselves), and strength to avoid them;
- II. to know and appreciate the true way and strategy for affirming and building of the community of

life, and the courage to follow this way unreservedly.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: Focus on the strategy of the leader of the first group of persons. This group is convinced that science and technology will provide a life of pleasure and comfort. The program of the people in this group promotes a materialistic and consumptive approach towards the non-human community; enlightened self-interest is the only governing principle in their decision-making.

Second point: Consider the following strategy of this first group of persons.

1. Encourage others to approach the rest of nature as something to be used and dominated. Convince others to develop a materialistic understanding of life, where the gifts of creation are used to develop comfortable, pleasant life styles in competition with other peoples and the rest of creation.
2. Suggest to others that honours will come to those who acquire and use an increasing amount of wealth. Suggest that the use of creatures for food, clothing, or drug testing creates a wealthier, easier lifestyle in comparison to those who approach our plant and animal kin and inanimate matter as subjects, not just objects. Suggest that poorer nations desire this materialistic lifestyle.
3. Eventually, control over nature, pride and isolation result in cosmic pessimism. After all, life is simply an expression of our genetic inheritance and nothing is holy.

Third point: The destructive standard of superiority encourages a threefold movement: first, a superior approach to living beings based on dominance and usage; second, a movement towards abuse of other living creatures for the sake of honours; third, pride.

Fourth point: In order to grow in knowledge and wisdom for the future, I look over my life and recognize how this way has influenced my life in the past.

DIALOGUE

Conclude your meditation with the *Triple Dialogue*.

◆ **To Mary, who represents the feminine element of our universe:** I ask Mary to ask Jesus, her Son for the grace to be chosen and received under the Standard of Humility (Christ's) that I may follow Jesus more closely: first in a sense of kinship with the rest of creation, so that I may be in the truth, and thus grateful for the gifts the Trinity has given to me in and through creation. Second, I ask for a desire to be vulnerable and poor with the rest of creation as Christ was. Third, I ask for the grace to bear insults and contempt such as my fellow creatures bear and thus be with Christ poor and humble, on condition that no sin on the part of another is desired.

Then I will conclude with a *Hail Mary*.

◆ **To Jesus Christ, who is the expression of the Three Divine Persons' process of love in the universe:** I will go with Mary to her Son, and ask Jesus that these same graces be given to me.

Then I will conclude with the *Soul of Christ*.

◆ **To the Three Divine Persons, whose energy of love initiated the evolutionary process:** Then with Mary and Jesus I will go the Trinity, and ask them that the same graces be given to me.

I will conclude with the *Lord's Prayer*.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

In my review, I look for instances of consolations, desolation and deceptions as described above and I consider how I might briefly share these to the benefit of my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

CHRIST'S STANDARD OF HUMILITY

All parts of the prayer exercise are the same as **HOUR 1** except for the **READING** and the following **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**.

READ: Philippians 2:5-8

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: Focus on the strategy of Christ, the leader of the second group of people. People in this group believe in a personal and spiritual way of relating to the community of life, as well as an objective one. They realize that science and technology are good and beneficial to the total community of life. They promote a balance between the intellect and logic (objective knowledge) and the personal and spiritual (subjective knowledge). This balance conserves the community of life for the future and promotes cosmic hope.

Second point: Consider the following strategy of the second group of persons carefully.

1. Encourage others to approach the rest of nature as kinfolk and assist them to develop a subjective relationship to and spiritual understanding of life. Approach nature in a spirit of gratitude, always aware that plants and animals present the love of the Trinity to humans. Encourage others to develop a spirit of sharing the goods of the earth with poor people and marginalized nature.
2. Suggest to others that uniting oneself with other creatures in an experience of dependent existence will bring about a sense of equality, friendship and community. This attitude asks an awareness of vulnerability with Christ and a desire for His kind of humiliations. Now we are ready to join with poor people and nations to thank the Trinity for an evolving process, which calls us to greater freedom and holier relationships.
3. Eventually, all are encouraged to seek unity with Jesus Christ, who expresses the risk and humility of the Trinity as they set aside their divinity to take on the vulnerability of their creation in the loving process of evolution. With this, all are led to take many more positive and constructive actions.

Third point: A program of truth (Christ's) involves a threefold movement. From a sense of kinship and union with the rest of creation, we can share the gifts of creation. This gratitude leads to a desire to be vulnerable and poor with the rest of creation in imitation of Christ's life and actions, which express the vulnerability of the Trinity in the universe. We are then free to bear insults so we can grow in humility with Christ and with the rest of creation. In this movement, we grow in cosmic hope of the *parousia*.

Fourth point: There are three steps: the first, gratitude and union with the rest of creation versus a superior, isolated approach to the rest of creation; second, the desire to be vulnerable and poor in Christ and the rest of creation versus the abuse of creatures for the sake of honours and riches; third, the bearing of humiliations and insults with the community of all life in Christ versus pride and destructive tendencies toward the community of life.

DIALOGUE

Conclude your meditation with the *Triple Dialogue*.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

In my review, I look for instances of consolations, desolation and deceptions as described above and I consider how I might briefly share these to the benefit of my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3

THE THREE TYPES OF PERSONS

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

In the meditation that follows, it is important to recall that meditation is a discursive method of prayer in which one considers different items and tries to come to a conclusion. This meditation is based on a story and uses the normal steps of prayer. It has us consider how to make proper decisions with the many gifts we are given, our own gifts and talents, as well as those of the cosmos.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

In the meditation on the Three Types of Persons, we use imagination to consider the responses of three different people when each is faced with the unexpected gift of a large sum of money, let us say 4 million dollars. The money has come to each honestly and each one desires to make a responsible decision about its use. The meditation considers three ways of dealing with the money.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I place myself with each of these three different persons (or a family) who has received a large gift of 4 million dollars. I wonder what I would do with this money and any other significant gift I have received. The decision on how to dispose of this huge increase in funds weighs heavily on the conscience of each of the three persons. Each is aware of Christ's teachings on poverty as presented in **Luke 18:18-26**, and each recognizes the neediness of destitute people in his or her city, country and in other parts of the world.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I pray to recognize my natural attachment to things (even God-given gifts) and to seek a true sense of freedom as I work with Christ that I may discern and choose whatever will be for the true growth of people and for the greater service of the Three Divine Persons.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: Read this story by **Ignatius**. Each of three people receives an unexpected, large sum of money. They are all good people intent on serving God as best they can. The three, knowing the enormous responsibility the acquisition of such riches entails, become fearful. All three ask, "*What will this money do to me? How will my relationship with God be affected?*" Though the question for each was the same, their responses differed dramatically.

- ◆ The *first person* becomes enamoured with the money; she loves being wealthy! She enjoys the prestige and security wealth brings. At the same time, she is aware of the effects the attachment has on her. She becomes progressively preoccupied with the returns she receives on her investments. She knows another kind of decision is required but remains undecided till her death.
- ◆ The *second person* is also fascinated with his newly acquired wealth. He is especially concerned that his attachment does not prove detrimental to his relationship with God. He wants to be free of his infatuation with the money. Yet he wants God to make it easy for him. He decides to use a percentage of the interest the money earns to build a new library for the community in which he lives. He insists that the library be named after him.
- ◆ The *third person*, too, is immersed in concern and questioning after receiving the large amount of

money. She wishes to get rid of attachment but in a way that there remains no inclination in her either to keep the money or to dispose of it. Her response is, “*How can I best use this gift to reflect the pure goodness of God?*” She wants only to do with the money what God wants. She places the money in a trust fund to be used by the Spirit’s invitation, as best she can discern it. She nurtures within herself a desire to serve the Three Divine Persons better. This desire is the deciding factor in how and when she uses the money.

Second point: Now consider a description of the three types of persons:

- ◆ The *first type of person* desires to use her gifts and talents in terms of God’s will and desire for the good of all humanity. But she cannot make a decision to act in the use of these gifts right up to the point of her death.
- ◆ The *second type of person* also desires to use his gifts for God’s will and desire for the good of all humanity. He ends up deciding to use the gifts and talents for his personal aggrandisement instead of the good of all humanity.
- ◆ The *third type of person* does not wish to lose sight of God’s intentions. She faces this new gift with time set aside for prayer and self-examination before moving into action. There is a desire to approach decisions in complete freedom from false ideas about success or achievement or feelings of self-importance and so she waits patiently and in freedom for indications of God’s will.

Third point: The *first* type of person wants to act in an unattached way but gets distracted and by external concerns - so she procrastinates. The *second* type of person wants to act in an unattached way but only in terms of his own internal conviction - not from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The *third* type of person wants to act in an unattached way and live in total freedom - waiting on God’s incentive through the action of the Holy Spirit.

DIALOGUE

Conclude your meditation with the DIALOGUE in HOUR 1 or according to the note, which follows.

