

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

**Notes for  
The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life**

**Part 3**

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Nairobi, 2001

Revised: 2015

**The Third Week: Some Introductory Notes**

As you have been moving through the Exercises up to this point, you have developed a personal relationship with Jesus. At first, you were given the grace to see your sinfulness before Christ, but also to see his love and mercy to you. In the "Second Week," you prayed on Jesus' public life, and you were given the grace to know, love, and follow him.

In short, Christ showed how he desires to have you as his disciple. In this "Third Week" Jesus no longer calls you his servant; he invites you to accompany him as he walks through the difficult last days of his earthly life.

Throughout this third week, your contemplations should become more passive. What I mean is this: in your contemplations, you are still present in the situation, but the focus is not so much on you and your relationship to Christ (though it is always remains so to a certain extent).

Rather, you focus your contemplative gaze on Christ. Of course, you always let the Spirit guide your contemplations, but for the most part you do not place yourself in the situation as an important person in the story. Always be present and close to Christ, but do not get in the way of the passion which is Christ's. Pay attention to the details but also note three things in particular:

*(1) Watch how Jesus suffers as a human person: what does he think? How does he feel?*

*How does he respond to those who hate him - those who betray him? Does he desire this suffering? See how he really feels the pain that is inflicted upon him, and how he endured the insults and betrayals. See how he is alone.*

*(2) See how Jesus "hides" his divinity. He does not pretend to suffer as a human person - he really suffers as we suffer. Still, he had the power, as God, to overcome his enemies, but he does not. Contemplate this great mystery of Jesus vulnerable - as we are vulnerable.*

*(3) Even though you do not focus on yourself, beg God to teach you - deep in the heart - that Jesus does this to bring healing and salvation in the world: and not just for the world in general but for you, so that you might have life. Stand before God knowing your weakness, and consider how Jesus - your closest companion - cries out in anguish in his profound love for you.*

The structure of the contemplation should be similar to the "Second Week," and by now you should be familiar with that structure. But here is a reminder: First, make yourself present to God, and ask the Lord to be pleased with your prayer, so that you might be open to the grace and love he desires to give you.

Second, take a moment to remember that what you are praying over actually happened. Jesus of Nazareth, Son of the Living God, was betrayed and crushed by his enemies. Thirdly, be attentive to the details of each place that you are contemplating. Use all your senses if possible.

Then, pray for the grace that you desire: generally, for this week it is to be saddened over the sufferings of Jesus and his death. If God will grant it, ask that you will be moved emotionally, and weep because of this sadness, but in spite of this sadness you will not try to run from the pain and suffering, but embrace it through perseverance in prayer.

Next, pray over the Scripture passage, using the contemplation described above. Finish each contemplation with a colloquy - a quiet heart to heart conversation with Jesus. Do not forget your review of prayer to see where you were moved most, and why you might have been moved by the Spirit at those particular moments.

I add one special comment. You are praying for the gift of tears and emotional movement. Do not forget that emotions in themselves are not absolute indications of consolation or desolation. It is a wonderful grace to be emotionally moved to tears in this week. But it sometimes happens that God offers us a different form of consolation - a form of emotional exhaustion or dryness.

Provided that we maintain the spirit of generosity and desire to pray, we should remain confident that we are in consolation during this week. The gift of dryness here may be a gift in the sense that we are experiencing **compassion** for Christ: that is, we are experiencing with Christ what he himself may have experienced during this time. Be careful not to judge the value of your prayer by emotions alone - always be aware of your deepest desires and the gentle graces that God may be offering you during this time.

**THIRD WEEK/1     Grace: Sorrow with Christ in sorrow; A broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and Interior suffering because of the great suffering Christ endured for me**

**The Last Supper**

Keep in mind the three special considerations for this "week": what Jesus suffered as truly human; how his divinity remains "hidden"; and how this suffering is done in love for you. The grace you seek is difficult. You are the friend and companion of Jesus now. You really are his disciple, and you want to act the part of his close friend while he goes through his suffering and death. This gives you pain. Ask God to let you feel this pain deep in your heart.

Ask to feel sorrow, compassion, and perhaps even shame, since he suffers because of our broken humanity.

