

St Mary's, Inverness

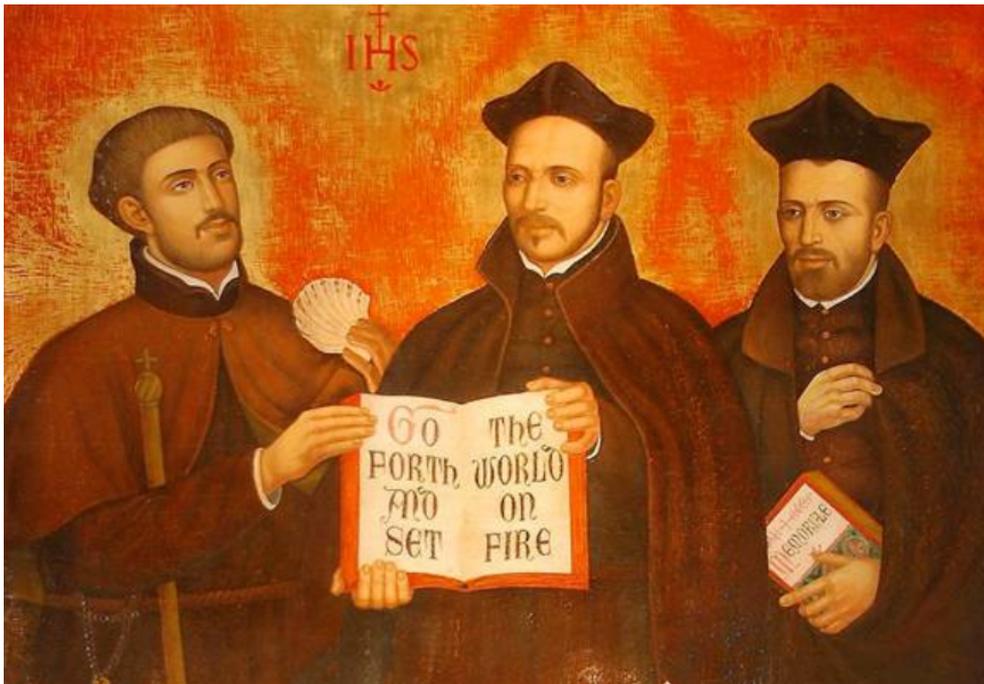
The RC Diocese of Aberdeen: SC005122]

The Year of St Ignatius

20 MAY 2021 >31 JULY 2022

FORTY-FOURTH IGNATIAN REFLECTION

FRIENDSHIP



What is 'friendship'? We probably have some experience of having friends which helps us in our own recognition of this gift. It has been written about by the classical authors, Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics says of it ***"the thing most necessary for life"***, and Cicero wrote a study of it De Amicitia, [concerning friendship] in which paraphrasing him he writes that 'Friendship' comes from human nature itself. It arises from our attraction to good qualities and this admiration for virtue should be accompanied by shared kindnesses in order to become friendship. So for Cicero 'Friendship' refers to that kind of relationship between different people who care for one another and freely share both the tears and smiles, the sorrows and joys of life. Friendship is usually based and maintained on honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, compromise, and unconditional support. It is a fruit of shared virtuous attraction.

These analytical thoughts may enable us to look at our own friendships and also the way we relate to Jesus, who called us 'friends'

I do not call you servants any longer... Instead, I call you friends.

– John 15:15

Ignatius teaches us to enter into a relationship with the Jesus of the Gospels. We encounter Jesus in the narratives of the Gospels. We are aware of him, as a teacher, healer, as the Good Shepherd, as the Suffering Servant of God who goes on forgiving through his Death and beyond it. He is a constantly forgiving friend. We find him reconciling the broken-hearted, those who have lapsed and fallen away, and always reassuring the doubtful. Getting to know the Friend we have in Jesus is the task of prayer. When we have a friend in Jesus, then naturally we communicate : conversation begins to flow. In *The Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius calls this prayerful conversation a '*colloquy*', simply being familiarly prayerful with Jesus. We speak in an open way.

Ignatius came to these insights from his earliest experiences after the life-changing events when he was wounded at Pamplona in 1521. His desire for a closer affinity with God was still being worked out during his convalescence at home in Loyola through his reading of 'The Life of Christ' by a Carthusian, and the Lives of Saints Dominic and Francis. His resolve was later strengthened by his self-surrender at Montserrat when he exchanged military and courtly dress for the simple habit of a Pilgrim. From there the year at Manresa was transformative, during which having had an excess of almost punitive self-imposed austerities, he finds balance and insights by the River Cardoner. While at Manresa he encountered the spiritual

manual, "*The Imitation of Christ*"- this book by Thomas a Kempis was to be a regular life-long staple of Ignatius' spiritual reading. In its dialogue form it enables the prayerful reader to enter into a private and personal interior conversation, sometimes astringent and always encouraging as we are open to God. From '*The Imitation*' Ignatius absorbed insights into friendship with Jesus.

