Spiritual Freedom (March 23 – April 5)

Sunday, March 23

For the past two weeks, we have been praying for and about gratitude. It is the fuel in the engine of our discipleship. We now turn to the pursuit of spiritual freedom. We reflect on our spiritual, emotional and psychological hang-ups, offering them to God so that God can purify and sanctify us once again.

If we ask for it, God will turn our gratitude into great desires for praise, reverence and service, and those desires will give us the strength we need to hold all of our gifts and resources lightly, ready to use them or let them go depending on whether they help or hinder our discipleship. Gradually, incrementally, we let go of all of our attachments and cling only to our Savior. We become spiritually free.

Today’s Grace

I pray for the grace to let God tell me who I am, what I have received and what I am still thirsting for.

Scripture/Reading

Reading via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/030313-year-a-scrutinies.cfm

Jn 4:5-42
Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon.
A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” —For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.— Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?” Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus said to her, “Go call your husband and come back.” The woman answered and said to him, “I do not have a husband.” Jesus answered her, “You are right in saying, ‘I do not have a husband.’ For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true.” The woman said to him, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; 
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. 
God is Spirit, and those who worship him 
must worship in Spirit and truth.” 
The woman said to him, 
“I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; 
when he comes, he will tell us everything.” 
Jesus said to her, 
“I am he, the one speaking with you.” 

At that moment his disciples returned, 
and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, 
but still no one said, “What are you looking for?” 
or “Why are you talking with her?” 
The woman left her water jar 
and went into the town and said to the people, 
“Come see a man who told me everything I have done. 
Could he possibly be the Christ?” 
They went out of the town and came to him. 
Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat.” 
But he said to them, 
“I have food to eat of which you do not know.” 
So the disciples said to one another, 
“Could someone have brought him something to eat?” 
Jesus said to them, 
“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me 
and to finish his work. 
Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be here’? 
I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. 
The reaper is already receiving payment 
and gathering crops for eternal life, 
so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. 
For here the saying is verified that ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 
I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; 
others have done the work, 
and you are sharing the fruits of their work.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him 
because of the word of the woman who testified, 
“He told me everything I have done.” 
When the Samaritans came to him, 
they invited him to stay with them; 
and he stayed there two days. 
Many more began to believe in him because of his word, 
and they said to the woman,
“We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.”

Reflection Questions

Such an ordinary encounter — with such extraordinary consequences. A woman goes to a well to draw water. Someone notices her — and makes the first move. “Give me a drink,” he says, as if to reveal his own thirst (for her? for us?). “If you only knew what God gives…” he later tells her — perhaps as a reminder that this is a giving God so that by his gifts we can come to know the Giver. How could she have known? With five husbands (symbolizing, perhaps, all that she had sought fulfillment from) and an insular mindset (“Are you greater than our father Jacob?”) her life was much too self-absorbed to see WHO was before her. Still, this being the Gospel of John, the one who has broken down the barrier between God and man now breaks down the human barriers of ethnicity, gender and religion, and, yes, self-absorption too. She wants his “living water”; he wants not just to give her water but to be the spring of living water welling within her. A back-and-forth ensues and something gives. She leaves her water pitcher behind and begins to testify to him. She recognized him only to the extent that she allowed herself to be transformed by him — into a wellspring of his Word.

1. When and how has God made the first move toward you, your institution, your community?
2. What are the gifts God has been giving you so that you can know him?
3. Who or what are your “five husbands”? What are you so wedded to that you simply cannot see beyond?
4. Who or what are you still most thirsty for?
5. What is the “water pitcher” you need to leave behind to begin testifying to God’s presence welling within you?

Reflection

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032314.cfm

The Well
by Karol Wojtyla

It joined us together, the well;
the well led me into you
No one between us but light
deep in the well, the pupil of the eye
set in an orbit of stones.
Within your eyes, I,
drawn by the well,
am enclosed.

The Gift
by R.S. Thomas

Some ask the world
and are diminished
in the receiving
of it. You gave me
only this small pool
that the more I drink
from, the more overflows
me with sourceless light.

**Quotation from C.S. Lewis’ “A Slip of the Tongue:”**
Does it matter to a man dying in the desert, by which choice of route he missed the only well?

**Music:** “O Come Everyone That Thirsteth” from Mendelssohn’s “Elijah”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ_FnJv46po

**Song:** “Bread and Water” by Vince Gill
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAVZiMETvPo

**Song:** “The Well” by The Casting Crowns
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLxdxw4Gj6g

**Music:** “Piya Ho,” from the movie “Water,”
a hauntingly beautiful song with themes of love and thirst.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wlwEUj5FXvU (music)
Monday, March 24

Today's Grace

I pray for the grace to recall some un-freedoms/resistances from my own history and remember how I was given the grace to overcome them.

Scripture/Reading

Reading via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032414.cfm

2 Kgs 5:1-15AB

Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, was highly esteemed and respected by his master. But valiant as he was, the man was a leper. Now the Arameans had captured in a raid on the land of Israel a little girl, who became the servant of Naaman's wife. “If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria,” she said to her mistress, “he would cure him of his leprosy.” Naaman went and told his lord just what the slave girl from the land of Israel had said. “Go,” said the king of Aram. “I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman set out, taking along ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces, and ten festive garments. To the king of Israel he brought the letter, which read: “With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy.”

