A Final Reflection

- Growth in friendship and intimacy needs time and constant attention. Thus, give 10 to 15 minutes daily to this examination.
- Cover all five points daily with a freedom to linger more at one point than another, as the Spirit moves you.
- Notice how you grow in appreciation for the variety of vocation—Marriage, Priesthood, Religious Life—among the people of God.
- Pray that all hear God’s call and respond generously to their vocation. “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth ...”

The Jesuit vocation means going directly and radically to the Gospel and living its message fully, generously and in this historic moment perhaps even heroically. It is not an easy life. It is a wonderful vocation. Everything for the greater glory of God: more is not possible.

– Pedro Arrupe SJ

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

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

All is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.

– from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola
Would You Like to Grow in Intimacy with God?

God becomes available to us through the lives of individuals who share their gifts, and the Source of their gifts, with others.

Saint Ignatius Loyola received a gift from God that enriched his Christian life. The gift was a “method,” a way to seek and find God in all things and then gain the freedom to let His will be done on earth. This “method” allowed Ignatius to discover the voice of God within his own heart and to experience a growth in familiarity with God’s will. This “method” involved discovery and experience; becoming attuned to God’s suggestions and supports for action, growing intimate with God’s promptings and purpose.

Through the steps below you can experience his “method” of growing in a sense of self and the source of self. You can grow more sensitive to your own spirit—its longings, its powers, its Source; and you will develop an openness to receive the supports God offers.

“Love consists in a mutual sharing.”
– Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

“Lord, lover of life, your imperishable Spirit is in all.”
– Wisdom

1. **Recall you are in the presence of God.**

No matter where you are, hilltop or valley, country or city, in a crowd or alone, you are a creature in the midst of creation. The Creator Who called you forth is concerned for you. The Spirit of God, sent by Christ, will remind you that you are gifted to help bring creation to its fullness, to restore it to the Creator’s way. Ask the Holy Spirit to let you look on all you see with love. “Love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous or boastful, it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; ... it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right ... Love hopes all things.” (1 Cor.)

2. **Give thanks to God for favors received.**

Pause and spend a moment looking at this day’s gifts. Be concrete! Recall the taste of jam on toast, the fragrance of a flower, the smile brought forth by a kind word, an act of patience that gave someone ease. Take stock of what you received and gave. Notice these clues that guide living.

Now look at the more permanent gifts that allow your participation in this day. Recall your particular strengths in times of difficulty, your ability to hope in times of weakness, your sense of humor and your life of Faith, your intelligence and health, your family and friends. God the Father gives these to you to draw you into the fullness of life. The Father sent the Son, Jesus, to assure us that God’s kingdom is being established. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to guide and sustain us as we receive and bring life to others.

Pause in thanksgiving.

3. **Ask for awareness of the Holy Spirit’s aid.**

Before you explore the mystery of the human heart, ask to receive the Holy Spirit so that you can look upon your actions and motives with honesty and patience. “When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13) The Holy Spirit inspires you to see, with growing freedom the construction of your life story. The Spirit gives a freedom to look upon yourself without condemnation and without complacency and thus be open to growth. “Love hopes all things.”

4. **Now, examine how you are living this day.**

Recalling the events of your day, explore the context of your actions. Review the day, hour by hour, searching for the internal events of your life. Look through the hours to see your interaction with what was before you. Ask, what you were involved in and who you were with, and review your hopes and hesitations. Many situations will show that your heart was divided—wavering between helping and disregarding, scoffing and encouraging, listening and ignoring, rebuking and forgiving, a word and silence, neglecting and thanking. See the opportunities for growth in faith, hope and charity and how you responded. What moved you to act the way you did?

Notice where you acted freely—picking a particular course of action from the possibilities you saw. See where you now sense you were swept along without freedom. This “method” is to give you habits of freedom. What habits helped or hindered you?

See where Christ entered your decisions and where you might have paused to receive His influence. “Test yourselves,” St. Paul urges, “to see whether you are living in faith; examine yourselves. Perhaps you yourselves do not realize that Christ Jesus is in you.” (2 Cor.) His influence comes through His people, the Body of Christ. His influence comes through Scripture, the Word of God. Now, as you pray, His Spirit will help you know Christ’s presence and concern.

As you daily and prayerfully explore the mystery of your self in the midst of your actions you will grow more familiar with your spirit. You will come to know the Lord is with you and with your spirit. Christ will continually invite you to love your neighbor as yourself and strengthen you to do this.

5. **Pray words of reconciliation and resolve.**

“The Word of God is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance. See, today I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster ... Choose life,” speaks the prophet (Deut. 18). Now, having reviewed this day of your life, look upon yourself with compassion and see your need for God and try to realize God’s manifestations of concern for you. Express sorrow for sin, the obscuring darkness that surrounds us all, and especially ask forgiveness for the times you resisted God’s light today. Give thanks for grace, the enlightening presence of God, and especially praise God for the times you responded in ways that allowed you to better see God’s life. In these acts of sorrow and gratitude you grow in knowledge of God’s gentle labor for you. “As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in mine.” (Jer. 18:6)