

ST. PAUL'S HIGH SCHOOL  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

**THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS ACCORDING TO  
ANNOTATION 19**

**Adapted for Use by High School Seniors and Young Adults**

2010-2011

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**THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES**

At their most basic, the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises is to lead retreatants towards choosing God first and only in their lives. To Ignatius, placing God first was the essential step in ridding the retreatant of "disordered affections," which are preferences which undercut proper relationship with God, other humans and, indeed, the whole of creation.

St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, developed the Spiritual Exercises when he was a layman and the first persons whom he directed in the Exercises were laymen, too. But for centuries, the Spiritual Exercises were given principally to priests and religious. After the Second Vatican Council, the Society of Jesus began strongly to promote their use among lay people.

In Canada, the most influential figure in the movement to promote the Spiritual Exercises among lay people was Rev. John English, S.J., author of the seminal work *Spiritual Freedom*. The program we have been using at St. Paul's High School owes an enormous debt to Fr. English. It is in Fr. English's spirit of continually reaching out and offering this gift of the Exercises that the school makes these materials available to the general public.

**HOW THIS PROGRAM IS ORGANIZED**

The Spiritual Exercises were designed by St. Ignatius to be given over a thirty-day period of intensive prayer and personal spiritual direction. However, the saint recognized that not everyone can take thirty days out of their lives. Hence, one of his annotations (19) allows for the exercises to be given in the course of a person's ordinary life. Our program follows Annotation 19.

The Exercises proper consist of four "weeks," though the "weeks" do not all consist of seven days! Week 1, the shortest "week" focuses on the retreatants' recognizing themselves as "loved sinners" acknowledging their "creaturehood" and their constant need for God's love and forgiveness. Week 2 focuses on the life of Jesus Christ and is designed to encourage retreatants freely to choose to follow Jesus by getting to know him personally through contemplative prayer based upon the Gospels. Week 3 focuses on the Passion and Death of Jesus and is designed to have retreatants experience the cost of discipleship. Week 4 focuses on Christ's 40 days of resurrected Presence among his disciples and is designed to lead retreatants ever more deeply

into the reality of Christ's living Presence today among his people and to choose every more deeply to follow Christ by serving others.

The school's program is designed to follow the Church's liturgical year and the typical school year. Introduction to Prayer and Disposition Days are done in September and October. Week 1 begins in late October, corresponding to the period before Advent. Week 2 begins in Advent and ends shortly after Ash Wednesday. Week 3 is done during Lent. Week 4 is done in the Easter season. It should be noted that the prayer materials and meetings with spiritual directors are done in accordance with the 6-day school cycle common in Canada.

### THE EXERCISES FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Our program is not an adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises (such as is done in accordance with Annotation 18.) We have tried to be as faithful as possible to St. Ignatius's original design. We have sometimes found it helpful, however, to adapt the saint's imagery to make it (in our view) more accessible to today's high school seniors and young adults. Those familiar with the Spiritual Exercises might notice this most during Week 1 (especially in the fifth meditation) and in several of the exercises done in Week 2.

Our program has been operating since 2002. We offer it only to Grade Twelve students, usually 17-18 years of age. Students have individual spiritual direction, generally about 30 minutes per 6-day school cycle. The commitment of individual direction is rather expensive but we believe the program would not be effective without it.

We have a limited number of spaces and generally accept 25-30 students. Students commit to praying every day. Generally, we start by asking them to pray 15 minutes per day, rising to 60 minutes by early in Week 2. Roughly once per month, retreatants meet in groups together with one of our directors. We have found these group meetings to be most helpful, principally because the retreatants hear the experiences of their peers and find validation of their own experiences.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every effort has been made to make proper acknowledgment of any published material used in this program. We welcome any corrections.

The version of the Spiritual Exercises most used in this program is David L. Fleming's *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading*. Institute of Jesuit Sources. St. Louis Mo. 1978.

This program draws heavily from the unpublished work of Rev. John English, S.J. He is the *sine quo non* of the program. May he rest in peace with the Lord he loves so dearly.

The main work of adapting the Spiritual Exercises for use by high school seniors was done by Johnston Smith and Rev. Earl Smith, SJ, both faculty members of St. Paul's High School in Winnipeg.

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