When you pray for this grace at the beginning of your contemplation, you may want to express it in this way:

*God our Creator and Lord, I beg you that I may truly be friend to your Son and enter into his sufferings - the sufferings that he embraced for me and for all people, so that we may all share in the life and love that you desire for us.*

Prayer materials for the week:

**1. The Last Supper** (Luke 22:12-20)

**2. The Discourse** (Luke 22:21-38)

**3. Repetition of 1 & 2**

**4. The Washing of the Feet** (John 13:1-20): Note that there is no mention of his removing the towel after washing the disciples' feet. Is this an intentional indication by the Evangelist that Jesus is not "play-acting" the role of a servant, but being servant is at the depth of his identity.

**5. Repetition: The Washing of the Feet**

**6. Summary of the Week**

**7. Prayer of Intimate Dwelling**

In case you have time and are so inclined, you might want to consider some of these supplementary meditative readings:

**Exodus 12:1-14**                      The Passover Story

**Exodus 24:1-11**                      The Covenant Established

**Psalms 113-118**                      The Passover Psalms

**Psalms 55**                              Friends Betraying the Innocent

**Psalms 69**                              Lament of an Innocent Man

Please note that the repetitions are very important in the "third week," and you should make them a priority. As I mentioned in the notes for this week, the grace that we seek may come to us in the form of dryness.

That is, we must watch very closely in the next few weeks, and discern spirits carefully. We must distinguish between "sorrowful consolation" and "desolation."

The former can come to us as strong emotions, but it can also manifest itself as not much feeling at all - what we call "dryness."

Desolation, on the other hand, will always manifest itself as the diminished desire to be close to Christ in prayer.

In any case, discern these spirits carefully. On Day Six of the week, I would like you to be sure to do a summary of the week's contemplations of the passion itself. If you like, you can do this in summary form, as discussed earlier, in the "Second Week."

Or, you may want to do a repetition that includes all three scriptural passages. The choice is yours, but always based on the interior movements of the Spirit.

Day Seven is given to the Prayer of Intimate Dwelling. Before you begin this prayer, consider where you can be present or dwell most appropriately in the mysteries contemplated during the week.

Is it a symbol, an image, a word, a feeling, a commitment, some way of simply being present with Jesus?

**THIRD WEEK/2 Grace: Sorrow with Christ in sorrow; A broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and Interior suffering because of the great suffering Christ endured for me**

**The Night of the Garden**

We continue with our contemplation of Jesus' passion and death. You may want to review the guidelines that I gave you for last week -- concerning the form and structure of contemplation, as well as the particular care in the discernment of spirits. Remember that the contemplations are to help you to remain close to Jesus. They are not material that you must "get through". Try your best to focus on the experience of Jesus. What did He feel? Enter into His fears, disappointments, sadness, anxiety. Remember that Jesus is a person, fully human, who shares all of the emotions that we possess.

The grace that you ask God for this week is to feel sorrow because of Jesus' suffering, even to the point that you may experience anguish and tears. Also ask that you might feel shame for what Jesus must endure for your sake. You may wish to express this prayer in the following way:

*Lord Jesus Christ, let my heart break with grief for You. Of all of people in the world, You should have suffered least. I am ashamed of what we have done to you, as your heart broke with grief for us.*

Prayer materials for the week:

- 1. From the Upper Room to Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-52)**
- 2. Repetition: From the Upper Room to Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-53)**
- 3. Jesus before Annas (John 18:12-27)**
- 4. Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-72)**
- 5. Repetition of 3 & 4**
- 6. Summary of the Week**
- 7. Prayer of Intimate Dwelling**

Supplementary Meditative Readings:

**Psalm 35**

Lying Witnesses

**Psalm 64**

Frightening Mobs

**THIRD WEEK/3 Grace: Sorrow with Christ in sorrow; A broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and Interior suffering because of the great suffering Christ endured for me**

**Jesus Faces His Judge**

We continue with the passion, in the same manner as the last two weeks. Be careful during your contemplation that you do not focus too much on your own sin. This tends to move us to self-pity, instead of to compassion for Christ. Watch Christ. Yes, He is suffering for you, and because of your need for reconciliation, but He does it out of love. See how Christ loves you.