NOTE

When we sense that we are not free with respect to our possessions or position, it may be helpful, in order to gain psychological and spiritual freedom, and though it is difficult to do, to ask in the Triple Dialogue that Jesus help us risk ourselves in total dependence on the goodness of the Three Divine Persons, and depending, also, on the humans, plants and animals that share Earth with us. This should be a genuine desire so that we beg and plead for full freedom in this matter, provided it is for the service and praise of the Trinity and the universe. The previous story may help us consider the significance of our gifts and seek a true sense of freedom as we work with Christ and others in building the human family.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

In my review I look for instances of consolation, desolation or deceptions and I consider how I might briefly share these for the benefit of my community.

**THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER
AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE**

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOURS 1 to 3

1. Read and consider the following statements on the Discernment of Spirits.
 - a. In Ignatius' understanding of discernment, a number of points are important: first, the understanding of spiritual consolation, spiritual desolation, and spiritual deception; second, his principle that it is in the time of spiritual consolation that good decisions are made. Spiritual consolation for Ignatius is the affective experience of loving the Trinity. It shows up as a movement of trust, courage, energy for the future, and communion with others and with the Trinity. Spiritual desolation is a movement of discouragement, aloneness, and helplessness in the face of life. Spiritual deception begins with apparent experiences of consolation and ends with desolation.
 - b. In terms of our relationship with Earth and its inhabitants, spiritual consolation is a subjective experience of the beauty, truth, goodness and oneness (communion) with creation. It is a relationship of love. This means that we experience gratitude and kinship with all creatures, a subjective experience indeed. Spiritual desolation is an experience of separation resulting from an attitude of domination and oppressive use of nature and the larger community of life.
 - c. Many benefits result from the use of an objective approach to non-human life and material. Witness the achievements of science and technology. But the exaggerated empirical philosophy, which developed along with it, has resulted in an impersonal approach to life that can lead us to a form of cosmic pessimism. For example, DNA is a marvellous discovery and the discoveries of molecular geneticists have been and will continue to be a benefit for humanity. Yet, the philosophical approach that says this explains all of life, making God and the spiritual life irrelevant, can result in a fatalism and pessimism in our lives, a spiritual desolation indeed.
 - d. When we experience spiritual desolation coming to us through our present global culture, Ignatian discernment can help us discover why this is happening. What is the experience of desolation? How did it develop, what is its source and how is it countered? If we reflect on the emphasis in the global scientific culture to take only an objective approach to life, we realize how easy it is to succumb to a pessimistic and discouraging attitude so that life is just another consumer product, or the meaning of life is limited to DNA. We counter this by returning to the spiritual consolation of the beauty, diversity and interdependence of ecosystems and all that live in them as friends, benefactors, companions and a presence of the Trinity to us.
2. Read the following paragraphs presenting two attitudes to nature.

“Everywhere in the bible you find hymns and canticles to the earth, expressing both joy and despair. The apparent indifference of the environment to human suffering has always been a cause of bewilderment.” (Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Address in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998)

In most creation stories there is a theme related to bringing order out of chaos. How does the cosmos emerge from chaos? How can human societies create order and maintain control? Another image found in many creation stories is Mother Earth. (Today, in Christian theology this feminine understanding of creation is related to Christ through the Greek work Sophia. *“The Word was made flesh”* in **John 1:14** is seen as a feminine expression of Christ.) These two human approaches to earth and its inhabitants still operate today. In one, we see nature as something to be used and dominated. In the other, we see nature as an encouraging companion. Over time, some creation

stories lost their original meaning and became a source of conflict between humans and all living and material entities that share Earth with us. Francis Bacon's attitude is one such example of this loss. The 17th century English lawyer, the "greatest prophet of the conquest of nature" (Rupert Sheldrake, in *The Rebirth of Nature*, p. 40) took an adversarial approach to nature and used imagery from the techniques, employed in his time, for the torture of those suspected of witchcraft. Thus nature was to be conquered by all kinds of cruel and destructive means. This understanding of Earth's plants, animals and ecosystems is still prevalent in the global scientific culture. This adversarial approach sees non-humans as objects and denies a subjective element in our relationship with nature. Certain philosophers, like Martin Buber in his book, *I – Thou*, have exposed the fallacy in this approach. The adversarial attitude denies the significance of a caring relationship with our plant and animal kin. In addition, humans are often denied a subjective importance and instead, are thought of as simply vehicles to be used by genes so that genetic material can survive and reproduce.

3. I reflect on the first and second points with these questions:
 - I. How have I experienced these two attitudes toward nature in my life?
 - II. What heightened sense of discernment of spirits has this brought to me?
 - III. How will this help me to discern correct decisions with the universal community of life in the future?

SIXTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE SECOND EXERCISES

Contemplating Jesus' Mission

PRAYER HOUR 1

JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

In the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we use our imagination to contemplate the events of Jesus' life. Contemplation uses creative imagination and memory so that we come to have an intimate knowledge of Jesus, and imitate Him in our lives. Thus we read over, several times, the *mystery*, which is the medieval name for a single Gospel story. In this way the story becomes familiar to us. Then we imagine the events occurring in the present day so that we may enter the story. This allows the mystery to come into and illuminate our present lives. Contemplation is not fantasy; it is important to stay within the gospel story. Nevertheless, it is also important to be receptive to the mysterious power of the story and allow it to move us deeply.

As I pray over Jesus' life, Ignatius asks me to make a choice of a way of life. I can make small choices every day to live in harmony with the animate beings and inanimate matter that share Earth with me.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Jesus' public life, which Ignatius asks us to contemplate in the Second Week of the Exercises, prompts us to ask questions. One is, "*Why be virtuous, compassionate, or just?*" In our contemporary world, there are two different answers. One answer lies in spiritual and philosophical traditions, which say that the expression of goodness or virtue is an attempt by humans to do God's will, or build the kingdom of God on earth. The other answer comes from evolutionary psychology, which states that the human brain is composed of groups of nerve cells called neural circuits that evolved to solve the adaptive problems our hunter-gatherer ancestors continually encountered. Thus, human cultures and relationships can be explained as the output of these circuits or devices.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Luke 4:16-30** and place myself with Jesus in the synagogue.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life; that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I contemplate Jesus in the synagogue making His great declaration of freedom. I consider that His declaration is meant for all matter and living beings in the cosmos; it is a statement of cosmic optimism.

Second point: I see Jesus' concern for all captives; I hear His declaration of universal freedom. I watch the amazement of those who are listening to Him.

Third point: To help me in this contemplation, I read and consider the following statements:

Jesus, after His baptism and retreat in the desert, returns home and proclaims His mission by reading a passage from Isaiah. He states decisively that he is sent to the poor, imprisoned and marginalized, to bring them good news and liberty. “*This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.*” Jesus exemplified John Macmurray’s dictum that “*We are not merely thinking things but moral agents*”.

Jesus, in all His actions flowing from His commitment to mercy and justice, shows us how to contribute to the evolution of what Teilhard de Chardin called the thinking and spirit envelope covering our Earth, the *noosphere*.

The evolution and growth of the Earth’s spirit and thinking layer comes from the activity of the spirits and minds of all living beings, human and non-human. The spirit and mind of plants and, especially, animals are different from mine in degree, not in kind. I consider how I can encourage, support and liberate all members of Earth’s community of life so that the noosphere continues to grow.

DIALOGUE

I ask Mary to ask Jesus to give me understanding to see what keeps my spirit captive, unable to be set free. I go with Mary to Jesus and ask for the same understanding. I go to the Trinity and ask the same.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

JESUS HEALS TWO BLIND MEN

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER as in HOUR 1

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Who or what is begging for pity in our time? We do not have to look far to find answers. The media are full of reports of suffering humankind. Wars, poverty, environmental destruction and family violence continue to plague the human community. The animate beings and inanimate matter that share our Earth with us are vulnerable to similar oppressions. Species that took millions of years to evolve are threatened with extinction because of our destructive activity.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Matthew 20:29-34** and place myself with Jesus on the road leading out of Jericho.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life; that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I contemplate the healing power of Jesus' compassion, a power infinitely great, used to heal the poorest and smallest. I see and hear the two blind men calling out to Jesus. I see and hear Jesus respond. I watch the crowd as Jesus restores the sight of both men.

Second Point: I consider that everything in the universe is in relationship, from galaxies to subatomic particles. I imagine the cells of the blind men responding to Jesus' healing power. I contemplate how this power permeates the cosmic community.

Third point: To help me in this contemplation, I read and consider the following statements.