When he read the letter the king of Israel tore his garments and exclaimed: “Am I a god with power over life and death, that this man should send someone to me to be cured of leprosy? Take note! You can see he is only looking for a quarrel with me!” When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his garments, he sent word to the king: “Why have you torn your garments? Let him come to me and find out that there is a prophet in Israel.”
Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. The prophet sent him the message: “Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean.” But Naaman went away angry, saying, “I thought that he would surely come out and stand there to invoke the LORD his God, and would move his hand over the spot, and thus cure the leprosy. Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?” With this, he turned about in anger and left.

But his servants came up and reasoned with him. “My father,” they said, “if the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary, would you not have done it? All the more now, since he said to you, ‘Wash and be clean,’ should you do as he said.” So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

He returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.”

**Reflection Questions**

Saved — by a slave. Naaman, we are told, was highly esteemed, respected and valiant. But not even these qualities would have spared him from the ignominy of leprosy. He could have consulted “the experts” — the leading oracles, the finest medics, the greatest authorities on this cursed disease. Instead, his cure begins with the words of that little girl — captured and enslaved herself — yet ever-ready to offer her master “freedom.”

To his credit, against all odds, he heeds her advice and approaches Elisha. Yet, his pride, status and valor almost botch the whole affair. Geographical jingoism nearly kept him a leper forever. But he swallows some pride and wallows in the Jordan and his life is changed forever. Who’d have thought that a persona non grata and a piddly stream would have been his keys to healing and freedom?

1. Was there a time when I found myself un-free and somebody got me out of it? When? Who? How?
2. What resistances did I have in seeking help from “lesser” sources? What resistances do I still have toward gaining “spiritual freedom”? 

http://jesuits.org/greaterlove
3. What are my/our current un-freedoms? Personally, as a community and in the apostolate? What are those sore spots that still remain amidst all my successes?
4. How might God be offering me a “cure” today?

Reflection

“Elisha Refusing Gifts from Naaman” by Pieter Fransz de Grebber

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032414.cfm
If—
by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too:
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same:
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build ‘em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss:
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: ‘Hold on!’

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,
And—which is more—you’ll be a Man, my son!

Zeroing In
by Denise Levertov

"I am a landscape," he said.
"a landscape and a person walking in that landscape.
There are daunting cliffs there,
And plains glad in their way
of brown monotony. But especially
there are sinkholes, places
of sudden terror, of small circumference
and malevolent depths."
"I know," she said. "When I set forth
to walk in myself, as it might be
on a fine afternoon, forgetting,
sooner or later I come to where sedge
and clumps of white flowers, rue perhaps,
mark the bogland, and I know
there are quagmires there that can pull you
down, and sink you in bubbling mud."
"We had an old dog," he told her, "when I was a boy,
a good dog, friendly. But there was an injured spot
on his head, if you happened
just to touch it he’d jump up yelping
and bite you. He bit a young child,
they had to take him down to the vet’s and destroy him."
"No one knows where it is," she said,
"and even by accident no one touches it.
It’s inside my landscape, and only I, making my way
preoccupied through my life, crossing my hills,
sleeping on green moss of my own woods,
I myself without warning touch it,
and leap up at myself -"
"- or flinch back
just in time."
"Yes, we learn that.
It’s not a terror, it’s pain we’re talking about:
those places in us, like your dog’s bruised head,
that are bruised forever, that time
never assuages, never."

Song: “Can’t Find My Way Home” by Joe Cocker
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCuF4SGB69k

Song: “Come Healing” by Leonard Cohen
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AA9VExCEV_k

Song: “Leper’s Song” by Barclay James Harvest
Tuesday, March 25  
(Feast of the Annunciation)  

Today’s Grace  

I pray for the grace to hear, like Mary, how God is calling me to cooperate in God’s redemptive mission.

Scripture/Reading  

Reading via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:  
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032514.cfm

Gospel: Lk 1:26-38  
The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.” But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,  

“The Annunciation” by El Greco, 1576
has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.”
Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the graces you can recognize and name (personally, in your community, in your institution or apostolate)?
2. Is there something God is calling out of you — to do, to be or to become — through those graces?
3. What fears, resistances, “troubles,” does this call cause?
4. Are you seeking courage or clarity in your response to God?

Reflection

“Study for the Annunciation” by Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1898
http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=23684

“The Annunciation” by James Tissot, 1886-1894 -
https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4422/The_Annunciation_Lannonciation
Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032514.cfm

Annunciation
by Robert F. Morneau

Were others asked?
A lassie from an isle in a distant sea?
A maiden in North Africa or a slave girl from the Congo?
How many times were angels sent and returned, unheard, unheeded?
Was Mary tenth on salvation’s list, or the hundredth?
And you, my soul,
was “fiat” spoken
when the angel came?

Antiphon for the Virgin
by Hildegard of Bingen
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UflHEjPmhNQ

Pierced by the light of God
Mary Virgin,
drenched in the speech of God,
your body bloomed,
swelling with the breath of God.

For the Spirit purged you
of the poison Even took.
She soiled all freshness when she caught
that infection
from the devil’s suggestion.

But in wonder within you
you hid an untainted
child of God’s mind
and God’s Son blossomed in your body.

The Holy One was his midwife:
his birth broke the laws
of flesh that Eve made. He was coupled
to wholeness
in the seedbed of holiness.

