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26

"PREPARE THE WAY..."

Some Methods of preparing  
for the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION (Sidney D'SOUZA, S.J.) . . . . . 3

I - WHY AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SPIRITUAL  
EXERCISES (Jose Luis Rodriguez-LAPUENTE, S.J.) 7

II - SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN COMMUNITY . . . . . 15  
(Hermann Josef KREUTLER)

III - THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS  
AND EUTONIC EXERCISES (Maria POLLETY) . . . . 21

IV - ORIENTAL PRAYER EXERCISES . . . . . 27  
(Matty SALDANHA and Sidney D'SOUZA, S.J.)

V - THE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER . . . . . 43  
(Raynah STANLEY and Sidney D'SOUZA, S.J.)

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

"A CLC'er is a man of the Ignatian Exercises." This was the realization and conclusion of more than one delegate at Manila '76. Of course, the approved General Principles in the late 60's had already stated: "We hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as a specific source and characteristic instrument of our spirituality" (n.4). But it naturally needs time before a seed can sprout, years before an intellectual statement can begin to be part of common living.

Some National Federations had started early to move in this direction of the Spiritual Exercises. Others were using them as the very unadulterated means for the renewal of their movement or the establishment of CLC in their country. However, the first International effort to form CLC's in the Spiritual Exercises really came only in the 1973 Rome Course I. Here the very first part consisted of an eight days Individually Guided Retreat. Similarly, the 1976 Manila Course II had the eight days Individually Guided Retreat as a sequence to a week's formation through social insertion. Then came the "Survey" document: "Growing in Christ together the better to give life to others" and Formation Course III which clearly brought out the parallel between the growth process in CLC and the steps outlined by Ignatius himself.

But as the commitment to these Spiritual Exercises grew stronger and wider, so did the hard realization of Re

at and formation Guides that not all CLC members are ipso facto prepared to experience these Ignatian Exercises. It requires something to make the usual annual Retreat or Renewal, to spend days in great meditative silence, to listen to the talks of a director for later prayer and reflection, etc., etc. But it calls for something else and more to truly experience the Ignatian Exercises so as to end up modeling and moulding one's whole life according to the key options they present, as this journey in and with Christ unfolds itself. This is why even Ignatius himself gave the whole Exercises to very few and rarely.

Hence arose the urgent need to develop Preparatory Forms to the Spiritual Exercises. These forms would not be mere "watered down versions" of the same exercises, lest the retreatant feels he has already made the Spiritual Exercises, or runs the danger of unnecessary repetition. Rather, their preparatory nature would be in that they thoroughly disposed the person, served as a test-dose, acted as an appetizer, helped each one to find his here and now reality situation, indicated areas which need to be further treated during the Exercises, brought into the retreatant's life the horizontal dimension of community and of social sin in the world, etc... For instance, some of these dispositions mentioned in the Annotations given by Ignatius could be high-lighted in a Preparatory Form and be made a constant living reality in the prospective exercitant.

Accordingly, the very first Progressio Supplement, May 1973, was precisely on "The Spiritual Exercises: Preparation and Preparatory Forms". The present Executive Committee of the World Federation decided to continue this search for Preparatory Forms, to obtain more detailed descriptions from various countries, to even publish examples of entire programmes developed. In this Supplement, therefore, we present the efforts and experiences of three CLC countries, Mexico, Germany and India. Naturally, these Preparatory Forms are not offered as magic formulas, but only as suggestions of what is working somewhere and what may also work elsewhere, though not necessarily everywhere. Neither do the authors claim any one form to be covering absolutely all aspects of the needed preparation.

The Mexican contribution begins by outlining the aim of the Spiritual Exercises and describes the fully formed man of these Exercises in ten points. Thus keeping the end result in mind, it indicates the areas to be developed in any Preparatory Form, eg. familiarity with Scripture, Theolo

gy, Social Analysis. It also stresses the need for an experience of prayer, of community and even of actual social injustice.

The German Preparatory Form, "Exercises in Community", is an initial experience of the Spiritual Exercises done in the supportive context of a group. It introduces the participants to a process of some depth. This experience accustoms them to spiritual interviews with the Guide and to the need for ongoing direction.

Since the conversion process implied in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius does not only refer to the "soul", but to the whole man - body included -, the following German "Eutonic" exercises represent one form of helping the exercitant become aware of this body-dimension of his being. This contribution also shows to what depth of experience a person can be opened by such body-awareness exercises.

The first Indian experience is a selection of "Oriental Prayer Exercises". They not only come close to some preparations that Ignatius counts essential in his Preludes, but they also teach a prayer itself which disposes the whole person and not just the intellect. They may even be used during the very Retreat as valuable alternatives to scriptural and discursive prayer.

The second Indian approach, "Spiritual Encounter", focuses much attention on a way of harmonizing the psychological and the spiritual dimensions, without leaving out the social, in preparing a person for the Exercises. These last two forms, besides indicating areas for preparation, also give detailed descriptions of the practical sessions that may be used.

All these Preparatory Forms mainly visualize preparedness of the exercitant for the Principle and Foundation or up to the First Week. If a person reaches thus far, the Spiritual Exercises themselves will give an experience which disposes one to the next stages or weeks.

This is not the last word on Preparatory Forms, but just another word. May we hope that readers and users of these Forms presented here may feed back their valuable comments, the results they experience and even be inspired to

develop their own distinct and typical national contributions.

Let this Introduction be ended with a word of THANKS, really very inadequate, to all those who have contributed these Preparatory Forms and collaborated in translating and editing this Progressio Supplement. Special gratitude, however, is conveyed here to J.L. Rodriguez-Lapuente of Mexico, to Hermann Joseph Kreutler and Maria Pollety of Germany, to Mathilda (Caszo) Saldanha and Raynah Stanley of India. May their efforts and experiences lead to "the greater glory of God" and to "the more of life in men".

Sidney D'SOUZA S.J.

## WHY AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

As one lives more and more in contact with people who have made the Spiritual Exercises in depth and as one reflects on their personal experiences, the more one is convinced that "to make the Exercises" is not just to have a fleeting experience but to enter into a permanent dynamic process of living. If one wants to imbibe all the power contained in these Exercises, one has to opt for a definite life-style. This implies making certain values one's very own, acquiring a criteria for judgements and evaluations of one's own life and of the society in which one lives, filling one's heart with longings and feelings which are really lived out, etc.

These Exercises, more than merely being compared to the experience of a journey - whether agreeable or disastrous -, they are rather similar to an apprenticeship for a profession, to which a life is being devoted.

In this framework, these Exercises are understood not just as one more important event of life, but as the most important event, in which is concentrated a whole process. This really brings great importance to that person's life, who has now accepted to live by the Exercises.

Evidently such a process points to the need for a serious and determined preparation. It implies a preparation which is also clear, adapted and yet demanding. May be it also calls for a preparation which does not exclude great ideals and dreams about this salvific event. This event is the most intense moment of the experience of these Spiritual Exercises, done in quiet retreat or during the course of daily life.

To prepare for an examination, course, athletic competition etc. one devotes much time, energies, creativity. The very nature of such events calls for a lesser or greater strictness of selection of persons, who have to pass the test. Unfortunately, when it comes to experiencing these Exercises, one is believed to be prepared for them by the mere fact of being a "practising" christian. It does not even seem to matter how ambivalent this practice may be, or how much the religious and theological training leaves to be desired. One does not even care to question the fact that the prospective retreatants' concern for social problems and their analysis may be almost nil. Naturally with such ignorance of the need and areas of preparation, these Exercises are degraded into becoming just one more "good" experience for all and sundry. The absence of adequate preparation will thus lead to ambiguous results. Thus these Exercises will fall into discredit, as has happened until recent times and still continues in some places.

It seems to be forgotten that Ignatius insisted that these Exercises be given "to few and special persons", only when the right "quality of subject" is assured.

What follows may seem a hard expression. But when one sees how and to whom these Exercises are given, one is reminded that the gospel-warning, "not to throw pearls to the swine", could have served the purpose of inspiring timely substitutes for the experience of the Exercises, thus preserving their good name.

Now, how is one to prepare for these Exercises?

It is easy to answer this question, keeping in mind the type of man which these Exercises aim at forming. In 10 principal characteristics this man of the Exercises may be thus described:

- 1 - A man with a "deep sense of God", as the absolute and highest value of his life, because he is fully aware of



God's love and is captivated by His plan for mankind.

- 2 - A "sinner-man", conscious of his sin and of the sin of the world, but who also knows that he is forgiven and hence has taken a clear stand against sin.
- 3 - A man who has perceived the call of Christ and made an option to follow it in poverty and humiliations, in order to prove himself the better in service. This is a man, therefore, who has the psychology of a follower of Christ in His work to build "a new world" (Kingdom)
- 4 - A man who has an "interior knowledge" of the Jesus of history, who has fallen in love with Him and has assimilated his life-style.
- 5 - A man of discernment who has learnt the difference between the criteria of this "world" and those of Christ and who now always makes his decisions "seeking "the more" for the Kingdom (the more urgent and universal).
- 6 - A man who sees the relative value of all means and so uses them only in so far as they help achieve the intended goal. For this, he keeps himself in an attitude of freedom and detachment from whatever is not conducive to living and promoting the Kingdom.
- 7 - A man who is ready to follow Christ in conflict-rejection, pain and death - a death which is like that of the grain of wheat - a death that results in life.
- 8 - A man whose life and behaviour patterns radiate hope, even through failure, because he has discovered for himself that Jesus lives.
- 9 - A man who knows that, to live what is mentioned above, his own strenghts are not enough. Therefore, he fosters a familiarity with God, in order to be "a contemplative in action".
- 10- A man who knows that he cannot live these ideals in isolation. Hence he seeks to live and feel with the Church, made present in a community. This is a cell of the great Community which he also tries to transform.

It is true that forming a man of this type is the work of many years. Still these characteristics serve as pointers to the selection required and mark the main lines for a theoretical and experiential preparation.

#### THEORETICAL PREPARATION

We can reduce it to three principal elements :

- a) A Scriptural Background: This does not imply an erudite

detailed understanding of the Bible which would not here serve much beyond grasping the fact of Bible history being the human history of the sociological and spiritual deliverance of a people. Neither would it be of much use to have an acquaintance merely of the stories and anecdotes of the Bible. This is what the old books of "Sacred History" mostly gave. One must rather understand the events of the Bible as connected with and being continued in the history of our people today. This preparation also requires a knowledge of some of the more important aspects of a primitive biblical culture: how the text came to be written, literary forms, inspiration, inerrancy, etc.

b) Updated Theology : In the last ten years, theology has undergone a rapid evolution, with significant shifts in emphasis and interpretation. It is no longer possible to come really close to the revealed word and message while ignoring this progress from recent theological scholarship. This retreatant refers to Christology and Ecclesiology. Here the retreatant as well as the guide need to be well updated, if they do not wish to find themselves trapped in blind alleys when they face the challenges and events in the world and in the Church of today. Without this, they may run into questions, during the Exercises, on which they may not take a one sided stand: God's universal salvific will, the relations between Church and world, etc. are only some examples.

c) Scientific Analysis of Reality: Of course the Exercises are not intended only for experts in Sociology. They are given to anyone who is concerned about carrying the gospel message of justice to the world. This person needs to have a clear insight into the dynamics of injustice, into the root causes of these dynamics. He has been awakened out of a blindness, a simplistic and all justifying attitude to life's situations. He has seen, in full day-light, the corrupt and decaying roots at the basis of social evils. To make the Exercises without these helps would be just to stumble anew into the old pitfalls: to make christians, with an un-historical sense, even more distant from the realities of life. Another description of this sad process could be: a loss of consciousness.