Humans, animals, trees, other plants, air and water are in need. They shout, "*Lord! Have pity on us, Son of David.*" As I contrast the reaction of Jesus with that of the crowd, I ask why I want to silence or ignore my suffering kin.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be measured by the way its animals are treated." (Mahatma Gandhi)

At this writing, the number of threatened species (*threatened* includes species that are vulnerable to extinction, endangered or critically endangered, or near extinction) is 5435 species of animals and 5611 species of plants. The threats come from destruction or poisoning of habitats. They cry "*Lord! Have pity on us, Son of David.*" If I have eyes to see and ears to listen, I can be a liberator and labourer.

DIALOGUE

I ask Mary to ask Jesus, to help me see who or what is crying for pity and how I can respond. I go with Mary to Jesus to ask for the same knowledge. I go with Mary to the Trinity and make the same request.

I close with prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share.

PRAYER HOUR 3

THREE KINDS OF HUMILITY

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

In this meditation, there are two statements concerning the *Three Kinds of Humility*. The first statement is directly from or close to the meaning of Ignatius' original *Exercises*. The second statement is a way of praying over these expressions of humility with other living beings, who with us, are part of the universal community of life. Consider these three attitudes and desires when you, your family or your CLC group make important decisions. If one desires the *Third Kind of Humility*, it is helpful to add the **NOTE** found at the end of the meditation on the *Three Types of Persons* to one's meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

"From a species point of view, there are two questions that were never asked. One is that there is no sense of responsibility in almost any of the discussion for what's being done to other species, just the assumption that animals are these empty, experimental stations where you can do anything that you want, which seems to be taken for granted and seems pretty problematic." (Marilouise Kroker in an interview with the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, January 11, 2001, speaking about reports produced by the U.S Commission on Bioethics.)

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Philippians 3:7-11** before praying with the Three Kinds of Humility.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

The grace I desire from the Trinity is an openness to consider the *Three Kinds of Humility* as a disposition and desire that I bring to making important decisions

FIRST KIND

Ignatius: I will not commit serious sin. I have fidelity to the moral law of God and man. This is fidelity to an external set of rules.

Community of Life: I am concerned with the welfare of not only humans, but also of ecosystems, plants and animals. This is fidelity to stewardship, which entails observing local environmental laws and making some changes in my way of life, such as recycling faithfully, or declining to use pesticides or herbicides in my garden.

SECOND KIND

Ignatius: I possess an attitude of spiritual freedom. I neither desire nor am I inclined to have riches rather than poverty, to seek honour rather than dishonour, to have a long life rather than a short life. I only desire what would serve God. I will not commit small sins. I desire a spiritual life from which moral values and actions flow.

Community of Life: I desire to more fully embrace practices that preserve environments and to make them my way of life, such as a simple life-style, modest consumption of goods, vegetarianism, the encouragement and support of efforts such as organic farming, conservation efforts and so on. I begin to see myself as part of creation, in relationship with all living beings, not as their steward. I desire a spiritual life, which leads me to right relationship with Earth's community of life.

THIRD KIND

Ignatius: Assuming the desires of 1 and 2 above, I imitate Jesus in His befriending of the poor and weak, His disregard of what the world thinks. This kind of humility is higher and better because it praises God more. It is an act of the heart in the sense that Jean Vanier uses it. He writes:

“It is not just a question of performing good deeds for those who are excluded but of being vulnerable to them in order to receive the life that they can offer; it is to become their friends. If we start to include the disadvantaged in our lives and enter into heartfelt relationships with them, they will change things in us.” (*Becoming Human*, p. 84)

I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in the world.

Community of Life: Assuming the desires of 1 and 2 above, I imitate Jesus. I do this by striving for authentic subjectivity as a member of a sharing community of faith. In this way, I hope for the authentic objectivity needed to change my world-view. Consequently, I will see plants and animals as deserving of my respect. I will see animals, especially the higher mammals, as possessing the same affective and cognitive qualities that I possess: the only difference being one of degree, not kind. I approach living beings as colleagues, stop lying to myself about my support of sinful structures that allow their misuse or destruction of their habitat. I will see trees and all other plants as giving me life, producing the oxygen I need to breathe, the food I need to eat. I join with my community to bring justice to my colleagues in Earth's community of life, for I know that right action is *from* a community *for* a community. This is not a sentimentalizing of animals or plants. It is an effort of justice and friendship. I know that if I enter into “heartfelt relationships with them”, they will change things in me. I know this stance will bring ridicule. I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world.

DIALOGUE

I may pray the three dialogues to Mary, Jesus and the Trinity. Or I may pray to serve Christ and be received by Him under the **Standard of Humility** in the following manner:

First, in a sense of kinship with the rest of creation so that I may be in the truth and grateful for the gifts the Three Divine Persons have given to me,

Second, I ask for a desire to be vulnerable and poor with all creation,

Third, I ask for the grace to bear the insults and contempt that my fellow creatures bear and thus be with Christ poor and humble, on condition that no sin on the part of another is desired.

I end with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOUR 1: JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

1. Evolutionary psychology and spiritual practice are two responses to questions about the source of human behaviour and action. It is reasonable to assume that the process of evolution, working through natural selection over millions of years, results in the emergence of neural circuits dedicated to solving the specific problems which humans came up against during our evolution. But are higher states of consciousness, noble feelings and actions *solely* the product of chemical reactions in nerve cells? Teilhard de Chardin, in *The Phenomenon of Man*, thought that evolution is a response to God, the “Prime Mover ahead”. From the future God calls evolution forward, towards ever increasing awareness and *freedom*. This evolutionary freedom is forming a layer of mind and spirit over the surface of the earth. Teilhard calls this the *noosphere* and its formation, he says, comes through the love that is self-gift, *agape*.

Jesus shows us what it means to practice *holy freedom*, arising from a love capable of bringing us into full communion with all creation. Hannah Arendt, in her book *The Life of the Mind*, writes that, “...*philosophers or scientists, have not been ‘pleased with freedom’ and its...randomness; they have been unwilling to pay the price...of being able to do what could also be left undone.*” Jesus does not leave undone what could be done, but in word and action, brings me to a new understanding of the Trinity’s love for me and for all of creation.

2. Our experience and the witness of others tell us that friendship, compassion, and sadness have elements of a higher level of awareness, which transcends a strictly biological expression of behaviour. The idea of a fragile and subtle emergence of freedom, through evolution, is ignored in most descriptions of evolving life on this planet, yet our personal experience tells us this freedom is *real*. When we recall the work of Jean Vanier or Mother Theresa, the courage of Nelson Mandela or Bishop Desmond Tutu, the nobility of Gandhi and his *satyagraha*, or truth force (the name he gave to his movement of non-violent resistance), we know there are such things as grace, transcendence and freedom of spirit.

HOUR 2: JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MEN

1. We have a responsibility to befriend and sustain the various animals and plants we come in contact with or use for food. What would they say to us if we asked them, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” Part of the answer lies in treating all members of Earth’s community of life with respect and friendship. The following is one small story of this respect and friendship, told by Joyce.

“Pippa is a mixed breed dog. She comes from a little seaside village called Batsi, on the island of Andros, in the Cyclades, in Greece. When we found her she was living under the steps to the side-door of a church. One or two local people took an interest in Pippa - she had a bit of sacking for a bed, a water bowl and a dish into which food was sometimes put, although the dish sometimes contained scraps that not even she would eat. At that time, according to two independent vets, she was about a year old and had been living under the church steps for 6 months. We heard that someone living nearby had seen her being thrown from a car.

Most of our first week on the island had been spent on guided walks in the countryside, so we knew little of Batsi. The final day of the guided walks was to be particularly strenuous (up a mountain) and I

opted out, preferring to explore the village. I walked past the church and as I passed her steps, Pippa approached me, wagging her tail, but also baring her teeth. But she seemed friendly and allowed me to pat her. I later mentioned the encounter to Sandy, an English resident of the island who was involved in helping the homeless animals around Batsi. A propos the bared teeth, Sandy said, "She was smiling at you."

George, my husband, met Pippa later the same day and over the next few days we visited her frequently, taking scraps of our own food. We decided to try and get her back to England with us. She was young, good looking and had an evident good nature. We were told that at the end of the tourist season the authorities poisoned all the stray animals. Also, the church where Pippa lived was about to undergo an external facelift; scaffolding was already being put up, and it was clear that she would be dislodged. Our tour guide was against it. She said, quite rightly, that it would cost us a vast amount of money but it seemed to us that if we didn't rescue Pippa, nobody would. At this time, we chose her name. We settled on 'Pippa' because the church that had sheltered her was dedicated to St. Philip.

On her last day there, when I was to take her to Sandy's shop to meet the vet, I realized I was going to have to pick her up for the first time and carry her down a steep hill. I expected her to object to being picked up, to struggle violently and quite possibly to bite me. Instead, she snuggled into my arms, which gave me a feeling of pure joy. Our final few days were mostly spent in organizing her trip to England. She left a week after we did. We arranged a Certificate of Import, and vaccinations and de-worming by veterinarians in Greece. A tour guide took her, in a cage we had purchased, to the ferry to Athens. A friend of ours in Athens drove Pippa to the airport and delivered her to the British Airways cargo terminal. She stayed in quarantine for 6 months in England. We have had her for two years."

