

A Spiritual Exercise to Open Up the Present Moment

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Adapted from "The Journal Retreat: A Model" by Theodore Wiesner, C.M. (Review for Religious, Nov.-Dec. 1982)

Early in his Spiritual Exercises (c.f., Annotation #11), St. Ignatius invites the spiritual journeyer to be in the present moment. Fr. Creed offers five steps with questions to help define and describe your current "Present Moment," the only moment in an incarnational spirituality where God is alive and active.

Step One:

Define your present moment. Delineate the period when this present moment began. It may have begun several years ago when you chose a particular college major. It may have begun when you began the job you now hold. It may have begun when you married, or chose not to remain married. It may have begun when you moved to a new location. It may have begun when a child was born or graduated. It may have begun when an illness occurred or when a loss was experienced. It may have begun with a new success or challenge in your life. The point is to listen to your life now, relax for a few moments, do some deep breathing. Allow yourself to determine when this particular present moment in your life began. In a sentence or two, jot down when this present moment began.

Step Two:

List two or three significant events and people in this present moment. This can include activities, bodily health, academic experiences, spiritual experiences, social experiences, events in family, with work. Pick out just a few significant events within this present moment. Just list them, no need to describe them in detail. Have a receptive attitude regarding this. Allow the memories to be given to you. Be open to receive whatever comes.

Step Three:

The author of Ecclesiastes 3:1-9 writes that there is a time for living and a time for dying, a time for sewing seed and a time for harvesting, a time for picking up and a time for setting down, etc. There are four aspects to the timing of this present moment. Do not force any answers to these four aspects of time. Let them come to you. Let what is given be given.

It is too soon to...

It is too late to...

It is just the right time for...

I need time for...

Step Four:

Christians live out the mystery of Christ's dying and rising. Good Friday of that mystery is the dying of Jesus but it is also our process of dying, of letting go. Holy Saturday is the time of the entombment of Jesus but it is also our time of letting be, a time of waiting, that time after the death but before the new life. Then Easter Sunday celebrates the resurrection of Jesus where he rises out of the tomb into new life. We are always living some aspect of this Mystery, what is called the Paschal Mystery. So be with these three phases of the present moment. Again, do not force anything. Allow it to be given to you. Let what is given be given.

What is dying in me now?

What is rising to new life?

What needs to be left alone for now?

Which aspect seems dominant?

Step Five:

Note which of the four steps engaged you or caught your attention. Which step seemed to energize you most deeply. What was that like? What else do you notice?

Review of Prayer:

- What was this Spiritual Exercise like for me?
- What aspect did I find most significant? Why?
- Which aspect did I find least helpful? Why?
- What is it about 'the present moment' that is appealing and challenging?

You may wish to share and discuss your experience of this exercise with a trusted spiritual companion or group.