



  
**WAYPOINTS  
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION**

ASSIGNMENT 1

## Preparing for the Spiritual Exercises

**Welcome to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.** It is a privilege for me to introduce you to the Exercises and to perhaps have the opportunity to join you on your spiritual journey as your retreat guide through them. I have prepared this document to give you more information about the Exercises and how the retreat works. At the end of the document, I give you an assignment to consider in advance of our first of two on-line meetings -- called conferences -- that **you can take advantage of at no cost to you.** I offer these no-cost conferences so you can learn more about the Exercises while you decide if you want to make the retreat from beginning to end. On the last page are instructions about how to get in touch with me with questions you have and to schedule our first on-line meeting. Thank you for considering Waypoints Spiritual Direction.

Tom Cashman, Waypoints Spiritual Direction

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## Growing in Spiritual Freedom

The 19th Annotation of the Ignatian Exercises is a spiritual retreat that helps Christians to grow more deeply in their faith and to discover more clearly their purpose and mission in life. Ignatian Spirituality affirms that God is present and active “in all things” — in creation, in our relationships, our jobs, our thoughts, our personal circumstances, in our culture — and in all we do. Ignatius of Loyola, who developed and wrote the Exercises five centuries ago, takes for granted -- as can we -- that the grace of God is always at work in our lives and is at work for us.

Through the use of your intellect, and with prayer, scripture reading, contemplation, meditation, and conversation with your spiritual guide, this retreat will help you learn to discern among feelings and desires that shape the circumstances of your life. Ignatius called these feelings and desires motions of the soul or movements of the spirits. By identifying and understanding these movements, you will be able to learn to make choices that draw you closer to God, rather than making choices that lead you away from God. Through our work together as retreatant and spiritual guide, you will grow to understand more about who you are for God and who God is for you.

## The Structure of the Spiritual Exercises and the Retreat

The 19th Annotation retreat of the full Spiritual Exercises takes approximately 30-34 weeks to complete. The Exercises are divided into four sequences of daily exercises called Weeks. They are called Weeks because the Exercises were originally planned to be made as part of a month-long silent retreat. Today, the Four Weeks do not correspond to 7-day calendar weeks. But they embody four distinct themes of prayer, contemplation, and meditation that a retreatant considers that closely align with key events in the life and ministry of Jesus. Before beginning the heart of the Exercises are the Preparation Days, a period of 4-5 weeks when the retreatant and guide get to know one another. The retreatant learns and practices new daily prayer disciplines and is introduced to the Principle and Foundation and the Examen prayer that frame the remaining journey of the Exercises summarized here:

**First Week.** We reflect on our lives in light of God's generous love for us and how our response to God's love has been distorted by patterns of sin. The First Week ends with a meditation: "What have I done for Christ?: What am I doing for Christ?; What ought I do for Christ?"

**Second Week.** With meditations and prayers, and with reflections with scripture about Jesus' birth and baptism, and his teachings and healings, we learn what it means to follow Jesus as one of his disciples. In our prayers, we ask for intimate knowledge of Jesus — to see him more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

**Third Week.** We meditate on the Last Supper, Christ's passion and death, and the Eucharist, and see in Christ's suffering the full expression of God's love for us.

**Fourth Week.** We meditate on the resurrection of Jesus and his appearances to his disciples. We walk with the risen Christ and seek to love and serve him in concrete ways in our lives. We are asked to make a decision: to change our lives to commit ourselves to doing Christ's work in service to the world.

## Prayer in the Exercises

We know that for every relationship to be successful both parties need to know how to listen to one another. Both must give and take; speak and listen. The Spiritual Exercises teach us how to be in close relationship to God who desires intimacy with us. Many of us first learned to pray in one direction only. We would tell God all of our needs (which God knows of already) and then end our prayer, likely expecting God to respond in full to our request. To understand what God wants for us, we must learn to wait on God by listening and to be attentive to God's initiative and response. During the retreat, Ignatius advises us to establish discipline to our prayer time. That we set aside a regular time and place where distractions to prayer are minimized and that we spend 45-mins to an hour each day in prayer. This may seem a challenge at first as you begin the Exercises. The Exercises will teach you to build-up your prayer time during the Preparation Days. You will also learn to keep a journal as part of your reflection and prayer time. The process of writing provides another opportunity to engage with God as you consider and reflect on the scriptures and the exercises.

## What Happens In Your Retreat

You can begin your retreat at a time of year that works for you and as we can set-up a schedule. Once we do that, we will meet on-line for 50 minutes to an hour each week via a video conferencing app, for 30 to 34 weeks, give or take a few small breaks for urgencies and for holidays. After your first two no-cost conference sessions, we will begin the Preparation Days, followed by the Four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises. After each on-line conference, I will email you an individualized set of assignments. These will include Ignatius' Exercises, scripture readings,

contemplations, meditations, and prayers for you to focus on between our weekly conferences. During our conferences you will share insights you gain, and feelings you experience during your reflections and prayer. I will listen closely and ask you questions to guide you on your journey. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius are a spiritually enriching and life-changing experience. I hope you choose to make them. See below to contact me with your questions.

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## The Role of the Spiritual Guide

Ignatius wanted individuals to make the Exercises with the encouragement of a qualified spiritual director or spiritual guide. An Ignatian spiritual guide is a faithful Christian who feels called to be a companion on another's faith journey. He or she has been individually directed previously in the practice of daily prayer with scripture for at least two to three years. The guide has completed formal professional training to give the Exercises before being credentialed to guide others. Ignatian Spirituality believes there are three participants engaged in spiritual direction in the Exercises: God, who initiates the relationship; the retreatant; and the spiritual guide. The retreatant and the guide meet at weekly meetings called conferences. By listening closely, the guide helps the retreatant identify those movements of God that invite him or her to draw closer to God. The guide helps the retreatant discern those movements -- distractions, temptations, sins, unhealthy attachments, and ego-centered preferences -- that entice them away from God. The guide will suggest questions and concrete topics for the retreatant to think about and pray about between conferences. The relationship of the retreatant and the guide is one of trust and friendship in God. But the guide is not the retreatant's confessor. The guide will help the retreatant respond to God's invitation to deal with their sin and may advise the retreatant to go to confession, if that sacrament is part of their faith tradition. The guide does not impose his or her spiritual or religious agenda on the retreatant. Nor does the guide provide advice that addresses those challenges and circumstances faced in daily life, career, or family that require the services of a licensed psychologist, mental health professional, or counselor. Everything the retreatant shares with the guide is held in strict confidence.

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**Your Next Steps:** Your first assignment. Ignatius places a high value in the Exercises on our desires and hopes for ourselves. Set aside 20 to 30 minutes in a place where you cannot be interrupted. Grab some paper for notes. Consider — contemplate, actually — what your hopes and desires from a spiritual retreat would be. Do this same exercise again, a day or so later. Arrive at an understanding about them. . . . Then

.. **Contact me**, Tom Cashman, with questions you have about making the Spiritual Exercises. You can use the contact form at the [waypointsspiritualdirection.com](http://waypointsspiritualdirection.com) website **Contact** tab. Or email me at [contactwaypoints@gmail.com](mailto:contactwaypoints@gmail.com) . I'll respond promptly.