

RETREAT IN DAILY LIFE T O G E T H E R



1—The First Week

Society of the Holy Child Jesus, 2021

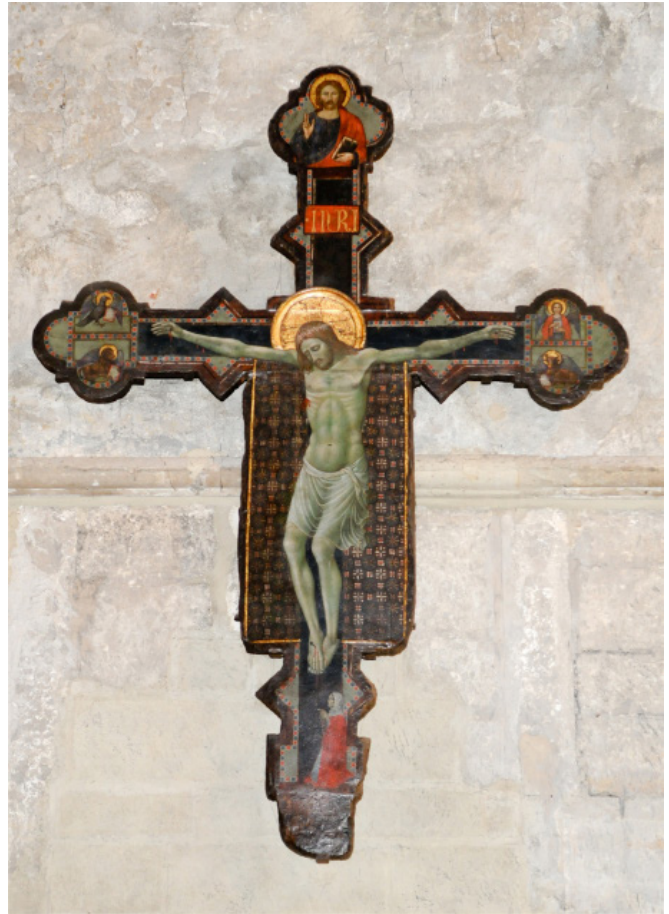
Some Food for Thought

as you consider re-visiting or beginning the First Week

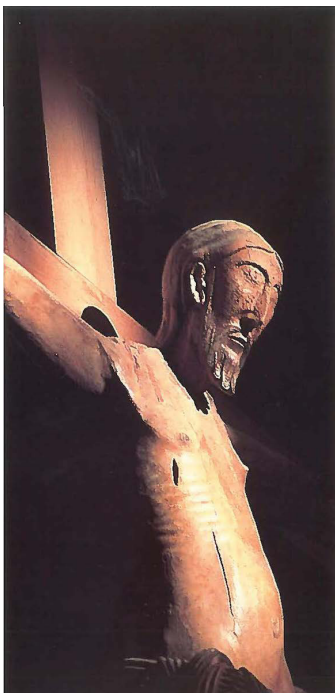
In this packet you will find:

- Orientation notes for the First Week, p.3-4
- Resources for praying the First Week, pp.5-16
- Supportive material: Discernment of Spirits, pp.17-19
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“When we are aware of God’s mercy and tender care for us, we can . . . review the way we are living our individual, communal, and societal responses to God. When we open to the experience of God’s forgiving mercy, we are at peace.” *Moment by Moment* by Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ and Eugene F. Merz, SJ

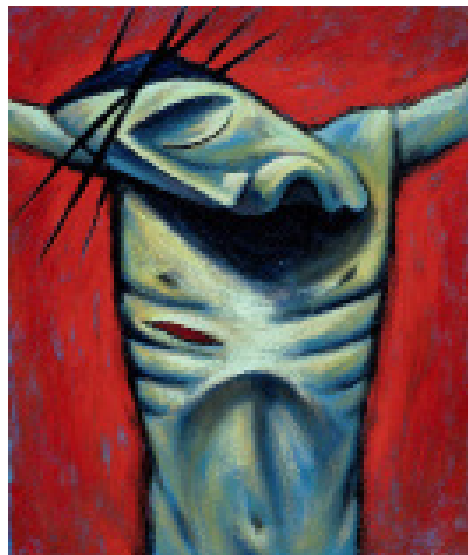


14th C. Italian crucifix in chapel at Mayfield, England, shows Christ in glory at the top & symbols of evangelists on arms.



In the passage from the *Exercises* on p. 5 you are asked to place yourself with Jesus present before you on the cross, and talk to him there. You may have a preferred crucifix for your prayer, and here are some other images that may be helpful.

12th C. crucifix in the Abbey of Sant' Antimo, Italy



Nicholas Mynheer, 21st C, England

Retreat in Daily Life Together —

Orientation Notes for the First Week

1. ABOUT “WEEKS” IN GENERAL

Notice, first of all, that this is a Week, with a capital “W.” Following the preparatory days, the Exercises as a whole are divided into four Weeks, which are “not calendar weeks but phases or movements felt within a person who is praying the Exercises.” (O’B) So this First Week spans four calendar weeks.