#### EXPERIENTIAL PREPARATION

a) Experience of Prayer: Some experience of formal prayer preceding the Exercises is clearly needed. This prevents an all too sudden plunge into the Exercises. It anticipates overcoming the usual difficulties in prayer and avoids unnecessary waste of time in handling these obstacles during the Exercises. But besides this prior experience of formal prayer, what needs to be underlined here is the need for a

and happy blending between a psychological conditioning and human maturity. without this, a profound and pleasing experience of prayer, which is required in the Exercises, can be impeded. In this line, some pre-requisites are : a well proven capacity to reflect, to be alone with oneself (not a solitude which is a flight but an openness and self-finding), to take seriously one's very existence, to listen through human communications, to surrender one's whole inner self.

b) Experience of Injustice: what is meant here is the experience of the economically poor, of those stripped bare by a social structure of rank discrimination. Only one contact with the poor and their misery poses so many challenges and questions to our faith, and to our way of living it, that not even a friend who knows us best could do better. One who enters the Exercises with this experience will certainly find it difficult to sin on the side of planning a future commitment which ignores the world's realities. There is no better and more adequate experience for one seeking the Kingdom of God and its justice, which the Exercises presuppose, than to have a defenseless contact with the anti-Christ and its injustice. Reflecting on this experience, as was done by the participants of Manila '76, was an undoubted help.

c) Experience of Community Living: It may seem strange to insist on this type of preparation for the Exercises. It may be objected that these Exercises are precisely a personal experience. Without denying this fact, we still stress the point that, even if the most "intense moment" of the Exercises is realized in a personal way, yet the process by which this "intense moment" is prolonged, and the dynamics by which it is later unfolded simply necessitate a community. This precious experience cannot be lived outside of a brotherly group, which has all things put in common, which now gives support, which questions, which demands, which accompanies in every discernment. Without this means, it is difficult that the dynamism begun in the Exercises will continue or that the Exercises will yield what one may demand from them. This is precisely what is meant by "The Christian Life Communities" (CLC).

The intense experience of community life should naturally be offered only after the Exercises. All the same, to have a previous practical knowledge of community helps to make more real the experience of the Exercises. One enters the Exercises knowing that what living is not possible alone may be fostered in community. This can prevent discouragement, open new horizons, facilitate the planning and orientation of one's future years.

\* \* \*

Together with the above mentioned areas of preparation, there is need to detect false or defective motivation for making these Exercises. The same holds true for basic attitudes which may indicate that a person is not yet prepared to experience the Exercises. Some examples to be kept in mind are: - tendency to escape from reality, an exaggerated spiritualism or intellectualism, superficiality, etc. This implies a previous knowledge of the retreatant, as much as is possible. It will accordingly help guidance or counselling in each case, whether another type of Retreat would be more advisable or whether the making of these Exercises has to be delayed.

The practical implementation of this programme of preparation will depend on each situation. As an example we will note down some salient features of group Retreats in Mexico, which have been in practice for many years :

Some three months before the actual experience of the Exercises, the group of prospective exercitants begin to meet once or twice a week. Alternately they reflect or hear talks on aspects mentioned above as part of the theoretical preparation.

As part of these meetings, they are also provided with a short bibliography to help them go deeper into each aspect and thus enrich the meetings.

If they do not belong to any community or group, then sessions of "faith experience" are organized to let them sample the dynamics and values of community living.

A retreat of one or two days in silence introduces them to the type of prayer envisaged in the Exercises and also helps evaluate their dispositions or readiness for mental prayer.

An experiential contact with an environment of injustice or a taste of its bitter fruits is suggested or even organized. This is followed by a time for reflection on the experience, during which some theory of the social analysis of society and its realities is explained.

At the end of this three month's period, an interview is arranged for the candidate for the Exercises. This is

conducted by one of the guides and helps both the guide and the exercitant to situate the experience and foresee possible difficulties. Normally the Exercises are directed by a team of guides.

The day of entry into the Exercises is devoted entirely to complete this preparation in any area in which the group may require it.

During the actual process of the experience of the Exercises, and at the end of the First Week, the exercitant is made to reflect on the conditions and dispositions required by Ignatius for entering into the Second Week:

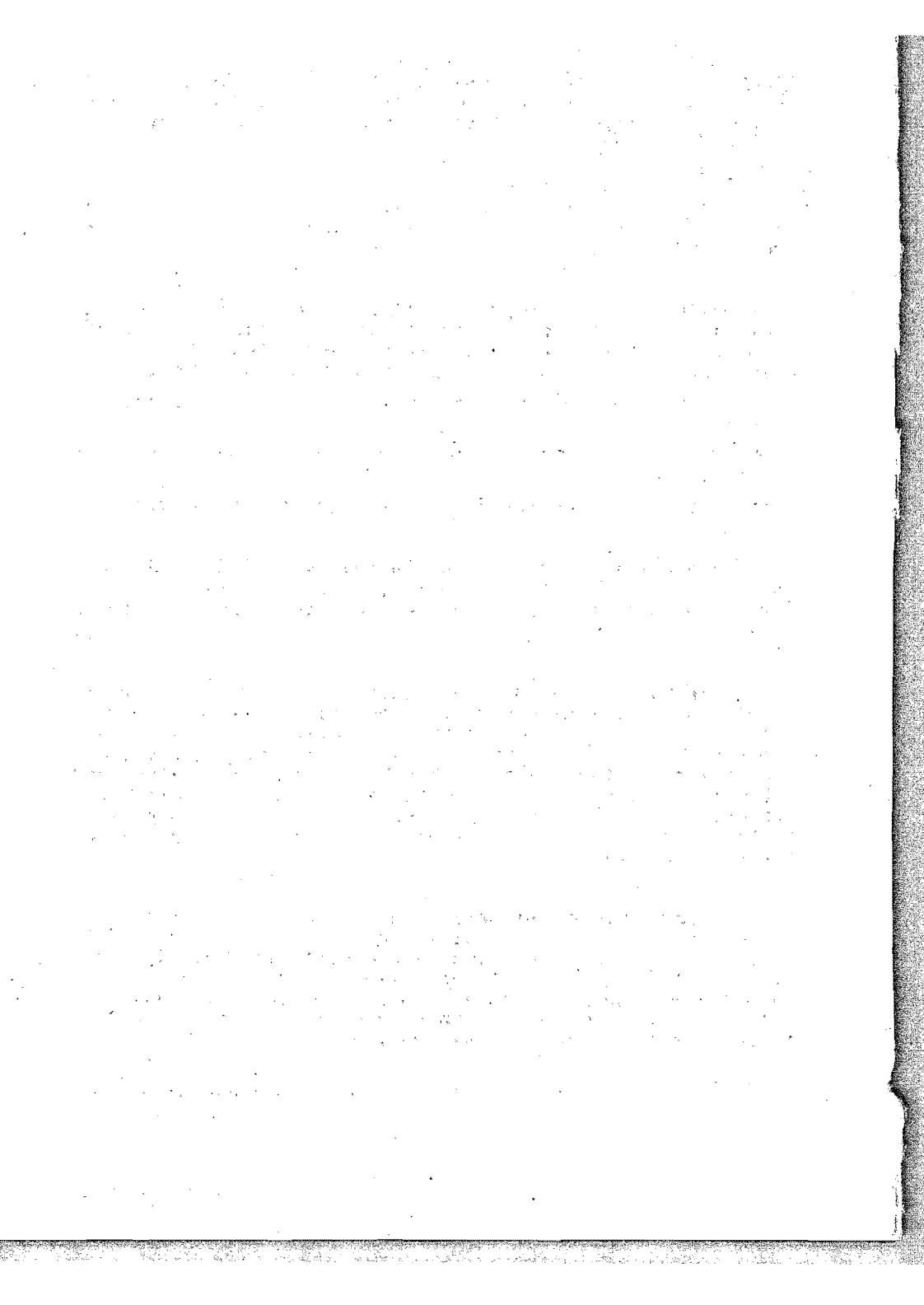
- to be able to continue the experience calmly and faithfully.
- to be searching for more and beyond what the First Week has given.
- to feel strong desires for an even greater commitment.

When one is found lacking in the adequate dispositions to continue the Exercises, another process or rhythm is offered, so that eventually this person may leave the Retreat if necessary.

Perhaps we give the impression of making it too difficult for a person to have this experience of the Exercises. But it all depends on the appreciation and value one has for them. For us, our efforts have proved positive, even if hard at the start. They have ultimately helped to reinstate these Exercises even in the eyes of their very promoters. No one, at any time, is prevented from giving another type of retreat to those who are not yet prepared for these Exercises.

At any rate, we strongly request that the name of Exercises of Ignatius be reserved for those Exercises which keep the real characteristics and essentials. Hence, it will help to differentiate between various ways of having a spiritual experience. It will help not to create a false belief of having experienced these Exercises, when in reality one has only made a simple retreat.

Jose Luis Rodriguez-LAPUENTE, S.J.



## SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN COMMUNITY

### Experiences

A good way to get acquainted with the Exercises at the beginning of a CLC group might be the Exercises in community - Form E - as developed over the last four years by the Freiburg (West Germany) CLC section headed by Maria Pollety and Father Hermann Josef-Kreutler. "Form E" means that in this type of Exercises in community - as in the individual exercises - the spiritual progress of the individual is helped and supported by sharing of experiences done in community. For this type of Exercises at least five full days (plus the evening of arrival and morning of departure) are needed, but the ideal would be a longer retreat, of about eight days.

### Content and Structure

In general, the retreat follows the Book of the Exercises, though, according to our experience most of the participants in this kind of retreat are in the Foundation stage of their spiritual life. This influences the organization of the content of the retreat.

The first days are then aimed at self-discovery and spiritual progress in openness - disponibility - awareness through "Eutonic" exercises (1), Scripture texts, picture meditations, etc. On the succeeding days, one seeks the reality of God's love by reflecting on one's own experiences, e.g. recalling the positive events of the last few weeks. With the help of Scripture texts one comes to discover the history of God's love for us and the salvation he offers to each one of us in particular. The meditation exercises based on the Eutonic method help one to experience one's existence physically, an existence desired and loved by God.

The perception and experience of the reality of God's love leads one to recognize that God has loved me first. During the next days, primarily through meditations on Scripture, encounter with God's love in Jesus Christ is stressed. In this encounter the reality of sin and guilt and of the even greater love of God is experienced. At this point the exercises differ from time to time depending on the experiences of the participants. During the first few days they bring about a deepening and widening of the Foundation phase for all participants. The structure of the succeeding days would be more varied, depending on where the individuals are in their spiritual journey. Where someone is ready to move to the "First Week", we would advise the person to follow the form of the individual retreat.

