Loyola University New Orleans  
Christian Life Communities Facilitator Binder  

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Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola
By Rev. Norman O’Neal SJ

Inigo de Loyola was born in 1491 in Azpeitia in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa in northern Spain. Ignatius was a soldier who fought for Spain. During battle a cannon ball struck Ignatius, wounding one leg and breaking the other. When he was sent home for recuperation from his battle wound, he asked for romance novels to pass the time. Luckily, there were none in the castle of Loyola, but there was a copy of the *Life of Christ* and *The Lives of the Saints*. Desperate, Ignatius began to read them. The more he read, the more he considered the exploits of the saints worth imitating. This was a struggle for him after his injury because he was left with a permanent limp which he obsessed about due to his attachment to his vanity. Ignatius was a man very much addicted to things of the world, especially gambling and women. This struggle was the beginning of his conversion, as it was also the beginning of his discernment of spirits, which is associated with Ignatius and described in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

The *Exercises* recognize that not only the intellect but also emotions and feelings can help us to come to a knowledge of the actions of the spirit in our lives. He continued towards Barcelona but stopped along the river Cardoner at a town called Manresa. He stayed in the cave outside the town, intending to linger only a few days, but he remained ten months. He spent hours each day in prayer and worked in a hospice. It was while here that the ideas for what are now known as the *Spiritual Exercises* began to take shape. During his time at Manresa, he had a very powerful vision. It was an encounter with God that inspired him to see everything in a new light as it all acquired meaning and relevance; an experience that enabled Ignatius to find God in all things. This grace, finding God in all things, is one of the central characteristics of Jesuit spirituality. It is especially evident in St. Ignatius’ prayer of the Awareness Examen where one is invited to reflect on the presence of God in one’s daily lived experience.

After his conversion experience, Ignatius went on to study Latin and Theology at various universities throughout Europe. He was often found preaching to and directing fellow students in the *Spiritual Exercises*. He developed a small group of companions including Francis Xavier, Peter Faber, and James Lainez, who were interested in forming a community, with the Pope’s approval. They intended to place themselves at the disposal of the Holy Father to travel wherever he would wish to send them for various duties. A vow to this effect was added to the ordinary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They referred to themselves as the *Societatis Jesu*, Society of Jesus (SJ). Ignatius strongly believed in the power of education and the influence it could have in educating persons that would act on behalf of laboring for others. Ignatius helped establish several Jesuit schools and universities all over Europe and the world throughout the sixteenth century. St. Ignatius’ was a man of great holiness rooted in a great love that directed his life to do everything “Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam,” (A.M.D.G.) for the greater glory of God.
History of CLC

“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.” – John 20:19-22

Christ appeared in response to this group of frightened followers hiding in a secluded room. He came to console their loss, comfort their fears, and empower them with the gift of the Holy Spirit. From then on, when they gathered as a community of believers, the Risen One would be in their midst. Sustained by one another and impelled by the power of the Spirit, the fearful disciples took up their mission to spread the good news beyond their circle of friends.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (officially formed in 1540), developed the Spiritual Exercises to help a person discern his or her mission in life. This powerful prayer instrument for change and growth leads individuals to a felt experience of God through prayer and Scripture. In 1563, a Jesuit teacher by the name of Jan Leunis formed a group of students at the Roman College to explore a way of living out the Spiritual Exercises in everyday life. Their spiritual formation was centered around devotional practices, daily Mass, and service to the poor. Similar groups were formed and came to be known as “Sodalities” or “Marian Congregations” after their patroness the Virgin Mary, the first disciple of Jesus. The Sodalities emerged at many of the renaissance universities (and trade guilds) in response to peoples’ need for a concrete way to live out their faith. They were called to spread the good news through their community bonds and by reaching out to others in mission. In its time, the Sodalities were a revolutionary movement because it called lay people to experience spirituality outside the walls of a monastery in everyday life.

As the organization grew and developed during the 17th century, the nature and vision of the original inspiration gradually faded. It was not until 1922 that these Marian Congregations took the first steps towards a return to their core spirituality. Another step took place in 1948 as the Congregations worked for a clear statement of identity and future vision. In 1967, the movement took a decisive turn and a new name: Christian Life Communities (CLC). Marked by a clear set of General Principles, these communities expanded beyond their Catholic roots to include Christians from other denominations. Over the course of the next thirty years the movement began to flesh out the idea that mission and service to others begins at the local community level and then expands from this “spiritual center” to meet the spiritual and basic human needs of others around the world. National CLC USA and the World CLC Assembly are making continual efforts to re-emphasize the role of the Spiritual Exercises in small group formation that aims toward mission.

Today, CLC is essentially a group of “friends in the Lord” who come together to support one another, serve their local and world communities, and deepen their own spirituality. CLC seeks to find Christ’s presence in one another, and to discern God’s call in everyday lives. Just as the first disciples were consoled by the Risen Christ learned to be attentive to the activity of God, we too are called be open to the many joys, challenges, and gifts that the Spirit offers us as a community of believers on the mission to console and reconcile.
Who We Are:
The Three Pillars of the CLC Way of Life

Community

Our primary commitment is to a common worldwide way of life lived out in a local community. This communion provides:

• a local community that promotes trusting and supportive relationships as “friends in the Lord”

• a sense of graced history — we experience the power of the Spirit working through our communal history

• a forum for an on-going discernment on local, national, and world levels

• a sense of the sacredness of unity in diversity; an awe of the Spirit reflected in all cultures and ethnic groups

• a broader context for discernment, seeking the more universal good which transcends geographical and cultural boundaries

• solidarity with those around the world living the CLC way of life

Discerning

A discerning heart towards life leads us to:

• a greater awareness of God’s presence and action in all areas of our lives

• a deeper appreciation of God’s life-energy in all of creation

• an increased sensitivity to those activities, desires, and attitudes that lead us to either:
  ○ a deeper participation in God’s life and a sense of peace
  ○ or a sense of alienation, frustration, and burnout

• a freedom to respond more fully to God’s loving desires for us

• experience the Spiritual Exercises beyond its retreat context, as a way of life rooted in a personal love of Christ that unifies all of us in the CLC family

for Mission

For us, mission is not primarily an activity, but a focusing of our energy and passion on living as Christ — focused passion. This expresses itself through:

• a preferential love for the poor

• a simplicity of lifestyle

• a sense of Church that leads us to be present where God’s love seems diminished

• a desire to develop community in all areas of our lives: family, work, school, neighborhood, parish, etc.

• a willingness to collaborate with all people of good will to reveal God’s presence and laboring love

• an openness and flexibility towards life that enables us to respond to the needs of the world, especially those which promotes greater justice

• creative fidelity — living Gospel values in a way that speaks to our society today

Through the CLC way of life, we strive to

…foster trusting relationships…find God in all things …discover our calling in life
CLC Spirituality: A Pathway to God1

Spirituality can be understood simply as a way of life that involves “getting to the heart of the matter,” “living with integrity,” or “becoming one’s best self.” Rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, CLC spirituality is a pathway to God that embraces continual conversion of heart, deepening attachment to Christ, and striving to become more fully alive. Seven characteristics2 outline this journey.

1. “Finding God in All Things”
   This favorite phrase of Ignatius points to an ease of finding God in each concrete situation of life. It presupposes openness to God in any experience, dramatic or dull, vital or trivial, such that we are willing to be shaped by God. It is the posture of seeking meaning in our own daily happenings: “Lord, how are You inviting me through this event?” “What are You trying to tell me through that person?”

2. Intimacy with Jesus
   The Spiritual Exercises is a “school of the heart” which fosters a personal knowing, loving, and following of Jesus. This intimacy with our Brother and Savior brings us to a greater identification with Christ poor and humbled, crucified and Risen. It impels us to collaborate with him in the struggle for the poor, powerless, and rejected – to befriend him in the marginalized. Heartfelt and honest conversations with Jesus in prayer and with others in dialogue ground this intimacy.

3. Following the Spirit / Tracking interior movements
   The desire to become more like Jesus and find God in all things moves us, as both individuals and as a community, to listen and respond creatively to the promptings of the Spirit. This entails attentiveness to the flow of interior moods, desires or feelings and the thoughts that accompany them. It involves both sensitivity to how God is present and acting in our lives as well as vigilance for the forces and influences that takes us away from God through personal vices, people, institutions, and cultural values, etc. Growing in awareness of inner motivations allows us to respond more lovingly to the Spirit at work in our lives.

4. Serving Out of Gratitude
   The Ignatian imagination sees “all as gift.” Our very existence, natural (in)abilities, the people, and experiences that shape who we are becoming are gifts that flow from God’s outpouring love. God who delights in me as “Beloved” labors in all aspects of my life to draw me deeper into loving union and service. The more I grow in gratitude of God’s plentiful love for me and all of creation, the more will I respond fully and generously in service of and with others. Gratitude fuels my striving to love as I have been loved.

5. Ordering Relationships
   Living and choosing in loving collaboration with Jesus inserts us more deeply into right relationships with others. We are called to foster just and loving relationships: to live with integrity in our calling to be “friends in the Lord,” to stand in solidarity

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1 Spirituality as a “pathway to God” is an expression found in the ‘Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus.’
2 These are ideals for which we in CLC @ Loyola are striving, inspired by the CLC-USA’s document with a similar name: http://www.clc-usa.org/clc_spirituality.htm
with the oppressed, and to extend charity toward all. Such heartfelt and ordered relationships expand to a care for all of God’s creation. Where there is alienation or division, we are called to be reconcilers and peacemakers; where there is suffering and injustice we are called to be healers, bearers of hope, and promoters of justice.

6. Living in True Freedom
Integrating the above ideals cultivates an Ignatian way of living rooted in freedom for which we are created and called. Each of us is entrusted with a unique and particular mission in life, loved into us by God. Living out this passion means living in freedom as children of God and collaborators with Christ in building up the Kingdom. Free from fear, untruth, disordered tendencies and relationships; free to live authentically, lovingly, justly as response to God in every situation of our lives. As Jesus was free with regard to wealth, honor, and power in order to be available for the work of God, so too are we called to be free.

7. Making regular Retreats
As a retreat experience, the Spiritual Exercises are a “school for conversion of heart.” The experience facilitates a rich and powerful encounter with God through reflection, prayer and Scripture that leads a person to true spiritual freedom. This is specifically evident in:

- growing openness to the Spirit
- looking honestly at his/her areas of unfreedom
- discerning and living more fully one’s mission in life

The “full” Exercises can be experienced in two ways. The first format consists of a thirty-day silent prayer and reflection at a retreat house, accompanied by a spiritual director. The other format, commonly called “retreat in daily life” or the “19th Annotations,” takes place over a period of seven to nine months. While living in his/her present environment, the retreatant engages in daily prayer periods, and meets a director weekly (possibly with others on a similar journey). Beyond its “full” form, the Exercises shape the dynamics of other Ignatian retreats, such as five or eight day silent retreats.

In summary, the spirituality of CLC rooted in the Exercises empowers us to encounter God who comes to meet us where we are, draws us to know and love him more faithfully, and enables us to better find him in all things and in every situation of our lives.

It also challenges us to confront ourselves where we are not free, to order relationships through charity and justice, and discover Christ as a personal friend with whom we can listen to the Spirit, collaborate, and love in the least members of our societies. All this so that we may be truly free – “to love and serve God in all things.”
2011-2012 Student Facilitator Contacts
Roles and Responsibilities of CLC Facilitators

Roles – As ministers, facilitators seek to support the way of life of Christian Life Community, which commits its members to strive for continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human, and apostolic. Our Role as facilitators requires that we:

1. Grow in our own journey of faith
2. Creatively facilitate our respective groups
3. Maintain a strong connection to the campus wide program.

Responsibilities - We strive to fulfill the aforementioned functions by:

1. Striving to practice what we preach in the Ignatian way of caring for persons (Cura Personalis.) We are willing to do first what we ask of those whom we are privileged to serve. Concretely, this means living out the CLC Way of Life by:
   a. Attending regular meetings with our groups
   b. Having one-on-one conversations with each individual member,
   c. Praying regularly, going on retreats,
   d. Engaging in regular service,
   e. Striving to live with integrity,

2. Overseeing all the activities involving CLCs as both spiritual animators and coordinators of events. We realize this by:
   a. Gathering our groups to meet regularly (weekly, bimonthly)
   b. Planning each meeting according to CLC spirituality, norms and guidelines
   c. Fostering an atmosphere of openness and trust through an attentiveness to each member, both during CLC meetings and in outside “dates” with individual members
   d. Affirming and calling forth the baptismal gifts of group members for service and leadership; this entails delegating tasks and empowering students in the effort to facilitate meetings and promote involvement in campus wide CLC

3. Serving as a bridge between our group members and the campus wide CLC community, as well as the regional, national, and world community by:
   a. Mandatory attendance at the semimonthly facilitator CLC meetings, and the fall and spring facilitator retreats,
   b. Encouraging group members’ involvement in Team Cura Apostolica and participation in campus-wide CLC events.
   c. Communicating with Laura about changes to our CLCs, problems and concerns, and ideas for the program.
Cura Personalis
“Care of the Whole Person”

*Cura Personalis* is a Latin phrase meaning, “Care of the Whole Person,” and captures a Jesuit educational ideal. Its purpose is to develop awareness of another’s needs to help the person reach his or her own fullness of life.

*Cura Personalis* involves:
* Looking at the person deeply and fully, seeing his or her present needs, gifts, weaknesses, challenges, desires.
* Helping the person grow in his or her relationship with God.
* Hence, *Cura Personalis* stems from the desire to see and care for a person as God sees and cares for that same person.

To live out *Cura Personalis* one needs a genuine concern for others. It requires being fully present in the moment: it involves openness, honesty, and trust so that conversations and friendships may develop. Moreover, it means making effort to be aware of another’s state of being and attentive to the ongoing growth of the person. This includes a willingness to gently and lovingly challenge the person to grow in his or her relationship with God. Lastly, it means being aware of each person’s physical abilities and needs. *Cura Personalis* takes seriously each person’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health.

*Cura Personalis* is not constantly over-extending oneself to help another person. At times it may require extravagant gestures of love, but in general it is a way of life and a way of forming relationships with others. It is about consistent care. Therefore, “care of self” is “care of others.” One cannot fully serve others if one is not consistently caring for oneself. Thus, *Cura Personalis* involves a growing awareness of one’s gifts and talents but also of one’s own limits and weaknesses. It is about being present to oneself as one is present to others. Similarly, as one grows with God one can help others grow with God. A deepening of care for self leads to a deepening care of others.

A community with multiple members who strive to live out *Cura Personalis* will grow steadily and its members will become fully alive. This is the ideal of *Cura Personalis*, “caring for the whole person.” It is a desire to care for oneself and others as God does, a habit of building healthy relationships, a way of life: *Cura Personalis.*
“CPing” Your Group

* Lunch/ coffee with members outside group meeting time. Between the two co-
coordinators, try to have a one-on-one with each member of your group at least once a
semester.

* Write notes/cards to individual group members (i.e. birthday, notes of encouragement,
praise- if they contributed a lot to the discussion or lead a topic themselves, or if absent for a
few weeks in a row- a note letting them know that they were missed and that their presence
is important to the group)

* Activity outside group meeting time (ask Laura for funds, University Ministry may be able to
help!)

* Service experience as a group?

* Keep a prayer journal where members can write down their intentions and you can pray for
them throughout the week (or delegate the responsibility of the prayer journal to someone
else in the group who perhaps brings the gift of spirituality)

* Talk with other co-facilitators and share what ideas you come up with!

* Encourage group members to CP each other!!!!!
Characteristics of a Good Group

trust, deep connections, and willingness to grow

Trust
Having a trusting relationship with your group is necessary for a great CLC experience. By providing a foundation based on trust, the group members have a safe place to share intimately, to enter into each others’ brokenness, to honestly reflect on the strength of each individual member. Trust allows each group to hold honest conversations, giving good feedback and tenderly challenging each other to grow.

Deep connections
Having good connections with each CLC member is important in a group’s growth. Deep connections make easier the process of discernment for the coordinators as to what direction the group should go. It is also through deep connections and prayer that the needs of the group and the individual members become evident. Deep connections are at the core of *Cura Personalis*. Deep connection or growing relationship with yourself, your members, and God is the key for caring for yourself and others.

Willingness to grow
The willingness of the group to grow is vital to its development. If a group is not willing to grow, growth in a group is difficult. Growth cannot be forced, rather it is nurtured. To nurture growth, it helps to be open to the movement of God in your CLC. Once nurtured, the movement toward growth is ultimately not up to the group or the coordinators, but comes as a grace. Emphasis remains in the willingness, being open to the work of God through easy times and hard times. Willingness to grow means asking difficult questions, faceting realities, and caring for each other tenderly.

How can a group work to build these characteristics?
Some possible suggestions are:
- Have one-on-one meetings with your members.
- Have social events outside of your weekly CLC meeting
- Take a risk by being the first to share openly
- Build camaraderie within your group and with individuals in your group.
- Have ongoing evaluations as a group.
- Do service together.
- Go on retreats together.
- Support each other in alternate activities (i.e., attend a sporting event or drama production of a group member)
A CLC Meeting Should…

At the end of the night, ideally, we would hope that you and your group can walk away from the meeting and say “yes” about the following. Think about this as a little check-off list for you to use to judge how well the meeting went. Add or subtract as you see appropriate…maybe even ask your group members what goals they have for their time together.