2. ABOUT THE FIRST WEEK

Within the experience of being loved and gifted by God, we inevitably “see that other side of life in the drama of human misery and suffering which flashes across our TV screens, ... through our minds and across our hearts. We search for ways to address that painful reality. With God’s help, we can stop denying and avoiding the sight of suffering, evil, need, and sin.” (S/M)

**‘sin — personally,
communally, and globally’**

In this movement of the retreat, the focus is on “our experience of sin — personally, communally, and globally We consider the cosmic battle between good and evil and watch how it plays out in every human heart not to be mired in guilt, self-hate, or despair [but] to ask for a healthy sense of shame and confusion when confronting the reality of sin.” (O’B)

**‘eyes fixed on God’s
ever-present mercy’**

At the same time, we remember the graces of the recent Preparation Days and God’s unconditional love for us, and we “keep our eyes fixed on God’s ever-present mercy, which is the ultimate source of our lasting liberation from sin. We seek healing. Just as bodily healing often begins with some physical pain, healing of the soul begins with a graced awareness of our disordered loves and self-preoccupations.” (O’B)

‘as one friend speaks to another’

3. WHAT IS A COLLOQUY?

A colloquy is an intimate conversation between you and God (as creator, father, mother, friend ...), or between you and Mary or one of the saints. Ignatius tells us in #54 of the Exercises that one makes it, “as one friend speaks to another....” We can take that description and reflect on what characterizes any encounter that we feel has been a really “good chat:” ease, because we feel welcomed and heard; honesty, because we feel free to be fully open and wholly ourselves; gratitude, from a deep sense of being enriched and blessed by this relationship. Entering into our retreat colloquy, we can seek and cultivate these dispositions, and ask for the grace to be gifted with them.

A colloquy can take place at any time in our prayer. Ignatius, however, suggests it at the end of an exercise. Doing so as we bring our prayer to a close can bring focus because, when we move to the level of speaking heart to heart, we make our desires, inclinations, thoughts and feelings more concrete, more visible. Expressing what is in our hearts can help us to see and judge the source or spirit that has given rise to our prayer. To end prayer “as one friend speaks to another” is to close the conversation with a moment of intimacy.

In an early biography of Cornelia Connelly, we hear her speak of colloquies:

‘make it all colloquy’

“She disapproved ... of too minute direction in the matter of prayer. One day, a novice, bewildered by all the ‘mechanism of meditation,’ in which she had been instructed, asked her if she might not begin the colloquy before she came to the end of the meditation. ‘Make it all colloquy, my dear child, if you like,’ she replied, ‘and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.’” (D63:66)

4. WHAT ABOUT REPETITION?

To help us go deeper into the mystery and become more free and open with God, Ignatius suggests that we do “repetitions” of previous prayer times. “This doesn’t mean that we reenact a prayer period minute by minute ... [but] we return to some word, image, desire, insight, feeling, attraction, resistance, or other interior movement that was particularly strong when we first prayed that exercise.” (O’B p. 61)

‘finding God’



Examen Monument, Fairfield University, CT

5. WHAT IS THE EXAMEN? —

sometimes called Examination of Consciousness, Reflection on Experience or Hindsight Prayer

“To help us find God in all things, Ignatius encourages us to look back over a period of time and pay attention to what is happening in and around us. Then he invites us to look ahead, to what comes next, so that we can act in a way worthy of our vocation as Christians. A daily practice of praying the Examen (perhaps for about 10 or 15 minutes) helps us discern how God is calling us in small and large ways. God is found in what is real, so we pray from what is real in our lives. Over the centuries, the Examen has been adapted in different ways.” (O’B pp. 75-77)

‘building a relationship’

The prayer of examen is not about completing a task but about building a relationship, and generally these elements are part of it —

***Pray for God’s help** — to be grateful and honest as you look back on the day, and to see your day as God sees it. ***Give thanks** for the gifts of the day — review the day and name the blessings; savor whatever gifts God shows you; let the day flow through you. ***Pray over the significant feelings that surface** as you replay the day — God communicates with us not only through mental insight but also through our feelings — *joy, peace, sadness, anxiety, confusion, hope, compassion, regret, anger, confidence, jealousy, self-doubt, boredom, excitement*. ***Pick one or two strong feelings** or movements and pray from them, asking God to help you understand what caused them and where they led you. ***Rejoice and seek forgiveness** — rejoice in those times that you came closer to God; ask pardon for the times today that you resisted God; give thanks for this awareness. ***Look to tomorrow** — ask God to be a part of your future; take a look at what tomorrow holds for you; what do you need God’s help with? Be specific and practical; close by speaking to God from your heart or with a familiar prayer, such as the —
Our Father ...

In other words ...

Relish what went well
Request the Spirit’s lead
Review the day
Repent of any failures
Resolve to live tomorrow well



Retreat in Daily Life Together —

First Week (1)

THEME:

Sin — personal, communal and global — is an inescapable reality of the human condition. We need to grow in an awareness of the sin and injustice in our world, to own our part in it, and know God's mercy and boundless love for us and for all of creation.

GRACE:

I pray for a healthy sense of shame and confusion before God as I consider the effects of sin in my world, my community, my life.

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 3:1-24
Ezekiel 18:25-32

Genesis 11:1-9
2 Timothy 3:1-5

Exodus 32:1-14
Spiritual Exercise #53 (below)

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Colloquy: "I place myself before Jesus Christ Our Lord present before me on the cross. I talk to him about how he creates because he loves and then he is born one like us out of love, so emptying himself as to pass from eternal life to death here in time, even death on a cross ... I look to myself and ask — just letting the questions penetrate my being:

In the past what response have I made to Christ?

How do I respond to Christ now?

What response should I make to Christ?

As I look upon Jesus as he hangs upon the Cross, I ponder whatever God may bring to my attention. I close with an Our Father." (SE 53) *Draw me into your friendship* by David Fleming SJ

SHCJ TRADITION:

Today's world is caught in a seemingly endless cycle of humanitarian, spiritual, environmental and political crises which crush the human spirit and bring anguish and death to countless millions. We must not fail to respond. 2016 General Chapter Enactments





PERSPECTIVES & ECHOES:


Loudly and clearly . . . the mercy of God is not dependent on the death of Jesus. Divine mercy does not require the torture and violence of crucifixion. To phrase this in reverse, the death of Jesus is not necessary in order for God to forgive sin. The fact that Jesus died an agonizing death on the cross is indeed part of the story of salvation Christians tell, but not because he had to appease an angry God or pay some kind of debt. Salvation does not require that kind of transaction.