Through the Exercises in community the participants can mutually encourage each other to live Christianity in daily life by sharing experiences and new insights. During the last days of the retreat we try to meditate on the invitation Christ addresses to me as shown in the Gospel. Consequently, there arises the individual and common question: what relationship do the Exercises have with my daily life? The sharing done on this point is always a source of encouragement and helps one to discover new possibilities for the application of the Exercises in daily life. It is not a matter of great changes but of an effective recognition of a new step to take.

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(1) See article "The Spiritual Exercises and Eutonic Exercises".



## Daily Program

Before breakfast, eutonic exercises, a brief exercise on meditation and on silence are given; then follow the common meditation and points for personal prayer after breakfast. In the morning, time is given for individual sharings by the retreatants. There should be a break after lunch which may again be followed by eutonic exercises if these seem necessary for the participants.

After tea another common presentation of the theme for prayer is given. An appropriate time for the celebration of the Eucharist is before supper. Evaluation of the day and a short explanation about a Psalm or a Scripture passage for the evening meditation and as an introduction to the following morning follow the evening break.

## Elements of the Method

Besides personal prayer daily consultation with the retreat guide is of great importance because it helps each one to find his/her way and to progress in it.

Another important element: the introductory points of meditation on Scripture and the time for personal prayer may last for an hour. The Exercises in community also offer the possibility for giving detailed instructions on how to employ the time allotted for individual meditation.

We also give great importance to external silence because it helps interior silence. During the meditation - sharing in the form of a "listening group" and in the dialogue that ends it, individual personal experiences may also be expressed. Slide-shows, music, metaphors or reflection on life may be utilized to help an individual in his personal meditation and in communal exchanges. Reflections on the process of one's development involve all the potentialities of the retreatants.

To practise awareness or discernment - a characteristic of Ignatian spirituality - the evaluation of the day and its appreciation are of special importance. At the beginning of the retreat and above all in the last reflec-

tion, when one is faced with the question of the relationship between the Exercises and daily life, the mutual sharings are a powerful source of encouragement, as it has already been mentioned. Likewise the meditation exercises starting with eutonic exercises support the stages of the process of the Exercises, thanks to the experience of the body.

It is finally good to find a balance between communal meetings and individual reflection, and also to find a suitable order of the different possibilities offered.

### Before and After the Retreat

Experience shows that the Exercises begin at the moment when one decides to make them. Since the time for the retreat is limited, it is prepared by means of a questionnaire, where the answers are sent to the retreat guide. This questionnaire serves as an incentive. It is not a matter of giving complete answers to all the points but only to clarify the actual situation of the retreatants desiring to make the Exercises.

Some weeks after the retreat, the participants receive another questionnaire with the aim of reflecting on the impact of the retreat in daily life and also to encourage further spiritual progress. Again stress is given to the importance of the community and of a spiritual guide, as mentioned during the retreat.

### Importance of Group Retreat for the Individual Process

The very fact that some persons come together for the Exercises brings about the formation of a group. However, the communal suggestions, the sharing with the group of retreatants, the communal exercises and common prayer should not be aimed at training a group. We also avoid the use of small groups which are normally used in formation courses.

Meditation exchange is always done in the big group; this makes it easier for someone who does not wish to say

anything and everyone can be more sincere. In this way the development and deepening of personal experiences is not disturbed since no one is obliged to express it before everyone in the group. But everyone is given the chance to speak, if that should be of help to them. In the large group one is content simply to listen to the experiences of others, without commenting on them; it is not a matter of obtaining unity of experiences or a unanimous agreement of different opinions.

During the retreat we do not think it useful to discuss together the development of the Exercises. It is important that external silence be observed and the retreatants are encouraged to express their doubts and questions concerning the Exercises with the guide. The retreatants should not share their experiences with each other so as not to make it difficult for others. It is essential for the guide to insist on interior silence.

Along the line of this type of Exercises in community whose goal is the personal process of each one, it is desirable that in the next few years a form of Exercises be developed which will even be more at the service of the particular experience of the individual.

### The Role of the Retreat Guide

For the retreat guides, this type of Exercises is very demanding not only because of the instructions to be given in common but also because of the daily consultations with the retreatants, consultations which last from 20 to 30 minutes each time. This type of retreat requires the presence of at least 2 guides; it is to the advantage of the retreatants who then need not have to listen to the words and insights of just one guide. Their interest is also aroused by the sharings of the guides who complement one another. At the beginning of the retreat the retreatants are given the opportunity to choose the guide best suited for them. The names are written on a sheet of paper where the hours for consultations are also indicated and these remain constant throughout the retreat.

The first evening of the retreat is organized in such a way that each guide is given the chance to say something on the following points: St. Ignatius and the Exercises,

the schedule of the day, the importance of Eutonic exercises, the reasons for individual consultations with the guide, external and interior silence, sharing of reflections on witness of faith, personal prayer.

The fact that there are two of them helps the guides very much also because together they can seek the best means of giving the points throughout the retreat. However, they should be careful not to reveal to each other what they have gathered in the individual consultations with the retreatants. It is essential for them to clarify their relationship with each other and their relationship with the retreatants; hence it is necessary that they should have evaluation and prayer together.

### Retreat for Couples with Children

If the facilities of the retreat house permit, couples are usually grateful to have separate rooms during the retreat though at the start the idea may surprise them. It is also good for the children to have their own rooms. It is essential that each partner can follow his/her own personal process during the retreat. However, at the end of the retreat we organize a time so that they can share their experiences and foresee together their next step in their spiritual growth (personal and communal). Generally the couple would also want to have a final consultation with one of the guides or with both.

During the retreat, the evening break is necessary for the children if the communal meeting does not start earlier than 8:30. Likewise, the children have their own rooms for meals. This arrangement gives the parents greater freedom. But what is more important is to have a good program also for the children which corresponds to the stages of the Exercises. Helen Doetsch from Frankfurt has developed an excellent program for the children from which we have had good experiences.

If a Sunday falls within the retreat days, celebration of the Eucharist is organized for the children. If not, this is possible at the closing mass. The Eucharistic celebration can be organized in such a way that the Word of God is directed to the children; this also allows the retreatants to express their personal prayer intention without any problem.

Hermann Josef-KREUTLER

## THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS AND EUTONIC EXERCISES

In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, man is seen as a whole, a unity of mind, soul, body. Genetic psychology, oriental forms of prayer and especially the eutonic exercises have helped me greatly to see how the Exercises bring this out.

One can see it, for instance, in St. Ignatius' treatment of prayer "On the five senses of the body" (no. 247). He obviously knew about the healing power of a good relationship between mind, spirit, soul. When talking about the preparation for prayer, he says: "I will stand for the space of an Our Father and, with my mind raised on high, consider how God our Lord beholds me..." (no. 75) or again: "I will enter on the meditation, now kneeling, now prostrate on the ground, now lying face upwards, now seated, now standing, always seeking what I desire" (no. 76). He speaks of "feeling and tasting things inwardly". And how can one pray with the five senses - feeling, tasting inwardly - if the "intimate relationship between head and heart, thought and senses, is broken?" (Hugo Rahner, "Application of the Senses in the Contemplative Method of St. Ignatius").

## The Resurrection of the Body

The human person is always a unity of body, soul, mind. Rather than say 'I have a body', one should say 'I AM a body'. Only in the body can we experience ourselves. We must get on easy terms with our body or we shall reject it, wholly or in part. We must feel an identification with it, internally and externally.

The Christian message, with its promise of the resurrection of the body, looks at man as a whole, not as a disembodied spirit. It sees the risen body not in the state it enjoys in this world but as glorified, transfigured: not separated from us in any way but as 'transparent', allowing a new inner understanding of ourselves, so there is no more illusion, nothing hidden.

Only through the body, too, can we enter into relationships with one another and meet one another. Even our relationship with God could not exist without the body - think of the Eucharist and the sacraments in general.

## Preparing for the Spiritual Exercises

During the last few years, I have found that the eutonic exercises, as interpreted by Mrs. Hannelore Scharing, can be of immense use to us today. They have certainly helped me a lot to attain the conditions necessary for making the Exercises but all have their dangers. It seems to me that the eutonic exercises are better adapted to human needs. Above all, they appear to confirm and throw additional light on the ideas of St. Ignatius and the march of the Spiritual Exercises.

One way of using the eutonic exercises is during the Exercises done in community - Form E, as explained in another article in this issue of PROGRESSIO. But they can also be useful in individual retreats, in a different way.

In these forms of community retreat, eutonic exercises are aimed chiefly at attaining self-realisation. One does them on the floor to experience that one's body needs a firm foundation. Our consciousness of our bodies is normally dormant. These exercises awake our awareness of it

and its inner meaning. Different experiences - very fundamental ones - result: "I AM my body; I exist but I am dependent, sustained". These are essential convictions when one is doing the Spiritual Exercises. The Scripture texts we meet in the Exercises bring us into touch with the foundation of all being, the personal God who called us into existence and goes on keeping us in being all the days of our life. I experience myself as existing, held in the palm of God's hand, wanted, accepted, known and loved from the tip of my toes to the top of my head - by the God who reveals himself in Scripture. Many new experiences come from a combination of the eutonic exercises and meditation on scripture, experiences that bring us to wonder and joy. At the same time, the participant reflects about his own life history and his development to the stage he has reached and he does this in ways suited to his own needs. He realises how he has been guided during his life, cared for, and gets a new appreciation of the God who has a personal love for him and a personal interest in his growth.

### Relaxing our tensions

During the first part of these Exercises in community, eutonic exercises encourage us to self-knowledge, self-acceptance, a new sense of equilibrium. They relax our bodily and spiritual tensions and gradually the natural rhythm and movement return and we grow in harmony of body, soul, mind. All this is very important for the Spiritual Exercises: accepting my human status as a creature, seeing beauty, strength, harmony about me and contemplating it with joyful gratitude. The eutonic exercises can deepen all this and zones of the body which have been shut in on themselves, dead, can be gradually liberated. This awakening of 'sleeping' tissue can release new life-forces. Even the spine may be felt to straighten and regain its suppleness. Whether one does the eutonic exercises lying down, standing up or sitting, one feels more and more the relaxing of the stiffness and feeling of cramp in one's muscular structure.

It is a fact that all spiritual experiences have their repercussions on the body, even transient mental attitudes: acts of the will and urges to action. But only when I am aware of tensions can I begin to relax them; only when I accept reality as it is can I begin trying to change it. A combination of eutonic exercises and meditation can bring these tensions to our conscious awareness.

### Towards conversion . . .

Eutonic exercises can also help the change and conversion which are part of the progress envisaged by the Spiritual Exercises. When a knowledge of my inflexibility, temptation to self-sufficiency, tensions are confronted by the gospel and the message and life of Christ, I am led to a deeper realisation of my blindness, powerlessness, sin - and so my need for redemption and healing by Christ Jesus.