From “Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC” by Frederick Buechner:
The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.

Music: “Ave Maria” by Franz Biebl
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLXICVvtgAo
Music: “Song of the Angel” by John Tavener
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0QZrEq1U8E

Music: “Ave Maria” sung by Aaron Neville
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0LRT2nSWJA

Song: “To Zion” by Lauryn Hill
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNXPepJtVrc
Wednesday, March 26

Today's Grace

I pray for the grace to recognize how and where my disordered attachments have kept me from following God more fully and freely.

Scripture/Reading

Reading via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/mk/10:1

Mk 10:17-22
As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’”

He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.”

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

From the De statu Societatis, the 2012 summary of the state of the Society of Jesus in the world by Jesuit Father General Adolfo Nicolás:

A fourth area of concern is perhaps the one alluded to most frequently in the reports, namely a disordered relationship to work. As I mentioned earlier, many reports from all over the world speak of Jesuits being overworked and over-extended. Connected with this is an excessive attachment both to work and to works.

To work: that is, some Jesuits tend to find their value in what they do, in achievement, or they
tend to focus on work primarily as a professional matter, so to speak, more than with a spiritual vision of serving Christ’s mission.

**To works**: which means being overly attached to existing apostolic ministries to the point that it becomes impossible to discern, and if needed, to let go or hand over what we can no longer take responsibility for.

I understand that it is very difficult to end a service, to reach an end-point in a good initiative. And yet there is no other way to remain free for apostolic discernment. The real risk is for us to become so over-extended that we become unable to offer depth of spiritual insight and of creative response, and perhaps even undermine what we have done well in the past. We cannot afford to lose the credibility that the Society earned in its past apostolic history. The Church expects from us depth and spirit. Overwork and over-extension do not help us offer this service to the Church and to people.

**Reflection Questions**

1. What do I find most fulfilling in my work/works?
2. To what extent do I find my value — my identity — in my work/works?
3. Does achievement and success with respect to my work/works free me “to offer depth of spiritual insight and of creative response” or trap me within the cycle of “success”? I speak to God honestly about my attitude toward achievement and success.
4. What is ordered and disordered about my attitude to work/works?
5. How do I keep holy the Sabbath?

**Reflection**

[“Sisyphus” by Titian, 1549]

[“Prisoners” by Michelangelo.

**Photo**: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/48431000@N03/11088456883/in/explore-2013-11-27/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/48431000@N03/11088456883/in/explore-2013-11-27/)
Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032614.cfm

Jesuit Hermes Poen, a young scholastic writing to his superior, Jesuit St. Peter Faber in 1546:

To put your mind at rest I want to assure you that in God’s Goodness I have my old health back again, except that my feet are not yet quite what they should be. They are still too weak to use. On the feast of St. Paul I left the house for the first time to do some walking and to get some recreation. When I left the house I was in fine shape, but on my return I had reached the point where I was unable to stand any longer ... In your letter you told me that after my recovery I could stay here if I so wished or I could go to Madrid. You know what is best for me and I leave the matter to your judgment and decision. If you want me to stay here, that I shall do. If you want me at Alcala, I shall go there. If you choose Gandia, Gandia is agreeable to me. I am ready, it making no difference to me, to set out for Flanders, Brabant, Portugal, Italy, France, India, Arabia, should you so wish. And if I cannot walk, I shall crawl.

Music: "Durch dein Gefängnis" from “St. John Passion” by Johann Sebastian Bach
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaYFGlokI8I

Durch dein Gefängnis, Gottes Sohn,  
Muß uns die Freiheit kommen;  
Dein Kerker ist der Gnadenthrön,  
Die Freistatt aller Frommen;  
Denn gingst du nicht die Knechtschaft ein,  
Mußt unsre Knechtschaft ewig sein.

Through Your prison, Son of God,  
must freedom come to us;  
Your cell is the throne of grace,  
the sanctuary of all the righteous;  
for if you had not undergone servitude,  
our slavery would have been eternal.

Song: “Shackles” by Mandisa  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvohSuRL3a4

Song: “Suitcases” by Dara Maclean  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoJlv22MzSg

Song: “Can’t Get There From Here” by R.E.M.  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gD3cYh5Pp1I (music)  
http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/rem/cantgettherfromhere.html (lyrics)
Thursday, March 27

Today’s Grace

I pray for the grace to recognize how and where I might have a divided heart desiring both “life and death” through my attitudes and choices.

Scripture/Reading

The Two Standards of St. Ignatius Loyola from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola:

Imagine the enemy seated himself in that great field of Babylon, as in a great chair of fire and smoke, in shape horrible and terrifying. Consider the discourse which he makes them, and how he tells them to cast out nets and chains; that they have first to tempt with a longing for riches — as he is accustomed to do in most cases — that people may more easily come to vain honor of the world, and then to vast pride. So that the first step shall be that of riches; the second, that of honor; the third, that of pride; and from these three steps he draws on to all the other vices.

