IGNATIAN RETREAT THEMES

The Consciousness Exam

Taken from the book "You Can Pray" of P. Ribes, s.j.
published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.

Introduction

- ✓ *This is a prayer method that was very dear to St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits. Occasionally, according to Ignatius, Jesuits could miss their daily prayer or meditation if the needs of the apostolate were very great; however, St. Ignatius did not want them to miss the Consciousness Exam. He considered it the single most important prayer exercise for his men to be done daily.*
- ✓ *The primarily purpose of the Consciousness Exam is not about becoming aware of our good deeds or of our sins and failures, nor about our thoughts, feelings, longings, fears, and anxieties,* ***but specially about our conscious and unconscious values and attitudes underlining them.***
- ✓ ***Are our values and attitudes the ones preached to us by Jesus in the Beatitudes?***
- ✓ *We need to have a spiritual insight to discover the quality of our relationships with God and neighbors. Are we lead in our actions and in our dealings with others by the spirit of God or by the spirit of the world or our sensuality?*
- ✓ *Over a period of time, the Consciousness Exam helps us to become more conscious of the presence of God in our lives and discover where the Lord leads us and which are the forces and influences taking us to God or pulling us away from Him, In otherl words, it helps us to be more discerning people. .*

Procedure;

A) Pray for 'Light' and Understanding.

- Pray to the Holy Spirit to help you to see yourself a bit more as God sees you.
- Ask God to help you to discover your true motivation in doing what you did during the day;
- Are you coming closer to Him or getting away from Him?

B) Give Thanks.

- Thank God for the blessings He has given you during the day. Be thankful for basic things - which we normally we take for granted - like being alive, meeting the people we love, having food to eat etc.
- Look over the entire day and ask Him to help you to be ever more grateful to Him.
- Do not dwell too much in individual gifts, but rather, look over the whole day to discover His ever loving generosity. Allow gratitude to take hold of you and express it to God.
- Be grateful even for things that have not gone the way you would have liked.

C) <u>Encountering God in All Things</u>.

Recall the moods and feelings you experienced during the day and try to ascertain what might have been the causes that occasioned them.
Refrain from judgments or self-analysis, but rather looking at your moods and feelings, find out their underlying attitudes:

- Are those moods in you, arising from your desire to serve or from your desire to be served?
- Are you working for God's glory or for your own reputation?
- Are those moods arising from your desire to do"your work" for God or rather to do the work God wants you to do? In other words: **To do your work for God v/s doing God's work.**
- On whose sake were you happy or sad? For your sake of for God's sake?
- Who benefited from what you did??
- Do you love others as God loves them? Are you detached while loving people, or rather too human; selfish, possessive, controlling, manipulative, clinging, and utilitarian?
- In your ministry, do you seek for power and independence? Do you accept dependency, vulnerability and weakness? ***(Blessed the poor in spirit*).**
- Are you sensitive to the hurts and sufferings of others, do you reach out to others to heal, console and strengthen? ***(Blessed those who mourn)***
- Do you bring out the best in others through gentleness, respect and compassion? ***(Blessed the meek and gentle)***
- Are you sincere and honest without ulterior motives or double dealings? ***(Blessed the pure of heart)*?**
- Are you forgiving and one working for people's reconciliation?, Do you try to break down all barriers of caste, creed etc.? **(*Blessed are* the p*eacemakers)***
- Are you affected by the injustices and the evils of our world, and one who speaks for the 'little ones' against those who oppress and exploit them? ***(Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice)***
- Are you centered in God even amidst the rush life?
- Are you true to yourself, honest, sincere, congruent, transparent, or insincere, doubled-minded, false? Remember: **"<u>To yourself be true</u>"**

D) <u>Respond to God in Dialogue</u>

- In dialogue with God express your regrets for the times you might have failed to live up to Christ's beatitudes – The Gospel Values,
- Single out one or two points you discovered that need correction and improvement. Make them the matter of your particular exam

E) <u>Closing Prayer.</u>

- Like the disciples of Emmaus, ask Jesus to stay with you and speak to you.
- With hope founded on Jesus promises, ask Him to make you a messenger of His love and a witness of His kingdom's values.
- Keep repeating within yourself those encouraging words of Jesus: '**I 'll be with you always, yes, even to the very end of time**

- You may recite, sing and pray St. Francis of Assisi's canticle: "Make me Channel of your Peace"