Scripture's role in all this is paramount. Methods and exercises can help a lot but they only leave me with a consciousness that I am a poor sinner; Jesus alone can bring me complete healing. When we meet him in the gospels, healing the blind, the lame, the crippled, the lepers, we are moved to ask him to heal us, too.

### Following the needs of the retreatant

It depends on the stage the retreatant has reached whether the experiences we have been talking about will take place when he is meditating on the Principle and Foundation or the First Week. The eutonic exercises should be offered according to where the retreatant is. Later in the Spiritual Exercises, eutonic exercises may assist in becoming more aware of the world around one and the people who are in it, as well as the reality that he himself is. So the eutonic exercises should be offered step by step, parallel to the stages of the Spiritual Exercises themselves.

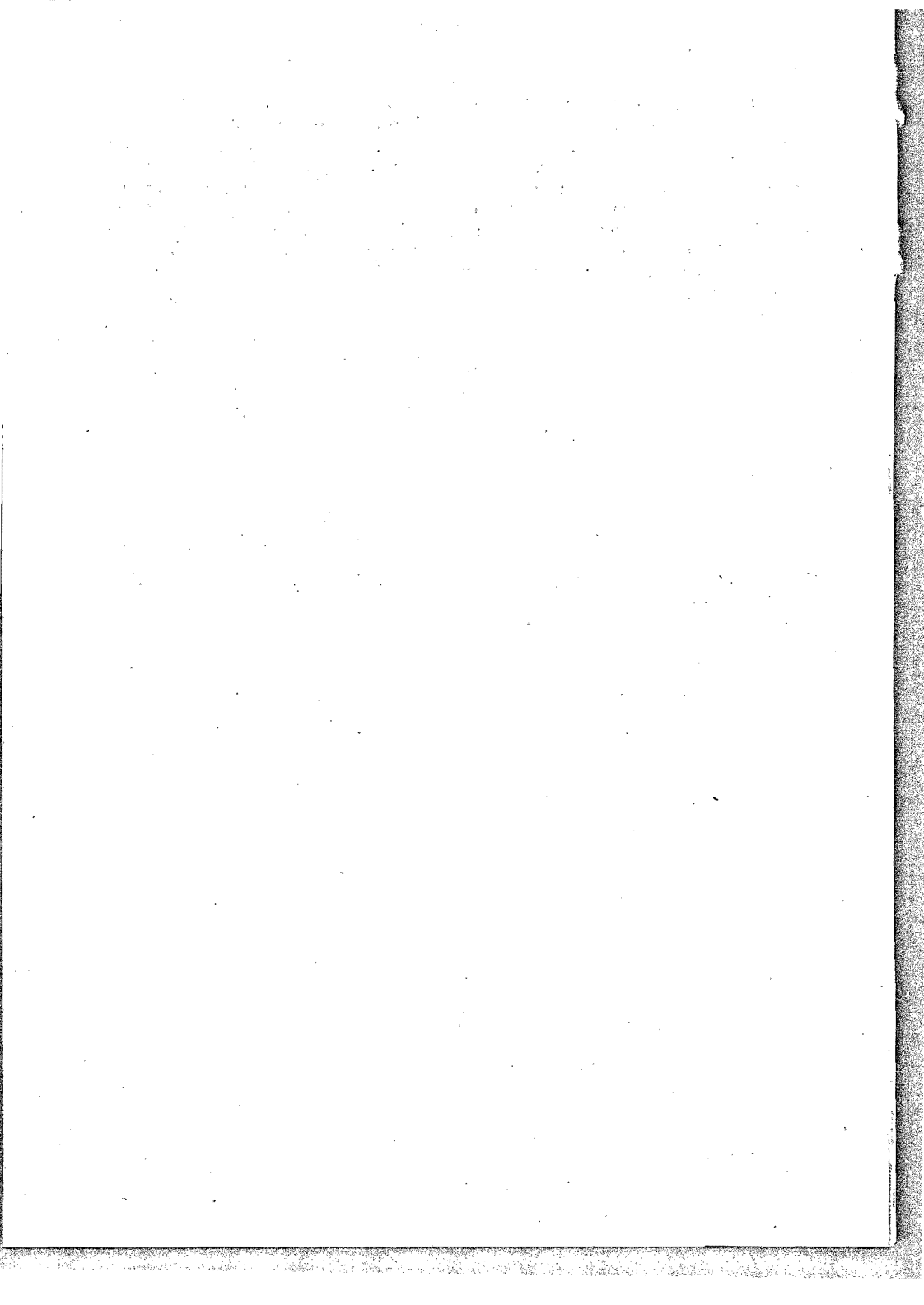
In the Second Week they may be of use in a different way - when one is looking for the will of God and becoming more sensitive to what it is asking : what I should do to imitate Jesus better.

In the exercises done in community, however, all this cannot be gone into in much detail; one can only indicate some of them. One should not hesitate to experiment in giving the Exercises of St. Ignatius, with a view to encouraging people to carry what they have learnt into their daily lives, perhaps between one retreat and another.



Encouragement comes, too, from the way that the euto-  
nic exercises open up new horizons and new methods, new  
strengths, which the person experiences for himself as com-  
ing from God, strength to attain more self-mastery, more  
courage, more freedom, so he becomes more able to apply  
his energies harmoniously and in an ordered way, in accord-  
ance with his goal. All this, of course, is directed to  
helping the person to be better able to hear the will of  
God for him, and so carry out more fully the mission which  
Jesus gives : *"As the Father has sent me, so I send you"*.

Maria POLLETY



## ORIENTAL PRAYER EXERCISES

For a long time, there has been a need to prepare CLCers for the deeper meeting with God in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. There have been different ways of preparing our members eg. faith sharing experiences, prayer techniques taught in groups, formation courses, etc.

Here we hope to present the ORIENTAL PRAYER EXERCISES as yet another path to deeper spiritual involvement through AWARENESS. These pages are but a humble offering for those who seek more. As each one of us is so different, these Exercises may appeal to some and may not suit others. Oriental prayer is done with the Heart and not with the head. God is found at the centre of every Heart Awareness. The body, objects, etc. are assumed as means to prayer, not as obstacles. They will be drawn into prayer, rather than be left aside in preference for mental speculation or verbal expressions.

Then let the Spirit guide you. The Pray-er is a traveller and the experience he will have will depend largely on the grace of God and the road he chooses to travel.

Such Exercises, and others similar to these that follow, have been practised by many CLCers and Religious. They were given each for one or more days of practice, or sequentially combined with 'repetitions' to make up sometimes a weekend and sometimes a three days' retreat. They have had a telling impact on the lives of these exercitants, giving them a new taste for that gift of prayer which God has implanted in all.

However, each Exercise calls for a lot of patience and repeated practice, as Oriental Prayer is no 'instant' formula. Besides, for the first attempts, it is better for the exercitant to let himself be guided than to just try these Exercises out of a book.

At the end of each Exercise the guide may solemnly chant a line from an appropriate hymn or psalm and leave the exercitant to stay two minutes more in the effect. Here too, while the whole Exercise is a prayer indeed, he may now remind the exercitant to make an act of prayer, not necessarily an expression of words, by staying in one apt disposition, e.g. adoration, love, supplication, etc.

The notes under the sub-title 'Effects' are some results these Exercises have had on those who have made the experience. We would request you to read 'Effects' only after you have reflected on your own experience. Your experience may be similar to those shared or may well be unique.

With this introduction and explanation, we leave you to explore an Oriental road of Prayer and another experience of God.

We wish to acknowledge gratefully the book of Anthony de Mello, sj "Sadhana, A Way to God" and his many courses which inspired us to make such precious material available to 'seekers' in the CLC Way of Life. We also acknowledge the book of Mark Link, sj "You", readings of which helped us stress a few aspects.

May the love of Christ touch and transform you in these ORIENTAL PRAYER EXERCISES, the way a cloud is transformed into a sight of splendour when the rays of the sun touch it.

## BASIC ESSENTIALS

As we are dealing with preparatory forms of prayer, it is important to keep in mind certain basic essentials in prayer.

CLOTHES: It is important to be comfortable when praying. Therefore the Pray-er should wear light and comfortable clothes. Constricting clothes will divert energy and attention.

PLACE: If you want to be alone with someone you love, you would choose a place with a certain amount of privacy where you can talk undisturbed, cry, laugh, unburden your heart or not talk at all.

Needless to say, this applies to meeting God in prayer too. Choose the place that is most conducive for you to BE.

TIME: One seldom finds lovers leaving meetings to chance. The date is always fixed either at the end of the evening or the next day over the phone. More often than not it is just understood that in the evenings they will meet at the bus stop, at such and such a time. One cannot build a relationship with a person one seldom meets or communicates with. The deeper the relationship the greater the need and the joy to 'meet'.

It helps the beginner if he sets a particular time for Oriental prayer. This need not stand in his way to communicate with God at other times during the day if he wishes to do so.

POSTURE: Posture has an amazing effect on the way we feel and think. One can almost guess the 'mental age' of a person just by looking at the way he holds himself.

Women the world over spend a lot of time trying to achieve that beauty asset called 'poise' much of which depends on posture. And men also do the same in their own ways!

William Johnston writes in "Oriental Mysticism": "If you go to a Zen temple, you are immediately taught how to gather yourself together in concentration...

The first thing is control of the body... Eastern religions know how to put the body at the service of prayer...

In the Bhagavad Gita we find instructions that are remarkably similar to Zen. The Yogin is told to select a clean

place neither too high nor too low and there he sits in magnificent silence... his mind at rest...

*"as a lamp might stand in a windless place unflickering."*

He is to restrain all his thoughts and senses... his mind is reduced to a single point...

*"Remaining still,  
let him keep body, head and neck  
in a straight line, unmoving;  
Let him fix his gaze...  
not looking around him...  
There let him sit,  
his self all stilled  
his fear all gone...  
His mind controlled,  
his thoughts on Me;  
integrated, yet intent on me."*

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## SILENCE - THE GREAT REVELATION

We are so busy talking to ourselves that sometimes we can't even hear ourselves! If we cannot hear ourselves how can we hope to hear God? Silence reveals a great deal. However it isn't an easy task to attain this silence. Men of profound thoughts are men who have listened to the message in the silence of their minds. Let us attempt to spend some time in silence.

EXERCISE I : Take a comfortable posture. Close your eyes. Keep silent for a period of 10 min. First you will try to attain silence, as total a silence as possible, of heart and mind. Having attained it, expose yourself to whatever revelation it brings.  
PAUSE.

REFLECT : What attempts did you make to attain silence? How successful were you? What were your feelings about this silence? What were your thoughts? What did this silence reveal to you?

SHARE : If you are doing this exercise in a group, perhaps it would be profitable to share your experience with the rest of the members. The guide could also add valuable comments on elements that helped or hindered your prayer and how next to handle them.

EFFECTS : The effects of this exercise are varied. For some (especially people who have some experi

ence in contemplation), it will be relatively easy to be silent. For most people it will reveal that they just cannot sit still. Others may sit still, but their minds will be dancing around the place. If you are aware of what has been happening in your body and mind during this exercise, this type of wandering going on, this is the first step to awareness and it still shows that you have some small degree of silence within you that will enable further building.