* Each individual participated in some way—either writing, drawing, speaking, etc.

* There existed an appropriate balance between deep, meaningful conversation and light banter, between silence and conversation

* Conversation was more faith-sharing than intellectual discussion; participants moved from their heads to their hearts

* Conversation “went deeper” as group members discussed their faith and spirituality, discerning God’s dream for their lives; conversation did not become a griping session or group therapy

* There was group cohesiveness (Individuals connected well as a group: mutual sharing, laughter, encouragement, support and compassion)

* The group took responsibility for itself (kept conversation going amongst themselves throughout the meeting time)

* Group individuals **appropriately** challenged each other, intellectually and spiritually

* Participants left with their focus on consolation and hope, that as individuals they feel more empowered to live with increased purpose, authenticity and gratitude

* Sense of excitement and possibility that they can meet the legitimate challenges of their week

* The group is continuing to maintain a sense of healthy, interpersonal boundaries (they are supportive, respectful, and concerned about each other, but not overly so).
Tips for Leading Effective Discussions

Good discussions will give people the opportunity to think about a question and decide how he or she feels about the topic. By encouraging participation in meaningful discussions, you can help your group members open up and express the things they want to share, while you help them discover a community that is open to them and their ideas and dreams.

Here are some helpful tips for leading a discussion:

- Be familiar with the subject matter. Take some time in advance to prepare or review the kinds of questions you want to ask.

- Give a brief introduction to the subject matter if it has not already been done. Then ask the group questions, beginning with easy or non-threatening ones. Then move on to the more difficult or specific questions.

- Be sure to address everyone in the group by name.

- Ask focused or specific questions. Try to frame your questions in the context of their lives. How something affects their lives will elicit much more response than something theoretical or disconnected.

- Encourage the participants of the discussion to ask questions of one another. This will keep from having the focus continually come back to you and maintain the conversational tone of the discussion.

- Explore how the participants feel about the topic. This will keep the conversation interesting and meaningful, and away from simply reporting the facts.

- When trying to evoke personal sharing, make sure everyone is talking in the first person. If someone is talking in vague generalities, gently urge him or her to be specific and concrete. Gently challenge the person to be open.

- Avoid questions that require a simple yes or no answer. If yes or no questions are necessary, be sure to ask why or why not. Open ended questions are always best.

- **Understand and be comfortable with silence.** This might seem contradictory to maintaining a good discussion. But there will be times when the participants will fall silent. It is good to know that this happens because they might be taking some time to think about their response. Another reason for silence is they may not have understood what you asked. Be aware and alert to their body-language and facial expressions in order to respond properly. Clarify when necessary.

- Avoid evaluating people’s answers with comments like “good answer” and “nice point,” etc. If people are sharing what is on their hearts, then there can be no wrong or right answer.
• Be sure to ask questions in kind and non-confrontational ways so as to not put anyone on the spot.

• DO not take disagreements personally; these are simply opportunities for the group to think about a variety of views on an issue.

• Beware of tangents. Call the group to task when they stray from the topic at hand.

• Give everyone a chance to talk, but don’t exhaust the topic. Watch for signs of boredom.

• Throughout the discussion and particularly at the end, summarize all that has been said, to check whether or not the subject was covered thoroughly and everyone had the opportunity to have their say.
Evaluating Your Meeting

After your group leaves, you might consider taking some time to make informal notes about the way your meeting time went, as well as a little reflection on each member of the group. **IT IS VITAL THAT THESE NOTES STAY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL. THESE ARE YOUR NOTES AND THEY ARE SIMPLY FOR REFERENCE AS KEEPING TRACK OF A GENERAL FEEL FOR HOW “THINGS” WENT….**

- Reflect with your colleagues on overall group dynamics, what seemed to have worked or not, what you might have done differently, what you’d like to do again
- Write up exactly what happened
- For each member you might jot just a few words or sentences…very short(!) about the following…
  - Did John connect with the group activities in some meaningful way?
  - Was John asking appropriate questions and receiving feedback without becoming overly defensive or offensive?
  - Did John walk away with the “extra umph” to help him get through whatever the upcoming week holds?
  - Did John exhibit a spirit of wanting to work together as a group?
  - It may be wise or advisable to simply use their initials or some other nickname known only to you to protect their anonymity even further.

- By doing this, over a period of time you can observe patterns in behavior (who are the participants that are consistently holding back, concerned about a certain area of their life (e.g. parents getting divorced, etc…) or who seem to consistently appear to be, angry, or always joking…

- On those rare occasions when there is a CLC member who may need professional psychological care, there are professionals in the counseling center who are ready to assist you should you feel that one (or more) of your group members may need to speak with someone who can be helpful to them as they cope with life at Loyola and beyond. Remember, if you feel that there may be an issue it is easy to reach Laura to touch base. You must certainly maintain the confidentiality of the person you are speaking about, but touch base with someone if you think that a person may need help that is beyond your reach. REMEMBER, you are not a professional helper and CLC groups are not therapy groups. We do, however, believe that CLC co-facilitators help their group members thrive in every area of life. As such, talking to a group member alone, over a cup of coffee, etc…about seeking medical care, psychological help may be the most appropriate and compassionate response.
CLC Meeting Format

**Prayer:** We will begin each session in prayer...Taking a moment to clear our minds of the worries and distractions of the day and to focus on God’s presence among us. Try to incorporate a variety of prayer forms and methods.

**Check In:** We then move to faith sharing...a time for the group members to share everyday issues of life and faith with one another and discern how it is that God may be speaking to us through our shared experiences. It is often helpful to have a specific question to focus the sharing.

**Focus Exercise:** After faith sharing we move to our focus exercise. The focus exercise, frequently drawing on Scripture and the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, will explore the three broad pillars of CLC, (Faith, Community and Mission), and central aspects of Ignatian Spirituality in more detail. Focus exercises allow the group to cover a wide array of topics such as prayer, discernment, justice, sin, peace, relationships, vocations, and any issues that are of particular interest to the group. After each focus exercise, led initially by the group facilitators, each member of the group will have an opportunity to share any particular insights or reflections they may have.

**Evaluation and Group Review:** After the focus exercise, the group takes a collective look at how things are going for the community.

**Prayer:** The group closes with prayer, giving thanks to God for their time together and offering up any special intentions and requests that they may have for the week ahead.

**Announcements/Social:** The group discusses any details, concerns or business type things that need to be attended to. Facilitators also pass any information about upcoming events or retreats happening in the wider CLC community.

Although we will generally adhere to this format, there may be times when we choose to mix it up a little bit or spend extra time in a particular area (ie, longer prayer, faith sharing or focus exercise). Nothing is written in stone and if necessary we can adapt particular sessions to meet our collective needs. As some other CLC groups do, we may also have occasional (every month or so) meetings devoted entirely to social activities or service projects. During the initial stages of CLC, the facilitators will introduce focus exercises and themes...as time goes by each member of the group will have an opportunity to present a reflection or decide upon a particular theme for our gathering.
CLC Meeting Worksheet

Theme:

Opening Prayer:

Check-In: (focus question…)

Focusing Exercise:  
(list activities, resources needed, etc. Attach if applicable)

Scripture:

Faith Sharing Questions:

Conclusion/Evaluation: (Ask for the group’s input on the meeting and allow the group to discuss how they feel they are doing as a community. One way to phrase this might be to ask “What are you going to take away from tonight’s meeting?”)

Closing Prayer:

Announcements/Social: (remind of any Cura updates or other upcoming community events)
Possible Focus Questions for CLC Check-In

Sometimes, groups have a hard time avoiding the “check in abyss” where members spend all the time griping about their weeks, and very little time going deeper and discerning God’s presence in these topics. It can be helpful to have a more focused check-in question to encourage the conversation to go deeper. The questions below are just some examples of more focused questions for check-in. They are broken into categories that emerge from the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Reflection
1. What was one experience last week where you experienced inner peace or contentment? Did it occur in a relationship with others or in a moment of quiet, personal reflection?
2. Name a moment in a classroom, library, studio, editing lab, in your room at your desk, or lying on your bed when you experienced the joy of knowing/creating, you were solving a problem/getting an insight/completing a project successfully/rising to an intellectual challenge?
3. What was one moment last week when you were overwhelmed, or at least gently touched, by the beauty of creation? Be specific about colors, sounds, smells, or other sensations that may have been part of the experience.
4. What was one moment last week when you experienced inner turmoil/tension/or found yourself conflicted or resisting an inclination?

Gratitude
1. We are often told to count our blessings. Name two or three occasions of gratitude from your life last week which represent different kinds of “blessings” (e.g., blessings which came through people or though events; blessings which were purely natural, or seemed touched by God’s grace/almost miraculous/unexpected answers to prayer).
2. Name an experience, either from last week or earlier in your life, which at the time did not seem at all like an occasion for gratitude but later turned out to be such—the kind of thing we call a blessing in disguise or an instance of God’s writing straight with crooked lines.

Service
1. What was an instance of service for others (or for another) that you performed last week? Was it part of an organized service project or philanthropy? What do you think was your motive (or motives) in performing the service? What did you learn about yourself in the context of the service? Did you learn anything from the person or persons for whom you performed the service?
2. Do you have any plans to participate in an organized service project next week?
3. What is a “hidden service” (one which will not necessarily become publicly known) that you could perform for others (or another) next week?
4. Does any service project occur to you that we could undertake as a collective CLC group? What should we be looking for in such a project?

More General “Going Deeper” Questions:
- How has God been present/active in my life since the last meeting?
- Where have I experienced God’s presence?
- When have I felt disconnected from God?
- How have I found God (or been found by God) in prayer?
- How have I discovered/encountered God in service/mission?
- How have I experienced a greater/lesser willingness to be led by God?
Ignatian Contemplation
“Just as if I were There”

This method is called by various names such as Gospel Contemplation, Method of Contemplation, Ignatian Contemplation. It makes use of guided imagery and active imagination within the framework of a gospel passage of Jesus’ life.

This is how you can enter into the life of Jesus through prayer:

1. Select a short concrete/action passage
First, from one of the Gospels, select an action passage, preferably fast-moving and colorful in detail. When you first begin to use this method do not attempt to pray a parable or a sermon.

2. Relax and settle into God’s presence
As for a particular grace that you are seeking or the particular gift you need at this time – perhaps to know Jesus more intimately, or to become more compassionate, or to be healed in a particular area of your heart, etc.

3. Read aloud the passage several times pausing half a minute or so between each reading while the gospel episode takes hold of you
Slowly read the passage once – aloud, if circumstances allow. Then for 30 seconds or so look up from the page and let the scene sink into your imagination. Do a second oral reading, noticing details which you missed in the first reading. Again look up from the page for 30 seconds or so, until these new details fit into the total scene in your imagination. In the third reading, you will see more details for the first time, also insights, questions and interpretations will begin to occur to you. Use a half-minute to let them settle into your memory. Then read a fourth or even a fifth time until almost all the distractions have disappeared and the Gospel scene totally saturates your imagination.

4. Now place the bible aside and let the scene happen
Do nothing to promote it except to stay alert to its developments. As you let yourself sink into the scene, you will tend to lose the sense of yourself and to identify with the situation. Suppose, for example, that you have read about Jesus quieting the storm on the lake. You may imagine the wind howling, the boat pitching, the apostles struggling at the oars. If this identification deepens, you will find yourself in the boat, e.g., at the oars, or you may find yourself as one of the characters in the scene, such as Peter or Philip. Sometimes you will discover yourself drifting in and out of the scene, in and out of various people of the scene.

5. Allow yourself to take part in the scene which is now present to you.
Be as passive as possible while being as alert as possible. In fact, let everyone else control the event: Jesus, Peter, Mary, Martha, John. You merely interact with the persons, listen and reply to their words, take part in their activity – conversing with them, accompanying them, helping them in their occupations, in whatever ways you find yourself as part of the event that is present to you.

6. Do not moralize or try to make applications
Don’t moralize (for example, “I should be more spontaneous like Peter when I am with my friends…) or draw theological conclusions (for example, “Notice how the three temptations of Jesus parallel the temptations of the Israelites…” ) or try to make clever applications (“It’s amazing how the Pharisees are so much like the people I am working with…”) By losing yourself in the persons, words and activity of the gospel event your whole being is affected and influenced at levels sometimes beyond even rational thought. You won’t need applications
because you will notice what happens to you either in the period of reflection after your prayer or, more subtly, in the effects in your life as almost by osmosis you begin to put on the mind and heart of Jesus’ Spirit.

7. **Near the end of your prayer period, converse directly to Jesus or any characters in prayer.**

   Bring whatever is on your mind and heart to converse with any of the characters in the passage. Perhaps you have questions; or observations. Even if you spend a minute or two just being-with and gazing at Jesus, that is good. It takes a life time to open one’s eyes, but only a brief moment to see! *Speaking with Jesus or God is the heart of this prayer, even if only for a moment.*

8. **After your period of prayer comes to an end make a review for a few minutes by reflecting upon what took place during the prayer.**

   What happened in you during this prayer exercise? What did you notice as standing out even slightly? What remains in your heart? Is there something you should return to in a later period of prayer? Give thanks to the Lord for being with you during this time.
Examen of Consciousness

So much happens in our day-to-day lives that we never notice because we never stop to pay attention. But when we do pause and reflect prayerfully on our life we can be amazed to discover how active God has been.

God can be found in all things. Above all we can discover God’s presence in our own experience, though sometimes we miss it at the time and only become aware with hindsight. The prayer of examen is spiritual hindsight—it asks where God has been in the last week, last day, last hour?

St. Ignatius of Loyola valued this kind of prayer above all others. He advised his companions that, even if all other spiritual practices had to be let slip, the practice of examen should be kept in some form.

Ignatius recommended doing the examen twice a day—at midday and at night—but more often people find a place for it as the last thing they do in a day. The more you pray this way the more focused your reflection can get. You begin to learn the particular ways that God moves you, the specific ways you resist and respond, the unique face of God that only you are shown.

The method here can be adapted in any number of ways and made specific to you and the way you experience God. Discover what works best for you.

BEGINNING
I let God look upon me for a moment. I let myself see God seeing me.
How does God see me right now?
What is the “look on God’s face”?
I let my desires and feelings surface. I let my heart open.
What do I want right now? What do I feel?
I want open eyes and an open heart to find God in my experience.

REFLECTING
I let my day re-run itself before me without judgment.
I let myself notice whatever I notice.
What have my eyes seen today?
What have my ears heard today? What has been done to me?
What feelings have been stirred in me today?
I let myself notice the currents flowing in my day. I let any patterns reveal themselves.
Where was the Spirit moving me? Where was I content, happy, joyful, interested, engaged, surprised, at ease…
Where was I resisting the Spirit? Where was I disturbed, sad, miserable, dull, disengaged, bored, weighed down…

RESPONDING
I let my attention drift to whatever the Spirit wants to highlight. I let myself be drawn.
What is God showing me here? What is God like here?
What do I feel here? What moves in me now?
What response do I want to make?
I let myself speak to Jesus, friend to friend, heart to heart, about whatever comes to me.

ENDING
I end with a favorite prayer.
I make a note of anything significant.
About 20 years ago, at breakfast and during the few hours that followed, I had a small revelation. This happened while I was living in a small community of five Jesuits, all graduate students in New Haven, Conn. I was alone in the kitchen, with my cereal and The New York Times, when another Jesuit came in and said: "I had the weirdest dream just before I woke up. It was a liturgical dream. The lector had just read the first reading and proceeded to announce, 'The responsorial refrain today is, If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' Whereupon the entire congregation soberly repeated, 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.'" We both thought this enormously funny. At first, I wasn't sure why this was so humorous. After all, almost everyone could assent to the courageous truth of the maxim, "If at first...." It has to be a cross-cultural truism ("Keep on truckin'!"). Why, then, would these words sound so incongruous in a liturgy? A little later in the day, I stumbled onto a clue. Another, similar phrase popped into my mind: "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. 95). It struck me that the sentence has exactly the same rhythm and the same syntax as: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Both begin with an "if" clause and end in an imperative. Both have seven beats. Maybe that was one of the unconscious sources of the humor.

The try-try-again statement sounds like the harden-not-your-hearts refrain, yet what a contrast. The latter is clearly biblical, a paraphrase of a verse from a psalm, one frequently used as a responsorial refrain at the Eucharist. The former, you know instinctively, is probably not in the Bible, not even in Proverbs. It is true enough, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. There is nothing of faith in it, no sense of God. The sentiment of the line from Psalm 95, however, expresses a conviction central to Hebrew and Christian faith, that we live a life in dialogue with God. The contrast between those two seven-beat lines has, ever since, been for me a paradigm illustrating that truth.

Yet how do we hear the voice of God? Our Christian tradition has at least four answers to that question. First, along with the faithful of most religions, we perceive the divine in what God has made, creation itself (that insight sits at the heart of Christian moral thinking). Second, we hear God's voice in the Scriptures, which we even call "the word of God." Third, we hear God in the authoritative teaching of the church, the living tradition of our believing community. Finally, we hear God by attending to our experience, and interpreting it in the light of all those other ways of hearing the divine voice -- the structures of creation, the Bible, the living tradition of the community.