So, on the contrary, one has to imagine as to the supreme and true Captain, who is Christ our Lord. He puts Himself in a great field of that region of Jerusalem, in lowly place, beautiful and attractive. Consider the discourse which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends whom He sends on this expedition, recommending them to want to help all, by bringing them first to the highest spiritual poverty, and — if His Divine Majesty would be served and would want to choose them — no less to actual poverty; the second is to be of contumely and contempt; because from these two things humility follows. So that there are to be three steps; the first, poverty against riches; the second, contumely or contempt against worldly honor; the third, humility against pride. And from these three steps let them induce to all the other virtues.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some signs of a “divided heart”? How do they find expression in my personal life, my community/family life, my ministry?
2. What is my attitude toward riches, honor and pride? What choices does this attitude lead to?
3. What is my attitude toward poverty, contempt and humility? What choices do I make based on this attitude?
4. How do I try to reconcile my divided heart? What role does Christ play in this?
Reflection

Follow Me” by Ilya Repin, 1903

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032714.cfm
My Eyes So Soft
by Sufi Master Hafiz

Don’t
Surrender
Your loneliness so quickly,
Let it cut more
Deep.
Let it ferment and season you
As few human
Or even divine ingredients can.
Something missing in my heart tonight
Has made my eyes so soft,
My voice so
Tender,
My need of God
Absolutely
Clear.

From “Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC” by Frederick Buechner:

Self-love or pride is a sin when, instead of leading you to share with others the self you love, it leads you to keep yourself in perpetual safe-deposit. You not only don’t accrue any interest that way but become less and less interesting every day.

Where?
by R.S. Thomas

Where to turn without turning to stone? From the one side history’s Medusa stares,
from the other one love on its cross. While the heart fills not with light from the mind, but with the shadow too much of sunlight casts.

Music: “O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross” (O mankind, mourn your great sin) from “St. Matthew Passion” by Johann Sebastian Bach
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0m4ol5Oclw

Song: “Good from Evil” by Levi Weaver
https://songspace.com/63e70b99aef18367c0f0748b2139ec7443c47e4b/song/good-from-evil

Song: “We Are Broken” by Paramore
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEXQGObRjV0
Friday, March 28

Today's Grace

I pray for a heartfelt desire to reorder my life toward God.

Scripture/Reading

Principle and Foundation from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created.

From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it.

For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.

The Three Types of Persons from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola:

The Setting: Consider the three types of persons. Each one of them has taken in quite a few possessions — not always with the best of motives, and in fact sometimes quite selfishly. In general, each one is a good person, and each would serve God, even to the extent that if these possessions were to come in the way of salvation, each would like to be free of them.

The First Type keeps saying that he would like to stop being so dependent on all the things which he possesses and which seem to get in the way of his giving his life unreservedly to God. This type talks about the importance of saving his soul, but when death comes, he is too busy about his possessions to have taken any steps toward serving God.

The Second Type would like to be free of all attachments which get in the way of his relationship with
God. But this type would rather work harder or fast or pray more — really do just about anything but face the problem which he feels holds him back in his relationship with God. He acts as if he is negotiating with God, trying to buy God off. So though this type may do many good things, he keeps running from the better and more honest way to face the issue.

The Third Type would like to be free of any attachment which gets in the way of God’s call to further life. This one’s whole effort is to be in balance, ready to move in any direction that the call from God may take him. Whatever seems better for the service and praise of God our Lord is his whole desire and choice. Meanwhile, this one strives to act in such a way that he seemingly is free of any attachments. He makes efforts neither to want to retain his possessions nor to want to give them away, unless the service and praise of God our Lord is the God-given motivation for his action. As a result, the graced desire to be better able to serve God our Lord is the cause of his accepting or letting go of anything.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Am I like the first type: am I not as generous as I profess to be?
2. Am I like the second type: am I generous, but on my own terms?
3. Do I presume to know what God wants me to do with the gifts I’ve been given? What gifts might I be most reluctant to let go of? What about my non-material gifts: my work, my home, my loved ones, my reputation, my lifestyle, my sense of accomplishment?
4. Am I like the third type: am I spiritually free with all that I have and all I possess? Am I ready, at a moment’s notice, to use it or give it away the moment God calls me to do so? Hardest of all, what if God asks me to hold off deciding at all — to wait patiently as the third class did, not knowing what to do for a while? Am I willing to wait for an answer that doesn’t come on my timetable?

**Reflection**

“Christ Calling His First Disciples” by Adam Brenner, 1839 -
http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/christ-calling-his-first-disciples-80973
Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032814.cfm

From the Wesley Covenant Prayer:

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing.

My Own Heart
by Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ

My own heart let me more have pity on; let
Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
Charitable; not live this tormented mind
With this tormented mind tormenting yet.
I cast for comfort I can no more get
By grooping round my comfortless, than blind
Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room; let joy size
At God knows when to God knows what; whose smile
's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather — as skies
Betweenpie mountains — lights a lovely mile.

Music: “Miserere” by Gregorio Allegri
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA88AS6Wy_4

Song: “Sono giunta! Madre, pietosa, Vergine” from “La Forza del Destino” by Giuseppe Verdi
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ef3miyjILPs

Song: “Hopeless Wanderer” by Mumford and Sons
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lMAfCIdDdA

Song: “Hall of Fame” by The Script featuring will.i.am
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jukv9Q1eR2g
Saturday, March 29

Today's Grace

I pray for the freedom to seek — and receive — God’s forgiveness.