The first revelation of this exercise is your SELF. The content of your awareness is less important than the quality of the awareness. As the quality improves, your silence will deepen. And as your silence deepens, you will experience change. You will discover to your delight that revelation is power; a mysterious power that brings transformation.

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## BODY SENSATIONS

"Far too many people live in their heads. They are mostly conscious of the thinking and fantasizing that is going on and far too little conscious of the activity of their senses. As a result they rarely live in the present. They are almost always in the past or in the future. Recalling the past in order to profit from it, or even to enjoy it afresh, and anticipating the future in order to plan realistically are valuable functions, provided they do not take us out of present for too long. To succeed in prayer it is essential to develop the ability to make contact with the present and to stay there"

EXERCISE II : Take up a posture that is comfortable and restful. Close your eyes.

Slowly become aware of certain sensations in your body that you are feeling at the present moment, but of which you are not explicitly aware... Be aware now of the touch of your clothes on your shoulders... Become aware of the touch of your clothes on your back or the touch of the chair or wall depending on where and how you are sitting... Now become aware of the feel of your hands as they touch each other or rest on your lap... Now become conscious of your thighs or your buttocks pressing against your chair... Now feel your feet touching your shoes... Now become explicitly aware of your sitting posture.

Once again: your shoulders...your back...your right hand  
...your left hand...your thighs...your feet... your sitting posture.

Continue to go the round by yourself now, moving from one part of your body to the other... spending a few seconds on each body sensation then moving on.

You may dwell either on the parts of the body indicated here or you may choose to dwell on other parts like your head, your neck, your arms, your chest, your stomach ... the important thing is that you get the feel, the present sensation of each part. If someone feels no sensation in a limb called by the guide, don't force a feeling there! Just score a blank or wait till some sensation makes itself felt. (PAUSE)

PRAYER : Father,  
you embrace me as certainly  
as the clothes I wear  
May each sensation I feel  
deepen my awareness of your loving embrace.

REFLECT: What feeling am I aware of : in my head, in my shoulders, in my back, thighs, feet? What is new about this awareness? Did you experience tension in any part of your body? Which part? Stay with or concentrate on that awareness of tension and that part will very likely loosen up.

SHARE : Share among group members, if necessary.

EFFECTS: One of the biggest enemies to prayer is nervous tension. This exercise helps you to deal with that. You relax when you come to your senses; when you become conscious of and thus comfortable with your body sensations, of the sounds around you, of your breathing, of the taste of something in your mouth.

Perception of these sensations by rotation also results in an awareness of the unity of the body and of its consequent inner strength; that the body is an integrated, powerful whole with God as the centre of this being.

This exercise is a matter of feeling not thinking. There are people who when asked to feel their arms or legs or hands, do not really feel them. They produce a mental picture of these limbs.

This body and its feelings and sensations are made by God ... made good...this body is the Temple of God...How can I realise this fully, if I'm not even aware of this Body?



## ALERT POSTURE

It is a sad thing to see a rose wither and die. Especially during the rainy season this is a common sight. It is equally sad to see a good body slouch its way to "Extra tyres"! Besides the esthetic value there is also a spiritual value to posture which cannot be overstressed. Let us spend a few minutes now becoming aware and alert to our posture.

EXERCISE III : Quietening down: relax... Breathe slowly and deeply... Concentrate for a while on Body Sensations. Keep feet flat on the ground...

back straight, spine erect = attention..  
head straight, not drooping...  
hands at the side of your body, if you are standing; or on your lap, if you are sitting or squatting...  
eyes fixed at a point in front of you or closed...  
tummy pulled in. If sitting on a chair try to feel your tummy touching the back of your chair...

BREATHE IN... BREATHE OUT... Do this for 10 min. If you have a flexible body, it is worth trying to sit in the lotus posture that students of yoga are taught : legs intertwined, feet resting upon opposite thighs, spine erect...

This posture is said to be ideally suited for contemplation and concentration.

WHEN YOU WALK : Become aware of the movement of your legs ... the swing of your body... the shifting of weight from one side to the other... the way you hold yourself...

This walk will be a real slow motion, actually needing minutes to go through a few steps.

EFFECT : This exercise practiced daily has a tremendous effect on the mind and physical health of the person, on the concentration when praying or doing something important as well as on general alertness. The relaxation achieved in this way is not that of drowsiness conducive to sleep, but of an ALERT CALMNESS which brings with it a sense of unity and lightness of the body and disposes us for prayer... prayer into which we will now bring our whole body.

## BREATH OF GOD

There are some things in life that we take for granted. Air is one of them. It is only when we feel suffocated in a polluted street or a crowded room that we begin to appreciate "a breath of fresh air". The book of Genesis tells us that when God made man he breathed upon him and man came to life. In ancient times when a man died it was said that God took his breath away. No wonder then that Indian Gurus say "The air you breathe is God."

EXERCISE IV : Begin this exercise by spending some five minutes in becoming aware of sensations in various parts of your body.

BREATHE IN...BREATHE OUT...

Now move on to the awareness of your breathing. Become aware of the sensation of air passing through your nostrils. Feel its touch. Notice in what particular part of the nostrils you feel the touch of air when you inhale... and in what part of the nostrils you feel the touch of air when you exhale...

Become aware, if you can, of the warmth or coldness of this air...its coldness when it comes in, its warmth when it goes out.

You may also be aware that the quantity of air that passes through one nostril is greater than the amount that passes through the other...

Do not control your breathing. Do not attempt to deepen it. This is not an exercise in breathing, but in awareness. So if your breathing is shallow, leave it that way. Do not interfere with it. Observe it.

Become aware of this air taken in as touching your throat, filling your lungs, puffing your stomach...Breathing finally pervades the whole body, revitalizes the whole being.

Stay with this awareness for some ten or fifteen minutes.

REFLECT : Do I breathe deeply or sometimes shallow, sometimes deeply?

Does the pace have anything to do with the thoughts that chose through my mind?

Did this exercise steady me or make me more tense?

PRAYER : "Father,  
you are closer to me than my own breath

May each breath I take  
deepen my awareness of your presence."  
(Mark Link - "YOU")

EFFECTS : Deep breathing like this induces relaxation. Headaches and other pains may lessen and go. One may experience a feeling of life, of strength, of joy, of closeness to God - The Breath of Life!

VARIATIONS : As you get the rhythm of this exercise, the following may be added :

"God is present everywhere, in the air about me, amidst the group... in me..."

BECOME AWARE OF HIM

- "This breath is God - God's life - I'm taking it in."
- "This breath is God - God's life taken in - and now I'm giving out to others... (as an intercessory prayer) without thinking of why or where they are or how they are. I will think simply in turn of groups of people. I would like to give to God to, e.g. sick, unemployed..."

CHANT : "Spirit of God... Blow, Blow, Blow till I be..."  
"Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out to you and me..."

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### SOUND OF SILENCE

Sometimes one wonders how people staying near the airports and railway stations manage to sleep. As the population increases there are greater crowding and noisier days that we have ahead. How can one manage to attain silence and do prayerful contemplation in such circumstances? Sounds are distracting when you attempt to run away from them. When you attempt to fight them out of your consciousness, when you protest that they have no right to be there, in this last instance they are both distracting and irritating. If you just accept them and become aware of them, you will find them not a source of distraction and irritation, but a means for concentration, even for attaining silence. How delightful the sound of church bells in a village!

EXERCISE V : Begin by setting up your posture and gaining awareness of sensations or breathing. Close your eyes. Block your ears with your thumbs. Cover your eyes with the palms of your hands. Tune in to the sounds within your own body, your heart beats, your breathing, etc... Is your breathing smooth? If jerky, slowly even it out... Is

your breathing deep? If shallow, gently deepen it ... Is your breathing rapid? If so, gradually slow it down.

After 10 full breaths, gently bring your hands to rest on your lap. Let your eyes remain closed.

Listen attentively now to all the sounds around you - to as many of them as possible, the big sounds, the small ones, the ones that are near, the ones that are distant...

After a while, listen to these sounds, without identifying them: sounds of footsteps, clock ticking, sounds of traffic... sounds of people speaking... Listen to the whole world of sound around you as one whole.

PRAYER : "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Samuel.

Feel God present in these sounds... as in the Thunder of the Old Testament. Hear God speaking to you through these sounds. Use these sounds to speak to God through them.

EFFECT : Feeling of peace, calm, lightness, union with God.  
Less irritation with one's surroundings.

CHANT : "BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD"

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### GARDEN OF EDEN

The Garden of Eden is here on earth. All the same it is true that "Beauty lies in the eyes of the Beholder" This garden is yours to discover and cherish. If you do not take time for it you will never discover it.

EXERCISE VI : As you walk in the garden before this Prayer Exercise pick up some natural object that strikes you, that spontaneously catches your attention, eg. a leaf, a stone, a flower... and bring it with you.

Assume posture and relax through awareness of sensations, or breathing or sounds... Close your eyes. Hold the object you have brought in the palm of one hand. With the same palm and fingers gently feel the object - its size, shape, surface expansion... With the fingers of the other hand now respectfully touch the object: is it hard or soft, rough or smooth and so forth? Bring it up to your cheek... what sensations do you feel? Bring it to your lips... what sensations do you feel? Taste it with your tongue... Put it to

your ears and listen to it speak of itself and of its creator. Take it to your nose and smell the elements constituting it... Hold it in front of you and slowly open your eyes and look at its intricate make up... First, get as much as possible from the senses that you least use. Repeat the application of senses always to familiarize yourself with the object.

REFLECT : What discoveries have you made of this object? Did you notice these aspects at the start? Did you develop any attachment for this object? If so what factors enabled this relationship to build?

CHANT : "Great indeed are your works O Lord..."

EFFECTS : Discovery of the object. Greater value for the works of God. Finding God in his creation. Building up a certain relationship with the object which contains God, or which is His reflection or is a bridge between Him and me.

VARIATION : TO PERSONS

When you slightly alter and apply this "discovery exercise" to persons, instead of objects, you find it has the same effect. By not using but by loving a person, you come to feel a deep respect and acceptance of that person: the majesty one discovers in him fills one with awe. When one approaches a person with an open mind and a steady look of loving respect, something brightens in him, he looks beautiful.

When one thus spends time with another, a bond of love is established... even with God dwelling within!

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### BODY OF CHRIST

Man is made in the image of God. This statement is tough to believe, when one sees handicapped people. However, what is most common is to see people with healthy, normal bodies hate a certain part of their body or not accept fully some parts of their body. A girl at a retreat shared: "I like my body, but with a few alterations." It is one thing to take care to keep oneself fit and yet another to despise or take for granted the valuable gift of my body made in the image of God.

EXERCISE VII : Take a relaxed posture  
Become aware of breathing, of sounds around

....

Open your eyes and take a long look at your hands; feel them - soft, hard, firm, etc.

RAISE these hands to touch your FACE...EYES...NOSE...MOUTH ...SHOULDERS...HEART... etc., etc.

