

CONTEMPLATION ON THE INCARNATION OF JESUS

DAY 1

Preparatory prayer: as usual.

Composition of Self (*includes history and place of the mystery*):

This will consist in calling to mind how the Three Divine Persons look down upon the whole expanse of all the earth, filled with human beings. Since They see that all are going down to hell, They decree in their eternity that the Second Person should become human to save the human race and they send the Angel Gabriel to Mary in Galilee. It includes seeing with the imagination the great extent of the surface of the earth, inhabited by so many different peoples and to focus on the house and room of Mary in Nazareth.

Grace: I ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for **an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who has become human for me, that I may love Jesus more and follow Jesus more closely.**

First Point: This will be to see with the imagination the different persons on the face of the earth, in such great diversity in dress and in manner of acting. Some are white, some black, some brown; some at peace, and some at war; some weeping, some laughing; some well, some sick; some coming into the world, and some dying; etc.

Secondly, I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal dais or throne of God. They look down upon the whole surface of the earth, and behold all nations in great blindness, going down to death and to self destruction.

Thirdly, I will see Mary and the angelic messenger greeting her, I will reflect on these things in order to draw profit from what I see.

Second Point: This will be to listen to what the persons on the face of the earth say, that is, how they speak to one another, swear and blaspheme, etc. I will also hear what the Divine Persons say, that is, "Let us work the redemption of the human race," etc.

Then I will listen to what the angel and Mary are saying. Finally I will reflect on all these words in order to draw profit from what I have heard.

Third Point: This will be to consider what the persons on the face of the earth do, for example, wound, kill, and bring about self destruction. Also what the Divine Persons do, namely, work the most holy Incarnation, etc. Likewise I will consider what the angel and Mary are doing: how the angel proclaims the divine message, and how Mary acts humbly and gives thanks to God. Then I will reflect upon all that persons are doing to draw some profit from each of these details.

Dialogue: I will think over what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, or to the eternal Word Incarnate, or to Mary. According to the light that I have received, I will beg for the grace to follow and imitate more closely Jesus, who has just become human for me. Close with the *Lord's Prayer*.

DAY 2

This follows St. Ignatius' instructions for contemplating a mystery of Christ's life as given in the gospel, i.e., a *Preparatory Prayer, a Composition of Self, Grace, Points and Dialogue*.

Preparatory prayer: as usual.

Composition of Self (*includes history and place of the mystery*):

This consists in calling to mind that our Lady, about nine months with child, and, as may be piously believed, seated on an ass, set out from Nazareth. She was accompanied by Joseph and a maid, who was leading an ox. They are going to Bethlehem to pay the tribute that Caesar imposed on those lands. It includes seeing with the imagination the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level, or through valleys and over hills. Observe also the place or cave where Christ is born; whether big or little; whether high or low; and how it is arranged.

Grace: This will be the same as in the preceding contemplations on the Incarnation and identical in form with it. (This **grace** remains the same for all the contemplations)

First Point: This will consist in seeing the persons, namely, our Lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I will make myself a little bit of a body, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence. Then I will reflect on myself that I may reap some fruit.

Second Point: This is to consider, observe, and contemplate what the persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it.

Third Point: This will be to see and consider what they are doing, for example, making the journey and labouring that Jesus might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labours, after hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, after insults and outrages, to die on the cross, and all this for me. Then I will reflect and draw some spiritual fruit from what I have seen.

Dialogue: Close with a dialogue as in the preceding contemplation and with the *Lord's Prayer*.

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DAY 3

Read: Luke 1:26 to 2:14 and do a Repetition of the previous two contemplations.

Note: In this *Repetition* and in all those which follow, the same order of proceeding should be observed. The subject matter is changed but the same form is observed.

DAY 4

A repetition of the three previous contemplations

DAY 5

A repetition of the four previous contemplations

DAY 6 (Please consult the sheet on APPLICATION OF THE SENSES)

An Application of the Senses over the five previous contemplations.

Begin with the same *Preparatory prayer, Compositions of Self and Grace* as in the previous five contemplations. It will be profitable with the aid of the imagination to apply the five senses to the subject matter of the previous five contemplation in the following manner:

First Point: This consists in seeing in imagination the persons, and in contemplating and meditating in detail the circumstances in which they are, and then in drawing some fruit from what has been seen.

Second Point: This is to hear what they are saying, or what they might say, and then by reflecting on oneself to draw some profit from what has been heard.

Third Point: This is to smell the infinite fragrance, and taste the infinite sweetness of the divinity. Likewise to apply these senses to the soul and its virtues, and to all according to the person we are

contemplating, and to draw some fruit from this.