Scripture/Reading

Readings via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032914.cfm

Hos 6:1-6
“Come, let us return to the LORD, it is he who has rent, but he will heal us; he has struck us, but he will bind our wounds. He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence. Let us know, let us strive to know the LORD; as certain as the dawn is his coming, and his judgment shines forth like the light of day! He will come to us like the rain, like spring rain that waters the earth.”

What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your piety is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away. For this reason I smote them through the prophets, I slew them by the words of my mouth; For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Lk 18:9-14
Jesus addressed this parable: “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity — greedy, dishonest, adulterous — or even like this tax collector.”
I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.
But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Reflection Questions

1. How much of my prayer is aimed at myself (personally, in my institution or apostolate)?
2. How much of my self-worth comes from undermining others (personally, in my community, in my institution or apostolate)?
3. Do I feel I need to prove my eligibility for God’s forgiveness? How willing am I to let God meet (and forgive) me where I am right now?
4. What are the “eight words” that God most wants to hear from the deepest part of me?

Reflection

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032914.cfm

The Coming
by R.S. Thomas

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce Colour. The light burned There; crusted buildings Cast their shadows: a bright Serpent, A river Uncoiled itself, radiant With slime. On a bare Hill a bare tree saddened The sky. Many people Held out their thin arms To it, as though waiting For a vanished April To return to its crossed Boughs. The son watched Them. Let me go there, he said.

Video: Fr. Robert Barron on being a priest today, which applies to all ministers of the Gospel — not just priests
http://youtu.be/FT0f1Hssilk

Music: “Ebarme dich” from “St. Matthew Passion” by Johann Sebastian Bach
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YszmEsvI6h8

Erbarme dich, mein Gott, Um meiner Zähren Willen! Schaue hier, Herz und Auge Weint vor dir bitterlich. Erbarme dich, erbarme dich!

Have mercy, my God, for the sake of my tears! Look here, heart and eyes weep bitterly before You. Have mercy, have mercy!

Song: “When God Dips His Love in My Heart“ by Alison Krauss
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5kakMbL06A (music)  
http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/alisonkrauss/whengoddipshispenofloveinmyheart.html (lyrics)

Song: “White as Snow” by U2
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3itFCZ6Z58

Song: “Redeemed” by Big Daddy Weave
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUD2AYhLY6Y
Sunday, March 30

Today’s Grace

I pray for freedom to bring my entire life into the light — to come out of the shadows.

Scripture/Reading

Readings via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/033014.cfm

Eph 5:8-14
Brothers and sisters:
You were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret;
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light.
Therefore, it says:
“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light.”

Jn 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38
As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.
He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him,
“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” — which means Sent —.
So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”
Some said, “It is, “
but others said, “No, he just looks like him.”
He said, “I am.”

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.
Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath.
So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.
He said to them,
“He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.”
So some of the Pharisees said,
“This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the sabbath.”
But others said,
“How can a sinful man do such signs?”
And there was a division among them.
So they said to the blind man again,
“What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?”
He said, “He is a prophet.”

They answered and said to him,
“You were born totally in sin,
and are you trying to teach us?”
Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,
he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”
He answered and said,
“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”
Jesus said to him,
“You have seen him, and
the one speaking with you is he.”
He said,
“I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him.

Reflection Questions

1. Is there any part of my life that I am keeping in the dark? Do I have a secret that I should be sharing with my loved one, my confessor, my superior? What fears are keeping me from coming clean? What delusions might have led me into secrecy? What would be the cost of transparency? What would be the spiritual benefits? Might Lent be a perfect time to come out of the shadows?
2. If I don’t have any deep, dark secrets, what aspect of my life am I tempted to keep a secret? Why? Might I speak with God about this today?
Reflection

“Christ Healing the Blind Man” by Gioacchino Assereto, 1640

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/033014.cfm

From “A Poison Tree” by William Blake:

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
Music: “Cast Thy Burden Upon on the Lord” from “Elijah” by Mendelssohn
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kv0lKXZvJoE

Hymn: “Amazing Grace” sung by Aaron Neville
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-F87AZ40EwQ

Song: “Make Me Over” by Lifehouse
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kr6JcES6rpc
Monday, March 31

Today's Grace

I pray for the grace to turn my back to the (limiting) past and to embrace the (promising) future.

Scripture/Reading

From “The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism” by William Johnston:

That detachment — which at first sight seems a cold and inhuman virtue — is in fact of primary importance for normal human development, is an ordinary finding of modern psychology. Erich Fromm tells us that detachment is something so vitally linked to human growth that it must begin at the moment of birth and proceed over one’s whole life — which, when all goes well, is nothing more than growth through a series of crises. “The aim of life,” he writes, “is to be fully born”; and he goes on to say that some people “cannot cut the umbilical cord completely, as it were; they remain symbiotically attached to mother, father, family, race, state, status, money, gods, etc.; they never emerge fully as themselves and thus they never become fully born. Here from a psychologist is a program of detachment as ruthless as that of John of the Cross; showing that the human perfection aimed at by the psychologist is not alien to the Christian perfection of the saints. Indeed, John of the Cross uses words reminiscent of those I have quoted from Fromm, for he complains that some people, retarded in their spiritual life “still think of God as little children and speak of God as little children, and feel and experience God as little children.” In other words, he wants people to get rid of children’s ideas of God and to grow up.