TOUCH : each part of your body gently and respectfully... especially those parts that you find difficult to accept.

Talk to each part..., don't think about them..., feel for, with them. Allow to rise up in you feelings of gratitude and happiness, of self acceptance and admiration for your whole self.

See Christ present.

Introduce each part to Him: "This is my face." Let Him see ...Hear Him accept each part as good... no negative comments.

Offer the whole of yourself to Christ

CHANT : "All that I am... I offer now to you."  
"Great indeed are your works, O Lord, now and ever more".

REFLECT : Do I accept my whole body? Are there some parts that I just cannot accept? Why? What can I do to move towards accepting these parts? Will I need help in these areas?

Note It is very damaging to criticise or joke about a child's body...

If negative feelings come towards any part of the body, just become aware of them, leave them for the time being and pass on to another part. Once total acceptance and a sense of unity of the whole body is felt, stay with it.

EFFECT : Acceptance of one's body gives a sense of unity and strength in all parts. Some people have found this exercise helpful to sort out their areas of non-acceptance and work towards (sometimes with outside help) total acceptance. It generally gives people a renewed respect for the whole human body and the magnificence of God's masterpiece. This ensures living in and serving (praying) with one's whole person!

### DISTRACTIONS

Most beginners may find themselves quite distracted when they begin to practise these exercises. However, as one perseveres, distractions will diminish and finally disappear. These exercises will come as normally as breathing.

We cannot stress sufficiently that these exercises need dedication and regularity to yield fruits.

Some of the suggestions offered to deal with distractions are given below :

You may be one of those who cannot concentrate when your eyes are closed. Hence the suggestion is to keep your eyes half open, resting on an object or a spot some three feet away. Experiment and take the suggestion that suits you best.

A straight back always helps.

If thoughts still keep shooting on your mind's screen, observe every thought that comes into your mind. Don't chase it. Just observe them as a man stationed at his window watches passers-by on the street. After you have done this for a while become aware that you are thinking. Say to your self interiorly, "I am thinking... I am thinking... or thinking... thinking..." to keep yourself aware of the thinking process that is going on within you. If you find there are no thoughts in your mind and your mind is blank, wait for the next thought to make its appearance. Be on the alert and, as soon as the thought appears, become aware of it or of the fact that you are thinking again.

Keep up this exercise for three or four minutes. You may find that while you are aware of the fact that you are thinking, all thinking tends to stop!(1)

There is a type of distraction that is charged with strong emotion. This kind of distraction, with a strong emotional base, will not easily yield to the exercise suggested above and may need outside help. There will be a great temptation to seek novelty and find newer and newer exercises to practice. Resist this temptation and first seek proficiency in these very simple exercises. Learn to master your boredom, before moving on. The aim is to pray and really find God in prayer, rather than to know more about prayer and spiritual techniques!!

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#### THE OTHER

So far, all the exercises you have done were based more on awareness of the self, and awareness of God within and

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(1) Anthony de Mello, s.j.: "Sadhana - A Way to God" p. 21

through this self. This is because for you there is no reality that is closer to God than yourself, and no one closer to yourself than God. St. Augustine would therefore rightly insist that we must restore man to himself so that he can make of himself a stepping stone to God. God is the very ground of my being, the Self of my self and I cannot go deep into myself without coming in touch with Him. With these steps walked, the pray-er is ready to experience a real awareness of the other. The awareness of self is a means for developing awareness of the other. It is only inasmuch as I am attuned to my own feelings that I am able to be aware of the feelings of others. It is only inasmuch as I am aware of my reactions to others that I am able to go out to them in love, without doing them any harm.

#### EXERCISE VIII :

Relax, keep motionless posture, eyes closed and mind blank ... Concentrate with the heart... being fully present to self.

Review (not re-live) the 'film of the day', starting at the present event/scene and moving backwards, i.e. to the preceding event and then to the one before...

Observe, Look : don't strain to recall; don't repeat or re-live feelings of pleasure or pain. Simply look as the river of life passes by (Buddha seeing reality) ... Don't even approve or condemn; neither 'Why' nor 'Because'. No emotional changes now. Be detached and cling to nothing. Just admit that a painful or pleasurable event or meeting goes by... Be a mere spectator and see oneself as in a film now running in slow motion. Just become aware of every detail, of one's every move, every gesture... word ... look... reaction. Don't analyze. Make yourself fully awake to life now.

REFLECT : How has my awareness grown? New realizations? What would I like to change, if I were to live this event/meeting again? Would I like to have listened more, instead of speaking so much? etc., etc.

Here you may even re-live the event/personal encounter with this change now inserted... (by fantasy).

EFFECTS: This awareness improves behaviour patterns of living without condemning, without guilt feelings, without feeling bad towards self or the other person. Such awareness results in life's relationships growing and healing... if looked at with this detachment... since nature is basically good and good does prevail over all. Awareness deepens normal perception of reality.



Done backwards from evening to morning is a better test... Going forward is only an easy association of images, not a proof of awareness and living. So if one can't remember something important now, one very likely was not fully alive in that event or to that person... or to God! Often unrelaxed, tensed-up or divided attention keeps us from fully living or fully giving ourselves... from fully praying.

This Prayer Exercise can be used as an Examination of Conscience or Consciousness Exercise.

VARIATIONS : I - *Awareness With Christ*

Review the film of the day's events/meetings, but now with Christ by your side seeing this replay. Become aware of His Reaction to your words, gestures, etc. Christ is not a judge, but a helpful friend teaching me to live. So as a result no guilt nor remorse is intended as an effect, e.g. Peter, Samaritan Woman, Woman taken in adultery...

II - *Awareness For The Future*

Foresee possible future events/meetings as they are realistically likely to happen, observing yourself in them. Any realistic changes desired? Then do a replay, in fantasy, incorporating and inserting these changes. Let Christ come in as co-observer and note His reactions in order to guide oneself for further improvement.

III - *Awareness Of Christ*

While doing the Review or Replay, See Christ in each event or person coming to you unrecognized at first... as at Emmaus or at the lakeshore of Galilee. One learns to recognize Christ faster and better; to love, to serve and to adore Him in others.

CHANT : "Christ be beside me"

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Mark Link in his book YOU says :  
*Meditation is thinking about God;*  
*Contemplation is resting in God*  
*and Conversation is speaking to God.*

Any prayer conscious person will agree that each of these forms of prayer has its importance in our spiritual life.

Many mystics tell us that, in addition to the mind and heart with which we ordinarily communicate with God we

are, all of us, endowed with a mystical mind and a mystical heart, it is a faculty which makes it possible for us to know God directly, to grasp and intuit Him in His very being, though in a dark manner, apart from all thoughts and concepts and images.

To be able to grasp Him beyond these thoughts and images is the privilege of this faculty which, in his book "Sadhana", Fr. de Mello calls the Heart. He goes on to say that in most of us this Heart lies dormant and undeveloped. If it were to be awakened it would be constantly straining towards God and, given a chance, would impel the whole of our being towards him. But for this we have to go with an open mind. We have to get rid of the vast number of thoughts and words and images that we constantly interpose between ourselves and God when we are communicating with him. Words sometimes serve to impede rather than foster communication and intimacy.

Now is the time to expose yourself to the divine sun in silence, not to reflect on the attributes and properties of the sun's rays; now is the time to gaze lovingly into the eyes of your divine lover and not break this special intimacy with words and reflections about him. Communication through words must be put off for another occasion. Now is the time for wordless communion.

We wish you God's Blessings as you embark on this new journey!

Matty Jane SALDANHA  
Sidney D'SOUZA SJ

## THE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER

A certain basic maturity is essential for anyone who seriously desires to obtain the full fruits of the Spiritual Exercises. One of the key objectives of initiation programmes and formation in CLC, is to help in this process of growth.

Maturity is basically integration of the total personality - body, emotions, mind, spirit which bring about harmony, well-being, acceptance of self and a capacity to love self and others. At the heart of this 'becoming process' is GOD, who created man for life and life in all its fullness (cf. Jn.10.10). We cannot overlook an individual's human development while we try to deepen his life in the spirit... the two are vitally interlinked; one flows from the other, one enhances the other.

The basis of all Christian Spirituality, and consequently the Principle and Foundation of the Ignatian Experience is GOD LOVES ME. Can this truth transform the life of a man who has never experienced himself as loveable? In theory he may accept it; in a flash of prayer he might perceive it; he may even live a heroic life trying desperately to live up to what he thinks he ought to, in response to God. But it is doubtful if he will ever really experience

the joy which Christianity gives to one who lives lit up by the rays of God's love. His own narrow view of self will make him a cringing, fearful, close-fisted person : afraid to risk, to trust, to surrender, to even receive, to love. His reasoning, coloured by his own vision of life, will condemn him... 'I am no good...I am unworthy...people cannot like me...God cannot love me...I am deserving of his punishment' LOW SELF IMAGE GREATES A LOW GOD IMAGE. A person, who is too blocked to obtain the full fruit of the first week, will see himself as a sinner without a Saviour. Is he ready to risk the total surrender which the Exercises demand?

## A UNITIVE APPROACH

It is understandable, therefore, that the Way of Life CLC has to offer is based on this principle of integration ... "Our groups are for those who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith" (GP 3).

In India, we have kept this fact in mind and in the formation courses we offer, both to beginners and to those who are more advanced in CLC, we take into consideration man's total reality in all its dimensions. A model of one such programme, we outline in the following pages.

## THE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER

The Spiritual Encounter is a three to five day programme designed for experiential learning, in an atmosphere that is informal and comfortable. A maximum number of about twelve participants meet with a trained facilitator who helps them in a self awareness and growth experience through a combination of techniques: prayer, personality growth sessions and Eucharistic celebrations. These facilitate "Encounter" with God, Self and Others in the group, as one total and unique experience.

There is a depth in the word 'Encounter' which must be grasped if one is to understand what the session aims at. It does not offer systematic knowledge which can be jotted down in a notebook, but a basic experience which is transforming in itself. It brings about a 'knowing' at depth, where you experience God and self at the centre of this knowing. It is as though a veil has been torn away and one enters into self, into others, into God. With this, the individual is strengthened in his own Okayness, finds joy, peace and freedom.

In everyday life, it is usually not possible to 'encounter' in this way; people are too afraid to take the risk of exposing too much, lest they get hurt. Secondly, people tend to be uncomfortable with the goodness and okayness in themselves, with the love they receive, the joy they experience. In a flash they may touch this, sample it; but then it recedes into the background. They would rather dwell on the hurtful, painful events, cling to the knowledge that they are sinners. Our joyful, love-filled, positive experiences are our greatest strength, if only we know how to relish them, re-live them, make them more and more part of ourselves.

THE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER creates an atmosphere of mutual caring and trust which helps the individual drop his mask and lose his fear to show himself as he is. In such an atmosphere, one can face the truth about oneself both positive and negative, stop defending oneself and start experiencing the here and now reality of God, Self and Others. In the process, there is greater awareness and acceptance of self, a genuine experience of emotions, a deeper understanding of one's reactions and behaviour patterns, a building up of one's self image, greater honesty, an awareness of belonging to a community; a readiness to listen, to be open to the next stage of growth, to surrender.

