

An Overview of the process of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola

The First Principle and Foundation [23]:

A Contemporary Reading – David L Fleming SJ (1996)

God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life.

All the things in this world are also created because of God's love and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we show reverence for all the gifts of creation and collaborate with God in using them so that by being good stewards we develop as loving persons in our care for God's world and its development. But if we abuse any of these gifts of creation or, on the contrary, take them as the center of our lives, we break our relationship with God and hinder our growth as loving persons.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some responsibility. 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 more loving response to our life forever with God.

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

Translation by Michael Ivens SJ (2004)

The human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by so doing save his or her soul; and it is for the human person that the other things on the face of the earth are created, as helps to the pursuit of this end.

It follows from this that the person has to use these things in so far as they help towards this end, and be free of them in so far as they stand in the way of it.

To attain this, we need to make ourselves indifferent towards all created things, provided the matter is subject to our free choice and there is no prohibition. Thus for our part we should not want health more than sickness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one – and so with everything else; desiring and choosing only what conduces more to the end for which we are created.

A prayer based on the First Principle and Foundation

Lord, my God,
when your love spilled over into creation,
You thought of me.
I am
from love,
of love,
for love.

Let my heart, O God, always
recognise, cherish and enjoy
your goodness in all of creation.
Direct all that is me towards your praise.
Teach me reverence for every person, all
things.
Energise me in your service.

Lord God, may nothing ever distract me from your
love...
neither health nor sickness,
wealth nor poverty,
honour nor dishonour,
long life nor short life.
May I never seek nor choose to be other than you
intend or wish.
Amen.
from Take & Receive Series by Bergan and
Schwann

God has a dream for me, that I will get in touch with through prayerful (ie God centred) attention to my dreams/daydreams.

Deepening Relationships, Clarifying Questions:

- How do I relate to myself: Who am I?
- How do I relate to God: Who is God for me?
- How do I understand life's purpose: Where am I going?
- How do I understand my purpose: What do I long for?

Inviting discovery of:

- A God who gifts – involving us in creative activity
- God's gracious, unconditional love for me personally.
- My true identity
- God's dream is for me and in me – 'There is a dreamer dreaming us' 'There is a dancer dancing us'
- I am held in love

Inviting my response

- May all my being directed to God's praise and service

The P & F establishes a spiritual reference point, a landmark to which the whole journey of the Spiritual Exercises, if not any aspect of the spiritual life relates. Any stage or experience needs this reference in order to make sense and find direction.

Discernment is dependent on the experience of grace and the desire for God.

This grace and the growing awareness of God's dream for me becomes the energy, the motivation, the lead for the journey of the Exercises.