2. Jean Vanier, the founder of l'Arche, in his book *Becoming Human* (p.5), asks how the human heart can be liberated, "...from those fears that provoke us to exclude and reject others." He writes, "...the discovery of our common humanity liberates us from self-centred compulsions and hurts." (p. 5) This common humanity is most deeply felt when we befriend those who are poor or rejected so that we, and they, are set free from fear, inner chaos and destructive compulsions.
3. John Haught, in *God After Darwin* (p. 134), writes that our practice of virtue can contribute to the intensification of beauty and diversity by promoting inclusiveness at the level of human society. This intensification is one of the major directions of evolution, existing side by side with aspects of evolution producing suffering, waste and pain. We need to extend this inclusiveness to animals, plants and ecosystems. Vandana Shiva in her book *Biopiracy, The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, observes, "...the conservation of biodiversity, at the most fundamental level, is the ethical recognition that species and cultures have rights." (p. 123)

DISCERNMENT

A SECOND SET OF GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

The following discernment guidelines are an attempt to apply some further *Rules of Discernment* given by St. Ignatius [328-336] to our experience of and relationship to the life and matter embedded in cosmic evolution. This set of guidelines concerns outside forces (angels) that influence our interior motivations. They are subtler than the first set.

1. One set of external forces (angels) give us a deep appreciation of our kinship with the community of life so that we experience great spiritual happiness and joy. This experience is truly from the good angel. This angel banishes all sadness and disturbances laid upon us by the external forces that reject our kinship with nature. Whereas, the evil angel works against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtleties, and continual deceptions concerning our sense of identity with the rest of nature.
2. Only the Trinity can give experience of the spiritual consolation that is immediate and without any previous cause. This is different from the constant presence of the Trinity in all things or the occasion of ordinary consolation given in the beauty of a flower, an animal, or a scene that takes one's breath away, or through our own acts of intellect and will. It belongs solely to the Trinity to bring about this experience of personal affection with us. So we sense that the Trinity can come freely into our being, leave it, act upon it, draw it wholly to the love of Jesus Christ. Such spiritual consolation is often a surprise.
3. If a beautiful experience of creation, truth, an act of affection, or an experience of goodness is present to us as a preceding cause of consolation then either the good angel or the evil angel can be active, but for quite different purposes. The good angel acts to console us and to increase our love and appreciation of the Creator in our universe. The evil angel acts to console in order that afterward it may draw us into a destructive attitude towards creation.
4. It is the mark of the evil angel to first encourage a generous, insightful or other beneficial attitude towards the rest of creation. Initially the person of good intentions is consoled, but eventually these consoling thoughts become arrogant and disordered. Thus, the evil angel begins with thoughts and desires that are in harmony with all life and gradually turns these against nature. In time the committed person is drawn, little by little, from an original conviction about our kinship with the rest of nature and from a commitment to befriend and respect Earth's inhabitants. Discouragement and desolation take over one's life.
5. From this knowledge we realize that we must carefully observe the whole course of our thoughts. If the beginning and middle and end of this course of thoughts are wholly good and directed to what is entirely right, it is a sign that they are from the good angel. But if the course of thoughts suggested to us terminates in something evil, or distracting, or less good than the person had formerly proposed to do, it is a sign that the evil angel is present. It may end in what weakens one's resolve, or takes away one's conviction, or lessens the awareness of the evolving love of the Trinity for all creatures arising from billions of years of cosmic evolution. Thus the person suffers interior disturbances. These are clear signs that the thoughts are proceeding from the evil angel who is trying to destroy nature and us.
6. When the evil angel, seeking to destroy all healthy relationships is detected and recognized by the destructive tendencies marking its activity, it will be profitable for one who has been deceived to review immediately the whole course of the deception. Consider the series of good thoughts, how they arose, how they gradually changed and brought one to move away from one's previous resolve

and sense of spiritual rightness and joy till finally one is drawn to deny one's commitment to and purpose with the community of life. The purpose of this review is that once an experience has been understood and carefully observed, we may guard ourselves in the future against the customary deceits of the evil angel.

7. Persons who are progressing in their commitment and action to heal Earth have experiences of hope and purpose. They experience their life with nature as delicate, gentle, and delightful. The effect of this may be compared to a drop of water penetrating a sponge. The action of the evil angel upon such persons is violent, noisy, and disturbing. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone. Persons, whose commitment and actions are going from bad to worse, experience the action of the spirits mentioned above in a reverse manner. Thus when our disposition is contrary to either of these angel forces, there is noise and commotion within the person. When our disposition is similar to either angel there will be a gentleness and quietness in the experience somewhat similar to one coming home when the doors are open.
8. A consolation like that described in the second guideline has no deception in it, since it proceeds from the Trinity alone. Someone who has received such a consolation must consider it very attentively, and distinguish the actual time of the consolation from the period that follows it. At such a time, one is still caught up in the consolation and favoured with the grace and lingering effects of the consolation which has passed. In this second phase, one frequently forms various resolutions and plans, which are not directly from the Trinity. They may come from our own inner response, our reasoning, the consequences of our judgements, or they may come from the good or evil angel. Hence, in the afterglow of such consolation, one must carefully review the whole course of events, using guideline #6, before proceeding with the suggestions given after the consolation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EXERCISES

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

The Third Exercises focus on Jesus' suffering and death. The Cross is introduced in the First Exercises and is present throughout all the Exercises. At this point, however, there is a change in emphasis. In our previous prayers, we approach the Cross - as sinners in need of redemption. Now, we come to Jesus' suffering and death as his disciples. We enter the mysteries of Jesus' passion with a question: "*What ought I to do and suffer for Christ?*" This is different from the acts of thanksgiving and mercy of the First Exercises when the question is: "*What ought I to do for Him?*" The Third Exercises follow the attitude of the *Third Kind of Humility* and sometimes, the process of making a serious decision.

In the Third Exercises, we are given an extended understanding of the suffering of Christ that includes His union with all the members of the community of life. We pray to enter into this new dimension (i.e., Christ's suffering), in the exploited, marginalized beings in the community of life.

SEVENTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE THIRD EXERCISES

We suffer with Jesus in the agony of all creation

PRAYER HOUR 1

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a contemplation on the mystery of the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation. (**Mark 14:26-42**)

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

The Agony in the Garden.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

In my imagination I wait with the three disciples in the garden. Though I am in anguish, I marvel that He, the Word through whom the cosmos exists, freely chooses to suffer along with His evolving creation.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of a deep-felt knowledge of the suffering of the Body of Christ, continued in exploited, marginal communities of life, which groan in their suffering. That is, I ask for sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Christ as he experiences the misuse of His beloved Earth, and the way I dismiss His personal concern for and His physical connectedness to His universal community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I see Jesus and His disciples leaving the house after the Last Supper and accompany them to

walk to the garden, Gethsemane.

Second point: I hear what they are saying.

Third point: I watch what they are doing.

Fourth point: I consider what Jesus suffers in His humanity.

Fifth point: I reflect on how Jesus' divinity hides itself rather than overpowers His enemies.

Sixth point: I reflect that Jesus does all this for my sins and those of my community, and ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus.

DIALOGUE

I speak to Jesus my friend and brother, and remain present to Him in His agony.

I close with the prayer that Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

I write what I will share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2 THE WAY OF THE CROSS

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a contemplation on the mystery of the Way of the Cross. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation. (**Mark 15:21-32**)

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Jesus carries the Cross to Calvary.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I imagine the spirit of the Tree of the Cross. In its capacity to regenerate from a twig, in its power to integrate carbon, water and light, it is the metaphor of my imagination. As it grows it becomes my image of the ecosystem, then my image of the universe; finally, in its depth, in its reach, in its splendour and mystery, it becomes my image of the Trinity. I wait with the women by the roadside as He bears the Tree on His back. Though I am in anguish, I marvel that the Word through whom the cosmos exists, freely chooses to suffer along with His evolving creation.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of a deep-felt knowledge of the suffering of the Body of Christ, continued in exploited, marginal communities of life, which groan in their suffering. That is, I ask for sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Christ as He experiences the misuse of His beloved Earth, and the way I dismiss His personal concern for and His physical connectedness to His universal community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I see the Roman soldiers bring in the cross and place it on Jesus' back. I accompany Jesus as He carries the cross to Calvary. I see the women who lament for Him.

Second point: I hear what they are saying.

Third point: I watch what they are doing.

Fourth point: To contemplate what Jesus suffers, I observe all matter in existence that morning: visible matter, dark matter, living matter, soul matter.

Fifth point: I reflect on how Jesus' divinity hides itself rather than overpowers His enemies.