In addition, through "the Fantasy prayer and Awareness exercises", the participants are given an opportunity to deepen their own here and now experience... to get in touch with the positive and relish it. There is a greater awareness of God's presence and love in whatever is happening... God in self, God in the Other, God in Himself. Thus the ground is being prepared for a deeper experience of the Exercises of Ignatius.

#### A PREPARATORY FORM OF THE EXERCISES

In this sense, the Spiritual Encounter is truly a preparatory form of the Exercises. It creates an atmosphere conducive to experiencing the reality of God, laying the foundation for a deeper personal relationship with Him. It helps to remove the obstacles that hinder one from taking in His love. As the person discovers more of himself, he is in a better position to approach the Spiritual Exercises with greater honesty; to lay before God areas that he now sees are in need of healing, he is able to seek and find, even discern what God wants of him because he has already owned his fears and is thus ready to let them go. His capacity to become aware, to relish love, is also deepened.

## THREE DAY PROGRAMME

The outline of the three day Spiritual Encounter as we present it in the following pages is subject to variations depending on the maturity of the group, as long as the objectives are borne in mind. The techniques used are not so important as the process of the encounter...of the necessity of creating an atmosphere in which each one can be himself, share freely and honestly, understand and learn about himself and experience how God is very much part of whatever happens, especially when it touches him deeply.

To bring this about, the facilitator must be alert to the needs of the individual and of the group and must help others become aware of them too. He should encourage full participation and strive to create a trusting, caring community charged with God's presence.

The three days may be centered on three different, though inter-related themes. WHO AM I?; I AND THE OTHER, and I AND OTHERS. In this article, three sessions are offered for each day: Fantasy Prayer, Structured Interaction, The Eucharist. These sessions already offer plenty to share and to work up on, to discover and to pray over.

### 1. FANTASY PRAYER

For many, the use of fantasy in prayer may be a totally new experience. We use the imagination as a vehicle to get in touch with ourselves, with others and with God. It serves as a very powerful method to elicit a total response. To fantasize is not to remember; it is to RE-LIVE an experience, an event..., it implies total absorption in the subject of the fantasy. One must forget the here-and-now and this demands concentration and stillness. To aid this, especially for those who are not used to concentrate in this way, we offer a five minute awareness exercise before each fantasy.

The Ignatian method of contemplation as described in the Exercises is basically similar to Fantasy Prayer. We are told to make ourselves physically present at the Gospel event we wish to contemplate, to use all our five senses and get immersed in the scene.

In the Spiritual Encounter, fantasy serves two pur-

poses. As a form of prayer, it takes one into oneself... and makes it basically easier to experience God affectively.

Secondly, sharing the fantasy experience with the group helps individuals see themselves more clearly. The self projections thus made in the fantasy reveal attitudes in general and by articulating this in the group, participants become more aware of these less conscious attitudes, values, reactions, responses, etc. etc.

## 2. STRUCTURED INTERACTION

This session begins with an activity, to create a learning situation and serves as a starting point for sharing a here and now experience. This experience, now felt and perhaps also visible to others, may even point to habitual, but semi-conscious experiences in similar situations. It leads to the discovery, admission, acceptance and working upon of emotional reactions and behavioural patterns of which one is hitherto unaware. These are often not only psychological. But they may also indicate similar elements in one's spiritual relationship with God eg. if a person appears to be normally distrustful of the other participants in this structured interaction or group, does he really trust God...? The exercises are related to the theme of the day, taking into account the overall objective of the Spiritual Encounter. The Structured Interaction could be replaced by Unstructured Interaction... Then, however, the facilitator needs to know not only the goal of a Spiritual Encounter but also needs to be well trained and experienced in Behavioural Sciences and Spirituality.

## 3. THE EUCHARIST

Celebrated at the close of the day, the Eucharist encompasses all that has hitherto taken place. In that atmosphere of trust and love, such liturgies don't just happen. They are happenings, celebrations, encounters with Christ in, through and with the Community. We have offered a basic theme, suitable readings and a suggestion or two. It is for the celebrant, with the group, to change this, vary it and complete it, depending on where the group is at that particular point.

Besides the fantasy prayer in the morning and Eucha-

ristic celebration in the evening, there is scope for prayer at anytime of the day...whenever a situation demands it, an individual asks for it or the group feels the need to join in silent or shared prayer. This happens particularly when a participant shares at great depth and when the group members feel deeply the pain, frustration, joy and successes of each other. The deeper the level of the group, the more palpable is the presence of God and the more is its union with Him expressed.

\* \* \*

ENCOUNTER WITH GOD IN MAN...  
AND MAN IN GOD...

### First Day

Theme. WHO AM I?

Ist session: Fantasy Prayer: THE STATUE

Assume a comfortable position, close your eyes... relax completely. Loosen up, relax your face muscles, shoulders, arms, torso, legs and feet, etc. Now observe your breathing, don't change it, just observe it, awareness of air passing through nostrils, feel the touch of air, quality of sensation : warm or cold... (if distractions arise, don't try to brush them away...become aware of thoughts and images as soon as they arise and they will go away: "I am aware that I am allowing myself to be distracted by my thinking!!").  
(pause) five minutes.

"Now follow my instructions closely. We are about to take a fantasy trip. You are on your way to visit a museum/ walk towards it, enter the building / go around from room to room, observe the objects /...



Now walk into a room that is empty, but for one statue in the centre. YOUR OWN STATUE. Look at yourself there / Observe every detail / How you yourself assume its form and position / Other people enter the room / They look at you, at your statue and comment / What are they saying? / The people gradually leave the room...

Christ enters / He looks at your statue / He is there with your Statue... What does he say? How does he look? What does he do?... Talk to Christ... (LONG Pause).

Now when you are ready, and only when you are finished, slowly return to this Encounter room. Don't hurry, don't disturb others. When you are back, don't move, just open your eyes. I will give you a signal when all are back".

Those who wish to share their fantasy experience are free to do so... After the sharings, the facilitator explains the fantasy as a self-projection exercise, he offers some interpretations (not judgements) and draws attention to: how each one saw their statue, felt about their statue ...the people who entered the room, who were they? What were their comments? What did Christ think of each statue? Were there similarities between the participants' attitude to self, others' attitudes to them and that of Christ? Point out the significance, allow individuals to comment more about it, without judging or labeling each other.

Let the participants have enough time to reflect on their experience and on any feed-back received so that each may decide for himself where he needs to grow and how he will go about it.

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## 2nd Session: Structured Interaction: BLOCK BUILDING (Part I)

Purpose : To discover how realistically one assesses one's capabilities and strengths.

Material required: A set of wooden blocks. (as used by children to study the Alphabet or make pictures)

Instructions : Members will be asked to mount the wooden blocks, one on top of the other, with one hand and having their eyes blindfolded. Before they do so, each one is asked to estimate approximately how many blocks he thinks he will be able to erect.

The experiment is carried out and each one checks his actual score with what he had previously estimated.

Group Interaction: Members share and comment on their score. What are the differences indicative of? Why? Does that also happen frequently in real life situations? Discuss: realistic, positive approaches to life, to one's God-given strengths.

## PART II - TRAIT CHECKLIST

Give each participant the following list with instructions to read quickly through them, ticking off those that fit their self-image and crossing those that do not fit. Use a question mark to indicate the ones they are not sure of.

|                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Like myself                   | Trust myself                   |
| Afraid of or hurt by others   | Enjoy people                   |
| People can trust me           | Usually say the wrong thing    |
| Put up a good front           | Don't enjoy being the sex I am |
| Usually say the right thing   | Discouraged about life         |
| Feel bad about myself         | Don't like to be around people |
| Fearful of the future         | Have not developed my talents  |
| Dependent on others for ideas | Glad I'm the sex I am          |
| Waste time                    | People like to be around me    |
| Use my talents                | Competent on the job           |
| Think of myself               | People avoid me                |
| Don't understand myself       | Enjoy life                     |
| Can't hold a job              | Enjoy work                     |
| Use time well                 | Enjoy nature                   |
|                               | Don't enjoy work               |

Now look at those traits you have marked with similar signs.

Is there a pattern?

Are they positive traits, negative traits, a mixture?

What traits would you like to change? to develop? How?

As you come to the end of these three days, come back to this check-list.

Look at the traits you have marked and change what you decide to change.

3rd Session: Eucharist: LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

The Mass may begin with the first reading. The place should be in darkness. Have a big candle unlit in the center of the room and several small candles.

Darkness :

Read Genesis I : 1-2

"There is darkness all around us. Let us get in touch with this darkness. What are our feelings? Let us stay with them". (Pause)... share your experience and feelings. Let us bring to God all that we are afraid to reveal, afraid to accept, all that we are ashamed of... (you are free to ask for pardon aloud/the community response will be : "we forgive you").

The big candle is now lit in the center of the room and the reading continues.

Genesis I:3-28

After the reading :

"Everything that God made was GOOD. Each one of us is created in the image and likeness of God. We are part of the goodness of God's creation. Let us ask for the grace to acknowledge and relish our own goodness and thank God for anything we see in ourselves as loving and beautiful" ... (The community response will be: We thank you Lord... for my loveableness,... we thank you... etc.).

Acclamation : Jn 8:12 (Between the Acclamation and the Gospel, the smaller candles are lit from the big one.)

Gospel Reading : Mt. 5:14-16

N.B.: As the Eucharist continues, the celebrant/commentator will high-light the parts or words in which man's God-given goodness is brought out in this context of divine love and kindness.

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SECOND DAY

=====

Theme : I AND THE OTHER

1st session : Fantasy Prayer - RE-LIVING LOVE EXPERIENCES

"Place yourself in a comfortable position and relax your whole body(as earlier mentioned).Listen to the SOUNDS around you...every sound, the softest, the most distant. Each sound contains dozens of sounds within it, attempt to pick all up, without naming them. There is a silence at the heart of every sound. Sounds are a distraction only when you try to get rid of them or fight them. Here absorb them or live with them.

Concentrate on sounds, rest in sounds...(5 minutes).

"Now go back in time - as far back as you can remember...bring to mind one by one all the people who have loved you/your mother, father, brothers, sisters, aunts, grandparents etc... right up till today... your spouse,your friends. / Bring each persons before you ONE BY ONE, and stay with each separately. See them loving you / re-capture the feelings aroused in you, when you know yourself loved by them / relish this love as deeply as you can / do not be in a hurry to pass on to the next person if you are still relishing one love experience. Do not think,nor question their reason for loving you. Linger on those experiences where your fantasy affords you the greatest amount of joy and depth... After seeing and experiencing each person loving you, say to yourself..."I am a loveable person,I am a wonderful person...I love myself exactly as I am...I accept myself exactly as I am... Thank you God for making me AS I AM...Thank you God for loving me through these persons ..." Say the words slowly and with conviction. Never mind if you do not completely feel that way yet. / PAUSE. ... Now see Christ before you... see and feel him loving you... accepting you... Relish his love...repeat the above words...Have a dialogue with Christ, who with His love confirms your loveableness. PAUSE...