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways have I not grown up? What are my umbilical cords connected to? What would it take for me to cut them?
2. What are the "new heavens and new earth" that God is desiring for me at this moment? What attachments are keeping me from embracing this new reality?
Reflection

“Return of the Prodigal Son” etching by Rembrandt, 1636


Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/033114.cfm

A Prayer for Growing Up at Thirty-Five
By John Shea

I am still looking
for footsteps to follow
like the phony feet
they paste on dancing room floors.
I do not want every day to arrive
like a blank page in a typewriter.
I want the clarity of a slice of moon
and the security of a lottery winner.
My soul yearns
for a turn-of-the-century Eden
with a weekday lunch at home
and jam preserves in mason jars
and naps on the swing
after baseball and beer.
On weekends
I want my mind to click off
like a construction site at night,
I want
routine without monotony,
expectation without pressure,
money without work,
love without need
and if Ida not get it,
I will hold my breath
till my face turns
as blue as a circus balloon.
But over my shoulder
a chorus of heaven and earth,
finally finding a ground of agreement,
chants like marchers for a doomed cause,
“Oh grow up!”

From the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: General Examen [101]:

It is likewise very important to bring to the attention of those who are being examined, emphasizing it and giving it great weight in the sight of our Creator and Lord, to how great a degree it helps and profits in the spiritual life to abhor in its totality and not in part whatever the world loves and embraces, and to accept and desire with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced. Just as the men of the world who follow the world love and seek with such diligence honors, fame, and esteem for a great name on earth, as the world teaches them, so those who proceed spiritually and truly follow Christ our Lord love to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him, to such an extent that where there would be no offense to his Divine Majesty and imputation of sin to the neighbor, they desire to suffer injuries, false accusations, and affronts, and to be held and esteemed as fools, because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, by putting on his garb and uniform, since it was for our spiritual profit that he clothed himself as he did. For he gave us an example that in all things possible to us we might seek, with the aid of his grace, to imitate and follow him, since he is the way which leads men (and women) to life.

Video: Prodigal Son Animation and Song
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbTK-mKxrAc
Song: “Seven Turns” by The Allman Brothers Band
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZ5Wpxf3LL4

Hymn: “He Who Would Valiant Be” by John Bunyan
http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/h/h155.html

Song: Hannah Trigwell covering Mumford & Sons’ “I Will Wait”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67gPzlIcTBY

Website: History on the suppression and restoration of the Society of Jesus
http://www.sj2014.net/
Tuesday, April 1

Today’s Grace

I pray for the grace to recognize the new waters that God is providing for me and the freedom to embrace the “new.”

Scripture/Reading

From *Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum*, Pope Pius VII’s bull that restored the Society of Jesus on August 7, 1814, after it had been suppressed by Pope Clement XIV 41 years earlier:

Day after day, by an almost unanimous consent of the Christian world, urgent and pressing petitions are coming to us from our venerable brother archbishops and bishops and from the ranks of outstanding persons and associations on behalf of this same Society of Jesus. This has been true especially since the news has spread abroad of the abundant fruits which this Society has gleaned in the regions of the world to which we have already referred. Fertile with increasing offspring it has been expected to cultivate widely and adorn the field of the Lord.

The very scattering of stones of the sanctuary on account of the recent troubles and calamities, (and it is easier to lament them than simply to call them to mind), the faltering discipline of the religious orders (the summit and splendor of religion and the Catholic Church) to whose renewal our thoughts and concerns are now directed, demand that we bestow our assent upon such just and general requests. For we would think ourselves guilty of a grave crime in the sight of the Lord, if amid such needs of the public weal we were to neglect to make use of the salutary aids which in his singular Providence God has supplied to us, and if we tossing and turning into the continuous whirlpools in which the bark of Peter finds itself, were to refuse the strong and expert oarsmen who offer themselves to us to break through the waves of the sea that every moment threatens us with shipwreck and destruction.

Reflection Questions

1. With this declaration from Pope Pius VII, the Society of Jesus was “restored.” Two hundred
years later, in what waters is “the bark of Peter,” i.e. the Church, floating? What are the signs of the times in your local manifestation of the Church?

2. What needs to be suppressed? What needs to be restored?

3. How can you, your community and your institution be a “strong and expert oarsman” guiding the Church through rough waters?

4. What does it mean for us today that the Society, which outside the Russian Empire lost everything during the Suppression, was able to begin again without any resources? In addition, what might we learn from the attempts of the restored Society to be faithful to the Ignatian heritage in vastly changed circumstances? (Jesuit Father General Adolfo Nicolás’ question from a Nov. 14, 2013, letter to the whole Society of Jesus.)

Reflection
Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040114.cfm

Pope Francis in an interview with Antonio Spadaro, SJ, published September 30, 2013:

No, the Jesuit always thinks, again and again, looking at the horizon toward which he must go, with Christ at the center. This is his real strength. And that pushes the Society to be searching, creative and generous. So now, more than ever, the Society of Jesus must be contemplative in action, must live a profound closeness to the whole Church as both the “people of God” and “holy mother the hierarchical church.” This requires much humility, sacrifice and courage, especially when you are misunderstood or you are the subject of misunderstandings and slanders, but that is the most fruitful attitude.

Journeys
by R.S. Thomas

The deception of platforms
where the arrivals and departures
coincide. And the smiles
on the faces of those welcoming

and bidding farewell are
to conceal the knowledge
that destinations are the familiarities
from which the traveler must set out.