'The Imitation': "Many are His visits to the man of inward life. With such a one He holds delightful converse, greeting him with sweet comfort, much peace, and an intimacy astonishing beyond measure. Come then, faithful soul, prepare your heart for this your Spouse, so that He may vouchsafe to come to you and dwell within you"(2.1.1-2).

This is a most close intimacy afforded to the person genuinely seeking a relationship with God- it is about the open heart ready to receive heartfelt Love. The language is nuptial- about a close intimacy between God and those who seek to love Him.

Again friendship in the Lord is expressed like this : '*The Imitation*' : "*Love Him, and keep Him for your friend, who, when all go away, will not forsake you, nor suffer you to perish finally" (2.7.1; cf. 2.8.3).*

Ignatius was looking for friendship with God, seeing Him in the Life of Jesus, and wanting to live a life like Jesus he developed a natural talent for friendship.

Some of his initial friendships were to endure, the families in Barcelona who befriended and supported him were life-long friends. In the periods of study at Alcala and Salamanca he found friendship among fellow students and others with whom he shared his experiences and insights. Gradually his methods of drawing others into *spiritual friendship* became refined as '**The Spiritual Exercises**' took shape through use. It was at Paris that the real gifts of friendship flourished and blossomed. While a student at the College of St Barbara he shared a room with two others, Francis Xavier and Peter Faber. In his written '*Memoriale*', seen in the top picture, Peter Faber wrote thanking God :

‘God wanted me to teach this holy man and to converse with him about ordinary matters, and later about interior things. We lived a life in common in which we shared the same room, the same table, and the same purse. He guided me in spiritual things and showed me how to know better both the divine will and my own will. In the end we came to have the same desires and the same will.’

There are three significant concepts here :

Comradeship This when we live closely with others, sharing a room [a chamber or camera]. When we speak of **comradeship** we understand that relationships are formed that induce loyalty and mutual support. For Ignatius and also for Francis Xavier who had also seen active military service, they would have understood the real strength of comradeship with its loyalty and mutual support. Ignatius exuded these qualities which made him attractive, likeable and sociable.



Companionship This word is about eating together sharing the same table. Derived from the Latin words for 'with'/cum and 'bread'/pan it clearly describes 'breaking bread together'. This has the obvious everyday significance of sharing, of nourishing and being nourished at the physical level. But such sharing has the further significance of helping each other and being bound by common tasks. There are clearly spiritual parallels for the thinking Christian – "our Daily Bread" for which we pray daily, the Divine Assistance, the everyday graces we need to grow in virtue ; the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ in the Eucharist.

Discernment In his Autobiography Ignatius reflected on the way he began to understand, during his convalescence, what made him feel good about himself and what distracted him : ***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).***

Where Ignatius uses terms derived from Biblical categories we might find psychological terms more familiar, but there is a simple everyday value about calling our feelings and impulses 'good' or 'bad'. We all recognise the tension between 'good ' and 'evil'. Ignatius is describing our interior struggle to behave virtuously [good] while at the same time he recognise the impulse or lure of the 'evil'. We call the impulses towards the good and the bad, towards virtue or vice, 'spirits'. If we are enjoying 'good spirits' we understand 'consolation', the feeling of peaceable comfort, a strengthening composure. If we are in 'bad spirits' we feel lost and bewildered, desolate- without solace.

Ignatius was sensitive to the movements in the impulses and motives in making good decisions- that whatever the circumstances of good or evil he was able to assist people in their journey of faith. He helped Peter Faber "***He guided me in***

spiritual things and showed me how to know better both the divine will and my own will. In the end we came to have the same desires and the same will”.

This is a telling sentence and is the basis of a sympathetic unity of shared insights into '*spiritual things*'.

Ignatius, Peter Faber and eventually, after some persuasive wrangling, also Francis Xavier became firm '*friends in the Lord*'. Soon other men became attracted to these early 'companions'.

The three became seven, and they were now Companions of Jesus based on a spiritual brotherhood '*kindly affectioned to one another*', in the words of St Paul. They dedicated themselves to God, taking vows at Montmartre on Saturday 15 August 1534 in the Chapel of St Denis. *The friends in the Lord* began that movement which culminated in their going to Rome, forming the Society of Jesus and eventually being dispersed to take the Gospel to every continent.