Now open your eyes when you have finished... Wait in silence, till all are back... I will signal when the group is ready for the next step".

Let members share experiences and FEELINGS. Some may not have experienced anything...felt blocked, unloved, unconvinced of their loveableness...it would be good for them now to go deeper into this / to question why...to ask themselves if they really believe in God...have faith in a Good Creator. For those who have had a good positive experience ...make them compare their here and now feelings with those they had before they began the fantasy. Is there a difference? eg. increase of peace, joy, internal strength,etc??

Here the facilitator could explain the value of re-

living and relishing joyful experiences in life. Most of us give more time to brooding over unpleasant experiences and this blocks our energy. On the contrary, relishing and remembering good experiences releases energy and the emotional feeling aroused in the fantasy remains with us when we return to the reality we are experiencing. It changes our outlook, makes us feel better, sharpens our perception, etc. Invite them to make use of fantasy in this way every time they feel a bit low and depressed.

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## Session II: Structured Interaction: THE TRUST WALK (Part I)

Half the members of the group have their eyes blindfolded. The other half choose one of these blindfolded members and lead them for a walk for about five minutes, in complete silence. Then exchange the blindfold and the roles... Continue the exercise for 5 more minutes. Both, the one who leads and the one led, now observe and make a note (mentally) of the feelings aroused in them. Observe also the gestures of the body and what these may indicate, e.g. rigidity, maybe lack of trust, ...fear.

Group Sharing : Each one shares the feelings aroused when being led (fear, uneasiness, anxiety, impatience or relaxation, peace, joy, sense of being cared for, in safe hands...TRUST). The ones who led, also share their feelings (concern, impatience, respect, responsibility...etc.). From this experiment, the facilitator can show the group the importance of TRUST in a relationship. To risk opening up and letting another enter your life, you must surrender something of yourself... you must be ready to trust someone (just as you did in the trust walk). The more you trust, the more you risk, the deeper you experience oneness and joy. Correspondingly, the one who is trusted receives this trust with responsibility and utmost respect and concern. This two-way communication leads to richness in a relationship. Now try the following...

### Part II TRUSTING THE OTHER

Choose a partner. Set a time limit of fifteen minutes. Make a contract with each other not to indulge in 'games' and trivialities. Select the least distracting place. Sit facing each other, not more than five feet apart. Look directly into each others eyes. Take turns sharing something

with each other, a personal concern, a worry, a deep interest, an incident. Share both thoughts and feelings. Try to be clear, and be aware of your emotions and express them. Be aware of how your emotions change.

When listening, don't interrupt, not even making mental judgements. Listen actively, caringly. Later respond to the person not with advice, but with genuine understanding, feeling / with empathy. Share back and forth several times. What feelings do you have toward your partner after the experiment?

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Session III: Eucharistic Celebration: ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

Scriptural Texts: 1st Reading: Acts.9:1-9 Paul encounters Christ  
2nd Reading: Mt. 16:13-20 Who do you say I am?

Sharing : An Encounter is a unique experience. It is never the same for another as it is for you. During these two days we all have encountered Christ in some way...in ourselves, in another, in Himself...Let us recall some or one of these experiences that have touched us deeply. After some reflection, feel free to share this Encounter Experience with the group.

After Communion : Christ is asking each of us today, as He asked His Apostles..."and you...who do you say I am? Let us respond to Christ, share this in the form of a litany...." You are my rock, ...you are my mountain...you are my friend ...you are my light...you are my everything... Let this go on for sometime. Now in silence, let us ask Christ... "And you Christ...who do you say that I am?" (Listen in silence as Christ answers us. This is yet another moment of encounter with Him). Share in the group Christ's replies to you and not the words you put into Christ's mouth.

N.B.: During this Eucharist, let those parts be emphasized which bring out the experience of meeting God and of oneness with Christ.

### THIRD DAY

Theme: I AND OTHERS

Session I: Fantasy Prayer: NO OTHER HANDS BUT YOURS

Close your eyes and relax. Feel the stillness and silence of the whole body, rest in it...feel the stillness of the whole room...rest in it. Be perfectly motionless (when the urge to move arises due to other sensations eg.itching, pricking etc.,just concentrate awareness on them till they disappear. Do the same with physical pain experienced in any limb. Pause... 5 minutes.

With your eyes still closed...become aware of your hands, resting on your lap or on the chair or on the floor ...feel life pulsating through them from the rest of your body...

Recall the most unforgettable hands you have ever known eg. of your father / your mother / your grandparents / your friends / Remember the oldest hands that have rested in your hands / Imagine the hands of a newborn child / the incredible beauty, perfection, delicacy in the hands of a child. Once upon a time, your hands were of the same size.

Picture the hands of someone who loves you dearly now ...see those hands / feel them reach out and caress you... speak to you without words. Pause...

Visualize the hands of all those who have educated you, formed you, healed you, cared for you, given you joy, filled you with awe... the hands of a teacher, a doctor, a nurse, an artist, a musician...

Become aware of your own hands once more... Think of all the things your hands have done since the day you were born. Almost all you have learned has been through or connected with your hands / Think of all the skills and activities your hands have mastered / the things they have made / Did you ever clap your hands in sheer joy or applause? / Or clench your first in anger or bang them in despair? Were your hands cold, nervous, trembling? How much hurt, anger,

and even violence they have expressed...how often they have been folded in prayer, both a sign of their powerlessness and of their power:

Lift your right hand slowly and feel your heartbeats. How often were your hands given to help another? Remember all the kinds of work they have done, the tiredness and aching they have known, the cold and heat, the soreness and the bruises. Remember the tears they have wiped away. How much gentleness, tenderness, love they have given. Every time your hand is extended to another in a gesture of kindness and friendship, you give your heart...yourself. Fingerprints and handprints are heartprints that can never be erased. The hand has its own memory. Think of all the people who bear your heart-prints. They are indelible and will last forever.

Eyes still closed, now take your hand from your heart and extend it slowly on either side. Find another hand. Do not simply hold it or treat it like a thing; but sense it and experience it. It is alive, it is personal. It is unique. Now bring your hand to yourself. Whose hand was that? It could have been any hand, it could have been HIS HAND. It was...HE HAS NO OTHER HANDS BUT YOURS! THESE!

Stay in silence, with your eyes closed, and see the crucified Christ before you. Look at His Hands.... nailed, bleeding, helpless...those hands were nailed to set me free, hands that carry my burden, heal my inner-most wounds, hands from which flow pardon, peace and power. Glorious hands, yet those hands washed dirty feet. They opened many eyes and ears, raised the dead, multiplied food and broke the Bread! Stay with Christ... keep your eyes closed... Pause... Now open your eyes gradually... become aware of your here and now feelings and surroundings.

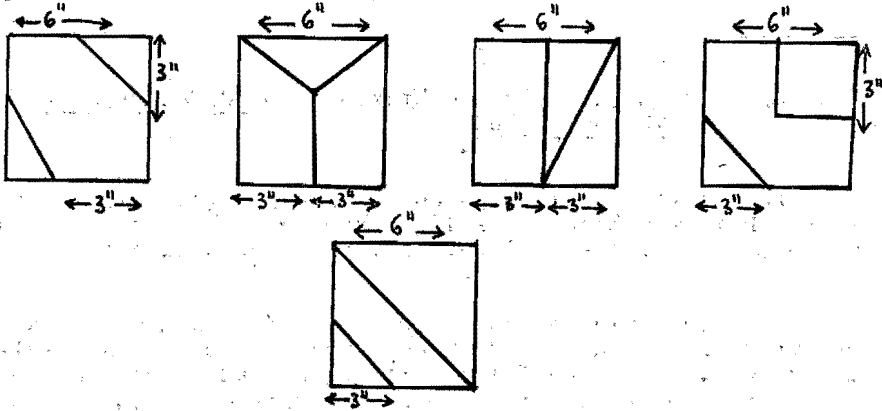
Let members describe their feelings throughout the fantasy. What strikes them most of all about their own hands.. what is it a symbol of within themselves? (Bring out the aspect of each one's unique and personal gifts to others. Let the positives outweigh the negative).

### Session III: Structured Interaction: EXPERIMENT IN CO-OPERATION (The Square Game)

Purpose: To become more sensitive to the Social dimension eg. to the way in which one's behaviour may help or hinder joint problem-solving or group action. (It takes about 45 minutes.)



Material: For every group of five participants, a puzzle-set consisting of five six inch squares made of hard board or stiff paper. Each square is cut into three puzzle pieces as indicated below. The 15 pieces are all mixed up when given to the participants and each member gets any three pieces.



Procedure and Instructions : The group consisting of five participants sit themselves around a table. Each table may have one or two observers, who note down what happens. The experiment is carried out in complete silence within the time-limit set down.

Each person is given three pieces for forming the squares and the following instructions are stated clearly (not explained):

"At the signal, the task of the group is to form five squares of equal size. The task is not complete until every one has before him, a perfect square and all the squares are of the same size. The rules are as follow :

1. No member may speak
2. No member may signal in any way that he needs a piece. Neither may he ask for it.
3. Members may give pieces to each other, (to anyone in the group) and receive...
4. No member may take, on his own initiative, any piece not offered to him.

When all or most of the groups have finished, call time, and discuss the experiment. The observers and the participants share personal observations and feelings.

Ask what co-operation means. List on the board the requirements for co-operation eg. Everyone needs to understand the problem / everyone needs to believe that he can help / instructions need to be clear, / everyone needs to think of the other person as well as himself, etc. etc.

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Session III: Eucharistic Celebration: GO FORTH AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS

(Each participant is asked to bring to the Mass something that symbolizes himself - what he wishes to offer to God and to others - a flower, a leaf ...a stick etc...)

The clear sign of one's being freed by a deep personal encounter with God in and through people, events, self-discovery etc., is to be filled with a joy and peace that overflows and reaches out to others... encompasses others. The deeper our sense of loveableness and joy, the more effective our giving.

During this Eucharist, let us celebrate the joy and freedom gained in our encounter during these three days... this is the good news that we take back with us... GOD IS LOVE... I am loveable...Others are loveable...

First Reading: Isaiah 52: 1-10

Second Reading: Lk. 19:1-9

Share reflections on the readings

At the preparation of gifts : each one comes up and places the symbol he has chosen of himself on the altar, offering himself to God, in any way he wants to, through a short spontaneous prayer.

The Kiss of Peace : could be left for the end of the Mass - an exchange of love, joy, peace and thanksgiving.

N.B. During this Eucharist, special attention may be drawn to parts that bring out the Social and Community dimension.

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The above account and exercises or techniques are not meant to help the Reader to be able to conduct a Spiritual Encounter from just out of these pages. Rather, it is hoped that from these, an experienced formation guide may now know in which direction he may have to equip himself so as to be able to facilitate this, as in any other Preparatory Form of the Spiritual Exercises. He realizes the need and helps his group members to get the psychological and the spiritual to be inter-related and even integrated for an experience of true Christian living.

Raynah STANLEY  
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