The phrase "If today you hear his voice," implies that the divine voice must somehow be accessible in our daily experience, for we are creatures who live one day at a time. If God wants to communicate with us, it has to happen in the course of a 24-hour day, for we live in no other time. And how long do we go about this kind of listening? Long
tradition has provided a helpful tool, which we call the examination of consciousness today. "Rummaging for God" is an expression that suggests going through a drawer full of stuff, feeling around, looking for something that you're sure must be in there somewhere. I think that image catches some of the feel of what is classically known in church language as the prayer of "examen."

The examen, or examination, of conscience is an ancient practice in the church. In fact, even before Christianity, the Pythagoreans and the Stoics promoted a version of the practice. It is what most of us Catholics were taught to do to prepare for confession. In that form, the examen was a matter of examining one's life in terms of the Ten Commandments to see how daily behavior stacked up against those divine criteria. St. Ignatius includes it as one of the exercises in his manual, The Spiritual Exercises.

It is still a salutary thing to do but wears thin as a lifelong, daily practice. It is hard to motivate yourself to keep searching your experience for how you sinned. In recent decades, spiritual writers have worked with the implication that conscience in Romance languages like French (conscience) and Spanish (consciencia) means more than our English word "conscience," in the sense of moral awareness and judgment: it also means "consciousness."

Now prayer that deals with the full contents of your consciousness lets you cast your net much more broadly than prayer that limits itself to the contents of conscience, or moral awareness. A number of people -- most famously, George Aschenbrenner, S.J., in an article in Review for Religious (1971) -- have developed this idea in profoundly practical ways. Recently, the Institute of Jesuit Sources in St. Louis, Mo., published a fascinating reflection by Joseph Tetlow, S.J., called The Most Postmodern Prayer: American Jesuit Identity and the Examen of Conscience, 1920-1990.

What I am proposing here is a way of doing the examen that works for me. It puts a special emphasis on feelings, for reasons that I hope will become apparent. First, I describe the format. Second, I invite you to spend a few minutes actually doing it. Third, I describe some of the consequences that I have discovered to flow from this kind of prayer.

Method: Five Steps

1. Pray for light. Since we are not simply daydreaming or reminiscing but rather looking for some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading us, it only makes sense to pray for some illumination. The goal is not simply memory but graced understanding. That's a gift from God devoutly to be begged. "Lord, help me understand this blooming, buzzing confusion."

2. Review the day in thanksgiving. Note how different this is from looking immediately for your sins. Nobody likes to poke around in the memory bank to uncover smallness, weakness, lack of generosity. But everybody likes to fondle beautiful gifts, and that is precisely what the past 24 hours contain - gifts of existence, work-relationships, food, challenges. Gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with God. So use whatever cues help you to walk through the day from the moment of awakening -- even the dreams you recall upon awakening.
Walk through the past 24 hours, from hour to hour, from place to place, task to task, person to person, thanking the Lord for every gift you encounter.

3. **Review the feelings that surface in the replay of the day.** Our feelings, positive and negative, the painful and the pleasing, are clear signals of where the action was during the day. Simply pay attention to any and all of those feelings as they surface, the whole range: delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, peace, contentment, impatience, desire, hope, regret, shame, uncertainty, compassion, disgust, gratitude, pride, rage, doubt, confidence, admiration, shyness -- whatever was there. Some of us may be hesitant to focus on feelings in this over-psychologized age, but I believe that these feelings are the liveliest index to what is happening in our lives. This leads us to the fourth moment:

4. **Choose one of those feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it.** That is, choose the remembered feeling that most caught your attention. The feeling is a sign that something important was going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to the source of the feeling -- praise, petition, contrition, cry for help or healing, whatever.

5. **Look toward tomorrow.** Using your appointment calendar if that helps, face your immediate future. What feelings surface as you look at the tasks, meetings and appointments that face you? Fear? Delighted anticipation? Self-doubt? Temptation to procrastination? Zestful planning? Regret? Weakness? Whatever it is, turn it into prayer -- for help, for healing, whatever comes spontaneously. To round off the examen, say the Lord's Prayer.

A mnemonic for recalling the five points: LTJF (light, thanks, feelings, focus, future).

**Do it.**
Take a few minutes each day to pray through the past 24 hours, and toward the next 24 hours, with that five-point format.

**Consequences.**

Here are some of the consequences flowing from this kind of prayer.

1. There is always something to pray about. For a person who does this kind of prayer at least once a day, there is never the question: What should I talk to God about? Until you die, you always have a past 24 hours, and you always have some feelings about what's next.

2. The gratitude moment is worthwhile in itself. "Dedicate yourselves to gratitude," Paul tells the Colossians. Even if we drift off into slumber after reviewing the gifts of the day, we have praised the Lord.

3. We learn to face the Lord where we are, as we are. There is no other way to be present to God, of course, but we often fool ourselves into thinking that we have to "put on our best face" before we address our God.

4. We learn to respect our feelings. Feelings count. They are morally neutral until we make some choice about acting upon or dealing with them. But if we don't attend to them, we miss what they have to tell us about the quality of our lives.

5. Praying from feelings, we are liberated from them. An unattended emotion can dominate and manipulate us. Attending to and praying from and about the persons and situations that give
rise to the emotions help us to cease being unwitting slaves of our emotions.  
6. We actually find something to bring to confession. That is, we stumble across our sins without making them the primary focus.  
7. We can experience an inner healing. People have found that praying about (as opposed to fretting about or denying) feelings leads to a healing of mental life. We probably get a head start on our dreamwork when we do this.  
8. This kind of prayer helps us get over our Deism. Deism is belief in a sort of "clock-maker" God, a God who does indeed exist but does not have much, if anything, to do with his people's ongoing life. The God we have come to know through our Jewish and Christian experience is more present that we actually think.  
9. Praying this way is an antidote to the spiritual disease of Pelagianism. Pelagianism was the heresy that approached life with God as a do-it-yourself project ("If at first you don't succeed..."), whereas a true theology of grace and freedom sees life as response to God's love ("If today you hear God's voice...").  

A final thought. How can anyone dare to say that paying attention to felt experience is a listening to the voice of God? On the face of it, it does not sound like a dangerous presumption. But, notice, I am not equating memory with the voice of God. I am saying that, if we are to listen for the God who creates and sustains us, we need to take seriously and prayerfully the meeting between the creatures we are and all else that God holds lovingly in existence. That "interface" is the felt experience of my day. It deserves prayerful attention. It is a big part of how we know and respond to God.
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<td>Genesis 29:1-30; Psalm 31:1-25; Romans 8:1-17</td>
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<td>2 Corinthians 12:1-10</td>
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<td>Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worry</td>
<td>Matthew. 6:25-34; Exodus 5:22-6:13; 1 Corinthians 7:25-.35; 1 Peter 5:6-7</td>
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Phase One Meeting Index

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<td>1</td>
<td>Casual Bonding</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Members will meet one another in a fun, casual atmosphere and be briefly introduced to being a part of a CLC community. An explanation will be given regarding the three week &quot;trial period&quot; and fourth week commitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1st Principle and Foundation - freedom and indifference</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will be introduced to the 1st Principle and Foundation as the basis for who we are as a discerning CLC community, and will discuss importance of freedom and indifference in living that out. Members will reflect on the meaning the 1st Principle and Foundation has for their lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Service as Way of Life</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Members will be introduced to the call to serve in everyday life, and will discuss the role of being a part of a CLC in that life of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Letters of Commitment</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Members will write letters to the group, explaining why they do or do think this is the right time for them to commit to the CLC. Members will also share their hopes and expectations, and the group will come up with a set of rules or &quot;non-negotiables&quot; that they will abide by.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The life of St. Ignatius/ intro to spiritual autobiographies</td>
<td>Spirituality/Community</td>
<td>Members will learn about and discuss the life and conversion experience of St. Ignatius Loyola so as to better understand the roots of our Ignatian Charisms. It will also be a model of the Spiritual Autobiographies that each group member will be sharing in the coming weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Examen and Desolation/Consolation - Spiritual Autobios</td>
<td>Spirituality/Community</td>
<td>2 or 3 members will share their spiritual autobiographies. Members will also learn about and practice the examen, and discuss how they find the movements of consolation and desolation in their lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Men and Women For and With Others - Spiritual Autobios</td>
<td>Service/ Community</td>
<td>2 members will share their spiritual autobiographies. Members will discuss Pedro Arrupe's &quot;Men and Women for and With Others&quot;, discussing service as an integral part of the CLC way of life. Members will prepare spiritually to find God in all things during the &quot;Wolves on the Prowl&quot; service activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Praying for a Grace - Spiritual Autobios</td>
<td>Spirituality/Community</td>
<td>2 or 3 members will share their spiritual autobiographies. Members will also learn about and experience the Ignatian practice of praying for a grace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thanksgiving- Spiritual Autobios</td>
<td>Spirituality/Community</td>
<td>2 or 3 members will share their spiritual autobiographies. Members will also reflect on and share the things in their lives for which they are thankful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Extended Check-in / Ignatian Contemplation</td>
<td>Community/Spirituality</td>
<td>After an extended check in about Thanksgiving break, members will learn about and enter into a gospel reflection using the method of Ignatian Contemplation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fun Activity</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Members will do something fun together to bond as community and take a break during pre-finals week.</td>
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Phase 1 Meeting 1

Theme: Who are you? Why are you here?

Resources Needed:
- Paper (plain or colored)
- Markers
- Crayons
- Pens or whatever else you would like to write with or draw
- Copy of opening prayer for each group member.

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)
For Honesty and Openness

Lord, we thank You for gathering us here. We believe You are here with us, for You promised to be present wherever two or three are gathered in Your name. We ask You to open our hearts to Your love and blessings. Help us to grow in friendship and companionship with one another and with You. Amen

Check-In:
Explain that this is a time for each member to briefly share how they are doing right now. The point of this part of the meeting is to help us know how we each come to the meeting. We will have more opportunities later in each meeting to expand upon what we have shared. Especially in the first meeting, use this check-in to just share who they are.
- Name, year, major, and maybe how they first heard about CLC.
- Or what made them curious to check it out?

Focusing Exercise:
Ask each member to draw how they view themselves and to include things that are important to them in their life. They should be aware that they will share once they are done with their picture. The point of this exercise is for each member to share a little about themselves to the group and for the group in turn to get to know each member.

Do a second wave of reflection posing the question if anything stuck out to a member of the group while they were sharing. The first meeting may not have everyone share, but this will help set a foundation of sorts for the members to know they have opportunities to mention something that popped up while another person was sharing. Also, it helps members know that they get an opportunity to say more after everyone has had an opportunity to share.
Conclusion/Evaluation:
What are you going to take with you from this meeting? Did anything challenge you? Did it engage you? Why or why not?

Closing Prayer:
You have Called Me by Name
Joseph Tetlow, S.J.

Oh, Lord my God,
You called me from the sleep of nothingness
merely because in your tremendous love
you want to make good and beautiful beings.
You have called me by my name in my mother’s womb.
You have given me breath and light and movement
and walked with me every moment of my existence.
I am amazed, Lord God of the universe,
That you attend to me and, more, cherish me.
Create in me the faithfulness that moves you,
And I will trust you and yearn for you all my days.
Amen

Announcements/Social:
Explain to the group the 3 meeting commitment, and how they will decide after the 3rd meeting whether or not they want to commit to CLC.
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Joseph Tetlow, S.J.

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   That you attend to me and, more, cherish me.
Create in me the faithfulness that moves you,
And I will trust you and yearn for you all my days. Amen
Phase 1 Meeting 2

Theme: First Principle and Foundation

Resources Needed:
- Copies of opening prayer
- Copies of the (one of three) First Principle and Foundation exercises
- Copies of the closing prayer

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)

Teach Me To Listen

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers. Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, "Accept the person I am. Listen to me."

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me-- the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside-- in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice-- in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and in doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen. Amen.

-Adapted by John Veltri, S.J
Check-In:
- What events during the week have led you see God working in your life?
  - OR
- Where have you been challenged to see God?

Focusing Exercise:
Pick one of the three different focus exercises based on the First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. All three are included here for you to choose from.

Explain that the First Principle and Foundation comes at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, the retreat experience that best characterizes Ignatian Spirituality. The First Principle and Foundation articulates the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises as well as gives an explanation as to St. Ignatius' view on life and God in people's lives.

It might be best to do a second wave of sharing to see if anyone might have anything else to say that they thought of, or ask the group to share about what struck them as another person was sharing.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
What are you going to take with you this week from the First Principle and Foundation? What about this meeting has challenged you? How did you find yourself reacting to the either the opening prayer, check-in, or focus exercise?

Closing Prayer:
Suscipe
~St. Ignatius

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
all that I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me.

Announcements/Social:
Teach Me To Listen

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers.
Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, "Accept the person I am. Listen to me."

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me-- the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

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Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me.
The First Principle and Foundation

The goal of our life is to live with God forever.

God, who loves us, gave us life.

Our own response of love allows God’s life to flow into us without limit.

All things in this world are gifts of God,

Presented to us so that we can know God more easily

And make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God
insofar as they help us develop as loving persons.
But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives,
they displace God
and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance
before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice
and are not bound by some obligation.

We should not fix our desires on health or sickness,
wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or short one.
For everything has the potential of calling forth in us
a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this:
I want and I choose what better leads
to God’s deepening his life in me.

-St. Ignatius as paraphrased by David L. Fleming SJ
[Consider] God’s gifts to me. God creates me out of love and desires nothing more than a return of love on my part. So much does God love me that even though I turn away and make little response, this Giver of all good gifts continues to be my Savior and Redeemer.

- Spiritual Exercises 234

*notice what happens to your own desire to love as you become more aware of God’s lavish care for you.

…if we are so intent on responding ever better to the love of God wherever it will lead us in our life, we will find the kind of quiet in which the movement of God in our life becomes all the more apparent; our mind will not find itself divided over many cares, but rather its one concern will be to follow the lead of God; in a similar way, our powers of loving, too, will be focused for this period of time solely upon God…

- Spiritual Exercises 16

[Spiritual Consolation may be defined as moments] when we find ourselves so on fire with the love of God that we can freely give ourselves over to God and there is no competition with any human person or any created thing. Rather, we begin to see everything and everyone in the context of God, the Creator and Giver of all good gifts.

- Spiritual Exercises 316a

We may find it helpful when we might discover some attachment…or when we are not indifferent to poverty and riches, to come to Jesus our Lord in prayer and beg him to choose us to serve him…We should beg with a certain insistence, and should plead for it—but always wanting what God wants for us.

- Spiritual Exercises 157

QUESTIONS to consider from the book, Moment by Moment by Smith & Merz
What attitudes and actions result in my life when I remember the goal of my life is the praise and service of God?

What people, places, and things need to be given a different priority in order to acknowledge God as the source and end of my life?

How do prayer and reflection help me to maintain order and priorities in my life?

In what areas of my life do I need to become more indifferent or free enough to want only what God wants for me? —or- Who or what do I need to surrender in order to entrust my life freely or completely to God?

What personal habits of the heart turn me back to God when fatigue or over-extension tend to throw me off balance?
The First Principle and Foundation: St. Ignatius’ Personal Mission Statement

The goal of our life is to live with God forever.
God, who loves us, gave us life.
Our own response of love allows God’s life to flow into us without limit.

All things in this world are gifts of God, 
Presented to us so that we can know God more easily 
And make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God 
insofar as they help us develop as loving persons. 
But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, 
they displace God 
and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance 
before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice 
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We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, 
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For everything has the potential of calling forth in us 
a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this: 
I want and I choose what better leads 
to God’s deepening his life in me.

-St. Ignatius as paraphrased by David L. Fleming SJ
**A TESTAMENT** by Anthony de Mello, SJ

I imagine that today I am to die. I ask for time to be alone and write down for my friends:

1. **This things I have loved in life:**
   - Things I tasted,
   - Looked at,
   - Smelled,
   - Heard,
   - Touched.

2. **These experiences I have cherished:**

3. **These ideas have brought me liberation:**

4. **These beliefs I have outgrown:**

5. **These convictions I have lived for:**

6. **These are the things I have lived for:**

7. **These insights I have gained in the school of life:**
   - Insights into God,
   - The world,
   - Human nature,
   - Jesus Christ,
   - Love,
   - Religion
   - Prayer.

8. **These risks I took,**
   - These dangers I have courted:

9. **These sufferings have seasoned me:**

10. **These lessons life has taught me:**

11. **These influences have shaped my life (persons, occupations, books, events):**

12. **These scripture texts have lit my path:**

13. **These things I regret about my life:**

14. **These are my life’s achievements:**

15. **These persons are enshrined within my heart:**

16. **These are my unfulfilled desires:**

I choose an ending for this document:
   - A poem—my own or someone else’s;
   - Or a prayer;
   - A sketch or a picture from a magazine
   - A scripture text;
   - Or anything that I judge would be an apt conclusion to my testament.
The Principle and Foundation
Of
St. Ignatius Loyola

I am created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means, to save my soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for me to help me in attaining the end for which I am created.

Hence, I am to make use of them in as far as they help me in attainment of my end, and I must rid myself of them as far as they prove a hindrance to me.

Therefore, I must make myself indifferent to all created things, as far as I am allowed free choice and am not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as I am concerned, I should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

My one desire and choice should be what is MORE conducive to the end for which I am created.

(1) Please read the above text slowly and carefully. Pause in any place where the text moves you and try to name or identify your reaction to the text and why you react that way.

(2) What insights into your own life can you draw from the Principle and Foundation?

(3) What “creatures” (created things like people, places, opportunities, etc.) are you most attracted to? What positives and negatives do these “creatures” present to you?