Song: “We Can Build a Beautiful City” from “Godspell”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d20RqaFpwBo

Song: “Drowned” by The Who
http://www.last.fm/music/The+Who/ /Drowned (music)
http://www.metrolyrics.com/drowned-lyrics-who.html (lyrics)

Song: “A Whole New World” from “Aladdin”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0DLS-F5aHA

Document: Decree 13 of the Society of Jesus’ General Congregation 34 “Cooperation with Laity in Mission” (page 13)
http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/mission/pdf1/ju6.pdf
**Wednesday, April 2**

**Today’s Grace**

I pray for the grace to cooperate with God in mission by surrendering; I surrender all.

**Scripture/Reading**

**In the Hands of God**

by Pedro Arrupe, SJ

More than ever I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth. But now there is a difference; the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God’s hands.

Reading via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040214.cfm

**Is 49:8-15**

Thus says the LORD:
In a time of favor I answer you,
on the day of salvation I help you;
and I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people,
To restore the land
and allot the desolate heritages,
Saying to the prisoners: Come out!
To those in darkness: Show yourselves!
Along the ways they shall find pasture,
on every bare height shall their pastures be.
They shall not hunger or thirst,
nor shall the scorching wind or the sun strike them;
For he who pities them leads them
and guides them beside springs of water.
I will cut a road through all my mountains,
and make my highways level.
See, some shall come from afar,
others from the north and the west,
and some from the land of Syene.
Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth,
break forth into song, you mountains.
For the LORD comforts his people
and shows mercy to his afflicted.

But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me;
my Lord has forgotten me.”
Can a mother forget her infant,
be without tenderness for the child of her womb?
Even should she forget,
I will never forget you.

Reflection Questions

1. Do I have Pedro Arrupe’s trust in God, no matter what? Am I growing more and more
toward surrender to Providence? Is my life and work becoming more and more about God
and less and less about me?

2. Today, what spiritual gift or grace might I need in order to turn over my entire life and work
to God? I ask God for that gift or grace.

Reflection

Chapel of the conversion of St Ignatius in Loyola, Spain. The caption over the altar reads
“Aquí Se Entrego a Dios Iñigo de Loyola” (Here Ignatius of Loyola handed over himself
to God).
Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: 
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040214.cfm

The Avowal
by Denise Levertov

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit’s deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.

From “Practical Mysticism” by Evelyn Underhill:

We know a thing only by uniting with it; by assimilating it; by an interpenetration of it and ourselves. It gives itself to us, just in so far as we give ourselves to it; and it is because our outflow toward things is usually so perfunctory and so languid, that our comprehension of things is so perfunctory and languid too. The great Sufi who said “Pilgrimage to the place of the wise, is to escape the flame of separation” spoke the literal truth. Wisdom is the fruit of communion; ignorance is the inevitable portion of those who “keep themselves to themselves,” and stand apart, judging, analyzing the things which they have never truly known.
Song: “Sweet Surrender” by John Denver
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvtrHJUZnRs

Song: “Sweet Surrender” by Sarah McLachlan
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsN8jiSU1Z0

Song: “I Surrender All” by Casting Crowns
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXziLUN6Fd0
Thursday, April 3

Today's Grace

I pray for freedom for mission: to recognize myself as sent by the Father to “help souls.”

Scripture/Reading

From the Formula of the Institute of Society of Jesus, July 21, 1550:

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the Cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the Name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth, should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty and obedience, keep what follows in mind. He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures and any other ministration whatsoever of the Word of God, and further by means of retreats, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ’s faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments. Moreover, he should show himself ready to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those who are in prisons or hospitals, and indeed, to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good.

Reflection Questions

1. Whether to religious life, to a marriage or to productive and inspiring work, a vocation is the answer to God’s call. I reflect back on my own vocation story. What was the moment that I knew I was called? What led me to say ‘yes!’ to that calling? What great desires were welling up inside me at that time? Do I still have those great desires? Do I still hear the call from God?

2. I pray to be re-ignited with love for God, for God’s people and for my calling to serve. I ask God to grant me the great desires to be an ambassador of love, consolation and reconciliation on this very day.
Reflection

A Teacher’s Prayer for Generosity
By Marc Fryer, SJ

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous;
  teach me to be generous with my time, especially when it’s running low;
  teach me to be generous with my patience, especially when it’s running thin;
  teach me to be generous with my praise, especially when I’m feeling judgmental.

Lord Jesus, teach me to serve you as you deserve,
  teach me to serve you as my students deserve;
  teach me to serve you as my co-workers deserve;
teach me to serve you as my community deserves.

to give and not to count the cost,
    even though it’s the last period of the week;
    even though it’s the fifth meeting today;
    even though it’s my 15th call from a parent.

to fight and not to heed the wounds,
    the wounds to my health;
    the wounds to my social life;
    the wounds to my pride.

to toil and not to seek for rest,
    even when I haven’t seen my family all week;
    even when that last student is waiting at the dance;
    even when I feel like I can’t go on.

to labor and not to ask for any reward,
    not even another free period;
    not even the teacher of the year award;
    not even a bigger paycheck.

but that of knowing that I do your will.
Amen.

