**The Full Spiritual Exercises in 3 Stages**

**Information for retreatants**

# What are the Spiritual Exercises?

The Spiritual Exercises grew out of Ignatius Loyola’s personal experience as a man seeking to grow in union with God and to discern God’s will. He kept a journal as he gained spiritual insight and deepened his spiritual experience. He added to these notes as he directed other people and discovered what “worked.” Eventually Ignatius gathered these prayers, meditations, reflections, and directions into a carefully designed framework of a retreat, which he called “spiritual exercises.”

Ignatius wrote that the Exercises: “have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one’s life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment.” He wanted individuals to undertake these exercises with the assistance of an experienced spiritual director who would help them shape the retreat and understand what they were experiencing. The book of Spiritual Exercises is a handbook to be used by the director, not by the person making the retreat.

### The Structure of the Exercises

Ignatius organized the Exercises into four “weeks.” These are not seven-day weeks, but stages on a journey to spiritual freedom and wholehearted commitment to the service of God. The Exercises in 3 stages consists of

Stage 1 Week 1

Stage 2 Week 2

Stage 3 Week 3 & 4

**First week.**The first week of the Exercises is a time of reflection on our lives in light of God’s boundless love for us. We see that our response to God’s love has been hindered by patterns of sin. We face these sins knowing that God wants to free us of everything that gets in the way of our loving response to him. The first week ends with a meditation on Christ’s call to follow him.

**Second week.**The meditations and prayers of the second week teach us how to follow Christ as his disciples. We reflect on Scripture passages: Christ’s birth and baptism, his sermon on the mount, his ministry of healing and teaching, his raising Lazarus from the dead. We are brought to decisions to change our lives to do Christ’s work in the world and to love him more intimately.

**Third week.**We meditate on Christ’s Last Supper, passion, and death. We see his suffering and the gift of the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of God’s love.

**Fourth week.**We meditate on Jesus’ resurrection and his apparitions to his disciples. We walk with the risen Christ and set out to love and serve him in concrete ways in our lives in the world.

### Prayer in the Exercises

The two primary forms of praying taught in the Exercises are meditation and contemplation. In **meditation**, we use our minds. We ponder the basic principles that guide our life. We pray over words, images, and ideas.

**Contemplation** is more about feeling than thinking. Contemplation often stirs the emotions and enkindles deep desires. In contemplation, we rely on our imaginations to place ourselves in a setting from the Gospels or in a scene proposed by Ignatius. We pray with Scripture. We do not study it.

The **discernment of spirits** underlies the Exercises. We notice the interior movements of our hearts and discern where they are leading us. A regular practice of discernment helps us make good decisions.

**During the retreat you will meet with your spiritual director each day,**

The focus of the one-to-one meeting is usually to talk about your prayer and experience of God over the last 24 hours and your thoughts and reflections. It is helpful if you keep a journal or notes during the retreat and take some time to prepare for meeting with your director. Your spiritual director will listen and offer resources for prayer as you journey through the days of the retreat. They may also offer help with ways of praying and reflecting on the Exercises.

We encourage you to pray up to 4 times a day during your retreat, occasionally 5 times especially during week 3. But this will be discussed with your director.

**The application form** attached will aid the search for a suitable spiritual director for you and the questions posed offer you the opportunity to reflect on your choice to explore this. The team will consider your application and a member of the team may contact you to discuss elements of your application further if need be.

**What to bring**

* **Bible and Journal / notebook**
* **Outdoor clothing, especially if you enjoy walking.**
* **If you enjoy being creative you may like to bring pencils, crayons, paper etc. Or perhaps knitting or crochet.**

**Safeguarding**

It is important that you have a safe, appropriate, and private place for your direction session and that as far as possible, your session will not be overheard or interrupted. All that is shared in spiritual accompaniment is confidential except for the following:

If you disclose information that suggests you or someone else, especially a child or vulnerable adult, is at risk of harm, your spiritual director may need to report this to the appropriate authorities, in accordance with safeguarding policies and legal obligations.

