

St Mary's, Inverness
The Year of St Ignatius
20 MAY 2021 >31 MAY 2022

SIXTH REFLECTION : THE EXPERIENCE OF MONTSERRAT



Context : Having travelled for about twenty days: since leaving Loyola, via Aranazazu, and Igualada to Montserrat, Ignatius and his mule had covered a distance of about three hundred and fifty miles. This was travelling physically, but what about the mental and spiritual journey? As the Pilgrim began the long climb up the twisting road to the Abbey on 21 March 1522 he now began to think about what a difference the new Pilgrim-Soldier would make after he had made his Vigil at the Shrine of the Black Madonna.

In his Autobiography we learn, “.. *when he arrived at Montserrat, he offered a prayer and arranged for a confessor. He made a general confession in writing, which lasted three days, and arranged with his confessor to leave his mule behind and to hang his sword and dagger at Our Lady’s altar in the church.....On the eve of Our Lady’s Feast in March, in the year 1522 he went at night, as secretly as he could, to a poor man, and removing all his clothing, and he gave it to the poor man and dressed himself in the garment he so desired to wear and went to kneel before Our Lady’s altar...at the break of the day he departed...and he took not the main road that led directly to Barcelona... but a detour to a town called Manresa*”.

This journey was interrupted by a request that he confirm that he had given his clothes to a poor man who subsequently was accused of having stolen them. Ignatius was moved to tears of compassion for the poor man’s plight.

Ignatius' time at Manresa was so eventful and full of insight.

Examen: Can we imagine Ignatius arriving at the Abbey, stabling the mule, booking into the Pilgrims' Hostel, making a prayerful visit to the Shrine of Our Lady with so many other pilgrims? This was the Feast of St Benedict [old calendar] and there would have been hundreds of other pilgrims. He then finds the priest allocated to hear his Confession- a French Benedictine monk of the Abbey, Dom Jean Chanon. He was given some manuals of prayers and a compendium to assist with making a confession. Is this familiar? Tables of sins and virtues as guides to a good confession were prevalent. So often we do not find these helpful. Perhaps we should begin with where we are and who we are. Questions about graces, blessings, sins and failures are best faced regularly.

We all have the every-day routines, the tasks that must be done, and we have been nourished over the years with Catechisms and guides to Confession. Yet, in a sense the practical and useful way of everyday penitence is to be found in the **Examen**. This review of behaviour, thoughts, aspirations, achievements, thanksgivings and our sense of continuing commitment is a rewarding daily routine. It draws us towards God -'rummaging for God' as one Jesuit put it. We might see the Five Steps of the Examen like this :

1. Reflect on God's presence. Be still – be calm and recollect – how has the day been? We ask that God will help us to see clearly.

2. Relish the day with gratitude. When we are mindful of the many blessings of each day – food, shelter, clothing, work, recreation, family, friends. Gratitude is at the heart of being with God. We see all our works, dealings with people, everything that is the stuff of our lives in the context of God. He is there in all things.

3. Request the Holy Spirit to see ourselves honestly. We pay attention to our feelings. We reflect on the feelings experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings? We may become conscious of having fallen short of what we aim for or know to be true, and when this happens we acknowledge and note these sins or failures. We might see whether or not we need to change or reach out to others.

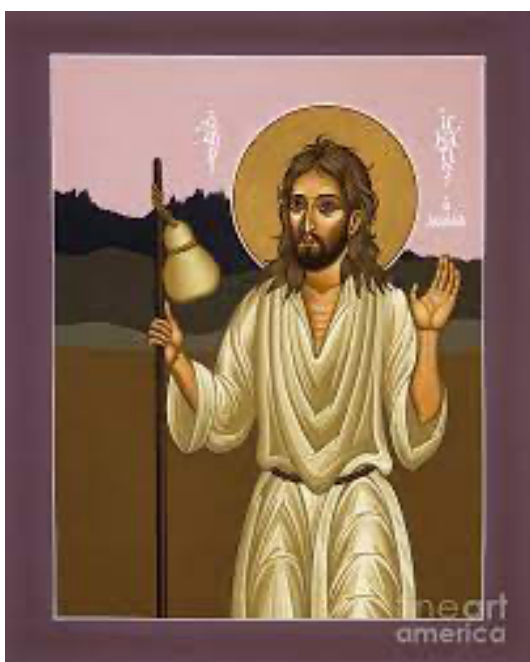
4. Repentance is an important feature of renewal. We look at how we might do better, having turned away from the selfish or self-centred things of yesterday we look towards God-in-Christ as he reconciles all things to Himself and we see that we are part of a continuing movement of grace. For this we are thankful and seek insight as to our future conduct.

5. Review what tomorrow might bring. As we look at impending opportunities and engagements we consider how we feel about these- are we happy, anxious, fearful, despondent? We ask God Our Father to nourish us with 'Daily Bread' and we seek persevering Faith, unwavering Hope and generous Love. We resolve to do what we can offering ourselves simply, humbly and confidently.

We have a friend in Jesus- we speak to him as to a friend who has called us to be friends. In this friendship we have such conversation that seeks forgiveness, accepts healing and fills us with gratitude.

Looking forward with grace, following the Way, seeking the Good.

Suscipe - a prayer of radical, self-less offering of every aspect of ourselves



*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.*

Scriptural Reflection : St Luke 15.1-7

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

'Rejoice with me'- come celebrate with me- Jesus invites us all to share in His joy. The joy in the heart of the recovered sinner, is an echo of the joy in the Heart of Jesus.



Jesu, I trust in You

A Period of Silence in which we pray with St Ignatius seeking understanding and insight. After this we say **The Lord's Prayer**

Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray

Praise God Always !