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, *Creation and the Cross*

'Out of the depths we cry for salvation!'

 **LISTEN TO:** "Adagio for Strings" by Samuel Barber, performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, 2019, written in 1936 when Barber was only in his mid-twenties — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WALJ8GbA4Y>

 **LISTEN TO:** "Deep River" sung by Jessie Norman — a 19th Century Negro "spiritual" based on Joshua 3:17 which describes the passage of the Israelites bearing the ark of the covenant across the river Jordan. For enslaved people it was a sung prayer for deliverance and freedom from bondage in both this life and the next — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw5dHeLag44>

 **LISTEN TO:** "Kyrie" from Palestrina's "Missa papae Marcelli," from the album *Allegrì Miserere*, performed by The Sixteen — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stIQwhVv3cE>

"EVEN APART FROM THIS NUCLEAR DANGER, HOWEVER, biocide is well underway. Earth's forests are shrinking, water-tables are falling, soils are eroding, fisheries are collapsing, rivers are running dry, glaciers and ice caps are melting, coral reefs are dying, plant and animal species are going into extinction, and human children are increasingly dying of malnutrition, cancer, and immune system breakdowns. Earth and its life-community are under increasing stress. Life forms are approaching a precipice with increasing speed. No previous generations have ever had to deal with this danger This is a time that calls out to us to repent, to make a radical turn away from the precipice we are beyond any doubt headed for. Never before has such a collective change of heart been required of humanity." John Surette, SJ, *The Divine Dynamic*

'Transform our hearts!'

"RACISM IS NOT A THING OF THE PAST OR SIMPLY A THROW-away political issue to be bandied about when convenient. It is a real and present danger that must be met head on. As members of the Church, we must stand for the more difficult right and just actions instead of the easy wrongs of indifference. We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice." Statement of bishops who are chairmen of committees within the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, May 29, 2020, following the death of George Floyd

"SOCIAL LIFE IS MADE BY HUMAN BEINGS. The society we live in is the outcome of human choices and decisions. This means that human beings can change things. What humans break, divide, and separate, we can — with God's help — also heal, unite, and restore." Bryan Massingale, *Racial Justice in the ... Church*

“OUR NATION IS LIKE A SHIP STRANDED ON the high seas, rudderless and with broken navigational aids. Today, our years of hypocrisy, duplicity, fabricated integrity, false piety, empty morality, fraud and Pharisaism have caught up with us. Nigeria is on the crossroads, and its future hangs precariously in a balance” Homily of Bishop Matthew Kukah of Sokoto, Nigeria, at the funeral of 18-year old seminarian Michael Nnadi, kidnapped and murdered by gunmen who attacked the seminary, January 8, 2020

“THE TIME WILL COME WHEN GOD’S LIGHT will invade our lives and show us everything we have avoided seeing. Then will be manifest the confinement of our carefully constructed meanings, the limitations of our life projects, the fragility of the support systems or infrastructures on which we depend ... [and] the darkness in our own heart.” “The Desire for God & the Transformative Power of Contemplation,” by Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, 2000

‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me!’ Psalm 51

“WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU BECOME A WAR REFUGEE? You walk you might first speed away by whatever conveyance possible. In the family car. Or in your neighbor’s fruit truck. Aboard a stolen bus. Inside a cart pulled behind a tractor. But eventually: a border. And it is here that you must walk. Why? Because

“SILENCE, SECRECY AND DENIAL HAVE BEEN evident at every level of the clergy sexual abuse crisis — from the abuse of individuals to leadership’s response to victims’ stories and its minimisation of the harm done, as well as its pursuit of gag orders, non-disclosure agreements and active cover-up A Church culture of silence and secrecy — from the ‘pontifical secret’ applied to abuse and the ‘seal of confession’, to the strategy of avoidance of scandal, in order to protect image and reputation and special status — made admission of wrongdoing difficult. Silence and denial in the abuse crisis have been diagnosed as a life-threatening infection of the Body of Christ. “Disinfecting denial and secrecy,” by Nuala Kenny, OC (Canada), MD, La Croix, June 29, 2020

men in uniforms will demand to see your papers. What, no papers? (Did you leave them behind? Did you grab your child’s hand instead, in that last frantic moment of flight? Or perhaps you packed a bag with food, with money?) It doesn’t matter. Get out of your vehicle. Stand over there. Wait. Now, papers or no papers, your life as a refugee genuinely starts: on foot, in the attitude of powerlessness.” From *Out of Eden* by Paul Salopek



Syrians at the Turkish border, National Geographic

“Our invitation is to look deeper than we do, to intuit and honour what so often lies beneath a surface of denial, anger and diminishment, grace pulsing to break through.” Edwina Gately

What quotation, music, or image might you have chosen to include in Perspectives & Echoes?

Retreat in Daily Life Together —

First Week (2)

THEME:

We can abuse God's gift of freedom by making choices that are hurtful to God, others and ourselves. However, God does not punish us for our sins, but we suffer from the consequences of both our own sinful choices and the sinful choices of other people.



GRACE:

I ask for the grace to experience my own blindness, deafness, and insensitivity to sin and evil, and I pray for a heartfelt experience of God's merciful love for me.

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 4:1-16

2 Samuel 11:1 – 12:15

Luke 16:19-31

Luke 15:11-32

Luke 7:36-50

Repetition

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES:



I see myself as a sinner — bound, helpless, alienated — before a loving God and all the love-gifts of creation. (SE 56)

I let the weight of such evil, all stemming from me, be felt throughout my whole being. (SE 57)

I will find that I speak or listen as God's Spirit moves me — sometimes accusing myself as sinner ... at other times expressing myself as lover or friend ... a colloquy ... happens as I am moved to respond within the setting of the exercise. (SE 54) Fleming

SHCJ TRADITION:

In Christ we unite ourselves to the whole of humanity, especially to the poor and suffering. We accept our share of responsibility for the sin of the world and so live that God's love may prevail.