(4) What do you understand by the term “Ignatian Indifference”? Where are you challenged to grow in “indifference”?

(5) Remember a time in your life (a period or even a special moment) when you were genuinely happy. Try to reconstruct this moment in your mind and heart. What made this moment so special? What elements, details, circumstances, etc. contributed to the dynamic of this special moment?
Phase 1 Meeting 3

Theme: What shall we do?

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the opening prayer for each group member
- Copies of Matthew 25:37-46
- Copies of “Men and Women For Others” excerpt
- Copies of closing prayer for each group member

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)

St. Ignatius’ Prayer for Generosity

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for reward,
save that of knowing that I do your will.

Check-In:
- When was the last time you served another person, and how did it make you feel?

Focusing Exercise:

Have a group member read Matthew 25:37-46 aloud.

Conversation about the following faith sharing questions:
- What does service mean to you?
- Does it mean charity?
- How do you think that God has blessed you to serve others?
- How can you serve as a community?

Conclusion/Evaluation:

Read the following excerpt from Pedro Arrupe’s “Men and Women for Others”
Have group members consider the following question throughout the week:
- In what ways can I use my unique God-given gifts to serve the world?

THE MEN AND WOMEN THE CHURCH NEEDS TODAY
Man or woman for others
“What kind of man or woman is needed today by the Church, by the world? One who is a “man-or woman-for-others.” That is my shorthand description. A man-or-woman-for-others. But does this not contradict the very nature of the human person? Are we not each a “being-for-ourselves?” Gifted with intelligence that
endows us with power, do we not tend to control the world, making ourselves its center? Is this not our vocation, our history?

Yes; gifted with conscience, intelligence and power each of us is indeed a center. But a center called to go out of ourselves, to give ourself to others in love -- love, which is our definitive and all-embracing dimension, that which gives meaning to all our other dimensions. Only the one who loves fully realizes himself or herself as a person. To the extent that any of us shuts ourselves off from others we do not become more a person; we becomes less.

Anyone who lives only for his or her own interests not only provides nothing for others. He or she does worse. They tend to accumulate in exclusive fashion more and more knowledge, more and more power, more and more wealth; thus denying, inevitably to those weaker then themselves their proper share of the God-given means for human development.”

Source:
http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html

Closing Prayer:
'May I Be Worthy of Your Trust' by Daniel Lord, S.J.

For some strange reason, Lord, you depend on me. What possible need could you have for my shoulder? Why should you lean on me? Yet you do just that.

I am grateful. It is a challenge and a trust, an inspiration and a call to character.

If you are willing to depend on me, weak and clumsy as I am, I am eager not to fail you.

Lean on me, dear Lord. At least pretend to find me a help. May your sweet pretence make me worthy of your very real trust.

Announcements/Social:
Preview of Week Four: Explain Commitment Plan
  o Meet with one facilitator over the next week about whether you want to continue
  o Write a letter of commitment before next meeting to the group about why you want to continue
  o Come with any “group rules” you might have
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Matthew 25: 31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations 15 will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous 16 will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.'

Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."
THE MEN AND WOMEN THE CHURCH NEEDS TODAY
Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

Man or woman for others

“What kind of man or woman is needed today by the Church, by the world? One who is a “man-or woman-for-others.” That is my shorthand description. A man-or-woman-for-others. But does this not contradict the very nature of the human person? Are we not each a “being-for-ourselves?” Gifted with intelligence that endows us with power, do we not tend to control the world, making ourselves its center? Is this not our vocation, our history?

Yes; gifted with conscience, intelligence and power each of us is indeed a center. But a center called to go out of ourselves, to give ourselves to others in love -- love, which is our definitive and all-embracing dimension, that which gives meaning to all our other dimensions. Only the one who loves fully realizes himself or herself as a person. To the extent that any of us shuts ourselves off from others we do not become more a person; we becomes less.

Anyone who lives only for his or her own interests not only provides nothing for others. He or she does worse. They tend to accumulate in exclusive fashion more and more knowledge, more and more power, more and more wealth; thus denying, inevitably to those weaker than themselves their proper share of the God-given means for human development.”

Source:
http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html
'May I Be Worthy of Your Trust'
by Daniel Lord, S.J.

For some strange reason, Lord, you depend on me. What possible need could you have for my shoulder? Why should you lean on me? Yet you do just that.

I am grateful. It is a challenge and a trust, an inspiration and a call to character.

If you are willing to depend on me, weak and clumsy as I am, I am eager not to fail you.

Lean on me, dear Lord. At least pretend to find me a help. May your sweet pretence make me worthy of your very real trust.
Phase 1 Meeting 4

Theme: Committing to CLC

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the opening prayer for each group member
- Two sided white or light colored paper
- Markers
- Copies of the closing prayer for each member
- Colored sand (one color for each group member)
- A glass vase or candle holder

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)
A prayer adapted from “For a New Home” by John O’Donohue

May this community shelter our lives.
When we come in home here,
May all the weight of the world
Fall from our shoulders.

May our hearts be tranquil here,
Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this be a safe place
Full of understanding and acceptance,
Where we can be as we are,
Without the need to mask
Of pretense or image.

May this community be a place of discovery,
Where possibilities that sleep
In the clay of your soul emerge
To deepen and refine our vision
For all that is yet to come to birth.

May it be a community of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,
Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A community where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost
Though the journey is difficult and slow.
May there be great delight in our community.
May it be a place of welcome for the broken and outcast.

May we have eyes to see that no one comes without a gift,
And no one leaves without blessing.
Check-In:
- Where did you sense God’s presence in the last week?
  OR
- What feelings or reactions did you have to the letters of commitment?

Focusing Exercise: These three activities are all actually ONE focus activity, meant to help the group form a common bond and vision for their community. The closing prayer is a ritual that will create a visual reminder (a colored sand candle) of the member’s commitment to one another.

1. Letter Sharing:
   - Facilitators share letters and/ or of members who have decided not to commit to CLC and therefore not present at meeting
   - Each group member reads their letters, saying why they want to commit to CLC and what they are hoping for from the group.

2. Sharing Hopes:
   - Members take a few minutes to write their hopes for what the community will be on side one of the group’s sheet of paper. Afterwards, people can discuss and explain the hopes that they have written.
   - Question for Listening Deeper: After everyone has responded, facilitators may ask something along the lines of “Are there any hopes here that resonate with your own?”

3. Creating “Non Negotiable”:
   - On second side of the group’s sheet, members write down the guidelines or rules they would like their group to follow. Facilitators should be sure to include and explain confidentiality and presence. Afterwards, people can discuss why they fell these guidelines are important.

Conclusion/ evaluation:
How do you feel about the vision for our CLC?

Closing Payer:
The facilitator should explain the logistics of and purpose for this particular closing prayer activity before beginning. After the facilitator’s opening prayer, each group member should place some colored sand in the candle holder and as they do so, offer one or two gifts that they’re presence brings to the group (i.e., I Rebecca commit to this group. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of empathy and listening.) By the end of prayer, the candle will be full of different colors of sand, representing one community made up of multiple individuals. A candle will be placed in each holder, and the candle will be lit at the beginning of each meeting. The CLC room will be decorated with each of these CLC’s candles, symbolizing how we are connected to the larger CLC community.
Prayer:

Facilitator: Loving God, we come before you asking that you accept our commitment to one another and to you in this Christian Life Community. We thank you for the ways that you have brought us to this place, and ask that you bless our commitment to accompany each other as a Christian Life Community.

I, ____________________, commit to this community. As a member of CLC, I bring the gifts of __________________. (At this time, pace colored sand in the candle holder).

Member 1: I, ____________________ commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of _________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)

Member 2: I, ______________ , commit to this community. As a member of CLC, I bring the gifts of _________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)

{Continue until each member has had a chance to share and add their sand}

Facilitator: (adding a candle to the holder and lighting it) these, gifts symbolized in the sand and fire, are our continual offering to you, loving God, and to one another. We ask you to accept these offerings and bless our commitment throughout the coming year and beyond. We ask all these things through Christ, Our Lord.

All: amen

Announcements/ Social:

Explain that CLC is sponsoring the 9pm Mass for this week, and that each group’s candle will be placed near the altar to decorate it, and that 9pm community will be offering a blessing over the candles at the end of Mass. Ask group members to attend the Mass if at all possible.
Opening Prayer

A prayer adapted from “For a New Home” by John O’Donohue

May this community shelter our lives.
   When we come in home here,
   May all the weight of the world
   Fall from our shoulders.

May our hearts be tranquil here,
Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

   May this be a safe place
   Full of understanding and acceptance,
   Where we can be as we are,
   Without the need of any mask
   Of pretense or image.

May this community be a place of discovery,
   Where the possibilities that sleep
   In the clay of your soul can emerge
   To deepen and refine your vision
   For all that is yet to come to birth.

   May it be a community of courage,
   Where healing and growth are loved,
   Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
   A community where patience of spirit is prized,
   And the sight of the destination is never lost
   Though the journey is difficult and slow.
May there be great delight in our community.
May it be a place of welcome for the broken and outcast.

May we have eyes to see that no one comes without a gift,
   And no one leaves without a blessing.
**Closing Prayer**

**Facilitator:** Loving God, we come before you, asking that you accept our commitment to one another and to you in this Christian Life Community. We thank you for the ways that you have brought us to this place, and ask that you bless our commitment to accompany each other as a Christian Life Community.

I, __________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of ___________________. *(At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder).*

**Member 1:** I, __________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of ___________________. *(At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)*

**Member 2:** I, __________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of ___________________. *(At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)*

【Continue until each member has had a chance to share and add their sand】

**Facilitator:** (adding a candle to the holder and lighting it) These gifts, symbolized in sand and fire, are our continual offering to you, loving God, and to one another. We ask that you accept these offerings and bless our commitment throughout the coming year and beyond. We ask all these things through Christ, Our Lord.

**All:** Amen.
Phase 1 Meeting 5

Theme: The Life of St. Ignatius

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the opening prayer for each group member
- Copies of St. Ignatius Autobio
- Laptop for Ignatius picture powerpoint (downloadable from blackboard)
- The “St. Ignatius Grab Bag Game” (strips cut up by question and folded)
- A paper bag for the grab bag game

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)

Read the following prayer, or have someone pray an impromptu prayer for the group.
- Loving God, thank you for gathering us these weeks, for drawing us closer to you and to one another. Help us through this meeting to become friends in the Lord, people who are willing to trust one another and grow in intimacy as we support one another on our daily journeys. Help us to listen to what moves us about the story of your beloved friend Ignatius and how you likewise seek our friendship.

Check-In:
- Where did you run into God this week?

Focusing Exercise:
The point of this focus exercise is twofold: first, to share with new members a brief history of the life of St. Ignatius, highlighting specific moments in his conversion experience; second, to demonstrate (through the material shared about Ignatius) what a spiritual autobiography is. Starting at the next meeting, people will begin to share their spiritual autobiographies.

- First, introduce the idea of a spiritual autobiography, and explain that this is an example of we will be sharing in the coming weeks.
- Read the included handout about St. Ignatius’. If you want, you can show the pictures from the slideshow that is posted on blackboard.
- Play the Ignatius Grab Bag Game, as a way to get people to think about how the life of Ignatius relates to their life. Have members take turns pulling out the slips of paper from the bag and answering the questions.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
- How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?

Announcements/Social:
- Hand out the paper explaining the Spiritual Autobiography
- Have members sign up to share their autobiographies for meetings 6, 7, 8, and 9.
The Life of St. Ignatius
Adapted from Mark Link, SJ

Ignatius: Saint or Sinner?
We often see or hear about this great figure in the Church as a saint or a great man. We do not usually first think or hear about his addictions and struggles to find God. This short article attempts to describe his journey to find himself and his purpose in life and how God helped him to do so. Hopefully, his story can help inspire you to walk your own path to do the same.

Early Life
Ignatius was born in Spain in 1491, a year before the discovery of America. He was the youngest of 13 children and was known as Inigo. His parents died before he was sixteen, at which point he went live with a family friend. There he was frequently at court and developed a taste for all, especially the ladies. He became addicted to gambling, dueling, and women. Eventually, he became a Spanish soldier and was wounded in a battle against the French. A cannon ball wounded one of his legs and broke the other.

Dreamer
During the long months of his recuperation, Ignatius asked for romance novels and chivalry books to pass the time, but there were none available. The only books available to him were a copy of *The Life of Christ* and a collection of saint’s lives. Desperately, he began reading them. The more he read, the more he daydreamed to be like them; which left him at peace and satisfied. At the same time, he continued daydreaming about winning a noble lady’s heart in court; which left him restless and unsatisfied. This experience was not only the beginning of his conversion but also the beginning of his “discernment of spirits;” a prayerful decision-making process that he began to develop.

Seeker
After regaining his health, Ignatius decided to go on a journey for his spiritual growth and explore his dreams. He left Loyola and travelled to Montserrat where he spent three days writing down all his sins and went to confession. He knelt praying all night in vigil, left his sword and knife at the altar to symbolize giving up his old life, gave away his fine clothes to a poor man, and dressed himself in rough clothes with sandals and a staff. At daybreak, he continued his journey towards Barcelona but stopped along the river Cardoner at a town called Manresa. There he spent the next ten months.

Prayer
Ignatius’ first months at Manresa were filled with profound spiritual consolation, a sense of peace and God’s love for him. He volunteered to help the sick in a hospital, begged for food and slept wherever he could. Each day Ignatius spent seven hours in prayer and read his favorite book, *The Imitation of Christ*. Whenever he experienced consolation and gained some insights about God he wrote it down in his spiritual journal.
Tortured Soul

After months of consolation, Ignatius began to experience desolation. He felt that God was totally absent from his life. The whole idea of conversion and the desire to turn his life over to God seemed impossible. Ignatius tried to pray and fast more to regain the joy and consolation that he once had. But, it was all in vain! He was on the brink of desperation and suicide. Fortunately, he did not give in to this dark period. Slowly, he experienced the comfort of grace.

Mystic

When peace returned to his tortured soul, Ignatius had some mystical experiences. When the church bells rang he felt like his soul soared skyward like an eagle. Everyday objects and experiences became images and symbols of God’s presence for him. On one occasion, he clearly saw how Jesus Christ was present in the Eucharist. Once during prayer, he had a powerful vision of the humanity of Christ. These experiences strengthened his faith so much that he said that even if there were no Bible he would still be convinced of God’s existence and love for him.

Transformed Person

One September afternoon, while he was walking along the Cardoner River, Ignatius had an extremely enlightening experience that forever impacted him. The experience helped him to understand many things, spiritually as well as intellectually, about God and life. Later, he mentioned that all the enlightenments of his life combined “would not, in his judgment, be as great as what he experienced on that occasion.”

Spiritual Guide

Ignatius was overwhelmed by his enlightenment at Cardoner. He saw clearly how the risen Jesus and his kingdom were truly real and active among us. He also saw how we all struggle to experience God in our lives and to fight the battle between good and evil in the world. Thus, he wanted to share his own experiences of God and ways we can “find God in all things.” This is one of the central characteristics of Ignatian spirituality. It is especially evident in his prayer of the Awareness Examine. He also wrote a book which helps others discover their personal vocations called “The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.” It is upon these exercises that CLC is based.

University of Paris

After many years of helping others to experience God, Ignatius discovered that he needed to further his education to better serve others. During his studies, he continued helping others to find God and discern their vocation in life. He found a small group of friends in his dorm, including Francis Xavier, Peter Faber, and James Lainez. They helped one another to discover their calling and purpose in life. The eventually founded a community called the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1540. By the time of Ignatius’ death in 1556, thirty-five Jesuit colleges had been established in Europe. LMU is now one among twenty-eight Jesuit universities in the U.S. and one of ninety Jesuit colleges world-wide.
Ignatius Grab-Bag Game

1/Family: Ignatius was born as Inigo de Loyola in Spain in 1491, a year before the discovery of America. He was the youngest of 13 children. Before the age of 16 he went to live with a family friend after his parent’s deaths.

Questions:
1. Where and when were you born? Is there anything significant about the place and time?
2. How many family members do you have? Who do you feel closest to in your family?

2/Ignatius’ talents and addictions: Ignatius’ gifts were dueling and horse riding. However, he was very addicted to gambling and women.

Questions:
1. What are your unique talents?
2. Is there anything you particularly struggle with that you feel comfortable sharing?

3/Cannon Ball Experience: During battle, a cannon ball wounded one of Ignatius’ legs and broke the other. During his recuperation, two books that changed his life were The Life of Christ and The Life of the Saints.

Questions:
1. Do you have any “cannon ball” experiences that made you pause and question life and God?
2. Are there any books that “changed” your life or outlook on life?

4/Dreamer: Ignatius daydreamed about becoming a knight, winning a lady at court and also about becoming a saint.

Questions:
1. What do you usually daydream about?
2. What is your dream right now at this point in your life?

5/Seeker: After regaining his health, Ignatius decided to go on a journey to encourage his spiritual growth and explore his dream. He left Loyola and went to Montserrat where he went to confession, held an all-night vigil, left his sword at the altar, symbolizing leaving his old way of life, and gave away his clothes.

Questions:
1. Are there any important questions or decisions you have to make right now?
2. Have you ever given up something meaningful in order to pursue a new or different goal?
6/Prayer: Ignatius’ first months at Manresa were filled with profound spiritual consolation. He volunteered to help the sick in a hospital, begged for food, and slept wherever he could.