Sixth point: I reflect that Jesus does all this for my sins and ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus.

DIALOGUE

I speak to Jesus my friend and brother, and remain present to Him in His agony.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3

THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a contemplation on the mystery of the Death of Jesus on the Cross. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation. (**Mark 15:33-41**)

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

The Death of Jesus on the Cross.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

In my imagination, I wait before the Cross filled with shame and love at what is being endured for me and all creatures. I see the pure, innocent life ebbing on the Cross before me. This Life brought matter into being from nothing, then life into being from matter, so that He could walk among His beloved creatures. I am filled with awe at the mystery of how He freely chooses to give His life for me today.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for the grace of a deep-felt knowledge of the suffering of the Body of Christ, continued in exploited, marginal communities of life, which groan in their suffering. That is, I ask for sorrow and grief, interior pain and even tears with Christ as He experiences the misuse of His beloved Earth, and the way I dismiss His personal concern for and His physical connectedness to His universal community of life.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I experience the darkness at Golgotha, starting at midday for three hours.

Second point: I hear what they are saying.

Third point: I watch what they are doing.

Fourth point: I consider what Jesus suffers in His humanity.

Fifth point: I reflect on how Jesus' divinity hides itself rather than overpowers His enemies.

Sixth point: I reflect that Jesus does all this for my sins and the sins of my community.

DIALOGUE

I speak to Jesus my friend and brother, and remain present to Him in His agony.

Close with the prayer that Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

**THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER
AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE**

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the Mystery.

HOOR 1: THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

1. He foretold that Peter would disown Him that same night. They came to a small garden called Gethsemane where He went with three disciples to a place in the garden where He began to pray. I see the sleepy disciples, the outlines of trees and rocks in the dark. I see Jesus in intense agony, His sweat as drops of blood.

I see others who suffer because of our species' suicidal greed and blindness:

Tarumitra is a student movement, which campaigns exclusively for preserving the biosphere, in India. Its first Eco-martyr was Jayant Chatterjee, 15 years old, the only son of his parents. He died while conducting an environmental survey of North India. In 1994, another boy, Pankaj was shot dead when he and his companions were raising funds for the activities. www.tarumitra.com/-

Chico Mendes, a Brazilian union leader, worked to keep tropical rain forests intact; he also worked for sustainable harvests of rubber and nuts that would protect these forests as a whole. This automatically made him an enemy of cattle ranchers who murdered him in 1988. www.chicomendes.com/-

Medgar Evers, an African American civil rights leader, fought against segregation and racial discrimination in Mississippi during the 1950's and early 1960's. Evers was shot and killed outside his home.

www.worldbook.com/fun/aajourny/html/bh107.html

Archbishop Oscar Romero who knew he would be killed for his outspoken support of the persecuted peasants of El Salvador, but did not cease. www.westminster-abbey.org/Martyrs

*Pastor Kaj Munk and Pastor Dietrich Bonhoffer who spoke out against oppressors in Denmark and Germany and were martyred by the Gestapo. www.folkekirken.dk/interchurch/cn/feb98.htm
www.westminster-abbey.org/Martyrs*

4. Jesus knew the rage of the Jewish leaders. He knew the brutality of the Roman army, which crucified two thousand people of Galilee during His lifetime. He was human; I grieve over His terror and the agony of this choice in the garden.
5. The power of matter is evident in the immense energy of stars, gravity and cosmic collisions. But the power of God is infinite love; John Haught shows us the astounding truth that God expresses this power through humility, through self-concealment. In this way, God's love cannot compel but only call forth a free response in creatures. Most profoundly, I see this at Gethsemane.
6. I reflect that Jesus does all this for my sins and those of my community, and ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus. I feel deep sorrow as I wait with the three men in Gethsemane; I know I have caused the drops of sweat like blood on Jesus' brow. My sinful ways of greed and exclusion have grievously hurt and humiliated His beloved world.

HOOR 2: THE WAY OF THE CROSS

1. I see the women who lament for Him. Jesus tells them of the future destruction of the city (**Luke 23:27-31**). Jesus falls several times out of weakness and exhaustion. I see Simon of Cyrene, a man passing by on a journey, being compelled by the soldiers to carry the cross with Jesus. At last Jesus reaches Calvary; the soldiers try to give Him drugged wine, which Jesus refused. At nine o'clock in the morning, they nail Him to the cross and raise it up. The soldiers divide His clothes among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get which piece of clothing. Later, an inscription is nailed to the wood above His head.

4. I consider how all matter has subjectivity. I ponder the words of scientists for whom lifeless electrons are not mindless:

Freeman Dyson: *"The more I examine the universe and study the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have **known** we were coming."*

George Wald: *"...the stuff of which physical reality is composed is **mind-stuff**."*

John Wheeler: *"...the **observer** is as essential to the creation of the universe as the universe is to the creation of the observer..."*

5. I talk to the atoms of hydrogen, which **observed** His command to exist in that morning when time and space was born.

I converse with the **mind-stuff** in the rocks beneath His feet: the mind-stuff in the microbes and roots deep underground.

I consider that Absolute Love could not resist entering the beauty of finite matter and today is insulted, falsely accused.

I grieve along with the stars and planets that, today, I am doing such an act of horror that I know not what I am doing.

6. As I talk with the Tree of the Cross, I am awestruck at the agony which the Trinity silently endures as we destroy ancient forests together with the immense communities of creatures in them.

I am filled with shame that, for me, God's beloved One is nailed to a tree.

I follow Jesus as He bears the weight of the wood. I see the Sacred Tree as a seedling, then a sapling, its roots probing far beneath the surface. I am filled with wonder that for ten billion years, the carbon atoms of this tree knew their momentous role in cosmic emergence.

I grieve along with it and with all matter in the universe.

I carefully consider that long before humans walked on Earth, there were catastrophes, which caused mass die-offs of creatures.

In my imagination I ask the forests, the wetlands, the shoreline, and the mountains, why Absolute Love is going to be killed on the Tree this day.

I ponder the words of a prophet (www.zukav.com/ -)

"The dolphin soul is leaving the Earth, that is, the dolphin species is becoming extinct. The dolphins are beaching themselves. They are creating diseases within themselves. This is their way of refusing to continue to live upon Earth. They feel they cannot fulfill the purpose for which they are born; Therefore,

they are leaving. Their deaths are not suicides, because they are not frightened. They are exhausted.

The dolphin soul manifests itself - dolphins are born – to bring love and life and creativity to the oceans. They manifest to form a bridge of joy and love and intelligence between the aquatic kingdom and the human kingdom. This they cannot do. Our species reaches towards the dolphin soul only with brutality.”

It is obvious that we humans are the next Earth catastrophe. Through despair, we are killing our kin and ritually committing mass suicide ourselves. I grieve with our kin, the dolphins, elephants, gorillas, giant redwood trees, on the road to Calvary.

HOOR 3: THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

1. I see Jesus in deepest agony cry out to God. Once more, he cried out and then gave up His spirit. The Temple curtain was torn open, from top to bottom. I see, near the Cross, the Roman officer who said: *“This man was really the Son of God!”* I see the three women who were particular friends of Jesus, watching from a distance: also, the many other women who had followed Jesus from Jerusalem. Near nightfall, Joseph of Arimathea went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
4. I consider that God did not *enter history*, but wished for a relationship with creatures even before time began. I recall the past image of the Trinity, far away in heaven, filled with pity for suffering creatures but untouched by their pain. I thank Jesus on the Cross, for revealing to me now, that all the struggles of the cosmos through all ages have been intimately experienced by the caring Trinity. I reflect in amazement that the very story of God’s life includes all the agony of evolution: mass extinctions of species, the pitiless necessity of food chains, living animals torn apart as prey, parasites and epidemics, destroyed forests, wars, starving and tormented children, the horror of our species’ greed and indifference. I thank God that the proof of this Divine suffering is His Beloved One choosing to die defenceless, in the face of our savagery
5. I am filled with wonder at Calvary’s revelation of the Three Divine Persons who humbled themselves to give birth to a cosmos of space, time and matter. I think in awe of the Trinity’s self-humiliation in giving their beloved evolving cosmos complete freedom, instead of imposing total control. I marvel at their loving self-effacement throughout evolution so that creatures acquired ever-greater freedom, culminating in human freedom to intervene like gods in guiding future change. At the foot of the Cross, I am moved in my depths that the power of God is most effective against evil as defencelessness - not as force.
6. I seek for tears of gratitude; knowing that because I am so deeply loved, I can shed my false self-image of knowledge, wealth and power. Freed from this burden, I give thanks that I can see the beauty in the diversity of all others, their faiths, their cultures, and the wonder of all creatures and their communities. I ponder not only the harm, which my sins have caused, but all of the suffering of evolving nature; I consider how all this pain has been somehow suffered by an empathic, compassionate God who cares for the death of even one sparrow. Before this Cross, I ask what I ought to do and suffer for Jesus.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH EXERCISES

In the Fourth Exercises we pray on the Resurrection and Ascension. These prayers focus on the appearance of Jesus to His disciples. The method of prayer is Ignatian contemplation with the intention of *joy and happiness* at the great joy and happiness of Jesus, bringing the good news to His disciples. In the Fourth Exercises, we are asked to be consolers. We are to console each other in our troubles and sufferings, and witness to others our belief in the Risen Jesus Christ.

