

Ignatian CLC Spirituality: A Pathway to God¹

Spirituality can be understood simply as a way of life that involves “getting to the heart of the matter,” “living with integrity,” or “becoming one’s best self.” Rooted in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, Ignatian spirituality is a pathway to God that embraces continual conversion of heart, deepening personal love of Christ, and striving to become more fully alive. Seven characteristics² outline this journey.

1. “Finding God in All Things”

This favorite phrase of Ignatius points to an ease of finding God in each concrete situation of life. It presupposes openness to God in any experience, dramatic or dull, vital or trivial, such that we are willing to be shaped by God. It is the posture of seeking meaning in our own daily happenings: “Lord, how are You inviting me through this event?” “What are You trying to tell me through that person?” Such habitual stance enables us to discern where and how God is calling us to partnership and intimacy.

2. Intimacy with Jesus

The *Spiritual Exercises* is a “school of the heart” which fosters a personal knowing, loving, and following of Jesus. This intimacy with our Brother and Savior brings us to a greater identification with Christ poor and humbled, crucified and Risen. It impels us to collaborate with him in the struggle for the poor, powerless, and rejected – to befriend him in the marginalized. Heartfelt and honest conversations with Jesus in prayer and with others in dialogue ground this intimacy. Discernment brings it to fruitful action.

3. Following the Spirit / Tracking interior movements

The desire to become more like Jesus and find God in all things moves us, as both individuals and as a community, to listen and respond creatively to the promptings of the Spirit. This entails attentiveness to the flow of interior moods, desires or feelings and the thoughts that accompany them. It involves both sensitivity to how God is present and acting in our lives as well as vigilance for the forces and influences that takes us away from God through personal vices, people, institutions, and cultural values, etc. Growing in awareness of inner motivations allows us to respond more lovingly to the Spirit at work in our lives.

4. Serving Out of Gratitude

The Ignatian imagination sees “all as gift.” Our very existence, natural abilities and weaknesses, the people, and experiences that shape who we are becoming are gifts that flow from God’s outpouring love. God who delights in me as “Beloved” labors in all aspects of my life to draw me deeper into loving union and service. The more I grow in gratitude of God’s plentiful love for me and all of creation, the more will I respond fully and generously in service of and with others. Gratitude fuels my striving to love as I have been loved.

¹ Spirituality as a “pathway to God” is an expression found in the ‘Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus.’

² These are ideals for which we are striving, inspired by the CLC-USA’s document with a similar name. Visit http://www.clc-usa.org/clc_spirituality.htm

5. Ordering Relationships

Living and choosing in loving collaboration with Jesus inserts us more deeply into right relationships with others. We are called to foster just and loving relationships: to live with integrity in our calling to be “friends in the Lord,” to stand in solidarity with the oppressed, and to extend charity toward all. Such heartfelt and ordered relationships expand to a care for all of God’s creation. Where there is alienation or division, we are called to be reconcilers and peacemakers; where there is suffering and injustice we are called to be healers, bearers of hope, and promoters of justice.

6. Living in True Freedom

Integrating the above ideals cultivates an Ignatian way of living rooted in freedom for which we are created and called. Each of us is entrusted with a unique and particular mission in life, loved into us by God. Living out this passion means living in freedom as children of God and collaborators with Christ in building up the Kingdom. Free *from* fear, untruth, disordered tendencies and relationships; free *to* live authentically, lovingly, justly as response to God in every situation of our lives. As Jesus was free with regard to wealth, honor, and power in order to be available for the work of God, so too are we called to be free.

7. Making regular Retreats

As a retreat experience, the Spiritual Exercises are a “school for conversion of heart.” The experience facilitates a rich and powerful encounter of God through reflection, prayer and Scripture that leads a person to true spiritual freedom. This is specifically evident in:

- growing openness to the Spirit
- looking honestly at his/her areas of unfreedom
- discerning and living more fully one’s mission in life

The “full” Exercises can be experienced in two ways. The first format consists of a thirty-day silent prayer and reflection at a retreat house, accompanied by a spiritual director. The other format, commonly called “retreat in daily life” or the “19th Annotations,” takes place over a period of seven to nine months. While living in his or her present environment, the retreatant engages in daily prayer periods, and meets a director weekly (possibly with others on a similar journey). Beyond its “full” form, the *Exercises* shape the dynamics of other Ignatian retreats, such as five or eight day silent retreats.

In summary, the Ignatian spirituality of CLC rooted in the Exercises empowers us to encounter God who comes to meet us where we are, draws us to know and love him more faithfully, and enables us to better discern God’s presence and invitation in every situation of our lives.

It also challenges us to confront ourselves where we are not free, to order relationships through charity and justice, and discover Christ as a personal friend with whom we can listen to the Spirit, collaborate, and love in the least members of our societies.

All this so that we may be truly free – “to love and serve God in all things.”