Song: “Living Prayer” by Alison Krauss
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnYILWhdA2o

Song: “One” by U2
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDwsEdlSMJY

Song: “Lean On Me” by Bill Withers
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPoTGyWT0Cg

Song: "We Are Called" by David Haas
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDijPsRlryo

Document: Decree 4 of the Society of Jesus’ General Congregation 35 “Obedience in the Life of the Society of Jesus”
Friday, April 4

Today’s Grace

I pray for freedom even when it leads to testing and persecution — even to the cross.

Scripture/Reading

Excerpt from a letter by Jesuit Blessed Miguel Augustin Pro (1891-1927) from the “Supplement to the Divine Office for the Society of Jesus”:

Nonetheless, the people are in dire need of spiritual assistance. Every day I hear of persons dying without the sacraments; there are no priests who confront the situation; they keep away due to either obedience or fear. To do my little bit may be dangerous if I do it the way I have so far; but I do not think it temerity to do it with discretion and within certain limits. My superior is dead scared and always thinks that, out of two possibilities, the worse is bound to happen. I dare say there is a middle way between temerity and fear, as there is between extreme prudence and rashness. I have pointed this out to the superior but he always fears for my life. But what is my life? Would I not gain it if I lost for my brothers and sisters? True, we do not have to give it away stupidly. But what are sons of Loyola for if they flee at the first flare?

Reflection Questions

1. What is the most “dire need of spiritual assistance” that you, your community or institution are aware of amidst the people you serve?
2. To what, if any, is this need compromised by “obedience or fear”?
3. Do you, individually or institutionally, tend to think that “out of two possibilities, the worse is bound to happen”?
4. What, for you, your community or institution, might be “the middle way between temerity and fear … between extreme prudence and rashness”?
5. What are sons (or daughters, sisters, brothers, partners) of Loyola for vis-à-vis your personal or communal situation?
Reflection

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040414.cfm

Hymn: Giovanni Pergolesi’s “Stabat Mater” performed by Emma Kirkby http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYsjwKuC-Wg

Music: “He That Shall Endure to the End” from Mendelssohn’s “Elijah” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IToTpL7q-pY

Song: “Lay Down My Life” by Sidewalk Prophets http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YYfSJa_GC8

Song: “We Shall Overcome” performed by Bruce Springsteen http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqT9yeggoRk

Song: “I Have a Dream” by Common featuring will.i.am http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clz3TFngmKQ
Quotations

Your real, new self (which is Christ’s and also yours, and yours just because it is His) will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for Him. Does that sound strange? The same principle holds, you know, for more everyday matters. Even in social life, you will never make a good impression on other people until you stop thinking about what sort of impression you are making. Even in literature and art, no man who bothers about originality will ever be original whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring twopence how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it. The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in. — C.S. Lewis, “Mere Christianity”

Dying and dissolution continue to strike fear in me. Death itself does not. Ten years ago if somebody had offered me a vigorous, healthy life that would never end, I would have said yes. Today I think I would say no. I love my life as much as I ever did and will cling on to it for as long as I can, but life without death has become as unthinkable to me as day without night or waking without sleep. — Frederick Buechner, “Listening to Your Life”
April

Saturday, April 5

Today’s Grace

I pray for the freedom to see things differently and act accordingly.

Scripture/Reading

Reading via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040514.cfm

Jn 7:40-53
Some in the crowd who heard these words of Jesus said, “This is truly the Prophet.”
Others said, “This is the Christ.”
But others said, “The Christ will not come from Galilee, will he?
Does not Scripture say that the Christ will be of David’s family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?”
So a division occurred in the crowd because of him.
Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not bring him?”
The guards answered, “Never before has anyone spoken like this man.”
So the Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived?
Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?
But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed.”
Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them, “Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?”
They answered and said to him, “You are not from Galilee also, are you?
Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”


Until now, one might say, men were living both dispersed and at the same time closed in on themselves, like passengers in a ship who have met by chance below decks with no idea of its
mobile character and its motion. They could, accordingly, think of nothing to do on the earth that brought them together but to quarrel or amuse themselves. And now, by chance, or rather as a normal effect of growing older, we have just opened our eyes. The boldest of us have found their way to the deck. They have seen the vessel that was carrying us along. They have marked the creaming of her bow wave. They have realized that there are boilers to be stoked and a wheel to be manned. And most important of all, they have seen the clouds floating overhead, they have savored the sweet scent of the Western Isles, over the curve of the horizon: it ceases to be the restless human to-and-fro on the same spot, it is no longer a drifting—it is the voyage.

Reflection Questions

1. What, concretely in my day yesterday and today, have I judged to be wrong? Is there someone, some book, some speech, some idea that I have written off?
2. If St. Ignatius is correct and God is to be found in all things, then where might God be found in the things I’ve written off? Am I willing to look?

Reflection

“Pharisees” by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, 1912

Other Resources

View the daily readings at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040514.cfm

Quotation: “All things are perceived in the light of charity, and hence under the aspect of beauty; for beauty is simply reality seen with the eyes of love.” — Evelyn Underhill


Song: “I Can See Clearly Now” performed by Jimmy Cliff http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUjl3tsIL_4

Song: “God’s Grandeur” by Benjamin Britten http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESW_QyzGJrl

Song: “Benedictus” by Ralph Vaughan Williams http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feBexmmxpjo


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