Questions:
1. How do you pray?
2. When was the last time you experienced consolation, a sense of God’s presence, of being at peace and alive?

7/Restless Heart: After months of consolation, Ignatius began to experience desolation. He felt that God was totally absent in his life. Ignatius tried to pray and fast more to regain the joy and consolation that he once had. But it was all in vain! He was on the brink of desperation and suicide.

Questions:
1. Have you ever felt God did not listen or respond to your prayers? Explain.
2. When was the last time you felt depressed and cried?

8/Transformative Experiences: When peace returned to his tortured soul, Ignatius had some transformative experiences. These moments strengthened his faith to the point that he said that even if there were no Bible he would still be convinced of God’s existence and love for him.

Questions:
1. How would you describe your relationship with God right now?
2. At what point in your life was your faith the strongest? How do you account for this?

9/Spiritual Guide: During his time, Ignatius often shared with others his own experiences of God. He wrote a book, “The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,” that helps others discover their own personal vocations. It is upon these exercises that CLC is based.

Questions:
1. Have you ever talked or shared with others about your experiences of God? Describe.
2. If you had to give advice or write a book about spirituality, what one or two things would you say?

10/Education: After many years of helping others to experience God, Ignatius discovered that he needed to further his education to better serve others. During his studies he found a small group of friends who helped one another to discover their calling and purpose in life.

Questions:
1. What do you think about Ignatius’ outlook on education; that “he needed to further his education to better serve others”?
2. How do your friends help you discover your calling and purpose in life?
Why write your faith story?

- It puts you in touch with the most important events and people of your life and helps you notice the inner movements that reveal how God is touching you.
- It draws your life and your prayer together, to help you see every event and feeling of your lived experience as an invitation to deepen your relationship with God.
- It helps you say to God, “Here I am. This is how I feel I have become who I am. Let us journey on together toward who I shall become in you.”

A faith story (or faith biography) is simply an account of your inner journey through the outer events of your life. It is the story of how you have gradually (or suddenly) become aware of a relationship with God and the ways in which he has been leading you. It is a kind of inner map of the feelings life has roused in you, the decisions you have made along the way, and the way you have made them. It would include significant landmarks along the way where you feel that something grew inside you, and significant people who have walked alongside you at different stages of your journey and brought you closer to an understanding of yourself.

And how to do it? Your faith story is a very personal conversation between you and God. If you find it easy to write, you might like to write it out, perhaps in the form of an account of those events and moments in your life that were charged with special feelings—good and bad—for you. Or you may prefer to use drawings or symbols to express those things that have been important to you; some people find it helpful to use different colors to represent their emotions with regard to these events.

You should feel free to tell your story in whatever way or ways are natural and meaningful for you. What is important is for you to get in touch with the movements in your life and with your feelings about your life, and by doing this, to get in touch with the ways in which God has been present to you in it. Sharing your story with others can help you to recognize the patterns and movements that it reveals, which in turn can help you to discern the ways in which God is present to your ongoing journey.

When you have expressed your story, as you see it now, keep it in a safe place without changing anything. From time to time, go back to it, and see for yourself how it has moved on, which patterns and movements have become stronger, and how you feel then about the areas of light and darkness, the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of your life. You may find that some of the sorrowful mysteries were in fact the places and the times when God was drawing you closer to him, drawing you into his own suffering, or inviting you to grow beyond the hurts that have held you to the past.

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3 Taken from Chapter 3 of Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality by Margaret Silf. Chicago, Illinois: Loyola Press, 1999.
Finally, enjoy the exercise. Let your joys be joys, and let your sorrows be brought into a healing light.

**Spiritual Autobiographies: Suggestions for Reflection**

- **Remember the exterior events of your life and your reactions to them.** Ask God for the grace to remember the fragments of your life in a way that will reveal to you the patterns that are leading toward your wholeness in God.

- **Notice now how God has been constantly present, not just in the special moments.** Notice especially how, with hindsight, periods when he felt absent may have prepared you in some way for further growth. Notice how periods of difficulty strengthened you in certain ways, as hard exercise strengthens our muscles. Remember how consolation and new strength have sometimes come when you were at the end of the line. This isn’t to pretend to yourself that everything, with hindsight, was good. That would be dishonest and untrue, because we live in a fallen world where evil is endemic. Where honesty prevents you from seeing God in parts of your life, tell him so in your prayer, and express your pain and anger to him freely.

- **Become aware of how God touches your unique personality and brings you to life, how he speaks to you through your own personality, your gifts, and your unique personality, your gifts, and your decisions.** Can you see any concrete examples of how God is using your gifts or working through your decisions now, in your immediate experience?

- **Try to describe—or to draw—your own images of God.** How does he appear to you—a father figure, a policeman, a friend, a doctor, a male or female, distant or close, firm or gentle, judging, guiding, or apparently ignoring you? It may be helpful to remember how you thought of God when you were a child and compare those images with the way you see him now. Your childhood images may actually express more honestly what you still, deep down, truly feel. There is no one right answer. The purpose of the exercise is to get in touch with the way you are personally relating to God and how you feel about that relationship.

At every point, express your feelings to God in prayer, without fear and without holding anything back. How does God feel about you in each moment of your faith journey?
FAITH STORIES: Suggestions for Reflection

- Often, it is helpful to use metaphors to reflect on our experience. Metaphors shed light on our lives in new ways that we might not have considered otherwise. Consider, for example, the metaphor of your life as a river:
  - What do you know and value of your own origins?
  - What kind of landscape has your river flowed through so far?
  - What kinds of obstructions or hazards has it had to negotiate?
  - Have you ever felt that your river’s energy and power were being sapped and exploited by others?
  - Has your life river ever appeared to disappear? To go underground or to dry up? To lose itself in the bog lands or marshes of your experience?
  - What detours do you see, with hindsight, that your life has made?
  - How and where do you feel that your river is flowing now?
  - As you let your mind wander back along the riverbanks you have known, what landmarks make you feel glad and grateful? Perhaps particular people or experiences? Have you ever told those concerned what a difference they made to your journey?
  - What landmarks have left you feeling angry, disappointed, misled, betrayed, or in any way negative? If other people were involved in these situations in your life, do you still harbor resentments against them, or can you now turn around to focus on the future rather than on the past? Are there things you would like to talk over with the people concerned? Do you feel able to do so?

- Much of our faith story naturally grows out of our experiences of trust and the difficulties, challenges, and joys we have encountered as we come to know more of the One who is supremely secure and trustworthy. You might try reflecting on your life in terms of trust:
  - Who and what has gained your trust over the course of your life?
  - What experiences do you have of trusting yourself, the deepest part of you?
  - How has growth opened up in you as a result of your experiences of trust?
  - Have there been times when you trusted someone or something that proved to be unreal, false, or less secure than you thought? How did you feel and how did you change as a result? What did you come to understand about yourself, God, and the world?

- You may also want to consider any significant Moments, events, relationships, circumstances, or places that have influenced your spiritual life. And remember – this is your life, so just share what has moved you!
Phase 1 Meeting 6

Theme: The Examen - Who are you? How is God Moving in Your Life?

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the Examen explanation for each member of the group
- Closing Prayer

Opening Prayer: (from LMU packet)
“We pause again tonight to become more aware of God’s love in our lives and our call in this world. We turn to you, O God, confident of your gaze upon us, filled with your hope, peace and love. We ask that as we continue to get to know each other, that you make yourself known always. Thank you for this precious time this evening. Amen.”

Check-In:
Skip “Check-In,” as the Examen can be that later. Explain that you will be checking a little later in the meeting. Instead, use this time to have 2 or 3 members who signed up share their spiritual autobiographies.

Focusing Exercise:
Introduce the Examen. See attached for an explanation of the Examen, and use either the attached version or one that you like/have used in the past.
After gently bringing everyone back to the group, let each member say one thing that particularly touched them about the prayer experience.

If the concepts of consolation and desolation have been introduced, you can incorporate these terms and discuss how the Examen has brought to light some of these movements.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
Talk informally about the Examen. What was good? Did the members have enough time to reflect? You can talk further on the different methods of the prayer, and you may want to encourage your group to pray it everyday, just as Ignatius instructed.

Closing Prayer:
“All Everything Is Waiting For You” by David Whyte (attached). Afterwards, you can say a short prayer asking for a deeper awareness of God in daily life, especially with the practice of the Examen.

Announcements/Social:
The Awareness Examen

The brief reflective prayer called the Awareness Examen was designed by Ignatius of Loyola to help foster intimacy with self and with God. Self-intimacy comes when we become more aware of our inner life of thoughts and feelings, hopes and desires, fears and frustrations. Intimacy with God comes when we are able to recognize how God is present and active in the whirl of events that make up each day.

We carve out a few moments of solitude in the day so that we can reflect on what is going on and where our actions and choices are taking us. We look concretely at events and ask: Where is God in this situation? Any one of the five parts that make up the structure of the awareness examen might occupy the majority of our time and attention. (Spiritual Exercises, no. 43).

- Pray in gratitude for all the gifts that we have received. With a grateful heart, we glance back at the experiences of the past twenty-four hours and thank God for every gift we can recall.

- Pray for enlightenment so that the Spirit will help us see ourselves more clearly, freed from defensiveness and blind spots. We are praying for a Spirit-guided insight into our actions and our hearts.

- Survey the period since last engaging in reflective prayer, paying attention to our feelings, moods, thoughts, and desires as a way of getting a sense of what is going on in our lives. Usually, our feelings—whether painful or pleasant, negative or positive—are the best indicators of what is happening in our lives and where we need to listen to the voice of God. As we attend to the more intense feelings that surface, we ask ourselves: What is the nudging of God in this experience? We try to let our prayer be a spontaneous conversation with God about what we notice in our day.

- Pray for forgiveness for the ways we have not lived up to the requirements of love in our relationship to God, ourselves, and others. The goal here is to glean the lessons of love embedded in yesterday’s experiences, so to be better able to love in the present.

- Ask God’s help to live with renewed hope and increased love of God and others. As we let our minds consider briefly the immediate future, we pay attention to the feelings that spontaneously arise and share them with God in prayer, like one friend speaking with another.

At midday or before bed, the awareness examen serves as a prayerful pause of ten to fifteen minutes to remind us that God is intimately present with love and support all the days of our lives.
A Sample Examen

I pray in gratitude for all the gifts that I have received as I glance back at the experiences of the past week, and allow a spontaneous conversation to develop with God who was and is present.

I pray for enlightenment so that the Spirit will help me see myself honestly, as I review both my actions and my heart’s involvement in them.

I survey the period since last engaging in reflective prayer, paying special attention to the more intense feelings, moods, thoughts, and desires that surface, as a way of getting a sense of what is going on in my life.

I pray for healing in my heart for the any of the ways that I have not lived up to the requirements of love in my relationship with God, myself, and others.

I ask for help to live with renewed hope and increased love of God and others, considering briefly the immediate future, and paying attention to the feelings that spontaneously arise.
Everything Is Waiting For You
by David Whyte

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array:
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice. You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things
to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and invite you,
and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into
the conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.
Phase 1 Meeting 7

Theme: Praying for a Grace

Resources Needed:
- Bibles for each group member
- Scripture Index
- Copies of opening prayer for each group member

Opening Prayer:

When everyone has settled down, ask them to pray the opening prayer aloud together:

O Lord,
I do not know what to ask you.
You alone know my real needs,
and you love me more
than I even know how to love.

Enable me to discern my true needs
which are hidden from me.

I ask for neither cross nor consolation;
I wait in patience for you.

My heart is open to you.

For your great mercy's sake,
come to me and help me.

Put your mark on me and heal me,
cast me down and raise me up.

Silently I adore your holy will
and your inscrutable ways.
I offer myself in sacrifice to you
and put all my trust in you.

I desire only to do your will.
Teach me how to pray
and pray in me, yourself.

(Prayer can be found at http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/special/discern.html)
Check-In:
Due to the spiritual autobiographies, check-in should be brief. Each person sharing a “God-moment” is probably best.

Spiritual Autobiographies:
Those who are scheduled to share spiritual autobiographies do so.

Focusing Exercise:
Use the following introduction to explain to the group the Ignatian concept of praying for a grace. Afterwards, hand out Bibles and put the Scripture Index on the table. Ask each member to think to themselves of a grace they would like to pray for (give this two-three minutes if necessary). When they have one, tell them to each look at the Scripture Index and find a passage that relates to that grace (if the exact grace is not listed, find something very close). Each member then takes their Bible and prays with that passage on his or her own, reflecting on it and relating it to his or her prayer. If space allows, moving to get more personal space may be a good idea. After approximately ten minutes (or a bit more, if needed), call the group members back. Then present a challenge to the group: each group member is to commit to continue to pray for this grace throughout the week, paying attention to opportunities they may have to grow in this grace or ways they see it present.

Introduction:
Saint Ignatius emphasizes in his Spiritual Exercises that we are to pray for that which we desire, to taste and relish the grace for which we pray. At one time this is “to ask for the gift of a growing and intense sorrow for my sins”; at another time, “to ask for the grace to know Jesus intimately, to love him more intensely, and so follow him more closely”; still again, it is “to ask for the grace to enter into the joy and consolation of Jesus in the victory of his risen life.”

Praying for a grace is a matter of the heart, of longing, of hunger, of desire; it is praying with emotion. This prayer should not be reserved; it should be insistent and impassioned. Consider the Psalmists or the prophet Jeremiah, the passion with which they addressed the Lord, whether that passion was joy or sorrow or even anger. Praying for a grace requires such vulnerability.

When we pray for a grace, we leave part of our being open to receive it; we make a certain area of our lives available for God’s action. And, as you pray frequently for a grace, you may find that a general grace becomes more particular according to your needs. Praying for trust in general may become praying for greater trust in particular relationships or certain kinds of situations. Praying for a grace gets us in touch with our deepest desires. It becomes a process of self-discovery.

Saint Ignatius goes on to say that if we don’t desire a particular grace, then we should pray to desire it. Again, the prayer comes out of the heart: desired, felt, and hungered for. Such prayer helps inspire and make real to us that for which we pray; it develops our inner freedom to be open to the gift of the grace.
Example graces:
- To see myself as God sees me
- Trust in God
- Falling more in love with God

Closing Prayer:
Read the following story, asking your group to reflect on it:

A devout religious man fell on hard times. So he took to praying in the following fashion: “Lord, remember all the years I served you as best I could, asking for nothing in return. Now that I am old and bankrupt I am going to ask you for a favor for the first time in my life and I am sure you will not say no. Allow me to win the lottery.”

Days passed. Then weeks and months. But nothing happened. Finally, almost driven to despair, he cried out one night, “Why don’t you give me a break, God?”

He suddenly heard the voice of God replying, “Give me a break yourself! Why don’t you buy a lottery ticket?”
Opening Prayer

O Lord,
I do not know what to ask you.
You alone know my real needs,
and you love me more
than I even know how to love.

Enable me to discern my true needs
which are hidden from me.

I ask for neither cross nor consolation;
I wait in patience for you.

My heart is open to you.

For your great mercy's sake,
come to me and help me.

Put your mark on me and heal me,
cast me down and raise me up.

Silently I adore your holy will
and your inscrutable ways.
I offer myself in sacrifice to you
and put all my trust in you.

I desire only to do your will.
Teach me how to pray
and pray in me, yourself.

(Prayer can be found at http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/special/discern.html)
Phase 1 Meeting 8

Theme: Called To Be Men and Women With and For Others

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the song of your choice for opening prayer
- Copy of selections of Pedro Arrupe’s “Men for Others”

Opening Prayer:
Perhaps use a song about solidarity or connectedness to open in prayer. Some suggestions… “Face” by Nina Storey, “Imagine” by John Lennon. Then someone could do a brief, spontaneous prayer to bless the meeting.

Check-In:
Since the focus of the meeting is MWWFO, a check-in question around service seems appropriate.
- In the past week, have you experienced an act of service (maybe even a “hidden service”)?
- What is a “hidden service” that you could do for someone next week?” You could explain that a hidden service is a random, subtle act of kindness.

Focusing Exercise:
- Have the two planned group members present their spiritual autobiographies.
- Then read together parts of former Superior General (of the Society of Jesus) Pedro Arrupe’s speech “Men for Others.” You could give everyone copies of the whole document, but go through the speech beforehand to find parts you could use to reflect on service as an integral aspect of living the CLC Way of Life. You can find the text of the entire speech through the link below. Just copy and paste the sections you find most appropriate.
  http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/men-for-others.html.
- Ask group members what stood out to them, or what resonated with them from the speech. A possible further question could look forward to the Wolves on the Prowl service day (this upcoming weekend), and how we can look for God in the people we work with and the places where we work.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
Chat informally as a group about Fr. Arrupe’s speech. Did members like it? Do they think that service in that way is truly possible? The group should be able to ask any other questions at this time.
Closing Prayer:
Someone from the group can offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the gathering, and also a special request for God’s blessing on the following week, especially the ability to see, feel, and get to know God in the context of serving others.

Announcements/Social:
Make sure the next spiritual autobiographers are aware of their upcoming presentation.
Phase 1 Meeting 9

Theme: Finding Christ in Scripture

(\textit{The individual theme of this meeting could very well vary depending on the passage used for contemplation. If you want to emphasize that theme, the opening and closing prayers can be changed to fit that. For instance, if you use the Prodigal Son parable and wish to emphasize forgiveness or mercy, choosing prayers that reflect that would help greatly.})

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the closing prayer for each group member
- A candle and lighter
- A Bible or printed copy of the scripture passage

Opening Prayer:
A personal prayer of Pedro Arrupe, SJ.

Lord, teach me your way of treating others - sinners, children, Pharisees, Pilates and Herods, and also John the Baptists.
Teach me your way of eating and drinking, how to act when I'm tired from work and need rest.
Teach me compassion for the suffering, the poor, the blind, and the lame.
You who shed tears, show me how to live my deepest emotions.
Above all, I want to learn how you endured your Cross.
Teach me your way of looking at people: the way you glanced at Peter after his denial, the way you touched the heart of the rich young man and the hearts of your disciples.
I would like to meet you as you really are, since you change those who really know you.
If only I could hear you speak as when you spoke in the synagogue of Capernaum or on the Mount of Beatitudes!
Give me grace to live my life, within and without, the way you lived your life, O Lord.
Check-In:
*This check-in should be long enough to allow people to catch up with one another (and themselves) in light of Thanksgiving break. Don’t be afraid to let it go for awhile.*

- Where did you see God’s presence in this week away?
  OR
- What did the holiday allow you to notice about yourself?

Focusing Exercise:
You can use the following introduction to explain what an Ignatian Contemplation is, adapting it however best serves the purpose. Following the introduction, you may want to tell the group what passage you will be using, perhaps giving a very brief summary of what takes place; however, be careful to be brief and undetailed, so as not to color any one’s experience. Then ask each person to find a comfortable position, close his or her eyes, and center himself or herself. Finally, read the passage aloud slowly and with a steady voice. Upon finishing, wait approximately two minutes; then reread the passage. Wait three to four minutes, then reread the passage again. Wait four to five minutes. Observe the group. If it seems that people are still in contemplation, continue for a few more minutes; if people are beginning to become restless, go ahead and end the exercise. A good way to end is just to softly ask people to begin to come back to the group. After everyone’s eyes are open and focused back on the group, ask if anyone would like to share anything they experienced, something that may have struck them or surprised them about how they imagined the scene. When sharing has ended, emphasize that contemplations are easy to do on one’s own.

Introduction:
Contemplation is the fundamental prayer in Ignatian Spirituality. It is not a type of prayer that seeks solutions to questions or problems. Contemplation is being present to the mystery of an event and to its meaning. It is not about discovering ideas or finding practical conclusions, it is about being present to a scene in such a way that the scene produces its effects in the depths of our hearts.

This is not an experience that is unknown to us. We do it all the time. When we gaze at a sunset or the ocean, when we feel held by the magic of a baby’s smile, or the timeless awe of death, we are present to the mystery of the event. There are no conclusions to be drawn or solutions to be applied, we simply are in the reality of the moment, in the eternal now.

Going about a contemplation is simple, both in a group or individually. One chooses a passage from scripture, typically a passage from the Gospels. The passage should be one focusing on some sort of action, though this can include
parables if the parable told is an active one. The more details and activity, the easier it will be for you to put yourself in the scene. This is the heart of the contemplation: using your imagination to see yourself in the story. Let it happen naturally. Perhaps you are one of the characters; perhaps you are a bystander. No matter who you are, imagine the scene as vividly as possible.

As you read the passage (or as it is read to you), find yourself in the scene and let yourself begin to notice things. What do you see? Smell? Hear? Where is this going on? A busy marketplace, or a windswept hill overlooking the sea? As the scene unfolds, continue to focus on the action, using these details to do so. If you are being guided in this exercise, the reader will periodically reread the passage: allow this to deepen your experience, but do not let it distract you, ignoring it if it would do so. If you are doing this individually, reread the passage once after the first time, but only reread the passage as you need. The emphasis is on the experience, not on getting the story right or even going through the whole thing. As such, do not force things to adhere to the passage. If the story takes an imaginative turn, allow yourself to go with it, perhaps finding yourself in conversation with Jesus. Continue until the experience naturally comes to a close. Afterwards, you may want to share some particular experience or (if by yourself) journal about it.

Above all, try to make this experience one of feelings and emotions; try as much as possible to avoid thinking or intellectualizing.

Possible Scripture Passages:
John 8:1-11 (the woman caught in adultery)
Matthew 14:22-33 (Jesus walks on the water)
Luke 5:1-11 (Jesus calls his disciples)
Mark 14:66-72 (Peter denies Jesus)

Closing Prayer:
The following is just a simple reflection, followed by a very common Ignatian prayer. It would be a good idea to print out quarter-sheet copies of both reflection and prayer for group members. Ask them to read along silently as you read the reflection, then to pray aloud with you the short prayer.

Do not wait for the whisper in your ear, the tap on your shoulder, or the knock on your door, for Christ. He has already said the words, held you in His arms and opened the door. It is up to us to take Christ in others, to grow personally, spiritually, and emotionally. There will be many times in our lives in which we are uncomfortable with a situation, but we need to trust ourselves and our faith and we will find Christ.

Jesus has already sought us out. We need to seek Him out.

Prayer: Lord, help us to see you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly.
Phase 1 Meeting 10

Theme: Thanksgiving
Resources Needed:
  o Copies of the closing prayer for each group member

Opening Prayer:
“Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn’t learn a lot, at least we learned a little, and if we didn’t learn a little, at least we didn’t get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn’t die, so let us all be thankful.”

Check-In:
  • Where have God and goodness been moving in your life?

Spiritual Autobiographies:
The 2 or 3 members scheduled for this day should share their spiritual autobiographies.

Focusing Exercise:
A facilitator should lead the group in the following Examen, as a way of everyone reflecting on the areas of their life for which they are thankful.

  • Recall that you are in the presence of God.
  • Spend a moment being thankful for all the gifts that God has given you.
  • Ask for the Holy Spirit to bless you with honesty and patience, and to help you be open to growth.
  • Recall this morning. What did you do? What were your hopes for the day?
  • As you move onto the afternoon, who did you spend time with? What were your feelings? What motivated you or frustrated you?
  • Moving into the evening, where did you see God? Where did you turn away from God? How can you better serve God tomorrow?
  • Spend the next few moments asking God for forgiveness, thanking him for the graces you received, and ask for the strength to do better tomorrow.

Faith Sharing Question:
  • What did you notice as you prayerfully examined your day? What thoughts or feelings stood out to you?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
  • After giving/hearing spiritual autobiographies, and doing the examen, what are you going to leave this meeting being grateful for?
Closing Prayer:
"I thank God and I praise Him
for the sunset that lifts my spirit,
the morning that lets my
soul take flight in search
of wildflowers, the songbirds that
waken my world. And I
thank God for His presence
in my life, for family and friends,
for joy and even sorrows
that strengthen my life, for
the awareness that
God's love is the essence of
all happiness, the bond between
heaven and earth.” ~Neil Fitzgerald~

Announcements/Social:
Closing Prayer

"I thank God and I praise Him for the sunset that lifts my spirit, the morning that lets my soul take flight in search of wildflowers, the songbirds that waken my world. And I thank God for His presence in my life, for family and friends, for joy and even sorrows that strengthen my life, for the awareness that God's love is the essence of all happiness, the bond between heaven and earth.”

~Neil Fitzgerald~

Closing Prayer

"I thank God and I praise Him for the sunset that lifts my spirit, the morning that lets my soul take flight in search of wildflowers, the songbirds that waken my world. And I thank God for His presence in my life, for family and friends, for joy and even sorrows that strengthen my life, for the awareness that God's love is the essence of all happiness, the bond between heaven and earth.”

~Neil Fitzgerald~
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<td>Community/Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will begin to get to know one another on a deeper level.</td>
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<td>community.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Our hopes and God’s dreams</td>
<td>Community/Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will consider and pray about their hopes and dreams for the year, both</td>
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<td>individually and for the group.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>CLC</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will explore elements of CLC spirituality and how they relate to their</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
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<td>Committing to CLC</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Members will share their letters to the group, explaining why they do or do think</td>
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<td>this is the right time for them to commit to the CLC. Members will also share their</td>
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<td>hopes and expectations, and the group will come up with a set of rules or “non-</td>
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<td>negotiables” that they will abide by.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>TBD by Group</td>
<td>TBD by group</td>
<td>Facilitators should assess the needs of their group and form a meeting accordingly.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Prism God</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will explore different images and perceptions of God, and articulate their</td>
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<td>own varying images of God.</td>
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<td>Discovering God in Creation</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will reflect on how they find God in creation.</td>
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<td>Spirituality/Community</td>
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<td>Spirituality/Service/</td>
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<td>Community</td>
<td>and change.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>TBD by Group</td>
<td>TBD by group</td>
<td>Facilitators should assess the needs of their group and form a meeting accordingly.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Inner peace</td>
<td>Community/Spirituality</td>
<td>Members will reflect on the ways in which they find peace during the stress of</td>
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Phase 2 Meeting 1

Theme: Called by name to be children of God in community.

Resources Needed:
- Paper (plain or colored)
- Markers
- Crayons
- Pens or whatever else you would like to write with or draw
- Copy of opening prayer for each group member.

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)
You have Called Me by Name
Joseph Tetlow, S.J.

Oh, Lord my God,
You called me from the sleep of nothingness
merely because in your tremendous love
you want to make good and beautiful beings.
You have called me by my name in my mother’s womb.
You have given me breath and light and movement
and walked with me every moment of my existence.
I am amazed, Lord God of the universe,
That you attend to me and, more, cherish me.
Create in me the faithfulness that moves you,
And I will trust you and yearn for you all my days.
Amen

Check-In:
- What has drawn you back to CLC?

Focusing Exercise:
- Ask each member to draw how they view themselves.
- After giving them some time, the group should draw how they think God views them.
  The point of this exercise is for each member to share a bit of depth about themselves to the group and for the group in turn to get to know each member.

  Do a second wave of reflection posing the question if anything stuck out to a member of the group while they were sharing.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- What was the biggest challenge in seeing yourself as God sees you? In seeing yourself?
- What do you plan to take with you about who you’re and who God intends you to be?
**Closing Prayer:**
Impromptu prayer with intentions of group.

**Announcements/Social:**
Explain to the group the 3 meeting commitment, and how they will decide after the 3rd meeting whether or not they want to commit to CLC.
You have Called Me by Name
Joseph Tetlow, S.J.

Oh, Lord my God,
You called me from the sleep of nothingness
merely because in your tremendous love
you want to make good and beautiful beings.
You have called me by my name in my mother’s womb.
You have given me breath and light and movement
and walked with me every moment of my existence.
I am amazed, Lord God of the universe,
That you attend to me and, more, cherish me.
Create in me the faithfulness that moves you,
And I will trust you and yearn for you all my days.
Amen

You have Called Me by Name
Joseph Tetlow, S.J.

Oh, Lord my God,
You called me from the sleep of nothingness
merely because in your tremendous love
you want to make good and beautiful beings.
You have called me by my name in my mother’s womb.
You have given me breath and light and movement
and walked with me every moment of my existence.
I am amazed, Lord God of the universe,
That you attend to me and, more, cherish me.
Create in me the faithfulness that moves you,
And I will trust you and yearn for you all my days.
Amen
Phase 2 Meeting 2

Theme: Our hopes and God’s Dreams
Resources Needed:
  o “Dreaming With God” handout
  o Pens/pencils

Opening Prayer:
  Impromptu prayer

Check-In:
  o Were there any moments this past week when you found yourself living out God’s view of you?

Focusing Exercise:
  Dreaming with God
  o Pass out the handout, “Dreaming with God.” Encourage members to pray and write down the answers. Play some instrumental music during prayer.
  o Suggested Questions to pray and share
    1. Share our answers to the questions, the first two paired, followed by the second two
    2. How can our CLC group concretely support you? In what way?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
  o What’s one thing I walk away with from the meeting?
  o Do I have a sense of what God is saying to me through this meeting?

Closing Prayer:
  Impromptu prayer with intentions of group.

Announcements/Social:
  Ask the group to make a formal decision whether or not they want to be in the group, and write a letter explaining why they want to commit to the group.
Dreaming With God

1. What are your hopes and dreams for yourself in this school year?

2. What are your hopes and dreams for our CLC group in this school year?

3. Imagine God is sitting in front of you. Ask God, “What are your hopes and dreams for me this year?”

4. Now ask God. “What are your hopes and dreams for our group?”
Phase 2 Meeting 3

Theme: Living CLC Spirituality

Resources Needed:
- Copy of Opening Prayer
- Pens
- Cut out slips of the descriptions of elements of CLC Spirituality

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)

First Principle and Foundation

The Goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts from God. Presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us to develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance. Before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening his life in me.

Check-In:
- What moments of consolation and desolation did you experience this week? Do you have a sense of what God is saying to you in these movements?

Focusing Exercise:
- Cut out the explanations of different elements of CLC spirituality. Make sure there is at least one for each member. If you need more, repeat some elements.
Have each member pick an element, read it, and write down any question they have related to that element. They should write down the question on the back of the description and place the description back into the pile/bowl/basket.

Each member should then draw a description and read it aloud. They should then read the question aloud and answer it.

**Conclusion/Evaluation:**
- Is there any question that was asked that you feel called to share about?
- What are you taking away from this meeting?

**Closing Prayer:**
Impromptu prayer with intentions of group.

**Announcements/Social:**
First Principle and Foundation
St. Ignatius, as paraphrased by David Fleming, S.J.

The Goal of our life is to live with God forever.
God, who loves us, gave us life.
Our own response of love allows God's life
to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts from God,
Presented to us so that we can know God more easily
and make a return of love more readily.
As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God
Insofar as they help us to develop as loving persons.
But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives,
They displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance
Before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice
And are not bound by some obligation.
We should not fix our desires on health or sickness,
Wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one.
For everything has the potential of calling forth in us
A deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this:
I want and I choose what better leads
To God's deepening his life in me.
"Finding God in All Things"

This favorite phrase of Ignatius points to an ease of finding God in each concrete situation of life. It presupposes openness to God in any experience, dramatic or dull, vital or trivial, such that we are willing to be shaped by God. It is the posture of seeking meaning in our own daily happenings: “Lord, how are You inviting me through this event?” “What are You trying to tell me through that person?”

Intimacy with Jesus

The *Spiritual Exercises* is a “school of the heart” which fosters a personal knowing, loving, and following of Jesus. This intimacy with our Brother and Savior brings us to a greater identification with Christ poor and humbled, crucified and Risen. It impels us to collaborate with him in the struggle for the poor, powerless, and rejected – to befriend him in the marginalized. Heartfelt and honest conversations with Jesus in prayer and with others in dialogue ground this intimacy.

Following the Spirit / Tracking interior movements

The desire to become more like Jesus and find God in all things moves us, as both individuals and as a community, to listen and respond creatively to the promptings of the Spirit. This entails attentiveness to the flow of interior moods, desires or feelings and the thoughts that accompany them. It involves both sensitivity to how God is present and acting in our lives as well as vigilance for the forces and influences that takes us away from God through personal vices, people, institutions, and cultural values, etc. Growing in awareness of inner motivations allows us to respond more lovingly to the Spirit at work in our lives.

Serving Out of Gratitude

The Ignatian imagination sees “all as gift.” Our very existence, natural (in)abilities, the people, and experiences that shape who we are becoming are gifts that flow from God’s outpouring love. God who delights in me as “Beloved” labors in all aspects of my life to draw me deeper into loving union and service. The more I grow in gratitude of God’s plentiful love for
me and all of creation, the more will I respond fully and generously in service of and with others. Gratitude fuels my striving to love as I have been loved.

Ordering Relationships
Living and choosing in loving collaboration with Jesus inserts us more deeply into right relationships with others. We are called to foster just and loving relationships: to live with integrity in our calling to be “friends in the Lord,” to stand in solidarity with the oppressed, and to extend charity toward all. Such heartfelt and ordered relationships expand to a care for all of God’s creation. Where there is alienation or division, we are called to be reconcilers and peacemakers; where there is suffering and injustice we are called to be healers, bearers of hope, and promoters of justice.

Living in True Freedom
Integrating the above ideals cultivates an Ignatian way of living rooted in freedom for which we are created and called. Each of us is entrusted with a unique and particular mission in life, loved into us by God. Living out this passion means living in freedom as children of God and collaborators with Christ in building up the Kingdom. Free from fear, untruth, disordered tendencies and relationships; free to live authentically, lovingly, justly as response to God in every situation of our lives. As Jesus was free with regard to wealth, honor, and power in order to be available for the work of God, so too are we called to be free.
Phase 2 Meeting 4

Theme: Committing to CLC

Resources Needed:
- Copies of the opening prayer for each group member
- Two sided white or light colored paper
- Markers
- Copies of the closing prayer for each member
- Colored sand (one color for each group member)
- A glass vase or candle holder

Opening Prayer: (See included sheet to print as a handout)

A prayer adapted from “For a New Home” by John O’Donohue

May this community shelter our lives.
When we come in home here,
May all the weight of the world
Fall from our shoulders.

May our hearts be tranquil here,
Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this be a safe place
Full of understanding and acceptance,
Where we can be as we are,
Without the need to mask
Of pretense or image.

May this community be a place of discovery,
Where possibilities that sleep
In the clay of your soul emerge
To deepen and refine our vision
For all that is yet to come to birth.

May it be a community of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,
Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A community where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost
Though the journey is difficult and slow.
May there be great delight in our community.
May it be a place of welcome for the broken and outcast.