As we pray this part, we enter into the joy of Christ and we recognise the constant renewal of all things in the universe. The novelty of the universe is expressed by Jesus: "*I make all things new.*" The Resurrection gives us the perspective to see this in our universe, as the community of life develops and moves into the future.

EIGHTH WEEK OF PRAYER ON THE FOURTH EXERCISES

We exult with the risen Jesus in His glorious new creation

PRAYER HOUR 1

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a meditation on the mystery of the Resurrection and Glory of Jesus Christ. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **John 20:1-18** and make an imaginative effort to put myself into the situation suggested by the scripture reading.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I seek the grace to be happy and rejoice with all creatures as they bask in the glory and joy of the Risen Jesus Christ.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I see and hear Jesus' friends this morning in the garden. I see all the details the two disciples saw when they looked into the tomb, particularly the pieces of cloth. I carefully observe their breathing, their posture, their eyes, the expressions on their faces. I consider that what is racing through their minds has never entered human minds before. Mostly, I sense their emotions, the wondrous hope flooding their hearts instantly. In this new biology, anything is now possible

Second point: In the same way, I am with Mary Magdalene as she weeps; I feel her despair and confusion. I see her turn to address the person she believes is the gardener. With her, I am amazed that this is not a ghost; our beloved friend has a physical body.

Third point: I reflect on how Jesus' divinity, so hidden during the passion, now appears and is revealed so marvelously in the risen and glorified Christ. I ponder, with Mary, why we did not recognize Him at first sight.

Fourth point: I reflect on how He acts as our consoler and compare this with the way in which friends console one another. I reflect too, on how Jesus sends Mary to find the brothers, His community of friends, to console them.

DIALOGUE

I speak to Jesus about His joy in consoling His friends and disciples.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

I recall my prayer, and write what I want to share.

PRAYER HOUR 2

THE WALK TO EMMAUS AND THE LOCKED UPPER ROOM

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a contemplation on the mystery of the Resurrection of our Lord. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Jesus' appearance to His disciples on the road to Emmaus.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Luke 24:13-43** and make an imaginative effort to put myself into the situation suggested by the scripture reading.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I seek the grace to be happy and rejoice with all creatures as they bask in the glory and joy of the Risen Jesus Christ.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I see and hear Cleopas and his friend talking as they walk. I take note of the details of the road and vegetation, and see Jesus joining them. I hear the doubt and confusion in their voices as they describe the report from the tomb.

Second point: I hear Jesus' words as He describes to them His graced history; I see their expressions as their hearts burn within them.

Third point: I see and hear Jesus' friends gathered in the room and the arrival of the two friends from Emmaus.

Fourth point: I reflect on how Jesus' divinity, almost hidden during the passion, now appears and is revealed so marvelously in the risen and glorified Christ.

Fifth point: I reflect on how He acts as our consoler and compare this with the way in which friends console one another. I reflect too, on how these two friends return seven miles that night to console their small community.

DIALOGUE

I speak with the Three Divine Persons in my astonishment and joy; I thank the Trinity that my despair is replaced with hope.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3

JESUS' APPEARANCE TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE SHORE OF LAKE TIBERIAS

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a meditation on the mystery of the Resurrection and Glory of Jesus Christ. After the Offering of Myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Jesus' Appearance to His Disciples on the Shore of Lake Tiberias

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **John 21:1-25**, and make an imaginative effort to put myself into the situation suggested by the scripture reading.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I seek the grace to be happy and rejoice with all creatures as they bask in the glory and joy of the Risen Jesus Christ.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I contemplate Jesus directing His friends to make a huge catch of fish.

Second point: On the Tiberias lakeshore, I reflect on how Jesus' divinity, almost hidden during the passion, now appears and is revealed so marvelously in the risen and glorified Christ.

Third point: I see Peter leap off the boat to wade to shore. I reflect on how Jesus acts as our consoler and compare this with the way in which friends console one another.

DIALOGUE

I speak with the Trinity in my astonishment and joy; I thank the Trinity that my despair is replaced with hope.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

**THESE ARE ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR PRAYER
AND/OR EXTENSIONS OF THE POINTS ABOVE**

You may find them helpful in leading you deeper into the mystery.

HOOR 2: THE WALK TO EMMAUS AND THE LOCKED UPPER ROOM

2. I ponder why we did not recognize Him at first sight. I see their faces as they recognize Him after He blesses the food. I see with joy how they are flooded with new life. I consider how this new biology reveals a hint of the vast evolutionary leap that awaits all life.
3. I see the locked door and sense their fear. I see Jesus appear in their midst. I consider how carefully Jesus ensures that they know His presence is physical, not ghostly. I marvel, with them, at the revelation of this new biology that is the basis of the material universe.
4. I reflect on the miracle of emergence; that is, our experience of true novelty. I marvel at the new community emerging from separate, discouraged, fearful individuals. Miraculously, it is much greater than the sum of those present and their desolation. I consider how the resurrected Lord draws all life in the universe into the future as an evolving community of increasing splendour and diversity.
5. I reflect how the Christ draws us to evolve toward full humanness. I consider that my evolution invites me to imitate Him; I console the lonely, the sad. I befriend all creatures. In this consolation, trees become fully trees, whales become fully whales, and I become fully human. This is emergence: a leap to unpredictable novelty, beauty, transcendence.

**HOOR 3: JESUS' APPEARANCE TO HIS DISCIPLES
ON THE SHORE OF LAKE TIBERIAS**

1. I see Him making a fire to cook breakfast on the shore. I marvel that what I see in this early morning is a glimpse of the fulfillment of the great promise of the Trinity. It is that all matter, all creatures in the cosmos will share in the resurrection. It is this cosmos of hydrogen, carbon, DNA, poetry, music, which will acquire a glorified information, not some ghostly substitute up in the heavens.
2. I become aware that St. Paul authored a glorious new biology of evolution. (**1 Cor 15:35-53; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 1:15-18; Colossians 3:1; Eph 3:20-21; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Rom 8:18-25; Rom 8:28-30**) John Haught interprets this new biology to explain that death is the switch-over from superficial associations with the world and creatures, to an ever-deepening intimacy with the entire cosmos - not a departure from it.
3. Jesus constantly befriended and consoled the lonely; moreover, His powerful parables were often about ravens, sowing seeds, harvest work, a fig tree, weeds, grapevines, yeast cells, lilies, grass. He ordered turbulent waters to be still; He changed water into wine, and loaves and fishes somehow cloned themselves. He commanded eyes to regain their sight, nerves to function, and life to animate a corpse. He was completely the author and source of this new biology. So I consider that if death is an evolutionary leap into greater intimacy with creation, then to prepare for death, I should, like Jesus, deepen and expand my friendship with persons and with creation. I ponder the astonishing logic of this life-force which prescribes that the right way to live is to prepare to die. (**Rom 6:8-11**)

APPLICATION OF THE SENSES

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a contemplation in which I apply the five senses to the matter of the previous contemplations on the Resurrection of Jesus. After the Offering of myself, and a Preface to the subject matter of the Mystery, it contains some Points for Reflection, a Dialogue and a Communal Sharing of the fruits of the meditation.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg the Three Divine Persons for grace during this hour that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to their praise and service.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

The Resurrection of Jesus.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I make an imaginative effort to put myself into a place or situation suggested by the scripture readings in the previous contemplations on the Resurrection of Jesus.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I seek the grace to be happy and rejoice with all creatures as they bask in the glory and joy of the Risen Jesus Christ.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

Once again, I reflect on the consolations and desolations I have experienced in contemplations of the Resurrection of Jesus. I look for amazing insights about the Trinity and Jesus. I enter into the ones that most deeply impress me; I relish and savour them.

I consider the physical presence of the resurrected Christ to His disciples and to the community of life: trees, birds, soil, air, oceans.

I see the delight in Jesus' eyes.

I hear, as He surprises those in the Upper Room, their songs of joy joined with the songs of all creatures.

I taste the mystery of the Trinity's amazing love, concealed for eons within all of evolving nature.

I smell the fragrance of trees, grass, and flowers in the promised fulfillment of the new biology.

I touch, with Thomas, His wounds and wounded creation.