The friendships endured and a letter from Diego de Lainez, who eventually succeeded Ignatius as General of the Society of Jesus, illustrates the affectionate and richly supportive friendship of the Companions :

“Every few days we would take our provisions and eat at the home of one of the companions, and after that at the home of another. We would visit each other often, and I think this helped us to stay close. In this time the Lord gave us special help with our studies, in which we did fairly well, directing them always to the glory of the Lord and to the help of our neighbours. We had a special love for one another, and we even helped one another financially as much as we could”.



The Correspondence between the Companions themselves, and between them and Ignatius, and indeed all those on the missions, richly illustrates the cords of affection that bound them together.

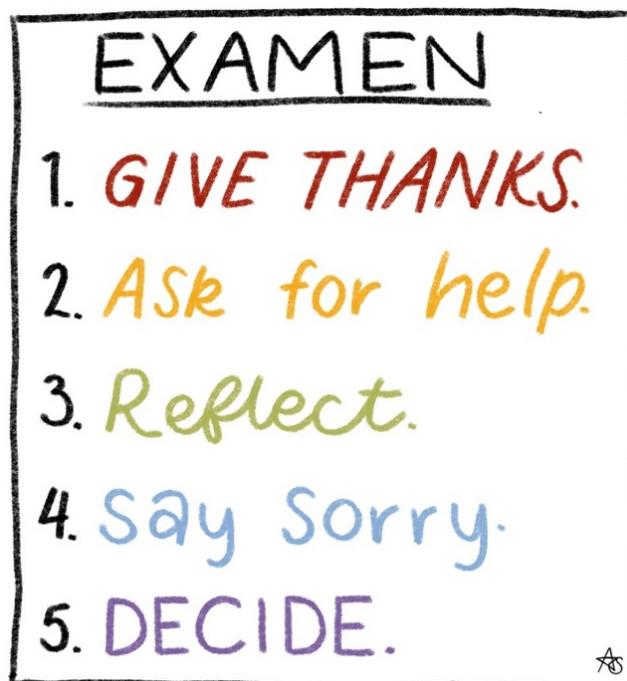
In one of his letters, Xavier recalls with tears how touched he was by his friend's words: ***"Among many other holy words of consolation in your letter, I was moved by your closing words: "Wholly yours, without ever being able to forget you, Ignatius." I read those words with tears, just as I write these with tears, remembering the times past and the great love you always had for me and still have".***