May we have eyes to see that no one comes without a gift,
And no one leaves without blessing.
Check-In:
- Where did you sense God’s presence in the last week?
  OR
- What feelings or reactions did you have to the letters of commitment?

Focusing Exercise: These three activities are all actually ONE focus activity, meant to help the group form a common bond and vision for their community. The closing prayer is a ritual that will create a visual reminder (a colored sand candle) of the member’s commitment to one another.

4. Letter Sharing:
   - Facilitators share letters and/or of members who have decided not to commit to CLC and therefore not present at meeting
   - Each group member reads their letters, saying why they want to commit to CLC and what they are hoping for from the group.

5. Sharing Hopes:
   - Members take a few minutes to write their hopes for what the community will be on side one of the group’s sheet of paper. Afterwards, people can discuss and explain the hopes that they have written.
   - Question for Listening Deeper: After everyone has responded, facilitators may ask something along the lines of “Are there any hopes here that resonate with your own?”

6. Creating “Non Negotiable”:
   - On second side of the group’s sheet, members write down the guidelines or rules they would like their group to follow. Facilitators should be sure to include and explain confidentiality and presence. Afterwards, people can discuss why they fell these guidelines are important.

Conclusion/evaluation:
How do you feel about the vision for our CLC?

Closing Prayer:
The facilitator should explain the logistics of and purpose for this particular closing prayer activity before beginning. After the facilitator’s opening prayer, each group member should place some colored sand in the candle holder and as they do so, offer one or two gifts that they’re presence brings to the group (i.e., I Rebecca commit to this group. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of empathy and listening.) By the end of prayer, the candle will be full of different colors of sand, representing one community made up of multiple individuals. A candle will be placed in each holder, and the candle will be lit at the beginning of each meeting. The CLC room will be decorated with each of these CLC’s candles, symbolizing how we are connected to the larger CLC community.

Prayer:
Facilitator: Loving God, we come before you asking that you accept our commitment to one another and to you in this Christian Life Community. We thank you for the ways that you have brought us to this place, and ask that you bless our commitment to accompany each other as a Christian Life Community.
I, ____________________, commit to this community. As a member of CLC, I bring the
gifts of __________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder).

Member 1: I, ____________________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I
bring the gifts of __________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)

Member 2: I, ____________, commit to this community. As a member of CLC, I bring the
gifts of ______________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)

[Continue until each member has had a chance to share and add their sand]

Facilitator: (adding a candle to the holder and lighting it) these, gifts symbolized in the sand
and fire, are our continual offering to you, loving God, and to one another. We ask you to accept
these offerings and bless our commitment throughout the coming year and beyond. We ask all these
things through Christ, Our Lord.

All: amen

Announcements/ Social:
Opening Prayer

A prayer adapted from “For a New Home” by John O’Donohue

May this community shelter our lives.
When we come in home here,
May all the weight of the world
Fall from our shoulders.

May our hearts be tranquil here,
Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this be a safe place
Full of understanding and acceptance,
Where we can be as we are,
Without the need of any mask
Of pretense or image.

May this community be a place of discovery,
Where the possibilities that sleep
In the clay of your soul can emerge
To deepen and refine your vision
For all that is yet to come to birth.

May it be a community of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,
Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A community where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost
Though the journey is difficult and slow.
May there be great delight in our community.
May it be a place of welcome for the broken and outcast.

May we have eyes to see that no one comes without a gift,
And no one leaves without a blessing.
Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, we come before you, asking that you accept our commitment to one another and to you in this Christian Life Community. We thank you for the ways that you have brought us to this place, and ask that you bless our commitment to accompany each other as a Christian Life Community.

I, __________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of __________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder).

Member 1: I, __________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of __________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)

Member 2: I, __________, commit to this community. As a member of this CLC, I bring the gifts of __________________. (At this time, place colored sand in the candle holder)

[Continue until each member has had a chance to share and add their sand]

Facilitator: (adding a candle to the holder and lighting it) These gifts, symbolized in sand and fire, are our continual offering to you, loving God, and to one another. We ask that you accept these offerings and bless our commitment throughout the coming year and beyond. We ask all these things through Christ, Our Lord.

All: Amen.
Phase 2 Meeting 6

Theme: Prism God

Resources Needed:
- Paper (plain or colored)
- Markers
- Pens or whatever else you would like to write with or draw

Opening Prayer:
“How You Look at It”
Philip Barnhart in Quiet Moments in the Presence of God

God is like a prism. What you see depends on how you turn the glass. Turn it in faith and see the greatness of God. Turn it in love and see the warmth of God. Turn it in hope and see the promises of God. Turn it in anticipation and see the guidance of God. Turn it in assurance and see the eternity of God.

Dear God, how wonderful and exciting to see you now as I have not seen you before. Help me have open eyes to glimpse the full spectrum of your majesty. Amen.

Check-In:
- Where did you see God this week? What aspect of God did you see?

Focusing Exercise:
- Have each member draw three columns on a piece of paper
- First, have members draw or otherwise represent what they believed about God when they were children
- Then, have each member do the same for when they were in high school
- Finally, have each member do the same for what they believe now.

Have each member share their different perceptions of God, especially asking what aspect or image of God was most prevalent for the person at that period in their lives.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- What was surprising, challenging, or exciting about this exercise?

Closing Prayer:
Play the song “God Is” by Danielle Rose

Announcements/Social:
Ask group members if anyone wants to bring in an opening and/or closing prayer
You want to know Me? You want to see My face?
I do not age with time; I do not fit into a space
I transcend the capacity of your eye, so who am I?
It is the question of the moment;
It is the question for all time
I am you, and you are mine

I am the beginning in the end
I am the faith in your believing
I am the color of truth
I am the dreamer of your dreams
I am the falling in your love
I am the words of a prayer
I am the silence in the music
I am the music in the silence

I am your father; I am your mother
I am the man who cannot cry
I am the story in your eyes
I am the orphan of war
I am the leper begging on the corner
I am the black slave in chains
I am the Muslim bride who cannot show her face
I am the cross you carry again

I am all you have forgotten
I am all that you have not been
I am in you - all of this in within you
Let the journey begin, Amen
I am in you, Amen
Phase 2 Meeting 7

Theme: Finding God in Creation
Resources Needed:
  o Copies of Genesis 1:1-31
  o Quiet piano music.

Opening Prayer:

Check-In:
  • When was the last time you were overwhelmed or at least gently touched by the beauty of creation?

Focusing Exercise:
  Ask members to do an Ignatian contemplation of Genesis 1:1-31. Be sure to give instructions first. Allow 15 minutes for the contemplation.
  • How was that form of prayer? What was good? What was difficult?
  • What did you see? Hear? Touch? Taste? Smell? What happened?
  • Were you able to have a conversation with Jesus? If so, what was it like?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
  • Did anything overwhelm you with beauty in this contemplation?

Closing Prayer:
  Praying for intentions of group

Announcements/Social:
Phase 2 Meeting 8

Theme: The God of Love

Resources Needed:
- Quiet, instrumental music
- A copy of “The Sanctuary” in Anthony de Mello’s Wellsprings

Opening Prayer:
Impromptu prayer for needs of the group

Check-In:
- When did you feel totally and utterly loved by God this week?

Focusing Exercise:
Have members find a comfortable position, and gradually lead them through the Anthony de Mello “The Sanctuary” meditation. (Can be found in Laura’s office).

Questions:
- What happened? Who did you see? What moments did you re-live?
- What was surprising, challenging, or exciting about this exercise?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- What did you find to be helpful? What can be improved?

Closing Prayer:
Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, 
Than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with, what seizing your imagination,
Will affect everything.
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
What you will do with your evenings,
How you will spend your weekends,
What you read, who you know,
What breaks your heart,
And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.
--Pedro Arrupe SJ

Announcements/Social:
Nothing is More Practical than Finding God

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is,
Than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination,
Will affect everything.
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
What you will do with your evenings,
How you will spend your weekends,
What you read, who you know,
What breaks your heart,
And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.

--Pedro Arrupe SJ

Nothing is More Practical than Finding God

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is,
Than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination,
Will affect everything.
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
What you will do with your evenings,
How you will spend your weekends,
What you read, who you know,
What breaks your heart,
And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.

--Pedro Arrupe SJ
Phase 2 Meeting 9

Theme: Heart and Hands – Discovering Myself Through Service

Resources Needed:
- Bible for opening prayer
- Pens
- Paper
- “Our Hands, God’s Hands” Meditation
- Instrumental Music
- “Hands” – Jewel CD
- “Hands” Lyrics
- Reflection questions for the week

Opening Prayer:
- Invite one of your members to read one of the scripture passages below in its full text from the Bible. Ask them to close the reading with their own prayer.

  Phil 2: 1-11: “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others.”

  Lk 10: 25-37: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

  Mt 25:3-46: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me... ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Check-In:
- When this week have you noticed your gifts being used in service to others?

Focusing Exercise:
- Preparation:
  1. Invite members to find a comfortable position (sitting up) as you will be leading them through a guided meditation. Encourage them to be aware of their feelings, reactions, and inner movements that occur throughout the meditation.
  2. Make sure the lights are dimmed and have some instrumental music playing in the background to help set the proper environment.

- Guided Meditation:
  1. Read “Our Hands, God’s Hand” slowly and softly
2. Making sure to take appropriate pauses at each ellipsis to allow sufficient time for reflection.

- **Reflection:** Invite members to reflect silently, in writing, after the meditation with the following questions prompted to them:
  1. What feelings did you experience in the meditation?
  2. What phrases/words stood out to you? Sit with these words or phrases. Listen to what stirs within as you meditate upon them.
  3. How is God speaking to you at this moment? What is God revealing to you about who you are, how you have been shaped, or ways you want to grow through acts of service?

- **Sharing:** Invite members to share based upon their experience within the meditation and/or their reflection from the follow-up questions. As always, encourage them to share anything else that they would like to bring to the group although it may be outside of the topic of the meeting.

**Conclusion/Evaluation:**
- What do you find to be helpful? Not helpful? Needs to be improved?
- Any ideas to help our group grow deeper and more intentionally become a community of discernment?

**Closing Prayer:**
Play the song “Hands” by Jewel, give out lyric sheets

**Announcements/Social:**
- Tell group about Wolves on the Prowl, November 6th.
- Give out the reflection questions for the week, asking people to consider if and how it relates to their daily relationships with God and others.
“Our Hands, God’s Hands”

Isaiah 49:13-16 “I have carved you on the palm of my hand.”

MEDITATION
(read slowly and prayerfully; play instrumental music in the background)

Sit straight up, feet flat on the ground, eyes closed, hands resting in lap, palms up. Tune into your breathing… relax any parts of your body that feel tensed. With each inhale feel the pressure build up in your chest… as you exhale feel the air sink into the depths of your stomach. Feel the tension move through your shoulders and arms and escape through your fingertips. Become aware of the air at your fingertips, between your fingers, on the palm of your hand. Wiggle your fingers and experience their energy, delicacy, and intricacy.

Think of all the things that your hands have done in your lifetime. Beginning when you were a baby, your tiny perfect hands were the means by which you learned… learned to crawl and creep… then to walk and balance yourself… hold things for the first time, feed yourself, wash and dress yourself. At one time your greatest accomplishment was tying your own shoes.

As you have grown older, what else have you learned to do? Think of the things you do every day- the essays you type, the basketball you dribble, the math problems you carefully work out, the food you cook, the notes you scribble in class, the hands you shake, the artwork you create… all the kinds of work they have done, the tiredness and aching they have known, cold and heat, soreness and bruises. What else do you do that requires the use of your hands?

How much hurt, anger and even violence have these hands expressed? The fights they have gotten into… the doors they have shut… the phones slammed down… the drinks forced on already drunk friends… the joint passed around the circle… the people you have overlooked and failed to help. With the awesome power of these hands, comes great responsibility. Do our hands consistently do good? When have they caused pain, either to ourselves or to others?

Our hands are not just for ourselves, but for others. Remember the tears they have wiped away, our own or another’s, the blood they have bled, the healing they have experienced. Think of the loving embrace that forgives, the pat on the back of encouragement, the “high fives” and secret handshakes of solidarity. When have your own hands offered help to another, amongst your friends or in the greater community? Building a house or doing construction work in Mexico or in a poor neighborhood… offering food to those that are hungry… bringing a card to a sick neighbor…

What hands have helped you along the way… reached out and caught you when you were about the fall… picked you up after you have hit the ground? When in a busy
crowd a friend reached out and grabbed your hand to make sure you did not lose your way or get separated from your group? Take a moment to reflect in gratitude for these people and experiences.

Our hands are from God and ultimately for God. How often have your hands been folded in prayer, both a sign of their powerlessness and of their power? We come to these states of prayer in our times of gratitude and thanksgiving, as well as in our weakness and desperation. To make the sign of the cross, strike our breast, receive Communion, hold our head in our hands... hands opened in meditation, drawing in the power and strength of our Creator, and sending it forth into the world.

Raise your right hand slowly and gently place it over your heart. Press more firmly until your hand picks up the beat of your heart, a rhythm learned in the womb from the heartbeat of your mother. Press more firmly for a moment and then release your hand and lower it into your lap very carefully as if it were carrying your heart. When you extend your hand to another, it is not just bone and skin, it is your heart.

Think of all the hands that have left their imprint on you- prints that can never be erased. Think of all the places that carry your hand prints and all the people who bear your heart prints. They are indelible and will last forever. It is in this sharing of gifts and communion of hearts that we are united with one another and transformed.

Without opening your eyes, extend your hands on either side and find another hand. Do not simply hold it but try to convey a message friendship, concern. Let your hand speak to it and let it listen to the other. Try to express your gratitude for this hand stretched out to you in the dark, and then bring your hand back again to your lap. Experience the presence of that hand lingering upon your hand. The afterglow will fade, but the print is there forever. Whose hand was that? It could have been any hand; it could have been Christ's hand. In a sense, it was. Christ’s hands through human vessels.

“Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet on earth but yours
Yours are the eyes through which He looks
compassion on this world
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

St. Teresa of Avila
“Hands”
Jewel

If I could tell the world just one thing
It would be that we’re all OK
And not to worry 'cause worry is wasteful
And useless in times like these
I won’t be made useless
I won’t be idle with despair
I will gather myself around my faith
For light does the darkness most fear
My hands are small, I know
But they’re not yours, they are my own
But they’re not yours, they are my own
And I am never broken
Poverty stole your golden shoes
But it didn’t steal your laughter
And heartache came to visit me
But I knew it wasn’t ever after
We’ll fight, not out of spite
For someone must stand up for what's right
'Cause where there’s a man who has no voice
There ours shall go singing
My hands are small I know
But they’re not yours, they are my own
But they’re not yours, they are my own
And I am never broken
In the end only kindness matters
In the end only kindness matters
I will get down on my knees, and I will pray
I will get down on my knees, and I will pray
I will get down on my knees, and I will pray
My hands are small I know
But they’re not yours, they are my own
But they’re not yours, they are my own
And I am never broken
My hands are small I know
But they’re not yours, they are my own
But they’re not yours, they are my own
And I am never broken
We are never broken

We are God's eyes
God's hands
God's mind
We are God's eyes
God's hands
God's heart
We are God's eyes
God's hands
God's eyes
We are God's hands
We are God's hands
Reflection Questions and Follow-Up Action

1. What experiences of service are life-giving for me right now in my life?
2. Which ones are not?
3. How might I integrate service more fully into my life?
4. How is this a part of me….flowing from my center….the core which is God?

Reflection Questions and Follow-Up Action

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2. Which ones are not?
3. How might I integrate service more fully into my life?
4. How is this a part of me….flowing from my center….the core which is God?
Theme: Called to Growth

Resources Needed:
- Quiet, instrumental music
- A copy of “The Enlightenment” in Anthony de Mello’s Wellsprings

Opening Prayer:
“The spiritual life is one of becoming. It is more process than event, and the process is always going on. The spiritual life is not so much reaching a destination as it is being on the road. You are on the road to a deeper understanding of who God is, [and who you are], to a more personal acceptance of God in your life, and to more joy and love than you have known before.” – “A life of process” from Quiet Moments in the Presence of God, ed. by Lila Empson.

Check-In:
- This past week there been moments when you feel you’ve been called to change? Where do you see God in that change?

Focusing Exercise:
Have members find a comfortable position, and gradually lead them through the Anthony de Mello “The Enlightenment” meditation.

Questions:
- What happened? Who did you see? What emotions came up within you?
- What was surprising, challenging, or exciting about this exercise?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- What are you taking away from this meeting?

Closing Prayer:
“I observe ‘me,’ but I do not think about ‘me.’ Because the thinking ‘me’ does a lot of bad thinking, too. But when I watch ‘me,’ I am constantly aware that this is a reflection.” – Anthony de Mello

God, this week, help us to watch ourselves without judgement. Give us eyes to see ourselves as you see us, so that we can move ever forward in the process of becoming who you have created us to be.”

Announcements/Social:
When I try to change what I dislike in me
By fighting it
I merely push it underground.
If I accept it,
It will surface and evaporate.
What I resist
Will stubbornly persist.

I consider the example of Jesus, who sets himself the task of moving mountains and battles with exasperating foes. Yet even in his anger he is loving - he combines a keen desire for change with an acceptance of reality as it is.