DIALOGUES

I speak to Jesus my friend and brother, in the triumph of His victory.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

CONTEMPLATIO

THE CONTEMPLATION TO ATTAIN LOVE FOR THE TRINITY

PRAYER HOUR 1

These three hours are prayed after the three prayer hours on the fourth exercises, either in the same week as the fourth exercises prayers or the week after.

INTRODUCTION

This prayer assists us to fulfill our deep desires to love the Three Divine Persons with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. It helps us find God in the mystery of our own lives. We recognize that our lives are intimately connected to the rest of the community of life. Through this prayer we appreciate the many gifts we have received through the Trinity's love for us and for all members of the community of life. We are filled with a gratitude, which leads us to love the Three Divine Persons and offer ourselves to them. The four points focus on remembering, being present, appreciating the effort of the Trinity for me, and their love for me. As I pray the *Contemplatio*, I realize that these expressions of love are given in the communal context of the universal community of life.

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This is a contemplation on the mystery of my own life within the community of all life. As such, it follows the same method as those in previous contemplations

Note: Before this exercise it will be helpful to call attention to two things:

- ◆ First, love ought to be manifested in deeds, rather than words.
- ◆ Second, love consists in a mutual sharing among persons, for example, as a lover gives and shares with the beloved what he or she possesses, or has to give; and vice versa, the beloved shares with the lover. Thus if one has knowledge, it should be shared with one who does not, and so also with honours, or riches, so that one is always sharing with others. [*Sp.Ex.* 230-231]

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I seek the grace to be happy and rejoice with all creatures as all of us praise the Trinity and experience the glory and joy that our Risen Christ experiences when we, also, have experiences of new life.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

The life story of each of us can be seen as an experience of the Trinity's love coming to each of us through the life of Jesus, and through other exemplars, friends, family, the living creatures sharing earth with us, and the actual mineral substances of our earth. As a preparation for this contemplation, let us recall the many places and situations where we have experienced the Trinity's love.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE

I observe myself standing in the presence of the Trinity, with Jesus Christ and of all the angelic and saintly beings both great and small of the universe who intercede for me.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the great gifts I have received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Trinity.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First Point of the *Contemplatio* [230-234]: Read the following passage from Teilhard de Chardin's, *Le Milieu Divin*:

“By virtue of creation and still more of the Incarnation, nothing is profane here below on earth to him who knows how to see. On the contrary, everything is sacred for the one who in every creature distinguishes the particle of the selected being that is subjected to the attraction of Christ in the process of consummation.”

Continue with Ignatius' First Point of the *Contemplatio*: I recall the activity of the Trinity as they initiate the vast evolutionary process, which results in the formation of millions of galaxies, stars, and planets, as well as myself. Recall also, the presence of Jesus Christ who has given me and the community of life meaning and fulfilment. I will reflect on my experience of the Trinity's presence in the special persons and occasions of my life. I ponder, with great feeling, on how much the Trinity has done for me, and the community of life: how much they have given me, and finally on how much they desire to give me their very selves. Then I will reflect upon myself and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer to the Trinity, that is, all I possess, and my own being as well.

DIALOGUE

Moved with great love, I will make this offering of myself:

TAKE AND RECEIVE

Take, O Trinity, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O Trinity, I return it. All is Yours. Dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer (Review) and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

All parts of the prayer exercise are the same as **PRAYER HOUR 1** except for the following **POINT**.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

Second Point of the *Contemplatio* [230-235]: Recall the instructions of the First Point. Then read the following passage taken from David Darling's book, *The Science of Death, the Logic of Reincarnation*, (p. 170):

"We now know - and every experiment quantum physicists carry out further bolsters our knowledge - that we are deeply, intrinsically bound up with reality as a whole. Subject and object are one."

Continue with Ignatius' Second Point of the *Contemplatio*. I reflect on how the Trinity began the evolutionary process, which resulted in the universe and all beings within it. I note how the Trinity dwells in all creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them growth, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in human beings giving them understanding. I ponder how the Holy Spirit also dwells in me as in a temple, since I am created in the image and likeness of the Trinity. Then I will reflect upon myself again in the manner described in the First Point, or in some other way that may seem better.

DIALOGUE

Moved with great love, I will make an offering of myself by praying the prayer, *Take and Receive*, given above.

Close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer (Review) and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 3

All parts of the prayer exercise are the same as **PRAYER HOUR 1** except for the following **POINTS**.

Third Point of the *Contemplatio* [230-236]: Recall the other instructions of the First Point. Then read the following passage taken from John Honner's book, *Time God and Cosmology*:

"For others, like Paul Davies, the brilliant orderedness of the cosmos implies some great designer who is called God...Like William Paley or Isaac Newton or Albert Einstein, Davies sees God not only uninvolved in the universe, but also unable to be involved."

Continue with the Third Point of the *Contemplatio*. I will consider how the Trinity, with the all living beings and inanimate matter of the universe, works and labours for me, that is, they labour to continue their creative act. Thus in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, and animals, the Trinity gives existence, protects, gives growth and feeling. Then I will reflect on myself.

Fourth Point of the *Contemplatio* [230-237]: Recall the two notes on love and the other instructions of the First Point. Then read the following passage taken from Rupert Sheldrake's book, *THE REBIRTH OF NATURE, The Greening of Science and God* (p. 110):

"The hypothesis of formative causation suggest that memory depends on morphic resonance rather than material memory stores. Morphic resonance (mirror memory) depends on similarity. It involves an effect of like on like. The more similar an organism is to an organism in the past, the more specific and effective the morphic resonance. In general, any given organism is most like itself in the past and hence subject to highly specific resonance from its own past."

Continue with the Fourth Point of the *Contemplatio*. This is to reflect that all blessings and gifts in me and in creation are an expression of the Trinity's love. Thus our limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power of the Trinity's love and, so too, our beauty, justice, goodness, pity, mercy, and all our virtues. The Trinity poured out upon us as the rays of light descend from the sun and as the water from a fountain. Then, once again, I will reflect on myself.

DIALOGUE

Moved with great love, I will make an offering of myself by praying this prayer, *Take and Receive*.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer (Review) and write it in my journal, I mark what I would like to share with my community.

Two additional readings you might find helpful are: **John 4:7-21** and **Luke 10:21-24**.

HOW TO MAKE A COMMUNAL DECISION

INTRODUCTION

Our experiences of prayer in the *Spiritual Exercises* can help us to make decisions, either individual or communal. Making a communal decision occurs over a number of weeks of prayer and discussion.

Ignatius asks us to make an important life decision while contemplating the life of Jesus. *The Two Standards*, *The Three Types of Persons* and *The Three Kinds of Humility* help with this by giving us a context for recognizing our interior movements and learning the correct criteria for making a decision. By following this formal process, we are better able to attain some spiritual freedom and, therefore, make a better decision. The steps for making a communal decision are given below. Read them, but don't worry about remembering the steps, they will become familiar to you and your community as you use them.

SIX STEPS IN DISCERNING A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNAL DECISION

The **first step** in making a communal decision is to **research an issue** you think might be of interest to you and your community. This step is taken in the light of the graces and insights given to you and your community during your prayer with the *Spiritual Exercises*. An example of an issue might be homelessness in your city. Leave time to share on various issues at your **community meeting**. Listen to the issues and the discussion around them. In a second round of sharing, identify any common themes or insights that emerge. Try to articulate a common issue.

The **second step** in this process is to **pray in the coming week** over what you have heard and then **compose an open-ended question**, i.e., one that has many answers, which you think is in the hearts and minds of community members. An example might be, "*How can our community help the homeless this year?*" Bring this to the next meeting and share it. If similar questions are given by other members, use part of your meeting to formulate a clear open-ended question, such as, "*How can we help at the homeless shelter this year?*" If there is time begin listing possible answers.

The **third step** is to agree on a specific answer and reword it to the satisfaction of all. An example might be, "*We will help at the homeless shelter on five weekends this coming year*". In addition, the group will compose its opposite, which in this example would be is, "*We will NOT help at the homeless shelter on five weekends this coming year.*" Each member takes these two statements home and before the next meeting lists the **advantages and disadvantages** of each statement, thus producing four columns. Bring your four columns to the next community meeting. Share your four columns by going around the circle, each person giving his or her reasons for *one column* until the community has a complete list for that column. Do the same for the other three columns. Pray over what you have heard in the sharing in the coming week. Come to the next meeting with a **provisional decision**, having read step four.

At this meeting each member first shares one reason, taken from the four columns, which influenced him/her the most, without naming their provisional decision. This process helps the group recognize whether there is **CONSENSUS**. The description of **CONSENSUS** is found below. Read this **before** your meeting. If consensus is evident, then the fourth step follows, which is each person, in turn, indicates his or her **provisional decision**. A **communal provisional decision** is then made.