**Booking & Payment for the Retreat**

To join this retreat focused on Ignatian spirituality, you will need to complete an application form. This form is designed to facilitate a discernment process regarding your readiness for the Spiritual Exercises in daily life. Your responses to the sections within the form will not only provide insight into your spiritual journey but also assist us in assigning a suitable retreat director who can best support your needs during the retreat. We encourage you to take your time in reflecting on the questions, as this will enhance your experience and engagement with the exercises.

Application Form Attached Below. Please return completed forms to [programmemanager@epiphanyhouse.co.uk](mailto:programmemanager@epiphanyhouse.co.uk)

Once your place on the retreat has been confirmed, the costs for each stage are detailed below. Bursaries are available to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder your participation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rates** |  |
| Single Room and Board | £ 1,375.00 |
| Double Room and Board | £ 1,595.00 |
| Accessible Twin/Double and Board | £ 1,595.00 |
| Additional Guest in Double Rooms | £ 715.00 |

**Full Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola in 3 Stages**

**Application Form**

**SECTION ONE – General Information**

**1.1 Date of Retreat**:

**1.2 Full Name:**

**1.3 Address**:

**Email**:

**1.4 Telephone Number**:

**1.5 Date of Birth:**

**1.6 What is your Christian Affiliation**?

**1.7 Status [i.e. are you a single, person, married, a religious, ordained minister, etc.]** :

**1.8 If a religious, please state the name of your Order/Congregation and the date of your entry**:

**1.9 If in Holy Orders, please give the date of ordination**:

**1.10 What is your present occupation**?

**1.11 What is your knowledge of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola** **/ Ignatian Spirituality**?

**1.12 How did you hear about the Spiritual Exercises**?

**1.13 Occasionally during the Exercises it could happen that it is better that the retreat does not continue. While we would hope to decide this jointly, do you understand that this may happen and agree to accept our decision**?

**SECTION TWO**

**The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are designed to challenge the ordinary Christian with the fullness of the Gospel message, thus allowing the Lord to call and form the person into an active apostle of generous and large-hearted desire for the Kingdom.**

**Your responses to the following sections helps us to enter into the discernment process with you about your readiness for the Spiritual Exercises in daily life and, will aid us in allocating a suitable retreat director.**

**A Why do you wish to make the Exercises at this point in your life? (e.g., at a crossroads in life, confirming a decision**)

**B Describe briefly *three* significant experiences in your life and what they meant to you, and how they have shaped you into the person you are. (Allow a short paragraph for each experience**).

**C1 What matters to you? (Please write a short paragraph to describe**).

**C2 How do you experience your life as a vocation and invitation to service? (Please write a short paragraph to explain your answer**).

**D1 Please tell us something about your prayer life**.

**D2 Who is God for you at the moment**?

**D3 In what ways does the Gospel challenge you at this time**?

**D4 Have you made an Ignatian individually guided retreat before**?

**Yes / No If so, how many?**

**E How do you see your making of the Exercises affecting how you engage with the Church and the world**?

**F Do you have regular spiritual direction**?

**SECTION THREE**

**3.1 What is the general level and state of your health**?

**3.2 Are you or have you been taking any stimulants, anti-depressants, or tranquillising**

**drugs during the past five years**?

**If ‘YES’, please let us know what they were prescribed for, how long you were taking them, why and with what result to you**:

**3.3 Are you or have you been undergoing any form of psychiatric treatment or psychotherapeutic counselling during the past five years**?

**If ‘YES’, please let us know in general terms something about the treatment or therapy, the problems you were experiencing, the time taken and the outcome**:

**3.4 Would you please provide the names and contact details of 2 people we may contact for references. This could be your Spiritual Director, Priest, Superior or someone else who knows you well. But not a family member or very close friend.**

*N.B. – An affirmative answer to Questions 3.2-3 does not of itself indicate unsuitability for the retreat.*

**Do you understand that completion of this form does not guarantee a place on the Retreat**

**Signature: ……………………………………………… Date:**

**Name: ……………………………………………………….**

Please email the completed form to [programmemanager@epiphanyhouse.co.uk](mailto:programmemanager@epiphanyhouse.co.uk)