The grace that you ask God for during this week is for sorrow with Jesus sorrowing, anguish with Jesus in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the affliction Jesus endures for you.

Prayer materials for the week:

**1. Jesus before Pilate** (Matthew 27:1-2;11-14)

**2. Jesus before Pilate** (John 18:28-19:16)

Notice that this is not a repetition. Day 1 is the same story but from a different Gospel.

**3. Jesus before Herod** (Luke 23:5-12)

**4. The Judgment of Pilate** (Matthew 27:15-26)

**5. Repetition of Material of 1 to 4**

**6. Summary of the Week**

**7. Prayer of Intimate Dwelling**

**Supplementary Material:** Psalms 25, 26, 44, and 57

**THIRD WEEK/4 Grace: Sorrow with Christ in sorrow; A broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and Interior suffering because of the great suffering Christ endured for me**

**The Way of the Cross and Crucifixion**

The story of the passion and death of Jesus is a whole story which does not lend itself easily to being broken into parts. Let the Spirit guide you through the story, and pay attention to those parts of the story that move you most. In your repetitions, return to those parts, and pause there to let the Spirit show you what is important about it. Do not forget to do the colloquy with Christ at the end of each contemplation.

The grace that you ask God for during this week is for sorrow with Jesus sorrowing, anguish with Jesus in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the affliction Jesus endures for you.

Prayer materials for the week:

- 1. Jesus is handed over** (Matthew 27:26-32)
  
- 2. The way of the cross** (Luke 23:26-32)
  
- 3. Jesus is crucified** (Matthew 27:33-38)
  
- 4. Jesus in Darkness** (Matthew 27:39-49)
  
- 5. Repetition of Material from 1 to 4**
  
- 6. Summary of the Week**
  
- 7. Prayer of Intimate Dwelling**

Supplementary Meditative Reading: Psalm 22, and Hebrews 5:1-10.



**THIRD WEEK/5 Grace: Sorrow with Christ in sorrow; A broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and Interior suffering because of the great suffering Christ endured for me**

**Jesus Dies on the Cross**

Persevere with patience even if you find it difficult. This is a time for very passive imagination. Remain close to Christ -- your companion. Open your heart to His pain and His love.

Prayer materials for the week:

**1. Jesus on the Cross** (Luke 23:33-43)

**2. Repetition: Jesus on the Cross**

**3. The Mother of Jesus** (John 19:25-30)

**4. Jesus dies and is Buried** (John 19:31-42)

**5. Repetition: Jesus dies and is Buried**

**6. Summary of the Week**

**7. Prayer of Intimate Dwelling**

## **Third Week/6**

### **The Longest Sabbath**

This is a week in which your prayer should be quiet. You have gone through the anguish of the passion and death of Christ, and now you face the silence of the tomb. In Luke 23:56 it says: *And on the Sabbath day they rested, as the Law required.*

During this week you might try to do what Mary, John, Peter, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Arimathea, and all the disciples did on the Sabbath after Jesus' death. They rested -- in a silent sorrow, and they kept reviewing what had happened in the last two days.

Perhaps you can rest and review in the same way that they did. That is, you might want to read quietly one of the passion accounts, or you might pray the Stations of the Cross.

If you want an imaginative contemplation, you might imagine that you are in the house of "the other disciple" with some of the disciples and Mary. Listen to them talk about their sadness, disbelief, fears. Mourn with them. Perhaps they are trying to console Mary. In what state is Peter?

It is possible that some of the family and disciples of Jesus turned to Scripture, trying to find consolation in the promises and predictions of the people of Israel. These are the texts that we use ourselves on Holy Saturday, and which you may want to meditate on during this week:

Genesis	1:1-2:4
Genesis	22:1-18
Exodus	14:15-15:1
Isaiah	54:5-14
Isaiah	55:1-11
Baruch	3:9-15
Baruch	3:32-4:4
Ezekiel	36:16-28

These are some suggestions from which you may choose. Your prayer in this week should be quiet, and not overly active. Rest with the disciples. Even though the prayers of this week are not structured, you should still end each prayer period with a colloquy -- perhaps with Mary or God the Father -- and of course end the prayer with an Our Father.