

## Ignatian Community Retreat 2010 Being and Becoming: Encountering God as Love Loving

### Friday:

#### God as Love Loving

Context for weekend: In 1522, Ignatius had a mystical experience along the Cardoner River outside of Manresa that was foundational to his spirituality and the development of the Exercises. He had a sense of being immersed in God. “He was given a deep sense of how all creatures emanate from God and, in Christ, return to God; how Jesus Christ completes human nature in taking our flesh; and how Christ is present in the Sacrament. He grasped that God’s plan is really a project that each person on earth contributes to, and how what God hopes for us rises in our consciousness and, by God’s grace, free enactment.”<sup>1</sup> As he gazed at the river, Ignatius became deeply aware of the ongoing story of God’s revelation and creation. This is a long-term relationship that continues to reveal deeper insights into God and our relationship with God. He received the insight that a person can’t step into the same river twice; that God’s plan is continually unfolding and that all of creation, past, present, and future are one. And we are co-creators in this plan.

As other mystics before him and since his time had done, Ignatius experienced that sense of oneness, not of just the human race with each other, not even of all of creation as it now exists, but of all things from the beginning of time and into the future. In God they are all one. He knew what today’s scientists are confirming: everything is relational. God’s creative activity is present in all things. I invite you to spend some time getting a glimpse of this story, of this unfolding of God’s creative energy.

PowerPoint: ICR2010Fri.pdf

**Closing Prayer:** (as quoted in *Open the Door* by Joyce Rupp)

I fall short of my own ideals over and over. Yet, despite the certainty of my unworthiness, I feel spirit urging me to venture forth again.

So, God, I ask you to use me, anyway.

Take my fears and use me, anyway.

Take my failures and use me, anyway.

Take my greed and use me, anyway.

Take my guilt and use me, anyway.

Take my confusion and use me, anyway.

Take my regret and use me, anyway.

I offer all of myself to you.

Use me to serve many or few.

In pain or in joy.

Use me as you will.

*Carol Osborn*

## Saturday am: Seeing as God Sees

Jesus' life reveals God's view of the world. The Word become Flesh. In the Meditation on the Incarnation in the Spiritual Exercises, we are invited to imagine God hovering over the world and observing all that is happening there.

Imagine you are God. What you see and what would be your response?  
God responds with compassion, not judgment, sending Gods' Self in the person of Jesus.

Jesus, born poor, homeless, considered by some illegitimate, who became a refugee, was from a small town, hung around with tax collectors and prostitutes, was considered a heretic and blasphemer, was put to death in one of the most humiliating and degrading ways as a traitor. This was the son of God.

If we were God is this how we would have planned it?

The Gospels gives us some insight into how Jesus understood his role in the unfolding of the kin-dom.

Jesus had received his being baptized according to Jewish custom, a remembrance of the Exodus event, being freed from slavery of sin to freedom. After his baptism, Jesus heard his identity as the beloved one. "You are my Beloved in whom I am well pleased." This was his relationship with God.

Ponder for a moment a time when you might have had a similar experience, or if you haven't, ponder it now. You are my beloved in whom I am well pleased.

If I heard this message this clearly, I would feel a need for some time to ponder the meaning of this. Jesus goes off into the desert on a vision quest.

What we hear is both the three temptations proffered by the devil and the three affirmations by Jesus of who he knew himself to be. So they are less temptations, but more a context for Jesus to clarify who he had heard he was and what are the implications for how he would carry out his mission.

First temptation:

*"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."*  
Jesus answered him, *"It is written, One does not live on bread alone."*

Jesus didn't use his powers to change something into what it wasn't to suit his needs. He understood that coercive and manipulative energy was not from God.

2<sup>nd</sup> Temptation

*"I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me."*

*Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written:  
You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."*

God is the source of all life, the creative energy that sustains the universe.  
How can I worship anything else?

Jesus understood that God invites us to co-creators. God doesn't give power to lord it over others, but to be servants to each other

3<sup>rd</sup> Temptation:

*"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written:  
He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,  
and:  
With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone."  
Jesus said to him in reply,  
"It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."*

Yes, I know I am God's beloved, and God cares for me with each breath I take. I know it therefore, I don't have to have God prove it. Who am I to demand anything from God who has given me everything?

Then he went to begin his preaching 'in the power of the Spirit' in the synagogue in Nazareth. Thrown out of town for suggesting that God's providence and care was for all, not just the Jewish people.

Jesus could listen to all temptations, challenges, and invitations to disown himself, to fall down, to be unreal, to seek power and glory because he listened once and often, to the prayer of God over and within him. You are my beloved.

Jesus provides us with a model for discernment. "The choices we are asked to make... are not so much about what job to take, which home to buy, how much money to save, or when to retire. These are important and can influence spiritual growth, but the selections on the threshold are deeper and more far-reaching. These choices stretch from the soul and into the heart of God. What we decide determines if we will develop innate qualities like compassion, unconditional love, trustworthiness, honesty, other-centeredness, and generosity." (from *Open the Door* by Joyce Rupp) And I would add gratitude.

In the Exercises, we have the consideration of the Two Standards or Two Value systems in which we look at the values of Lucifer and how he goes about his work, and the values of Jesus and how he goes about his work.