I try to be like him.
I start with feelings I dislike.
To each of them I talk
In a loving, accepting, kind of way
And listen to what each has to say,
Till I discover that, while it can do me harm,
It also does me good,
That it is there for a benign purpose,
Which I now attempt to see.

I keep on with the dialogue
Till I feel a real acceptance of these feelings
- acceptance, not approval, not resignation -
So that I am no longer depressed about my depressions
Or angry with my anger
Or discouraged because of my discouragement
Of frightened of my fears
Or rejecting of my feelings of rejection.
I can live with them in peace
For I have seen that God can use them for any good.

I do the same
With some of the many other things about my life
That I want to change:

My body's disabilities…

My personal shortcomings…

The external circumstances of my life…

The happenings of the past…
The persons with whom I live…

The whole world as it is….

Old age, sickness, death.

I speak to them with love
And the consciousness that they somehow fit
Into God's plan.

In doing so I undergo a transformation:
While everything about me is the same
- the world, my family, my feelings,
My body, my neuroses -

I am the same no longer.
I am more loving now,
More accepting of what is undesirable.
More peaceful, too, for having come to see
That violence cannot lead to lasting change
- only love and understanding can.
Phase 2 Meeting 12

Theme: Inner Peace
Resources Needed:
  o Jennifer Knapp “Peace”
  o Paper
  o markers

Opening Prayer:
Ask members to take a minute to quiet themselves and get in a comfortable position. After a moment of silence, facilitator repeats the verse “Be still and know that I am God” slowly a few times, with pauses between each time.

Check-In:
  • Where are you right now? Where is your head? Where is your heart? How are you and God?

Focusing Exercise:
Ask members to think of what brings them inner peace and consolation. Ask them to spend a few moments going to whatever that is, taking note of how they feel as they do so.
  • What about this place or state of being brings you peace?
  • What are some of the details of this peaceful place or state? Feel like? Sound like?

Ask them to draw it or represent it through art, and then share with the group, answering:
  • Is God present in this peace for you? How so?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
  • In the craziness of the semester, how can you continue to foster this inner peace?

Closing Prayer:
Play Jennifer Knapp’s “Peace”

Announcements/Social:
“Peace”
Jennifer Knapp

He is my Light and my Salvation
Whom have I to fear
In His secret place I'll hide and pray
That I might hear a simple word

O, how I would have despaired
If You had not come found me there
I can lean against You throne and find my Peace
Find my Peace
And when my enemies draw near
I pray that they will find
That I'm protected and secure
All tempests He will bind with a mighty word

O, how I would have despaired
If You had not come found me there
I can lean against You throne and find my Peace
Find my Peace

He is my Light and my Salvation whom have I to fear?
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Theme: People as Gifts
Resources Needed:
- Persons as Gifts poem (1 for each person)
- My gift list (1 for each person)
- Gift list papers

Opening Prayer: Persons as Gifts Poem
Also you could use these Scripture resources:
- “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another.” (1 Peter 4: 8-11)
- “As a body is on though it has many parts.” (1 Cor. 12: 12-26)
- “A man’s gift clears the way for him.” (Proverbs 18: 16)

Check-In:
- Can you describe a time in the last week were you felt successful, either at problem solving or helping another solve a problem? What traits or qualities do you have that help you solve problems in your life?

Focusing Exercise:
- Have each group member individually go through the “Gift List” and check off what gifts she feels she has. After that have them reflect on the following:
  - Do any of the gifts you checked off surprise you?
  - Do you keep any of the gifts secret or don’t want others to know? Why?
  - Are gifts merely accidental or given with purpose?
- At this point have the members write their names at the top of the paper and then pass them around the group to have other members check off the gifts the person has.
- Finally, have each member look over their “Gift List.” Now invite them to share their surprises, their reflections, and their hopes.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- What was the biggest challenge of receiving gifts?
- What do you plan to take with you as a result of this meeting?

Closing Prayer:
We are all children of God, all gifted in different ways. As Scripture says, in each of us, God’s Spirit is shown in a unique way, for the good of all. There is no question that each of us have been given unique gifts. We are called to discover the gifts that are ours and to use them wisely. We are also called to recognize and appreciate the gifts of others. Furthermore, we are sent by God, into the world to embrace and develop our gifts for the service of others. We are called to continue in Christ’s mission. We ask for you help. Amen.
My Gift List

___Diligence
___Independence
___Sensitivity
___Kindness
___Enthusiasm
___Ability to Lead
___Faith filled
___Courageous
___Organized
___Affectionate
___Sense of Wonder
___Able to live in mystery
___Openness
___Honesty
___Peacemaking
___Creativity
___Integrity
___Faithfulness
___Musical talent
___Dreamer
___Spontaneous
___Athletic
___Caring
___Gentleness
___Sense of Humor
___Cooperation
___Humility
___Courageousness
___Dependability
___Listening
___Artistic Ability
___Practical
___Openness to new Things
___Patience
___Friendliness
___Compassion
___Hospitality
___Generosity
___Acting
___Easy-going
___Efficient
___Realistic
___Respectful to others
Additional Resources: 2

Theme: True Self vs. False Self

Resources Needed:
- Meditation Music
- Copies of “My Truest Self” worksheet

Possible Scripture Resources:
- “If you continue my word... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8: 31-32)
- “I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4: 1-7)

Opening Prayer:

I want to unit my life to your life,
my thoughts to your thoughts,
my affections to your affections,
my heart to your heart,
my works to your works,
my whole self to your whole self,
in order to become through this union
more holy and pleasing in the sight of your Father.
I want to join my intentions to your intentions,
the holiness of your actions to mine,
and the excellence of your lofty virtues
to the lowliness of mine.
For example, when I pray
I will join the holiness of your prayer to mine;
in the totality of my life as well as in its every detail,
I will join the whole breadth and height
of your divine intentions
to whatever I have to suffer,
I will join, if possible, your looks to my eyes,
your holy words to my tongue,
your meekness to my gentleness,
your humiliations and self-emptying to my humility,
in a word, your whole divine spirit to my actions:
and when, in some some of my works,
I discover something not inspired by your spirit
and which proceeds rather from my self centeredness
or some poorly mortified affection,
I will renounce it and disown it with my whole heart.
No my Jesus, I promise myself to have nothing in me
which is not in union with lofty virtues. Amen.

~ Jean Pierre Medaille, S.J.
Check-In:
- When in the past week do you think you shown your true self, shared your honest feelings? When have you hid your feelings or yourself?

Focusing Exercise:
- Pass out the sheet entitled “My Truest Self” Explain to the group that for the next twenty minutes they will be engaging in a stream of consciousness writing exercise. There are a couple of questions that will serve as prompts. Tell the members of your group not to worry about punctuation or grammar but to simply let the writing flow, being aware that sometimes we even edit our prayer.
- After the 20 minutes has passed invite members to look over their writing for repeated themes, thoughtful reflections, or surprises.

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- Invite group members to share parts of their writings. In their sharing, the following questions may prove helpful:
  - Did there anything that surprised you?
  - Anything that was challenging in this exercise?
  - How is God communicating to you through your own words?

Closing Prayer:
There is another self, a true self, who comes to full maturity in emptiness and solitude – and who can of course, begin to appear and grow in the valid, sacrificial and creative self-dedication that belong to a genuine social existence. But note that even this social maturing of love implies at the same time the growth of a certain inner solitude.

Without solitude of some sort there is and can be no maturity. Unless one becomes empty and alone, he cannot give himself in love because he does not possess the deep self which is the only gift worthy of love. And this deep self, we immediately add, cannot be possessed. My deep self in not ‘something’ which I acquire, or to which I ‘attain’ after a long struggle. It is not mine, and cannot become mine. It is no ‘thing’ – no object. It is ‘I’. Amen.

~Thomas Merton
Additional Resources: 3

Theme: Who is God for me?
Possible Scripture resources:
  o “I am the God of your father ... What is his name? God replied, I am who I am.” (Exodus 4-22)
  o “Amen, Amen I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.” (John 8: 58)

Opening Prayer: “God Is” by Danielle Rose
  • If you cannot find a copy of this song, you can go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PQiji32-4

Check-In:
  • During the past week where did you see God? Where might you have seen God if you had been paying more attention?

Focusing Exercise:
  • As children the only faith we could really have was the faith of our parents. We mimicked their actions learning to fold our hands, when to sit, stand, or kneel. Now as we have gotten older we have encountered many different beliefs and faiths. So tonight we want to explore this topic.

  • Ask the following focusing questions:
    o What, if any, religious tradition did you grow up in?
    o What were your experiences of it, namely, do you remember how you thought of or envisioned God?
    o What questions do you have about God now? How do you envision God now?
    o If you were God, how would you go about communicating or revealing yourself to your people?

  • If a conversation does not begin about how God has revealed himself to each member of the group then use the following images to help members reflect on their own lives:
    o Through life experiences: We can sometimes see God simply in the way life works out, whether it be for good or ill.
    o Through other people: God can reveal himself in the words and actions of others. This can come from the most unexpected people.
    o Through creation: We can see God’s creation and see the order, the beauty, the controlled chaos of it all. We can see God in the ocean, the forest, or even in the desert.
    o Through Scripture: God reveals himself in the person of Jesus Christ, whom we first come to know through the scripture.

  • So, where is God? And how has she revealed herself to you? How could you be more open to seeing God in other ways?
Conclusion/Evaluation:
- Why is it so hard to know God... or is it?

Closing Prayer: The Little Fish, by Anthony DeMello, S.J.
“Excuse me,” said an ocean fish, “You are older than I so can you tell me where to find this thing they call the Ocean?”

“The Ocean,” said the other fish, “is the thing you are in now.”

“Oh, this? But this is water. What I’m seeking is the Ocean,” said the disappointed fish as he swam away to search elsewhere.

He came to the Master in sannyasi robes. And he spoke sannyasi language: “For years I have been seeking God. I have sought Him everywhere that He is said to be: on mountain peaks, the vastness of the desert, and the silence of the cloister and the dwellings of the poor.”

“Have you found him?” the Master asked. “No. I have not. Have you?”

What could the Master say? The evening sun was sending shafts of golden light into the room. Hundreds of sparrows were twittering on a banyan tree. In the distance one could hear the sound of highway traffic. A mosquito droned a warning that it was going to strike... And yet this man could sit there and say he had not found Him.

After a white he left, disappointed, to search elsewhere.

Stop searching, little fish. There isn’t anything to look for. All you have to do is look.
Additional Resources: 4

Theme: Searching for God - Being Searched by God

Resources
- Excerpts from either *Hound of Heaven* or Augustine (below)
- Opening and closing prayers

Possible Scripture resources:
- “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him...” (Isaiah 55: 1-13)
- “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3: 1-11)

Opening Prayer:
Psalm 90: 12-17
So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.
Do return, O LORD; how long will it be?
And be sorry for Your servants.
O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.
Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us,
And the years we have seen evil.
Let Your work appear to Your servants
And Your majesty to their children.
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;
And confirm for us the work of our hands;
Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

Check-In:
- How do you view your relationship with God, does the Lord pursue you or do you pursue the Lord? What is it like to be chased by someone you want to catch you?

Focusing Exercise:
- Either pass out the excerpts from Thompson and Augustine or have students read them aloud.
- At this point you can ask the following focusing questions:
  - Does anything in the readings evoke in you your own longing for God?
  - What do you think about being “chased” by God as Francis Thompson describes? What have your experienced in your own faith journey that is similar?
  - How would you describe your own relationship with God these days?

Conclusion/Evaluation:
- How could you invite God to pursue you?
Closing Prayer: Psalm 139

The Response is: You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid your hand upon me.

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

R. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid your hand upon me. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

R. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid your hand upon me. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

R. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid your hand upon me. For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance.

R. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid your hand upon me.
Excerpt from the Hound of Heaven, *Francis Thompson*

I fled Him down the nights and down the days
I fled Him down the arches of the years
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind, and in the midst of tears
I hid from him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped and shot precipitated
Adown titanic glooms of chasmed hears
From those strong feet that followed, followed after
But with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat, and a Voice beat,
More instant than the feet:
All things betray thee who betrayest me...

Still with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following feet, and a Voice above their beat:
Nought shelters thee who wilt not shelter Me.

Adapted from St. Augustine’s *The Confessions*

Late have I loved you,
beauty so old and so new,
late have I loved you.
And see, you were within,
and I was in the external world and sought you there,
and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely things
which you made.

You were with me, and I was not with you.
The lovely things kept me far from you,
though if they did not have their existence in you
they had no existence at all.
You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness.
You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness.
You were fragrant,
and I drew my breath and now pant after you.
I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you.
You touched me,
and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.
Additional Resources: 5

Theme: Understanding Sin and Guilt

Resources Needed:
- Copies of Opening and closing prayer
- Copy of Mark Thibodaux’s book “Armchair Mystic” (available in Laura’s office)

Possible Scripture resources:
- “For all have sinned, all fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3: 23)
- “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28: 13)

Opening Prayer:

The Monk and the Woman by Anthony De Mello
Two Buddhist monks, on their way to the monastery, found an exceedingly beautiful woman at the river bank. Like them, she wanted to cross the river, but the water was too high. So one of them took her across on his shoulders. The other was thoroughly scandalized. For two hours he scolded the offender for his breach of the Rule: Had he forgotten he was a monk? How had he dared to touch the woman? And worse, carry her over the river? And what would people say? Had he not disgraced their holy Religion? And so on. The victim took it gamely. At the end of the lecture he said, “Brother, I dropped that woman at the river. Are you carrying her still?”

The Arab mystic, Abu Hassan Bushanja, says, “The act of sinning is not so harmful as the desire and the thought of it. It is one thing for the body to indulge in pleasure for a moment, and quite another for the mind and heart to chew on it endlessly.” Each time I chew on the sins of others, I suspect the chewing gives me greater pleasure than the sinning gives the sinner.

Check-In:

- During the past week when did you move towards God? When did you move away?

Focusing Exercise:

- Sin seems like a concept that we are either afraid to talk about or that we think has very little relevancy anymore. This is simply not the truth. Ask the group how they define sin? Offer the definition of sin from the catechism, below, and ask the group if this resonates with them, why or why not?

- **Catholic definition of sin:**
  Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law." Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight." Sin sets itself against God’s love for us and turns our hearts away from it.
Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods," knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God." In this proud self-exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation. It is precisely in the Passion, when the mercy of Christ is about to vanquish it, that sin most clearly manifests its violence and its many forms: unbelief, murderous hatred, shunning and mockery by the leaders and the people, Pilate's cowardice and the cruelty of the soldiers, Judas' betrayal - so bitter to Jesus, Peter's denial and the disciples' flight. However, at the very hour of darkness, the hour of the prince of this world, the sacrifice of Christ secretly becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly. (CCC 1849-1851)

OR

- Lead everyone through Exercise K on page 70, "Meeting a Younger Me", found in Armchair Mystic, by Mark Thibodeaux, S.J.
- Invite people to reflect on their experience with this meditation.

Closing Prayer: Psalm 51: 10-13

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.
Theme: Ordinary Miracle

Resources Needed:
- “Ordinary Miracle” by Sarah McLachlan – song and lyric sheet
- CD player

Opening Prayer:
  Impromptu prayer by group

Check-In:
  - Consolation/desolation

Focusing Exercise:
  - *Play the song “Ordinary Miracle” by Sarah McLachlan*
  - What “ordinary miracles” astound you, blow you away?
    - In nature?
    - Among people?
    - About yourself?

  - Is there any way in which you feel called to respond to this feeling?

Second Round of Sharing
  After hearing everyone share, did anything stir within you that you feel called to share?

Closing Prayer:
  - Squeeze Prayer
Ordinary Miracles
~Sarah McLachlan~

It's not that unusual when everything is beautiful
It's just another ordinary miracle today

The sky knows when it's time to snow
don't need to teach a seed to grow
It's just another ordinary miracle today

Life is like a gift they say
Wrapped up for you everyday
Open up and find a way
To give some of your own

Isn't it remarkable?
Like every time a raindrop falls
It’s just another ordinary miracle today

Birds in winter have their fling
And always make it home by spring
It’s just another ordinary miracle today

When you wake up everyday
Please don’t throw your dreams away
Hold them close to your heart
Cause we are all a part
Of the ordinary miracle

Ordinary miracle
Do you want to see a miracle?

It seems so exceptional
Things just work out after all
It’s just another ordinary miracle today

The sun comes up and shines so bright
It disappears again at night
It’s just another ordinary miracle today

It’s just another ordinary miracle today
Theme: Trusting in God

Resources Needed:
- Paper, markers/crayons
- Meditative Music

Scripture:
Proverbs 3:5-6
*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.*

Opening Prayer:
*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.*
(Repeat slowly 3x)

Check-In:
- Consolation/desolation
- OR
- Is there anything about which you are having a hard time trusting God?

Focusing Exercise:
- Breathe deeply, think of 3 or 4 events that have shaped the course of your life. Write them down or draw them somehow. Next to each event, write your reflections about how it was instrumental in shaping your faith and trust in God.
- Write your reactions to the following questions:
  - How was God’s hand apparent in each event
  - How have good, wisdom and growth come about because of each event?
- Spend some time talking to Jesus now about times when you have lost your trust in him, about areas of your life in which you need more trust, and about whys in which you resist trusting him

Sharing questions:
From this exercise what one or two things do you feel called to share with the group?

Second Round of Sharing
After hearing everyone share, did anything stir within you that you feel called to share?

Closing Prayer:
- Squeeze Prayer