SHCJ Constitutions 6

PERSPECTIVES & ECHOES:

The First Week is not for half-measures; it is not a *pro forma* exercise. It is for those who experience their sinfulness as a darkness which calls out for God's light; it is for those who are wrestling with the sin which implicates them in the structures they have helped to create; it is for those who are moved to seek conversion of heart; it is for those who wish to live more faithfully according to the grace they have already received. It might be good to ask yourself where you belong in that procession of sinners." Strub

"THE STORM [OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC] EXPOSES OUR VULNERABILITY and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly 'save' us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity. In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters." Pope Francis, "Extraordinary Moment of Prayer" at St. Peter's Basilica during the pandemic, March 27, 2020



Beloved, 'Be Loved'




"HOW MUCH OF THE UNABATED TIDE OF VIOLENCE in our world is due to the fact that, underneath, people feel themselves unloved, unworthy, of no account and don't know what intimacy is? How much of our labeling, hatred, sectarianism and racism is due to the fact that people don't feel that they belong and so will fight to the last ditch stand for some sort of external identity that at least gives cover for their nakedness, the shame of non-being? How much of our abuse of creation and of each other is because we have never known that God created us and calls us for a purpose, uniquely and specifically

calls us? God sees us, the real you and me — knows and loves us. There's a wonderful old word that sums up what I've been trying to say. It's beloved. It's not just a description, an adjective; it is also a command, 'Be loved.'" Ruth Patterson, Presbyterian minister based in Northern Ireland



“HE (THE ELDER BROTHER IN THE PARABLE) IS a caricature of all that is joyless and petty and self-serving about all of us. The joke of it is that his father loves him and has always loved him and will always love him, only the elder brother never noticed it because it was never love he was looking for but only his due. The fatted calf, the best Scotch, the hoedown could all have been his too, anytime he asked for them except that he never thought to ask for them because he was too busy trying cheerlessly and religiously to earn them.” *Telling the Truth* by Frederick Buechner

 **LISTEN TO:** “Five Variants of ‘Dives and Lazarus’” by Ralph Vaughn Williams, performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQoP9iLwoos>

LISTEN TO: “There is a Balm in Gilead,” a traditional Negro spiritual originating in the mid-19th Century, performed by the Adventist Vocal Ensemble — https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fcMxI_6xsk

“PART OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT, AT ITS CORE, we tend to think shame and sin ... happen to someone else I remember a woman who came to Mass every day at Dolores Mission, and during the time of petitionary prayer she always said the

same thing: ‘*por los pecadores, para que ELLOS ...*’ (For sinners, so that THEY ...) It was never ‘sinners, we.’ It seemed outside of who she was. Yet, it’s precisely within the contour of one’s shame that one is summoned to wholeness. ‘Even there, even there,’ Psalm 31 tells us — even in the darkest place, we are known — yes, even there. My own falsely self-assertive and harmful, unfree ego gets drawn into the expansive heart of God. It is precisely in the light of God’s vastness and acceptance of me that I can accept the harm I do for what it is.”
Tattoos on the Heart by Greg Boyle, SJ

“THE CONTINENT [OF AFRICA] BLEEDS FROM resource exploitation, leaving its health systems fragile. Weak governance continues to expose Africa to organized criminal practices by foreign governments and multinationals who skillfully avoid taxes, manipulate prices, and limit opportunities for manufacturing. Africa loses more through illicit outflows to foreign governments and elites, than it gets from aid and foreign direct investment, combined. We assert that Africa’s debt has been paid many times over. In fact, the world owes Africa and Africans reparations for the horrors of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and ongoing resource exploitation. We believe a **STRONGER, UNITED** Africa and a better world is inevitable.”

A Declaration: Africa, Remember Who You Are, Africa Liberation Day May 25, 2020

‘Sin is behovely’

“WHETHER OUR WOUNDS ARE CAUSED BY OTHERS or by our own mistakes, Julian [of Norwich] frames it all as grace, saying, ‘First the fall, and then the recovery from the fall, and both are the mercy of God.’ Julian’s showings helped her to understand that it is in falling down that we learn almost everything that matters spiritually. Humans come to full consciousness precisely by shadow-boxing, facing their own contradictions, and making friends with their own mistakes and failings. As Lady Julian put it in her Middle English, ‘Sin is behovely!’” Richard Rohr, OFM, Center for Action & Contemplation, July 20, 2015

What quotation, music, or image might you have chosen to include in Perspectives & Echoes?

Retreat in Daily Life Together —

First Week (3)

THEME:

Just as the wider world influences our personal choices, although we often are not conscious of this, so too our personal choices have an effect on other people as well as on the wider world. We need to deepen our perception of this reality, and to seek a heartfelt understanding of sin so that we may desire the conversion that will call us to a change in thinking and feeling, in choosing and desiring.