<p><b>THE ENEMY</b>  Pompous, Powerful, Oppressive  Summons, Scatters  Using all Force/violence  Missing Nobody  Tempt to  Riches  Honor  Pride  Lead to all other vices</p>	<p><b>GOD</b>  Humble, Gentle  Chooses, Sends  Gently/non-violence  Embracing everyone  Invites to  Poverty (Spiritual Freedom)  Contempt (Vulnerability)  Humility (Unconditional Love)  Lead to all other virtues</p>
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Lucifer is greedy, manipulative, secretive, enslaving, leading us away from this attitude of gratitude to one of selfishness and self-centeredness. Jesus values on the other hand lead us to a deeper relationship with God, ourselves and all creation. These are outlined in the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes give us the Attitudes necessary for building the kingdom. They invite us to participate in the way God works in the world. Matthew 25, the story of the Last Judgment, “Lord when did I see you...,” expands on this by giving us the how.

So when we come to make a decision about something or even what stand we should take on an issue, questions we might ask ourselves is:

How are the values of Jesus, the Beatitudes being most fully activated?  
Who are the winners and losers? Those with ‘power’ or the poor and marginalized?  
Where is the faith being placed? In power, security, wealth, prestige, control?  
Or compassion, honesty, respect, generosity, empowerment, simplicity, humility?

The objective in discernment is to sift through and come to a deeper awareness and understanding so that either as an individual or a community we can come to a decision of how to more authentically live out the Gospel. We try to look at the situation through God’s eyes rather than the world’s.

It is not about making a judgment on someone else’s beliefs or response. Everything is gift and all situations are calls to respond to God’s grace.

Gratitude is the operative stance we need to have.

## Saturday am: Suffering as God Suffers

The Body of Christ. Focusing on Jesus physical suffering invites us to become more aware of the suffering of the Body of Christ in the World today. Transformational suffering. Not suffering for the sake of suffering, but suffering as a result of an authentic living out of the Gospel (Blessed are those who suffer persecution): Martin Luther King, Jr.; Mother Theresa.

Eucharist is the explanation of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection. Do this in memory of me, not simply a re-enacting of a ritual. Do THIS. All of this, my whole life.

Giving of self in service to the kingdom.

Passion/death/resurrection is reflected in the unfolding of the universe.

*"The paradox of creation and destruction shapes the evolving rhythms and patterns of the young universe. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth became the inspiring process that would endow creation for time immemorial. Chaotic and destructive at times, and often baffling to the human mind, creation's paradoxical wisdom continues to beget the wonderful world we all inhabit."*  
Diarmuid O'Murchu

Model for transformational suffering

The dying of each being/era allows the creation of a new being

Existence of the universe is based on transforming one energy into another:

$$E=mc^2$$

Sacred history, graced history. Continual unfolding of the kingdom

There is no other. There is no enemy.

Encountering God in all things. Indifference – not *finding* God, that is laying our own expectations upon what is of God, and not of God.

Suffering: not victimhood. Stance of freedom.

Suffering which transforms negative energy into positive energy: Love

Jesus lives the ultimate model of transformational suffering

Jesus: No power over me, I give my life freely.

No one takes freedom, we give it over.

Not resentful

Paschal Mystery: passion, death, resurrection

Not fight/flight, but third alternative – non-violent engagement. (Gandhi)

Spiral of violence (Dom Helder Camara)

Pondering (Rohlheizer)

To hold, carry and transform tension so as not to give it back in kind, because what we don't transform we will retransmit.

We can't redeem what we don't love. Father, forgive them.

I read excerpts from article on Dr. Denis Mukwege and his mission to help the traumatized women of the Congo. *Note: the full article is more graphic and detailed than what I read. It can be found at:*  
<http://www.glamour.com/magazine/2007/08/rape-in-the-congo>

*You can Google Denis Mukwege for more information on this man and his ministry.*

## Saturday pm: Loving as God Loves

### Sharing

What is resurrection? How do we experience it? Is it something that happened 2000 years ago? Is it happening today?

Earlier today we were with Jesus in the desert pondering how to authentically respond to the realization that he was God's beloved.

We were reminded that Eucharist is not a past event, but is present now. As is the passion of the Christ lived now.

So also we celebrate the Resurrection of the Christ lived now.

Last night we have re-membered our salvation history, that beloved relationship we have with God. A relationship that still active and creative among us. It reminds us that we are only part of much longer story. And there have been times of pain, slavery, bondage, but also times of freedom, redemption and peace.

Resurrection is not a one-time event; it is world view, a mind set, the way we choose to relate to the life. It is choosing life over death, hope over despair, survivorship over victimhood, love over hatred, or even more over apathy.

I am borrowing the voices of modern day prophets, to explain.

**Dorothy Day:** "How little we have attempted, let alone accomplished. The consolation is this – and this is our faith too: By our sufferings and our failures, by our acceptance of the Cross, by our struggle to grow in faith, hope and charity, we unleash forces that help to overcome the evil in the world."

**Ann Frank:** This freedom is not simply about DOING something. It comes from an interior choice. A couple of quotes from Ann Frank illustrate this.

"I simply can't build my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery and death ... I think peace and tranquillity will return again."

"It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart."

### Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.  
This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.  
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.  
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Loving as God Loves  
Suffering brings about compassion.  
Loving without judgment and without criteria.