CONSENSUS

Consensus in a group is a special form of confirmation. It is not simply majority rule or unanimity. It means that everyone in the group will be satisfied they and others have been listened to, that the gifts of each member have been acknowledged and that a free and effective process has been followed. The group will know itself as loved by God. Members will have a sense of wonder and of being drawn into the future, despite the group's limitations and past sufferings. The group will experience consolation as a gift from the Holy Spirit.

The group will have an awareness of transcendence and experience the beauty, truth, and goodness of God as well as union with God. The fruits of consensus for the community are:

- *the consoling insight of seeing the Paschal mystery in the life of the group, since the decision means dying to self for the sake of the universal community of life,*
- *group members may feel a special sense of wholeness and consolation,*
- *all are committed to the decision and its implementation with realistic hope and joy,*
- *an experience of a freeing and creative love operating in the group.*

*Consensus is experienced as a **unanimous decision**, made in true consolation, that is to say, all are satisfied with the process and the decision. It may also be experienced as a **high degree of agreement**. If this is the case, try to get unanimity by asking those not in agreement to state their objections to the decision and discover what will satisfy them in implementing the decision. Keep in mind the reasons against the decision, even as the group implements it. If there is a **low degree of agreement**, the group would be wise to revisit the general issue and look for another proposal for discernment.*

The fifth step is **SEEKING CONFIRMATION** of the decision. If consensus is reached, go round the circle once again, this time indicating whether or not you experienced consolation. Describe your experience briefly. If you are not in agreement with the communal decision, state your objections and make suggestions for change.

The sixth step is **implementing the decision**. Many a well-discerned decision is lost in implementation. Make sure that communications and delegation are dealt with as soon as possible after the decision is made. As the group works through various items of implementation it will become aware of the costs to the group. When members face these costs in union with Christ suffering and still wish to do the work, they will have another experience of consolation.

On the following pages you will find two examples of Ignatian prayer, which may help you and your community make a significant communal decision.

TWO PRAYER EXERCISES FOR UNDERTAKING A COMMUNAL DECISION

PRAYER HOUR 1

A MOMENT OF DECISION

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

I contemplate the action of the early Christian community in **Acts 11:27-30** as an example of a communal discernment.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg God for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of the Holy Trinity.

A PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

It is not always possible, due to time and circumstances, to use a formal process of decision-making. However, the weeks of prayer over the *Spiritual Exercises* are times of grace and spiritual growth for communities. They provide the foundation for making an important communal decision. This work involves increasing the beauty, diversity and novelty in the universal community of life by living in an attitude of forgiveness and by befriending humans, plants and animals that are suffering or oppressed. When we do this, we contribute to the evolution of greater freedom for the cosmos.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Acts 11:27-30** and place myself with the early Christian community.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life, that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I see the disciples making a decision to contribute to famine relief. I hear what they are saying.

Second point: The reading from Acts describes a moment of decision for the early Christian community. As I reflect on this reading, I think of how the Spirit was active in this young Christian community and what resulted from the decision they made

Third point: I consider the four elements that precede a good decision. They are: **first**, an intimate knowledge of Christ's beauty, goodness, truth and oneness with us and the Trinity; **second**, a knowledge of true and false impulses coming to us from our cultural, political and social environments; **third**, an awareness of our usual ways of making decisions and meeting a commitment; **fourth**, responding with a deep desire to be with Christ in His work.

DIALOGUE

I ask Mary to ask Jesus to help our faith community focus on making a communal decision and to guide us to an issue that is important for our community. I go with Mary to Jesus to ask for the same guidance. I go with Mary and make the same request of the Trinity.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer with step one, I write in my journal what I wish to share with my community.

PRAYER HOUR 2

JESUS TEACHES HIS FOLLOWERS

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

This contemplation on Jesus' teaching can help us when we begin the process for making a communal decision.

OFFERING OF MYSELF

I beg God for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of the Holy Trinity.

PREFACE TO THE MYSTERY

Freedom can be thought of as external. So, one is a *free citizen* or *free to move*. Freedom is also an internal disposition. In Jesus there is a new stress on *interior freedom*, and on making decisions to start something unpredictably new. Jesus brings about the latter by being with the poor as a friend and healer, living in an attitude of forgiveness that informs all His words and actions and making liberation and freedom an interior movement, as well as an external event. His life provides us with a way to liberate and restore healthy relationships of all in Earth's community of life. He is an evolutionary force for freedom, and hopes we will follow His example.

BRINGING MY WHOLE SELF TO THE MYSTERY

I read **Luke 6:27-38** or **Matthew 5:38-48** and place myself in the crowd, listening to Jesus.

THE DESIRE OF MY HEART

I ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who became a creature like one of us for the sake of the universal community of life, that I may imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATION

First point: I see and hear Jesus talking to the crowd, giving us His new vision for the community of life, one of compassion and forgiveness. I watch the expressions of amazement or, perhaps, disbelief on the faces of those in the crowd.

Second point: Darwinian thinkers believe that morality is *hardwired* in our brains and therefore, determined by our genes. So the choice is not whether an action is moral or immoral, but whether or not to chose the nerve cell activity in our brains, which we call morality. This attitude is an example of what John Haught calls "a metaphysics of the past" because it "rules out the coming of something genuinely new". (*God After Darwin*, p. 86) Jesus is the genuinely new expression of *spiritual freedom* giving us a way to make good decisions by cultivating a forgiving, loving attitude.

Third point: I ask for the humble freedom of Jesus as I consider the steps in making a Communal Decision. Are there any tasks or issues facing my community? What are they? I develop an open-ended question related to the one I consider most significant, and list the answers to this question. I use this for entering into a discerning process for making a communal decision.

DIALOGUE

I ask Mary to ask Jesus to help my faith community and me to focus on and make a communal decision and to guide us to an issue that is important for our community. I go with Mary to Jesus to ask for the same guidance. I go with Mary and make the same request of the Trinity.

I close with the prayer Jesus taught us.

PREPARATION FOR SHARING MY PRAYER

As I recall my prayer with step one, I write in my journal what I wish to share with my community.

IF YOU WISH, REFLECT ON ANY OF THESE ADDITIONAL POINTS

You may find them helpful in making a communal decision.

First point: I remember that the disposition for making a good communal decision is one that includes all members of Earth's community of life. Reflection on relationships with our plant and animal kin, and their relationships with each other, is one way to think about being united with a common purpose and mind. I read **Philippians 2:1-11** and enter into the mystery of being united with my CLC group and Earth's community of life. Jesus Christ became a creature like one of us for the sake of this community. I seek to imitate Him in His respect for all life and love Him in the fullness of communion with all creation.

Second point: I reflect on the following story of friendship with trees and ask myself how this friendship affects the decisions of those involved.

The Chipko movement is a method of non-violent resistance based on Gandhi's method of satyagraha. It acts to prevent the destruction of rural forests in India, which are a critical resource for rural villagers. For decades, the trees in these forests were increasingly felled by industry. The first Chipko action took place spontaneously in 1973. Chipko leaders and participants are mostly women acting to preserve their communities and their livelihood. They place their bodies between the trees and the loggers' saws and axes. The name "Chipko" comes from a word meaning "embrace" and that is what the women do; they put their arms around the tree they wish to protect. They know what many of us don't; that the members of Earth's community of life are our kin, deserving of respect, needing to be listened to and valued and taken into account when making decisions.

Third point: I reflect on the story below, an illustration of being united in love, with a common purpose and a common mind. I draw fruit from my reflection.

This excerpt, from an essay by Joy Williams, describes the author's experience of buying 5 adjacent lots, totalling one acre, on a two-lane road in Florida, 30 years ago. Since then, all the land adjacent to her acre has become a housing subdivision. Roads were built, trees and wildlife uprooted, driven out or killed. The author decided to let her acre just be- no building, except for the small cypress house and cottage already there, no lawn, no garden. In 1990, she had a wall built around the acre.

"Behind the wall was an Edenic acre...Although the wall did not receive social approbation, its approval from an ecological point of view was resounding. The banyan, as though reassured by the audacious wall, flung down dozens of aerial roots. The understory flourished; the oaks soared, creating a great grave canopy. It was odd. I fancied that I had made an inside for the outside to be safe in...Inside was cool and dappled, hymned with birdsong... An osprey roosted each night in a casuarina that leaned out over the lagoon, a tree of no good reputation and half-dead, but the osprey deeply favoured it, folding himself into it invisibly in a few seconds each nightfall. A pair of yellow-crowned night herons nested in a slash pine...A single acre was able to nurture so many lives, including mine. Its existence gave me great happiness." (One Acre, by Joy Williams, in Harper's magazine, February 2001)

Fourth point: I reflect on these wise sayings.

- ◆ "Better than a thousand useless words is one single word that gives peace." (a saying of the Buddha)
- ◆ "Forgiving is the only reaction that does not merely react but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act that provokes it." (Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*, p. 241)

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