GRACE:

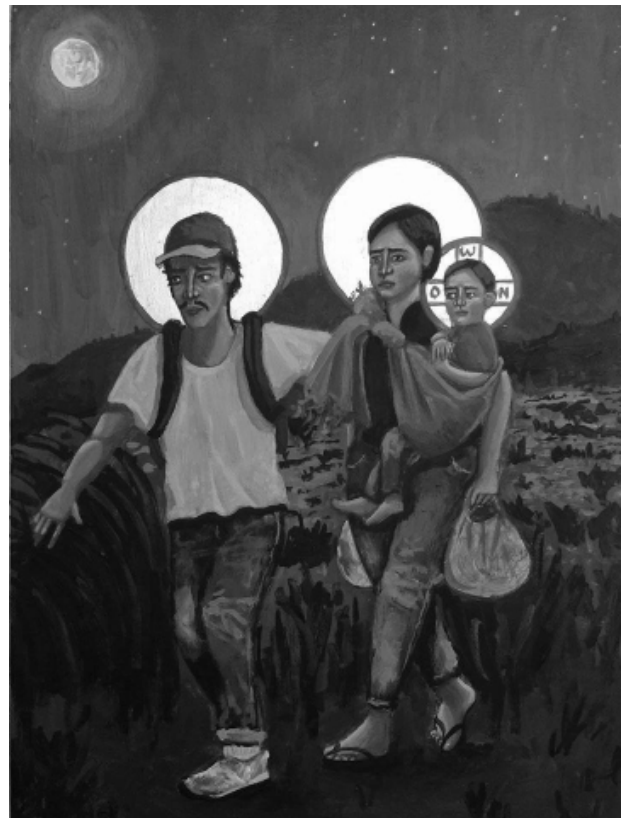
I pray for a deeper awareness of the hidden, sinful tendencies that influence my decisions and actions.
I ask for heartfelt sorrow for my sins and for sincere gratitude for God's faithful mercy.

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 51	Mark 2:13-17
Hebrews 12:1-13	Romans 7:14-25
Matthew 25:31-46	Repetition

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES:

I put myself before God and look at the contrast: God the source of life, and I, a cause of death; God the source of love, and I with all my petty jealousies and hatreds; God from whom all good gifts come, and I, with my selfish attempts to win favor, buy attention, be well thought of, and so on. (SE 59) Fleming



"I was a stranger & you welcomed me," Kelly Lattimore

SHCJ TRADITION:

In the humble and hidden life of the Holy Child Jesus we find mysteries of the most sublime teaching. Here it is that God manifests to us in the most wonderful manner the treasures of His mercy and of His boundless love. SHCJ Foundation Text 2

A key theme in Cornelia's spirituality is that of mercy. It is significant that she couples "our own nothingness and misery" with "His infinite love and mercy" in her preface to the 1854 rule, because the grace of the First Week is precisely to accept this mercy permanently into one's continuing proneness to sin. Strub

PERSPECTIVES & ECHOES:

To sustain a lifestyle that excludes others . . . a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up by being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain and feeling a need to help them as though this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase; and in the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us. Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* (54)

"IF I THINK OF HOW AUSTRALIA AND OTHER fossil fuel nations behaved at the climate conference in Poland this past week, how they flat-out refused to see themselves with others and as part of the whole, we see how difficult repentance can be, how strenuously we can resist, and almost none of us manages it in a single go, or completely. But if we even begin, can you feel how this invitation is actually a relief, how it creates space within and around us, as we let go clinging to what we have? . . . We start to become aware of and open to a reality far larger than what we can possess on our own terms, a far larger reality — the abundance and irrepressible fecundity of God . . ."

"Repentance" — a reflection on Luke 3:7-18 by Sarah Bachelard, 2018



LISTEN TO: "2 Cellos" — Theme from the soundtrack for the film *Schindler's List*, performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, 2017; Oskar Schindler was a German industrialist and member of the Nazi Party who is credited with saving the lives of 1200 Jews during the Holocaust — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID-H1XN-RL5w>



WATCH THE 3- MINUTE VIDEO: "Oren Lyons on Profit & Loss" — Lyons is a native American faithkeeper and advocate for indigenous rights; in this video he says that if we take care of the future seven generations from now, we ourselves will have peace, because to protect the future is to protect ourselves now — https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr8k_43QtJo



Amid heat, smog and wildfires, essential workers are picking our food — California

"IT IS ... NECESSARY IN BOTH PUBLIC AND private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others — even our enemies — is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion." *The Charter for Compassion* — initiated in 2009 by Karen Armstrong draws groups to work together for their shared vision of "a world where everyone is committed to living by the principle of compassion"



THERE ARE NOW EIGHTY MILLION people displaced in the world. See the faces of just a few in a short video from the UNHCR, with photography by Sebastian Rich — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYeuoTgGVjc>

'Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!'

"WHY ARE YOU AFRAID? HAVE YOU NO FAITH?' Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you [Y]our call reverberates urgently: Be converted! 'Return to me with all your heart' (Joel 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others." Pope Francis, Extraordinary Moment of Prayer, St. Peter's Basilica, March 27, 2020

"THEN I PRAYED, BECAUSE WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, YOU FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS, and I began to pray the way my mentors had taught me:

I prayed, 'Help me, help me.'
I prayed, 'Please. Please.'

I let go of an angstrom of blame. That was the hardest part. This batch of blame had more claw marks than most of the things I try to let go of. Blame is always my first response: figure out whose fault things are, and then try to manipulate that person into correcting his or her behaviour so that you can be more comfortable... 'Help' is a prayer that is always answered. It doesn't matter how you pray — with your head bowed in silence, or crying in grief, or dancing. *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith* by Anne Lamott

PRAY WITH YOUR FEET. (African proverb). WHAT PRAYER DOES YOUR BODY WANT TO OFFER?



Scripture tells us — **Moses held up his arms** in prayer . . . **Jehosaphat stood** in the house of the Lord praying for liberation . . . **Anna wept and poured out her soul without words** to the Lord . . . **David sat**; sometimes he **danced**, or **sang** as he plucked his harp . . . **Judith prostrated herself and cried out** to the Lord with a loud voice . . . and there was **a woman** who simply **touched** the fringe of Jesus' cloak . . . **Stephen fell on his knees and talked to the Lord** before he was stoned to death . . .



