

SIX PRAYER EXERCISES **TO GROW** **IN THE LOVE OF GOD,**

Preliminary Thoughts:

The Prayer Exercises herewith, are an attempt at a modern presentation of the CONTEMPLATION TO ATTAIN LOVE with which St Ignatius Loyola closes his book of “The Spiritual Exercises”.

By means of that contemplation St Ignatius intended, at the close of their month Retreat, to make The Retreatants feel the love of God encompassing them and the whole universe. Their entire lives henceforth should be lived in the presence of God and suffused with God’s strengthening love.

Uses of These Exercises

- They have been prepared for individual use. However, they can be also offered to others, either individually or in groups.
- Individual users may take only what is helpful to them.
- If offered to groups, group moderators should adapt them to the nature and capacity of their groups.
- These exercises can be offered at retreats, recollections, camps, seminars and other events.

Target Audience

- All audiences, young and old, religious and lay people.
- Except for exercise No. Six of Part II, all the rest can be given to Non-Christians too.

Requirements

- A quiet, restful and prayerful place.
- Writing material.

Likely Gains from These Exercises

The experience of being loved and growing in love will help us in many ways.

Improving our self-image

Self-acceptance.

Self-forgiveness.

Healing of hurts and injuries.

Finding joy in daily living.

Being able to help others grow by loving them.

Become kinder to all.
 Ability to forgive others.
 Improve one's interpersonal relationships.
 Finding God in the events of life.

- To feel forgiven by God.
- To be able, not only to “believe” in God, but to “entrust” ourselves to Him.
- To enrich our prayer life.

EXERCISE ONE

Loved by “Unknown, Anonymous Lovers”

Note: This exercise is based on the love we received from strangers who accidentally showed their concern for us. We call them “anonymous lovers”.

Preparation:

Quiet down: Soft music, breathing and awareness exercises may help.
Short introductory prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Step 1. FANTASY – “RELIVING PAST MEMORIES”

- **Remember some unknown persons who showed love and concern for you**
 - ✓ In an accident in the street they assisted you...
 - ✓ Making room for you in the train to sit...
 - ✓ Helping you to find an address...
 - ✓ Giving you water to drink...
 - ✓ Or any other similar occasion.
- Relive those scenes now...Make yourself present at them as vividly as you can...
- Feel nice... enjoy the occasion... feel cared for ...
- Remembering those occasions become aware of the love unknown people gave you..
- **In your fantasy show gratefulness tose unknown lovers.**
 - ✓ Remember them and thank them now in your mind
 - ✓ It's never too late to say thanks.
 - ✓ Thankfulness shown to others, even in their absence, is gratefulness shown to God
 - ✓ Give thanks to God for the love He showed you through those anonymous persons!
- **Pray to God for them.** Say these or similar things:
 - ✓ Lord, my God, whoever those people were I pray for them to you ...
 - ✓ Bless them... console them... fill them with peace and joy...
 - ✓ Lord, help me to love people in return...

- ✓ Teach me how to love all people even strangers.....
- ✓ Give them all your choicest blessings...

Step 2. POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- There is much **unnoticed** love going on in the world all around us! Be aware of it, experience it...
- It is a pity that we have gone through life with blindfolded eyes, unable to see the love that there is all around us.
- Try as you can, you will never be able to recall the many occasions when “unknown” people had shown you love and concern.
- Open your mind and your eyes now. Be aware and experience the atmosphere of love encompassing you from birth till now...
- Discover God’s love in all these people... It is God loving presence in the world.
- Those “unknown lovers” are “sacraments of God’s love”. They make our world a nice place to live in!
- God was not only incarnated in Christ, he is, in a true sense, incarnated in every loving person!
- You too are God’s incarnated love if you go about giving others your love—even to those unknown to you.
- Keep ever in mind that people will come to know God only when you reveal it to them through your acts of love!

Step 3. EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE :

In the past what has been your attitude towards strangers and “unknown people”?

- ✓ In the street and other public places: market, cinemas, etc.
- ✓ In the trains, buses and public services?
- ✓ In our schools, colleges and other training institutions?
- ✓ In hospitals and dispensaries?
- ✓ In our offices and places of work?
- ✓ Have you given back to strangers and “unknown people” the love, so many times, you received from them?
- ✓ Have you helped them in their need?
- ✓ Have you spoken to them kindly and politely?
- ✓ Did you listen to them patiently?
- ✓ Did you ever pray for them?