Fourth Point: This is apply the sense of touch, for example, by embracing and kissing the place where the persons stand or are seated, always taking care to draw some fruit from this.

Dialogue: Conclude with a *Dialogue* and with the *Lord's Prayer* as in the other contemplations.

DAY 7

CONTEMPLATION OF THE VISITATION

SEE THE SHEET *GENERAL METHOD FOR WEEK P.8 of September handouts.*

Preparatory prayer (of this type): Oh Holy Trinity, I ask for the grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of your Divine Majesty.

Read the passage: **MARY'S VISITATION TO ELIZABETH**

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zachariah' house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said:

Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my God? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the God would be fulfilled.

And Mary said:

I acclaim the greatness of the Lord, I delight in God my Saviour, who regarded my humble state. Truly from this day on all ages will call me blest. For God, wonderful in power has used that strength for me. Holy the name of the Lord! Whose mercy embraces the faithful, one generation to the next. The might arm of God scatters the proud in their conceit, pulls tyrants from their thrones, and raises up the humble. The Lord fills the starving and lets the rich go hungry. God rescues lowly Israel, recalling the promise of mercy, the promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham's heirs for ever.

Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home. (Lk 1:39-56)

Composition of Self (*includes history and place of the mystery*):

This consists in calling to mind that our Lady, shortly after the angel Gabriel's announcement to her, leaves Nazareth to go and visit her cousin Elizabeth. She is greeted by Elizabeth and attends Elizabeth in the delivery of her child (John the Baptist). It includes seeing with the imagination the way from Nazareth to Elizabeth's home in the hills of Judea. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level, or through valleys and over hills. Observe also the place and home of Elizabeth; its size and furniture.

Grace: This will be the same as in the preceding contemplation on the Incarnation and identical in form with it. I ask for what I desire:
Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, who has become human for me, that I may love Jesus more and follow Jesus more closely.

First Point: This will consist in seeing the persons, namely, our Lady and her cousin Elizabeth. I will imagine that I am there with them, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence. Then I will reflect on myself that I may reap some fruit.

Second Point: This is to consider, observe, and contemplate what the persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it.

Third Point: This will be to see and consider what they are doing, for example, greeting each other, serving each other, praising God. Then I will reflect and draw some spiritual fruit from what I have seen.

Dialogue: I will think over what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, to Mary, to Elizabeth, etc..According to the light that I have received, I will beg for the grace to follow and imitate more closely Jesus, who has just become human for me.

Close with the *Lord's Prayer*.

Religion 41G Called to Love, Called to Serve: The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life

The Application of the Senses

(Spiritual Exercises 121-126)

St. Ignatius adds to contemplation of the Gospel mystery an additional dimension which has come to be called the Application of the senses. The idea is *to engage the inner senses or the senses of the imagination, transformed by the Holy Spirit*. The method is as follows:

After the usual preparatory prayer and the petition for the grace, the retreatant enters into a total “immersion” OR “letting go” into the mystery of Christ’s life which he has been contemplating up to this point.

There are five points or steps.

Using the imagination,

1. see the person(s), paying attention to details of their appearance and what they do....and draw some profit from this;

2. hear what the person(s) say(s)....and draw some profit from it;

3. smell and taste the sweetness of the Divinity or the soul of the person(s) contemplated...and draw some profit from it.

4. touch and feel, for example the places where the person(s) has/have talked or sit or even the person him/herself if appropriate and reverent....and draw some profit from it.

5. Finish with a colloquy and Our Father. The colloquy may be with Mary, with one of the Divine Persons or with the Holy Trinity, as dictated by your experience and your desires.

When St. Ignatius calls upon the retreatant to “draw some profit from it” he means to apply what you have learned or experienced in your prayer to your own life or to see how it applies very concretely to

you in your life now. For example, you might contemplate and apply the senses to the story of Jesus's birth. You may *see* Mary gently holding the Infant, a tear in her eye and find you are very sympathetic. To draw profit from this, how does it apply to your life now? For example, you may need to know more fully Mary's maternal love for you...or you may need to more deeply appreciate the love your own mother bears for you.

“Just as you tried to enter into the experience of Hell during the First Week, so too here it is not a matter of thinking new thoughts or trying new methods of getting into the mystery. Rather the notion is to build upon the experiences which have been a part of my prayer day. Again, it is akin to the passive way in which my senses take in sights, sounds, smells, feelings as an automatic datum for my attention. The total felt-environment of the particular mystery of Christ's life, in whatever ways it can be most vividly mine, is the setting for [the application of the senses.]”

David L. Fleming, SJ, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading*. St. Louis, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978, p. 79.