Retreat in Daily Life Together ~

First Week (4)

THEME:

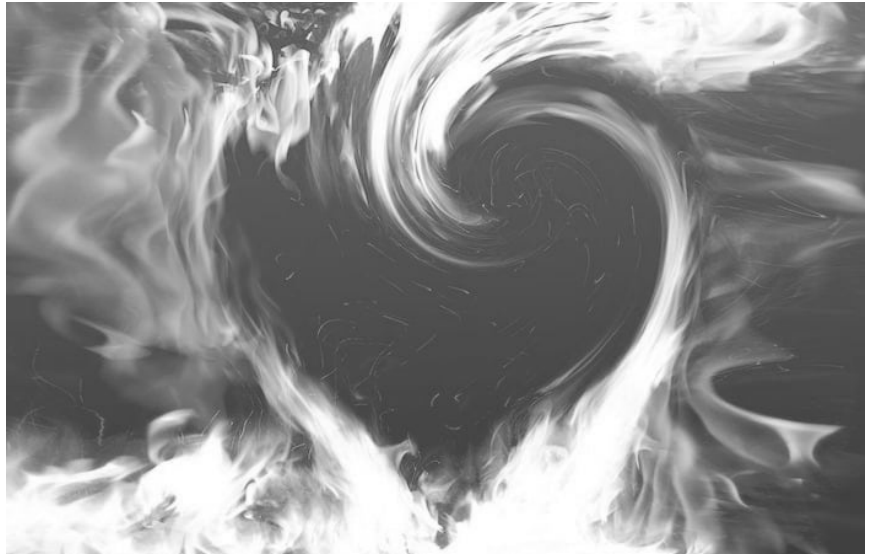
God loves and knows each of us better than we know ourselves, and continues to create in us. Slowly, gently God helps us integrate our limitations so that we can learn from them and be transformed.

GRACE:

I pray to experience God's boundless mercy and love for me as one caught up in the human story of sin.

SCRIPTURE:

Isaiah 54:1-10
Hosea 11:1-4
2 Corinthians 12:5-10
Ezekiel 36:25-28
Luke 15:1-7
Repetition



SPIRITUAL EXERCISES:

How can I respond to a God so good to me and surrounding me with the goodness of holy men and women and all the wonderful gifts of creation? All I can do is give thanks, wondering at God's forgiving love which continues to give me life up to this moment. By responding to God's merciful grace, I want to amend. (SE 61) Fleming

SHCJ TRADITION:

To experience God as mercy is to have tasted the bitterness of one's own "corrupted heart" as [Cornelia] describes it. She defined her Society's mission as embracing all the works of spiritual mercy, and she meant that mercy which comes from the heart of God, the mercy shown in the incarnation, the mercy of Jesus upon the crowds in his days of active ministry. After a lifetime of stewardship over the mercy of God, she begged on her deathbed for that same mercy upon herself. Strub

+ my heart is changed within me, all my compassion is aroused + with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you + with deep compassion I will bring you back + I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you + I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh + rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep +

PERSPECTIVES & ECHOES:

The Hebrew word for mercy is the word for womb with different vowel points. So mercy ... is womb-like mother love ... the capacity of a mother to totally give herself over to the need and reality and identity of the child. And ... then, mercy is the capacity to give one's self away for the sake of the neighborhood. Now, none of us does that completely. But it makes a difference if the quality of social transactions has to do with the willingness to give one's self away for the sake of the other, rather than the need to always be drawing all of the resources to myself for my own well-being. It is this kind of generous connectedness to others. Walter Brueggemann, ON BEING, radio interview, December 20, 2018

'That's how the light gets in'

"WE HAVE FAILED IN SO MANY WAYS, BUT WE KEEP TRYING. As humans, our best intentions are often flawed; filled with motivations and bias forged in our own broken pasts. These cracks lead us



to continue to be reborn in new ways and lead us — as a country and as individuals — to a more perfect union it is our very humanity that is key to answering the questions our nation is facing right now. As individuals who have been made in the image and

likeness of God ... it is our duty and our responsibility to bring our humanity into the conversation, with all of its many flaws and even its messiness. It is there that we'll find our answers. Or in the words of the late Leonard Cohen, 'Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.'" *Presidential Ponderings* by Jayson Boyers, Rosemont College, July 2020

"PERHAPS WE CAN SEE SALVATION AS GOD'S LOVE AT THE HEART of the cosmos that heals, makes whole, and generates new life. This love is visibly expressed in the cross of Jesus Christ. As we are healed and made whole by God's love, we, in turn, can promote greater wholeness in our communities in our world. This does not negate sin but it puts sin within the wider context of the whole cosmos. Sin is living in unrelated-ness or disconnected from the whole." "Seeing Christianity as a Religion of Evolution" by Ilia Delio, *LCWR Occasional Papers* 2012

"WE PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT HAVE THE POWER TO BUILD a better future. We demand full commitment to women and girls as leaders, entrepreneurs, and agents of change. We will not be fully free until we decolonize our minds and maximize the creativity of our youth. We must harness Africa's blessings of sun and wind to power new jobs, grow our own food, and drive a more just economic development model. Let us honor the sacrifices of our ancestors and demand leadership that puts the interests of the people first." A Declaration: Africa, Remember Who You Are, Africa Liberation Day May 25, 2020

LISTEN TO: "The Armed Man — XII, *Benedictus*" by Karl Jenkins, performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. The melody is taken up by the choir to words from the Latin Mass: "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WggAE91YFs>



WATCH: a 6-minute video marking the 10th anniversary of *The Charter for Compassion* — https://charterforcompassion.org/?gclid=EAIaIQob-ChMIsV3VoZjP6gIVQAIICR1pyA-REEAAYASAAEgI9g_D_BwE

"WE URGENTLY NEED TO make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. From *The Charter for Compassion*



LISTEN TO: "Amazing Grace" sung by 50 countries impacted by Covid-19 — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA7pdABvpnc>

'O Come, Thou Day-Spring from on High, Cheer Us by Thy Drawing Nigh'

"SINCE SALVATION MEANS MAKING LIFE WHOLE, liberating, healing, forgiving, restoring, cleansing, opening up new possibilities, belief in a God who saves is obviously germane to the polluted, ravaged, depleted natural world. Comfort! A theology of accompaniment sees God's redeeming action always present and active in service of the flourishing of a world that is currently suffering reversals and death in a horrific way ... the living God, gracious and merciful, always was, is, and will be accompanying the world with saving grace, including humans in their sinfulness, and humans and all creatures in their unique beauty, evolutionary struggle, and inevitable dying."