Ask God to pardon you for the times you have been unkind and indifferent towards strangers.

Step 3. CLOSSING PRAYER

- Put down on paper your insights
- Write a prayer expressing your feelings of affection and gratitude towards Him and towards people in general.
- Prayerfully read several times all you wrote.
- End by spontaneously speaking to God..

EXERCISE TWO:

Loved by “Unseen Lovers”

Note: This exercise is based on the love and services we received in our lives from people we have never seen. Yet, because of their services our life has been made pleasant.

Preparation:

Quiet down: Soft music, breathing and awareness exercises may help.

Short introductory prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Step 1. THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

- Most of our needs and wants are satisfied through the services and the love of thousands of simple and unassuming people whom we don't know.
- They may be bakers, weavers, cobblers, farmers, masons, etc. People we have never seen and whom we shall never see!
- Yet, we enjoy the fruits of their labors and toil.
- They work for the love they have for their dearest ones – husbands, wives, parents, and children. It is by loving their nearest ones that they love and praise God in their occupations and work.
- We too, without their knowing it, profit from their deeds of loving dedication.
- Let us remember that love is one and indivisible. By loving our dearest ones, we love in one single embrace, **God, others and ourselves!**

Step 2. FANTASY

- Think of the countless items we require to satisfy our needs and wants: food, clothing, housing, books, entertainment, tools, houses, gadgets, etc... thousands of items...
- Amongst them, for instance, take the bread we eat. To have our bread, the fields have to be ploughed, watered, manured, planted, harvested... We need the ploughs and other farming implements... carpenters, blacksmiths, machines etc. We need the flour, grinding mills, selling and buying it, making the dough, baking it... Truly, a long chain of human hands is necessary before the bread reaches our table... They are human hands... moved by human hearts... All working together to satisfy our need for bread!
- Thousands of simple, honest people keep toiling from morn to dusk that we may enjoy the fruits of their labors and love...
- Every morsel of bread we eat is kneaded and baked with love... Yes, human love... divine love!.. .Let us remember, when we eat bread we eat love!... It's man's love made eatable... it's God's love made eatable!..
- When we put on clothes, we put on love... we put on God!
- When we dwell in a house made by human hands, we dwell in God! We dwell in love... Love! Love! Love is everywhere...
- We are immersed in a world created, fashioned and sustained in love!...

- We cannot escape love! We are encompassed with love... We swim in love... Bask in love... Bathe in love!... It's wonderful... It's great!... It's God!...

Step 3. PERSONAL PRAYER

- Write down your insights and feelings.
- Write a note of thanksgiving to all your “unseen lovers”, to all men and women for what they did and do for you, for all the love you received from them...
- Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all the love he is pouring on you, day in, day out, through your fellow men...
- Prayerfully, read several times all you wrote.
- End by spontaneously speaking to God..

EXERCISE THREE.

Loved by “Faithful Servants”

Note: This exercise is based on the love we receive night and day from people who serve us, people who work for us.

Preparation:

Quiet down: Soft music, breathing and awareness exercises may help.

Short introductory prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Step 1. THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

- There are hundreds of people who faithfully serve us in many ways: servants, cooks, teachers, drivers, postmen, waiters, nurses, doctors, peons, cleaners, etc.
- Most of them live hard and unrewarding lives. . They toil and moil in their jobs. They do not find their work easy. .
- The pay we give them is not charity done to them. They need it to look after their dear ones! They work for the love they have t for their families.
- Unfortunately, often enough, we do not give them the love and recognition they deserve,
- The pay we offer them should be an expression of the love we have for them for making our lives pleasant, joyful and “livable”.
- It is in our hands – in the hands of the public - to make their lives meaningful and gratifying!
- In fact, through their services to us, God is serving us.
- Should we not show gratefulness to God for what He does for us through them?
- The only way to show our gratefulness to God for serving us, is by being grateful to those who serve us!

- In fact, they and their services is sort of a two-way channel of God's love: namely, of God's love to us, and of our love to God!
- God makes us feel his love through them and we express our loves for God through them too.