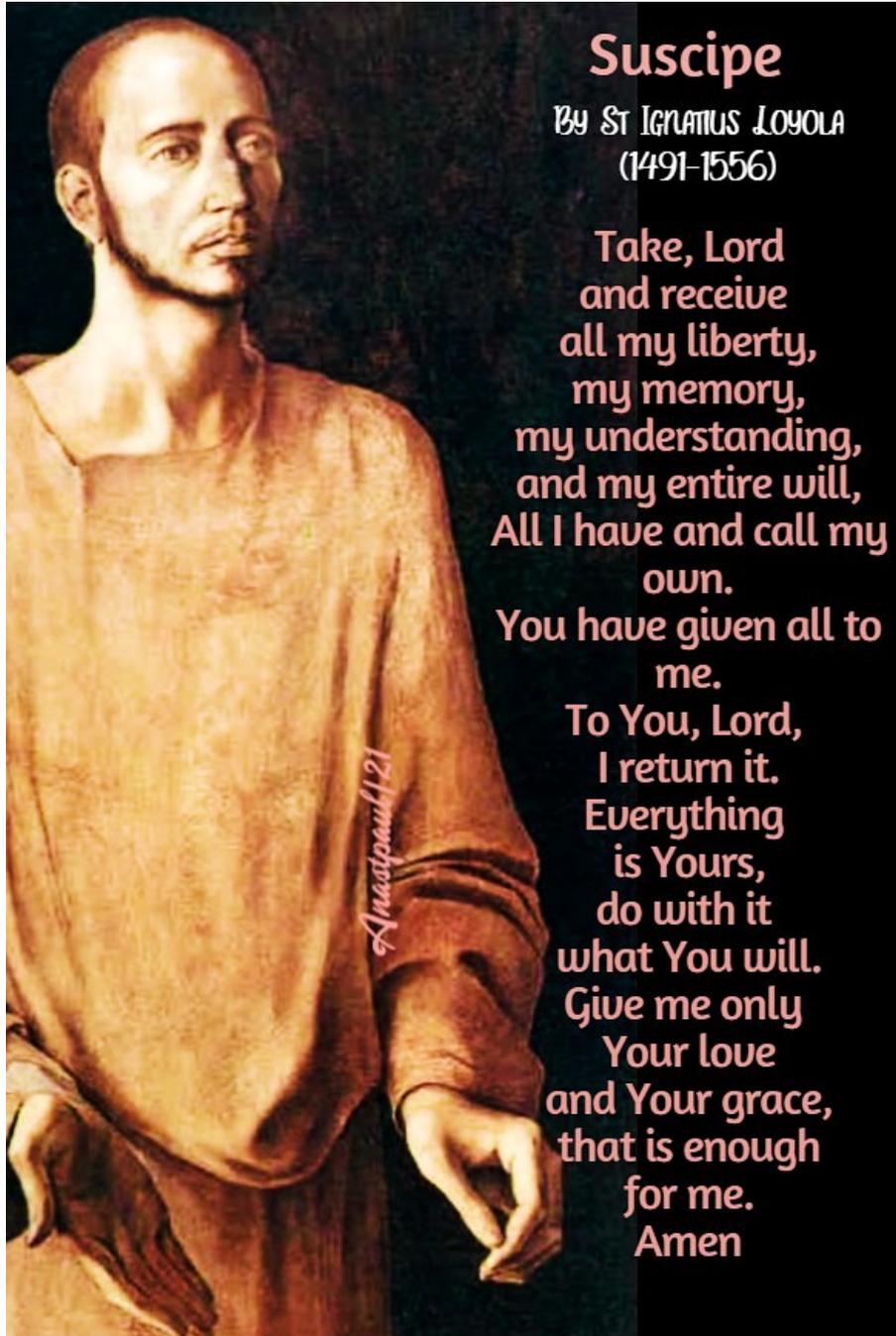


Points to ponder :

- Shared interests and shared values are the foundations of many friendships. As we recall our friends how good are we for them and they for us?
- Keeping friendships in good repair : being genuinely interested in each other, encouraging and sharing 'good news'- how are we doing?
- Correspondence : just a text, an email, a postcard or a letter. Keeping open our lines of communication is good for friendship and for prayer.

Clearing the lines of Communication : St Ignatius encourages us to be thankful and through our grateful hearts we open up in friendship with Jesus seeking his assistance and removing any obstacles to our conversation with Him. It is time for the EXAMEN with all its opportunities for creating a positive relationship with the Lord and all His friends.





Suscipe

By ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA
(1491-1556)

Take, Lord
and receive
all my liberty,
my memory,
my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my
own.

You have given all to
me.

To You, Lord,
I return it.
Everything
is Yours,
do with it
what You will.
Give me only
Your love
and Your grace,
that is enough
for me.
Amen

Suscipe

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,*

All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

*Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.*

Preparation for Scriptural Reflection :

- *We place ourselves in the presence of God – short prayer of devotion: 'My Lord, and my God'*
- *We open up to God, expressing our sorrow for sin and our gratitude for our blessings*
- *We ask God to receive our lives, our hopes, our best intentions and our prayers*
- *We begin to read the passage of Scripture slowly. It helps to say the words, even silently.*
- *We think imaginatively trying to see ourselves in the scene of the Scripture : what we see, what we hear, what it feels like, what we smell, what we might taste.*

Passage for Reflection :

St John 15. 9-17

***⁹ "As the Father has loved me,
so have I loved you.***

Remain in my love.

***¹⁰ If you keep my commandments,
you will remain in my love,***

***just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and remain in his love.***

¹¹ "I have told you these things

*so that my joy may be in you
and your joy may be complete.*

¹² "This is my commandment:

*love one another
as I have loved you.*

*¹³ No one can have greater love
than to lay down his life for his friends.*

*¹⁴ You are my friends
if you do what I command you.*

*¹⁵ "I shall no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not know
what his master is doing.
I have called you friends
because I have revealed to you
everything that I have heard from my Father.*

¹⁶ "You did not choose me.

Rather, I chose you.

And I appointed you

to go out and bear fruit,

fruit that will remain,

*so that the Father may give you
whatever you ask him in my name.*

¹⁷ The command I give you is this:

love one another.

Points for Reflection :

- ***Friendship with Jesus is a close and fruitful relationship : we realise that we are bound to Him closely through Baptism and strengthened by Confirmation and further graced by the other sacraments of commitment, whether Marriage or Ordination.***
- ***Friendship with Jesus requires the recognition and acceptance of the virtuous life- keeping the Commandments***
- ***Friendship with Jesus brings profound joy, based on our 'loving one another' – being kindly affectioned to one another, a call to Christian friendship with all its costly simplicity.***

A Period of Silence in which we pray with St Ignatius, talking conversationally to God as Father : seeking understanding and insight, ever searching, ever finding, always willing, and Loving.

Laus Deo Semper : Thank God Always



The Lord's Prayer

Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray