COMMUNITY OF FAITH
July 6, 2024

Deepening Our Faith Journey

This past May of 2024 the St. Francis Xavier Parish Ignatian Retreat Ministry completed 30 years of offering the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola Retreat in Everyday Life, also known as the S.E.E.L Retreat, to retreatants in Western Montana and beyond. This is truly a momentous milestone. And we're not done. In September of 1994, Fr. Tom Healy, S.J. and then Jesuit scholastic, Fr. Jerry Graham, S.J. took a group of nine, quite diligent parishioners through the nine month Spiritual Exercises Retreat. At the end of the retreat, the retreatants were told that if they wanted to keep this opportunity alive they would have to do it and they did. The summer of 1995, these determined individuals went through an intense formation process to become spiritual directors and, well, the rest is history.

There is an incredible invitation to a deeper experience of God inherent in Ignatian Spirituality, specifically in the Spiritual Exercises. Born out of Ignatius's conversion experience 500 years ago, the Spiritual Exercises have provided for many through the ages an opportunity for spiritual growth and formation. From our very beginning, our Creator has placed within each individual one's deepest desires. The Exercises and its adaptations are a means to explore and deepen one's experience of these sacred desires and to rediscover who we are as faith-graced individuals. The way of Ignatius is in finding freedom, the freedom to become the person we were created to be, our most authentic self, to love and accept love, to discern, that is to make good decisions which lead us closer to our Creator, and to experience the beauty of creation and the mystery of God's love.

There is a term in Ignatian Spirituality known as the Magis, a Latin term which suggests that we should always proceed in a way conducive to the *greater* service of God and the universal good of humanity. It is a call to the more, an invitation to engagement, building bridges and loving relationships with all of creation. It speaks to a deep listening, providing a framework to explore this truth of our being on the basis of relationship with the Divine, Infinite Love, and with each other. There is an incredible journey into self-knowledge and conversion linked to living out this call to the more universal good. It is grounded in the spirituality of choice at the level of faith; it is a call to greater inner freedom and love manifest in a deepened realization of union and communion with the Divine. The beauty of Ignatian Spirituality is its adaptability to the individual. It is a contemplative prayer form whose goal is to take the individual deeper not necessarily different.

There is no mistake that in 1995 the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius found me and how it deepened my experience of family and faith. It was and continues to be a call to the more, the better, the greater, for God, a realization of the deep and abiding importance of hospitality, that is, a generosity of spirit and sacred devotion. When the Exercises found me they took me deeper, expanding and reigniting my deepest God-given desires and my most authentic self.

Perhaps summertime might be a good time to ponder again our relationship with our good and gracious God and to seek out ways to enliven our spiritual journey. I invite you to consider Ignatian Spirituality. Wishing you blessings on your journey.

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