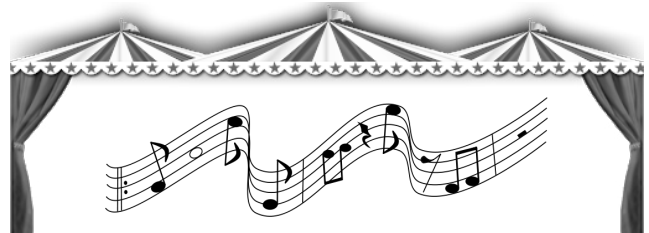
Creation and the Cross (6.7) by Elizabeth Johnson



Adam and Eve, Omerihu Amachi

What quotation, music, or image might you have chosen to include in Perspectives & Echoes?

THE AMAZON RAINFOREST IS A 'BIOLOGICAL HEART' for the increasingly threatened earth. It is a frenzied race to the death . . . It is scientifically proven that the disappearance of the Amazon biome will have a catastrophic impact on the planet as a whole! (2) . . . The search of the Amazonian indigenous peoples for life in its abundance takes the form of what they call 'good living', *buen vivir*, which is fully realised in the Beatitudes ... a matter of living in harmony with oneself, with nature, with human beings and with the Supreme Being, since there is intercommunication throughout the cosmos; here there are neither exclusions nor those who exclude, and here a full life for all can be projected. (9) Final document of the Amazon Synod, 2019



There's a wideness in God's mercy

Morning in a New Land, Mary Oliver

In trees still dripping night some nameless birds
Woke, shook out their arrowy wings, and sang,
Slowly, like finches sifting through a dream,
The pink sun fell, like glass, into the fields.
Two chestnuts, and a dapple gray,
Their shoulders wet with light,
their dark hair streaming,
Climbed the hill. The last mist fell away.

And under the trees, beyond time's brittle drift,
I stood like Adam in his lonely garden
On that first morning, shaken out of sleep,
Rubbing his eyes, listening, parting the leaves,
Like tissue on some vast, incredible gift.

Retreat in Daily Life Together ~

Supportive Material: Discernment of Spirits

In *A Retreat by All Means*, Elizabeth Mary Strub suggests that, at this point in the retreat, you look back, at the road that has brought you to where you are now, and ask yourself, “What is bringing me peace or hope or light or gratitude or love, or sorrow as I think and pray about all this? What is leaving me low, dispirited, bored, restless?” (p.81) In other words, pay attention to the feelings you’ve experienced. Reflecting on his own experience of these kinds of inner movements, Ignatius developed guidelines for interpreting the “motions of the soul,” and these are appended at the end of the Spiritual Exercises as “Guidelines for the Discernment of Spirits” (SE 313-335).

There is a super-abundance of good and current material about discernment, both in print and online, treating both discernment within a retreat experience, and living a discerning life every day. A few suggestions are listed on the next page for those who wish to explore it further.

In any case, discernment has to do with coming to understand God’s desires for us, making good choices, and growing in intimacy with God. In *Finding God in Each Moment*, Smith and Merz explain that discernment is reflection on experience, but that means more than just “thinking about it” or “processing it.” The difference, they say, “flows from the faith attention which guides the reflection. Faith leads us to look at our unfolding experience from the perspective of God’s presence and action in all of creation and in all of us.” (p. 21)

God has given us at this time the gift of a Jesuit pope for whom discernment is the heartbeat of his life of faith. In an online article called “**Francis: the discerning pope**,” Nicholas Austin SJ says that Francis returns to the theme of discernment repeatedly in his addresses, homilies and writings. He prays urgently for a discerning Church. For him, “discernment is a dying followed by a rising ... a letting go of one’s own plans, certainties and agendas, and allowing oneself to be guided into new life by the unpredictable leadings of the Holy Spirit.” Francis also describes discernment as a “spiritual sense” ... an “instinct of faith,” a wisdom that enables us to perceive and grasp what is of God. He says, too, that although Ignatius’ “guidelines for discernment” suggest that we can acquire the skills needed, spiritual discernment is above all a gift — to be asked for, and “received with openness, at the time of the giver’s choosing.”

Ignatius gave us a vocabulary of discernment which may be helpful to learn. In *The Ignatian Adventure*, Kevin O’Brien SJ is a good teacher of a few key concepts:

‘Motions of the soul’

“These interior movements consist of thoughts, imaginings, emotions, inclinations, desires, feelings, repulsions, and attractions. Recall that during Ignatius’s convalescence after his run-in with the cannonball, he noticed different interior movements as he imagined his future. In his autobiography, Ignatius writes (in third person):

‘He did not consider nor did he stop to examine this difference until one day his eyes were partially opened, and he began to wonder at this difference and to reflect upon it. From experience he knew that some thoughts left him sad while others made him happy, and little by little he came to perceive the different spirits that were moving him; one coming from the devil, the other coming from God.’ (Autobiography, no. 8)

In other words, Ignatius believed that these interior movements were the result of ‘good spirits’ and ‘evil spirits.’ Spiritual discernment involves reflecting on interior movements to determine where they come from and where they lead us. We try to understand whether a good spirit or evil spirit is acting on us so that we can make good decisions, following the action of a good spirit and rejecting the action of an evil spirit.”



