



## CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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## MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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Dear Parish Family,

June 12, 2011

As many of you know, this past year I've had increased health issues ranging from asthma to allergies; sinus and ear infections; bronchitis and vertigo. I've been struggling to get a handle on it; and last week the bishop asked me to take some time off to go through a thorough examination with my own physician and the appropriate specialists. Following that, I will do something I have desired to do for some years: namely go on an Ignatian thirty-day silent retreat.

School's out for the summer! This week was a busy week of graduating 6th graders, talent show, and yearbook signings. Although this was a sad year with the death of one of our Kindergarteners, we have done our best to honor him with a photo above the school office window, and a tree planted in his memory. Please pray for our students and for their parents and families.

We continue to collect pledge cards and contributions for the Catholic Services Appeal. We are reaching the end of the appeal. Remember, it's not so much the amount you give; but that you return the card and provide support through prayers. If you haven't returned your CSA card, or if you've misplaced it, there are blank cards by the church entrance; and now is the time to do it!

The Holy Father's general prayer intention for the month of June is, "that priests, united to the Heart of Christ, may always be true witnesses of the caring and merciful love of God." Please pray for me as I get myself back into tip-top shape, and dive into the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises! God bless you!

*Fr. David*

## *Sacred Signs and Symbols*

## *Kneeling & Standing*

When we feel proud, we stand upright, draw ourselves to our full height, throw back our head and shoulders and say with every part of our body, I am bigger and more important than you. But when we are humble we feel our littleness, and lower our head and shrink into ourselves. We would abase ourselves. And the greater the presence in which we stand the more deeply we abase ourselves; the smaller we become in our own eyes.

But when does our littleness so come home to us as when we stand in God's presence? He is the great God, who is today and yesterday, whose years are hundreds and thousands, who fills the place where we are, the city, the wide world, the measureless space of the starry sky, in whose eyes the universe is less than a particle of dust, all-holy, all-pure, all-righteous, infinitely high. He is so great, I so small, so small that beside him I seem hardly to exist, so wanting am I in worth and substance. We have no need to be told that God's presence is not the place in which to stand on one's dignity. To appear less presumptuous, to be as little and low as we feel, we sink to our knees and thus sacrifice half our height; and to satisfy our hearts still further we bow down our heads, and our diminished stature speaks to God and says, Thou art the great God; I am nothing.

Therefore let not the bending of our knees be a hurried gesture, an empty form. Put meaning into it. To kneel, in the soul's intention, is to bow down before God in deepest reverence.

On entering a church, or in passing before the altar, kneel down all the way without haste or hurry, putting your heart into what you do, and let your whole attitude say, Thou art the great God. It is an act of humility, an act of truth, and every time you kneel it will do your soul good.

Standing is the other side of reverence toward God. Kneeling is the side of worship in rest and quietness; standing is the side of vigilance and action. It is the respect of the servant in attendance, of the soldier on duty.

When the good news of the Gospel is proclaimed, we stand up. Godparents stand when in the child's place they make the solemn profession of faith; when we renew these promises during Easter. Bride and groom stand when they bind themselves at the altar to be faithful to their marriage vow. On these and the like occasions we stand up.

We may feel at times a sort of constraint in kneeling. We feel freer standing up, and in that case standing is the right position. But stand up straight: not leaning, both feet on the ground, the knees firm, not slackly bent, upright, in control. Prayer made like this is both free and obedient, both reverent and serviceable. *Romano Guardini*

# IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, were written between 1522 and 1524. They are a brief set of Christian meditations, prayers and mental exercises, divided in four thematic weeks of variable length, designed to be carried out over a period of 30 days. They were composed with the intention of helping the participant in the retreat to discern Jesus in their life, leading then to make a renewed personal commitment to follow Him. The Spiritual Exercises were approved in 1548 by Pope Paul III.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius form the cornerstone of Ignatian Spirituality which is a way of understanding and living the human relationship with God in the world exemplified by the Jesuits. Although originally designed to take place in the setting of a secluded retreat, during which those undergoing the exercises would be focused on nothing other than the Exercises, in his introductory notes, Ignatius provides a model for completing the Exercises over a longer period without the need of seclusion. The Exercises were designed to be carried out while under the direction of a spiritual director. The Spiritual Exercises were never meant only for the vowed religious. Ignatius of Loyola gave the Exercises for 15 years before he was ordained, and years before the Society of Jesus was even founded. After the Society was formed, the Exercises became the central component of the Jesuit novitiate training program, and the Exercises usually take place during the first year of a two year novitiate. Ignatius considered the examen, or spiritual self-review, to be the most important way to continue to live out the experience of the Exercises after their completion. When lay people have undergone the Exercises, this event is often under the guidance of a spiritual director who is a member of the religious order of Jesuits. In contemporary experience, more and more lay people and non-Catholics are becoming both participants and directors of the Exercises.

Within the Exercises, daily instructions include various meditations and contemplations on the nature of the world, of human psychology as Ignatius understood it, and of man's relationship to God through Jesus Christ. The Exercises are divided into "four weeks" of varying lengths with four major themes: sin, the life of Jesus, the Passion of Jesus and the Resurrection of Jesus. During each day of the Exercises, the participant prays with a particular exercise, as assigned by the director, reviews each

prayer, and, following four or five periods of prayer, reports back to the spiritual director of the retreat who helps them to understand what these experiences of prayer might mean to the participant. The goal of the Exercises is to reflect upon their experiences and to understand how these same experiences might apply to their spiritual life.

In Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, good and evil are presented as active players in the world and in the human psyche. The main aim of the Exercises is the development within the human psyche of discernment (*discretio*), the ability to discern between good and evil. Discernment is achieved in order to act with the Grace of God. In other words, to act on the spiritual discernment one has had on what is right. This is the context within which, during the exercises one thinks about humility, selflessness for the sake of the religious life, reflection upon natural sin. There is an acknowledgment that the human soul is continually drawn in two directions: both drawn towards Godliness, and at the same time tempted towards baseness. Accordingly the Exercises provide several illustrations of how one might best be able to refrain from satiating one's lower desires and instead how one might find a means to redirect one's energies towards the fulfillment of one's higher purpose in life. It also needs to be understood that at the heart of Ignatian thought, "discernment" while on the one hand being an act of mysticism, can also be understood as a method of subjective ethical thought.

The Exercises emphasize the role of one's own discernment in deciding what is the path to glorify God – that is, the right path. Discernment attempts to make a direct connection between the participant's thought and action and the Grace of God. Discernment is thereby an action which potentially emphasizes the mystical experience of the believer. This aspect of the Spiritual Exercises is very much typical of the mystical trend in Catholic thought.

The Exercises are still undertaken in their original form over the full 30 days. Participants in the full Exercises usually spend their days in silence, doing up to 5 hours of prayer a day. In the original form each participant has a guide to help lead them through the meditations of the Exercises. The Exercises done in this way offers what is probably one of the most intensive spiritual experiences.

Besides the 30 day silent form of the Exercises many undertake the Exercises in everyday or in daily life. This form brings the participant through the Exercises during a longer period of time (perhaps over several months) using periods of daily prayer.