Step 2. FANTASY

- In imagination, see the countless people who keep serving you every day... servants, peons, teachers, drivers, postmen, cleaners, sweepers, nurses, tailors, barbers etc...
- Choose from among them, some who served you with greater love and dedication in the past, for instance, a teacher, a nurse, a house servant...
- Remember what he/she did for you... recall some instances of their dedicated service.
- Relive those moments... Feel grateful to those persons...
- Thank them in your mind and heart. Tell them belatedly, may be, "I thank you... I love you".
- In fantasy, in their place see God... It is God cooking for you... it is God giving you a haircut... it is God driving the bus; it is God sweeping your house, your school or office... It is God delivering a letter to you... It is God teaching you in class... It is God coming as a doctor to heal you...
- Discover God loving you in all those serving you
- Bask in his love... let God's love soak you...

Step 3. PRAYERFUL REFLECTIONS

In your heart of hearts, break into a prayer of thanksgiving both to God and to all men and women who served and still serve you...

- **"I thank you, Lord,** for all the love you pour on me every day, every moment of the day! You keep serving me and loving me through so many kind people... Help me to show my gratitude to you, by being grateful to them...
- **I thank you all men and women,** my brothers and sisters, for what you did and do for me... In turn, I promise to repay you for your love and concern by being loving, kind and grateful to you all.

Step 4 A CHECK, AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

In general. What has been your attitude towards those who serve you., peons, tailors, waiters, postmen, teachers, nurses, drivers. at home in the school or college? in the office? in hospitals and dispensaries? Etc?

- ✓ Have you shown friendly or unfriendly towards them?
- ✓ Have you given them respect and acceptance?
- ✓ Have you thanked them for their services?
- ✓ Have you been polite and soft spoken to them?
- ✓ Do you ever smile at them?
- ✓ Would you feel happy, were you to be treated as you treat them?

In particular. Your servants at home, your teachers, your dhobi, you sweeper, your milk-man etc.

- ✓ How will you treat them as you go home today?
- ✓ How will you show gratitude to them?

- ✓ How will you try to make them feel happy and wanted?
- ✓ How will you be able to see God in them?

End your Examination of Conscience by writing down your insights, feelings and resolutions

EXERCISE FOUR

“We Are Lucky Heirs of Love”

Note: This exercise is based on the fact that if today we enjoy a comfortable and easy existence, it's all due to the love with which generations of human beings before us built the world we live in.

Preparation:

Quiet down: Soft music, breathing and awareness exercises may help.

Short introductory prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Step 1. THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

- We belong to the “human family”, a family made-up of weak, yet basically loving human beings.
- None of us can stand alone either in time or in space. No man is an island. We lean on one another.
- Today, we owe all we have to our predecessors, people who lived much before us.
- They built the world we live in today.
- Our present, rests in their past – our culture, education, works of art, music and dance, scientific achievements, medical advances, literature, entertainments, technology etc.- is based on their struggles and strivings...
- We enjoy now the fruits of their long years, nay centuries of labors.
- “We Are Lucky Heirs of Love” they have been the channels of God’s love generation after generation...
- God’s love reached us through thousands of years of history by the instrumentality of our brother and sister humans
- We are duty bound to build a better and more loving world for the men and women of generations to come.
- God’s love has to flow through our hands to the children of generations still unborn.

Step 2. FANTASY

In imagination, let us go backwards to the beginnings of man’s life on earth...

- Man has just come to existence... Watch him, how primitive and backward is he...
- Then, man begins to live in groups to protect himself and to improve his condition.
- He is supporting and helping his clan... those to whom he belongs to.
- He works to improve his lot and that of others, especially of his own group...

- He learns what it is to care... to support others... He learns to love and to experience love...
- Slowly man is growing in humanity... His ways become more and more civilized... more loving...
- Slowly, religion is born... Man discovers God... that God is love...and that love leads to God.
- He grows in concern for others ... social concern is born...
- He discovers the value of the “human person”... the rights of the individuals and “Personal freedom”...
- All over the world in many ways - sometimes in mistaken ways – he tries to build a better world...a world of peace, justice and love...
- Because so many people struggled and suffered before us we now enjoy the world we have...
- Admire...Feel gratitude and love for the millions of people that lived before us... Thank them... Thank God for them
- At this moment, be moved to love all men, your brothers and sisters...
- Feel love for God too... He built our world through those countless generations of former days for us...
- The whole of human history is a sign, and a “sacrament” of God’s love for you, and me.

Step 3. PERSONAL REFLECTION AND PRAYER.

- Write down your insights and feelings emerging from this exercise..
- Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the people who lived before us and prepared for us the world we have.
- Write a note of thanksgiving to all men! To the human family and express your joy to belong to it.
- Feel part and parcel of the entire human race... we are citizens of the world...
- Prayerfully, read several times what you wrote.
- End by spontaneously speaking to God.

Step 4. A CHECK - AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Preliminary thoughts .

- ✓ The goods of the world, all technical advances and all the benefits accrued to us from the labors of previous generations are “The Common Heritage” of mankind!
- ✓ All men and women have a right to share them proportionately.
- ✓ It is right-down injustice that today in our world, only a few privileged persons or a few privileged nations should have access to them.
- ✓ To struggle for a more equitable distribution of the wealth and advances of modern civilization is a duty incumbent on every living man and woman.
- ✓ To struggle for “human rights” is not only a duty of justice, but also a duty of love and charity binding on each one of us. .
- ✓ Struggling (fighting) to make the world’s economical, social and political structures more humane is the best “way” to show our love and gratitude towards our present and former brothers and sisters and even to God himself!

- ✓ If we feel loved by God and others, our duty is to promote social justice, equity and equality among all men and women.

Points for Personal Examination

1. Do you feel concerned with the injustices done to so many people and to so many nations in the world today because of economical, class, caste, nationality, religion, sex, color and similar differences? How do you express it? How should you?
2. Since you received so much from people in general, and especially the poorer ones how do you favor them?
3. Do you practice justice at home with those you live with -: You: servants, workers, the weak, and the helpless? How?
4. Do you share what you have with the “have-nots”? How?
5. Do you work in such a way that our world, after your death, will be a better place to live in for the generations to come? How?
6. Do you get involved in political and civic issues in you neighborhood? How?
7. Have you ever stood for the rights of those exploited or ill-treated? How?
8. Are you concerned with the waste of the world’s resources and the destruction of the earth’s environment?
9. Are you not a waster yourself? How? How not to be??

End your Examination of Conscience by writing down your insights, feelings and resolutions

EXERCISE FIVE

‘A Loving Nature – A loving Creation’

Note: This exercise is based on the awareness of how much love God pours on us through nature, his wonderful creation.

Preparation:

Quiet down: Soft music, breathing and awareness exercises may help.
Short introductory prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Step 1. POINTS FOR REFLECTION

God’s creation and love

- Everything that exists “is” because God loved it.
- God out of love, called by name, into being, each thing that exists. .
- Everything that God has made is good, very good. (Gen.1:31) “And God saw all he had made, and it was very good”.
- God has implanted in everything he made his own image, his own countenance.
- He cannot but love creation. St. Augustine’s prayer runs thus: **“Oh, God, we love you because you are. We are, because you loved us”**

- God's divine qualities and attributes are imbedded in his universe, in his creation. (Rom .1:20 "Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities. have been clearly seen")
- When we love Nature – God's natural revelation - we actually love God.
- How can we say that we love God, whom we cannot see, if we do not love a sunset, a bird, a rose, a landscape when they reflect to us God's face, peace, beauty, greatness and love?
- The saints, who loved God most, loved creation most!

Purpose of God's Creation

- God did not make the world for himself – he didn't need it
- God created the universe for you and me- intelligent beings.
- It is only you and me - human beings - who can see God in his works and praise and thank and love him in them!
- God loved the things he made because he loved you and me!
- In God's mind, man—you and me – are the "focal point" of his creation. Everything converges on us!
- We are the "reference" point; the key, the clue of God's universe, of God's infinite creative love.
- Creation is the language God used to tell us: I LOVE YOU!"
- Nature is the manifestation, the "sacrament" of God's love for man.

Step 2. FANTASY: AWARENESS CONTEMPLATION

Imagine God as a great artist engrossed in building our wondrous universe...

See God working with love and joy making the stars... the trees... the flowers... the fruits... the animals... the sunsets... and all the wonders of the universe

See, visualize God imprinting his own image on the things he makes... his beauty... his power... his peace... his joy... his love...that we may find him in them!

Impersonate nature:

- Imagine you are nature... impersonate a flower... or a bird... or a tree... or anything else...
- Look at yourself coming from God's hands...so beautiful, so great.. How do you feel?
- Feel happy that God made you so wonderful...and unique...
- Thank God for making you, you! Speak freely to Him..
- There is no other you in the entire universe!

Discover God in Nature – A fantasy.

- Imagine yourself eating one of your favorite fruits... enjoy it...
 - ✓ Say to God: "Thank you God for making yourself eatable... for being so sweet..."
 - ✓ Smell the scent of a flower... and say: "Thank you God for being so scented... for making yourself so pleasurable..."
 - ✓ Imagine you' quenching your thirst with cool, clean water... say: "I thank you God for being so cooling..."

- ✓ Imagine yourself breathing pure and fresh air... say: "Thank you God for making yourself breathable..."
- ✓ In this guise, keep on fantasizing, and feel yourself loved, hugged, satisfied, soaked with God through his creatures

Step 3. PERSONAL PRAYER TIME.

- Write down your insights and feelings.
- Pray in silence thanking God for the gift of nature, for his giving himself to you through the things he made
- Make the thoughts and the feelings of Daniel your own. (Read over and over again his canticle to the Sun.

TEXT OF THE CANTICLE OF DANIEL

May you be blessed, Lord God of our ancestors,
 Be praised and extolled forever
 Blessed be your glorious and holy name,
All things the Lord has made, bless the Lord:
Angels of the Lord! All bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Heavens! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Waters above the heavens! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Powers of the Lord! All bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Sun and moon! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Stars of heaven! Bless the Lord
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Showers and dews! All bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Winds! All bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Fire and heat! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Cold and heat! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him

Dews and sleets! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Frost and cold! Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him

Ice and snow! Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.

Nights and Days! Bless the Lord,

Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Light and darkness! Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Lightening and clouds! Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Let the earth Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Mountains and hills! Bless the Lord
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Everything that grows on the earth:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him
Springs of water! Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Seas and rivers! Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Sea beasts and everything that lives in water!
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Birds of heaven! All Bless the Lord,
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
Animals wild and tame! All Bless the Lord:
 Give glory and eternal praise to him.
All you who worship him, bless the God of Gods.
Praise him and give him thanks,
 For his love is everlasting.

EXERCISE SIX

The Love of God-Made Man

Note: This exercise is based on the love of God manifested to us through the Incarnation of The Word of God – His only Son.

Requirements

New Testaments copies and writing material

Preparation:

Quiet down: Soft music, breathing and awareness exercises may help.

Short introductory prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Step 1. BIBLE READING, MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

God is a loving Father, and Christ – His Son - the greatest sign of his love for us humans.

➤ Read, ponder and meditate and on some of the quotes of the N.T. Quotes mentioned below. Choose those that appeal to you most.

Biblical Texts:**The Fatherhood of God. God as a loving Father.**

1 John 1:1-10' 2:1-2

Luke 15:11-24

2 Peter 1:16-18

Romans 8:12-17

1 Peter 1:3-4

Hebrews 1:1-3

God the Father sends Jesus his Son to us as a sign of his love and forgiveness.

Ephes. 1:3-14; 3:14-21

2 Thes. 2:13-17

Colo. 1:15-20

Gal 4:1-7

John 3:16-17

2 Cor. 5:18-21

The main teachings found the Quotes are:

- God is a Father, a loving Father.
- God is love.
- The Incarnation is the final and irrevocable manifestation of God's love for us.
- Christ is the "embodiment" of God's love for mankind, God's love made man.
- The person of Christ is the visible manifestation of God's unconditional pardon and acceptance of us – sinners!
- The humanity of Christ is the unique and supreme sacrament of God's redeeming love.
- All other sacraments draw the power from this unique "Christ-event."

Step 2 POINTS FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION.

Believing that God the Father made his love visible to us by sending his son to be our Savior reflect on:

Why did Jesus Christ, his Son, became an ordinary, simple and poor man, a suffering Savior, a man of sorrows, a man spat upon, flogged, crowned with thorns and crucified?

Studying The Bible we find the following reasons. Spend time meditating on them/

1. To identify Himself with us in the painful experiences of human life.

- To be like one of us in everything except sin
- To be born as a man, to grow as a man, to suffer as a man and to die as a man. :

2. To be our Model and Guide:

- To teach us not only by word, but much more by example.
- Jesus not only practiced what he taught, but he only preached what he practiced!
- It is hard to love God and others, even our enemies for God's sake – Jesus showed us the way.
- It is difficult to submit ourselves completely to God's will, to be humble, generous, and meek – Jesus did it.

3. To put us right with his Father:

- By the Incarnation, by his becoming a human being, Christ made us God's children.
- In Christ, God became man, that man would become divine
- Man and women as creatures of God had no claims to forgiveness and to be loved as God's children. Now, in Christ we have such claims!
- In Christ we enter into partnership with the life of the Trinity.

4. To show us Who and What God is:

- Left to our natural reasoning we can only come to know God in a shadow, in Christ and through Christ we came to know clearly that God is love.
- In Christ we could experience God's tenderness, kindness, concern and forgiveness.
- Once we came to know his beloved Son, we need not fear God anymore

5. To be with us:

- Friends who love each other want to be together. God wanted to be with us in Christ day in day out, until the end of time. "Emmanuel" means God with us.
- By becoming a man himself, He pitched his tent among us.
- Through Christ, God becomes "friendly", "familiar" even "intimate" with us!

6. To show us his greatest possible love.

- Redemption is a work of love rather than a work of power.
- In his almighty power, God could have saved us, in many other ways, however, he chose the way of love.
- He chose to save us not in an impersonal way, but personally through his beloved Son.
- God wants to be loved, not be feared:
- Had God manifested himself only in his power, we might fear and revere Him not love Him tenderly. Now, after He has manifested Himself in Jesus we love Him like little children most tenderly,
- We love God because in Christ, he made himself "vulnerable" for our sake.

Step 3 CLOSING PRAYER AND HYMN

- For a short while remain in silent adoration.
- Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God the Father for the gift of Jesus Christ to us.
- Keep reading over and over again, attentively and tenderly, the prayer you wrote,
- Recite, reflect on and finally sing the prayer of St. Ignatius. **Take and Receive.**

Verse: Take and Receive
 O Lord, My Liberty.
 Take My Will,
 My Mind, My Memory.
 Do Thou Direct,
 And Govern All And Sway.
 Do What Thou Wilt,
 Command And I Obey.

Ref: Only Thy Grace and Love on Me Bestow,
 Possessing These, All Riches I Forgo.

Verse: All Things I Hold,
 And All I Own Are Thine.
 Thine Was The Gift,
 To Thee I All Resign.
 Do Thou Direct,
 And Govern All And Sway.
 Do What Thou Wilt
 Command And I Obey.

Ref: Only Thy Grace and Love on Me Bestow,
 Possessing These, All Riches I Forgo.

APPENDIX:

Original Text of The “Contemplation To Attain Love” as written, by St Ignatius in his book of The “Spiritual Exercises” (Nos 230-237)

Note: Before presenting this exercise it will be good to call attention to two points:

The first is that love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words.

The second is that love consists in a mutual sharing of goods, for example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses, or something of that which he had or is able to give; and vice versa, the beloved shares with the lover. Hence, if one has knowledge, he shares it with the one who does not possess it; and so also if one has honors, or riches. Thus, one always gives to the other.

PRAYER: The usual prayer.

FIRST READING: This is the representation of the place, which here is to behold myself standing in the presence of God our Lord and His angels and saints, who intercede for me.

SECOND READING: This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received that filled with gratitude for all; I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty.

FIRST POINT: This is to call to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received.

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one would do who is moved by great feeling, I will make this offering of myself:

TAKE LORD AND RECEIVE

“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou has given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine. Dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient to me.”

SECOND POINT: This is to reflect how God dwells in creatures; in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in many bestowing understanding. So he dwells in me and gives me being, life, sensation, intelligence; and makes a temple of me, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty.

Then I will reflect upon myself again in the manner started in the first point, or in some other way that may seem better. The same should be observed with regard to each of the points given below.

THIRD POINT: This is to consider how God works and labors for me in all creatures upon the face of the earth, that is, He conducts himself as one who labors. Thus, in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle etc. He gives them being, life and sensation, he conserves them. Then I will reflect on myself

FOURTH POINT: This is to consider all blessings and gifts as descending from above. Thus, my limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power above, and so, too, justice, goodness, mercy etc., descend from above as the rays of light descend from the sun, and the waters flow from their fountains, etc. Then I will reflect on myself, as has been said.

Conclude with a colloquy and the Our Father.

(Text taken from the translation of the Spiritual Exercises of Fr Louis J. Phul. sj. The Newman Press.)