'good & evil spirits'

"Talk of good and evil spirits may seem foreign to modern pray-ers. Psychology gives us other names for what Ignatius called good and evil spirits. We know much more than Ignatius did about human motivations and the influence of culture and groups on an individual psyche" Ignatius offers these guidelines to describe how the good spirit and evil spirit generally operate, depending on the person in question. (SE314)

"For people who are caught in a pattern of sin or who have closed themselves off from God's grace, the good spirit shakes them up a bit, making them feel remorseful or unsettled and 'stinging their conscience' ... The good spirit tries to get their attention so that they can get back to God. The evil spirit, however, wants nothing more than for such people to continue in their confusion and darkness. So the evil spirit tries to make them complacent, offering excuses and enticing them with further distractions and pleasures.



For people who are growing in faith, hope, and love and trying to live a life pleasing to God, the evil spirit wants to derail them by stirring up anxiety, false sadness, needless confusion, frustration, and other obstacles. In contrast, the good spirit strengthens, encourages, consoles, removes obstacles, and gives peace to such people. Most people who are praying at this point of the retreat fall in this second category of persons. Thus, be aware of how the evil spirit may get in the way of the retreat, follow the lead of the good spirit who consoles and uplifts you." (SE315)

We tend to resist consolation, as if we were safer in the turbulent waters of our problems.
We bet on desolation, on problems, on defeat;
the Lord works very hard to console us,
but encounters resistance.

Pope Francis, 12/11/18

'spiritual consolation & desolation'

"Spiritual consolation is an experience of being so on fire with God's love that we feel impelled to praise, love, and serve God and help others as best as we can. [It] encourages and facilitates a deep sense of gratitude for God's faithfulness, mercy, and companionship. In consolation, we feel more alive and connected to others. Ignatius concludes, 'Finally, under the word [spiritual] consolation, I include every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and every interior joy which calls and attracts one toward heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, by bringing it tranquility and peace in its Creator and Lord.'

Spiritual desolation, in contrast, is an experience of the soul in heavy darkness or turmoil. We are assaulted by all sorts of doubts ... bombarded by temptations and mired in self-preoccupations. We are excessively restless and anxious and feel cut off from others. Such feelings, in Ignatius's words, 'move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love. One is completely listless, tepid, and unhappy, and feels separated from our Creator and Lord.' (SE 316-317)

A note of caution: spiritual consolation does not always mean happiness, and spiritual desolation does not always mean sadness. Sometimes an experience of sadness, loneliness, or restlessness is a moment of conversion and intimacy with God and others the key question is, Where is the movement coming from, and where is it leading me?

Some helpful resources —

A Retreat by All Means: Ignatius, The Spiritual Exercises & Cornelia, by Elizabeth Mary Strub, SHCJ

Finding God in Each Moment, by Carol Ann Smith SHCJ and Eugene Merz SJ;
Ave Maria Press, 2006

The Ignatian Adventure, by Kevin O'Brien SJ;
Loyola Press, 2011

"Francis: the Discerning Pope," by Nicholas Austin SJ; on the website THINKING FAITH,
<https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/francis-discerning-pope>

"Prayer & Discernment in Lockdown," by David Lonsdale, <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/prayer-and-discernment-lockdown>

Love in Action / Discerning Love — *some perspectives & echoes*

The elements of discernment include freedom . . . to choose . . . to do . . . to act . . . in love. Cornelia urged “*actions not words*” and prayed for “*a love full of action*” to “*accomplish the things most pleasing to God*.” At the end of the Exercises, Ignatius reminds us that love ought to show itself more in deeds than in words. (SE230) Scientist, Albert Einstein, would add a note of creative risk-taking to action, saying, “*If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got*.” US Congressman and racial justice activist John Lewis put his life on the line for love in action — “*When we went on the freedom ride it was love in action. The march from Selma to Montgomery was love in action. We do it not simply because it’s the right thing to do, but it’s love in action*.” As did Rosa Parks when she sat in the front of the bus and was arrested.



LISTEN TO: US Congressman John Lewis call graduates of Emory University to find a way to create the beloved community — <https://www.w.c-span.org/video/?c4895540/user-clip-recorded-voice-john-lewis-to-day-capital-rotunda> — a recording of this 6-minute speech was played at his memorial service in the US Capitol, July 27, 2020



Rosa Parks refused to sit in the “colored” section of the bus, 1955

Live by the Spirit
the fruit of the Spirit is love,
joy, peace, patience, kindness,
generosity, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control,

Galatians 5:22

13th Century Persian poet Rumi counsels us not to resist the thoughts and emotions that pass through us, but to meet them with courage, warmth and respect. Though they seem like unwelcome guests they will scrub away at everything that is untrue or unhelpful, if you let them. —

**This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.**

A joy, a depression, meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows,
Who violently sweep your house
Empty of its furniture, still,
Treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
Meet them at the door laughing
And invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes,
Because each has been sent
As a guide from beyond.

From the novel *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson, p. 179 — an elderly pastor who is dying of a heart condition reflects on his own life-long process of reflection —

“MY CUSTOM HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO PONDER GRIEF; that is, to follow it through ventricle and aorta to find out its lurking places. That old weight in the chest, telling me there is something I must dwell on, because I know more than I know and must learn it from myself — that same good weight worries me these days. But the fact is, I have never found another way to be as honest with myself as I can be by consulting with these miseries of mine, these accusers and rebukers, God bless them all.”

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