

INTRODUCTION

When we think of St. Ignatius of Loyola, we might be reminded of the universities and schools that bear his name or of the religious order he founded: the Society of Jesus, otherwise known as the Jesuits. We might know of his *Spiritual Exercises*—the classic meditations, prayers, and practices he compiled that have helped countless seekers discover God’s presence in their lives.

We might know something of his famed conversion: the courtly young soldier, recuperating from a battle wound, reads the lives of the saints and devotes himself entirely to God and his service. Ignatius means so many things to so many people, partly because he accomplished so much in his lifetime, but also because Ignatian spirituality has something for everyone. It is a spiritual, practical, contemplative, and active approach to life that can surprise and astound us as we discover God in all things. May these words of Ignatius, taken from the *Exercises*, his letters, and other sources, inspire you to learn more as you seek the “greater glory of God.”

TO BEGIN

For those who love, nothing is too difficult, especially when it is done for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” JOHN 13:34

Prayer

Lord God, as I look at the day ahead and wonder how I will get everything done, I think about why I am here in the first place: because you love me. How simple, and yet, how magnificent! You have created me to love, praise, and serve you, so that I might live forever with you. Help me see everything I do today as an expression of my love for you.

Action

I will write the word “love” next to each item on my to-do list as a reminder that when I do things for love of God and neighbor, nothing is too difficult.

TO FIND GOD IN ALL THINGS

*Consider how God dwells in his creatures:
in the elements, giving them being; in the plants,
giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation;
in humans, giving them understanding. So he dwells
in me, giving me being, life, sensation, and intelligence,
and making a temple of me, since he created me to
the likeness and image of his divine majesty.*

Scripture

God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. **GENESIS 1:31**

Prayer

Lord God, everything you have created—including me—is good. Help me seek and discover your presence in all of creation, that I might find new ways to be grateful for your gifts every day.

Action

I will spend time noticing one aspect of nature: the weather, the sky, a sparrow on the windowsill. I will consider its unique place in God's creation and strive to see how God uses it so that I might know him better.

TO BE GRATEFUL

We will more quickly tire of receiving God's gifts than he in giving them.

Scripture

His mercy endures forever, his faithfulness lasts through every generation. **PSALM 100:5**

Prayer

Gracious God, you have given me life, love, understanding, and free will. You have given me family and friends. You have given me all of creation to call my home. Most astounding of all, you have given me the gift of your Son, who gave up his own life so that I might have eternal life with you. Help me keep this good news always in my heart, so that I might live a life of gratitude.

Action

I will start a journal for prayerful reflection and expression. I will begin by listing five things for which I'm grateful. Today, I will savor these gifts and thank my God for them.

TO FIND MY STRENGTH

If we desire to live in honor and to be esteemed by our neighbors, then we shall never be solidly rooted in God our Lord, and it will be impossible for us to remain undisturbed when insults come our way.

Scripture

“Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.” **MATTHEW 5:11**

Prayer

God, Creator of all, how is it possible for me to forget you? And yet, so often I do. I allow other people to loom larger than you. I worry about their opinions of me. Did they create me? Absolutely not. Do they love me as you do? Not possible. My life, my strength, and my courage are in you alone, O God. Help me remember this.

Action

I will find a place where I can spend time alone in conversation with God today.

TO PROGRESS

We must always remind ourselves that we are pilgrims until we arrive at our heavenly homeland, and we must not let our affections delay us in the roadside inns and lands through which we pass, otherwise we will forget our destination and lose interest in our final goal.

Scripture

“But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” MATTHEW 6:20–21

Prayer

Loving God, I know it's good to enjoy life, but sometimes I get stuck. I let certain things dominate my thoughts and desires. Lift me up, Lord. Remind me of my true goal, my true home, my true joy—which is you.

Action

I will identify what Ignatius would call “disordered attachments”—things in my life that get in the way of loving God, others, and myself. I will ask God's help to find better balance.

TO RESPOND

Be slow to speak, and only after having first listened quietly, so that you may understand the meaning, leanings, and wishes of those who do speak. Thus you will better know when to speak and when to be silent.

Scripture

Fools take no delight in understanding, but only in displaying what they think. **PROVERBS 18:2**

Prayer

Jesus, as your follower, I strive to love others. But when I forget to listen to someone, through my own eagerness to speak, I fail to love. Help me, Lord, to value the thoughts and words of others just as I value my own. May my words never tear down, but rather build up your Father's kingdom.

Action

I will use a memory aid—perhaps a string around my finger or a bead in my pocket—as a personal reminder to listen well to others before I speak.

TO IMPROVE MYSELF

*In revealing the defects of another I thereby
make known my own defect.*

Scripture

“Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?” MATTHEW 7:3

Prayer

Holy Spirit of God, help me realize that the more time I spend focusing on others’ faults and weaknesses, the less time I have to work on my own, which are many. Make my vision weak when it comes to others’ weaknesses. But give me strong, unfailing eyesight so that I can focus on my own sins, faults, and weaknesses.

Action

I will make a list of three things I want to improve about myself. I will quietly commit to making a plan for change, with the understanding that with God’s help, all things are possible.