

WHAT MORE CAN I DO?

AN IGNATIAN RETREAT FOR PEOPLE SOMEWHERE ON THE WAY

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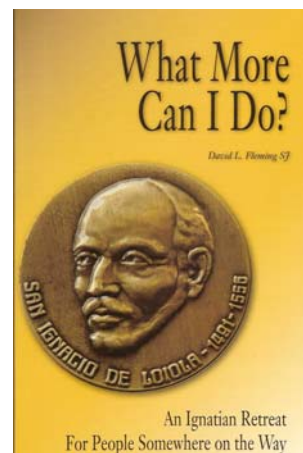
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Foreword

Beginning the Retreat

As we begin the retreat, I have a combination of thoughts that I would like to share with you. I intend that all these thoughts lead to a single focus for our retreat prayer.

The focus is the grace prayed for in the final exercises of the Exercises book, "The Contemplation on the Love of God." In abbreviated form, the grace may be stated: "in all things to love and to serve"—in Ignatius's Spanish, "*en todo amar y servir.*"

I want for us to explore and pray about what it means for us "to serve." Too often I believe that we think of service in a rather restricted way of "getting things done," "a job accomplished." It seems to me that if we use a reflective approach to the gospels, we begin to see how expansive the notion of "to serve" is as Jesus would indicate to us. And so our retreat will be exploring through gospel contemplations all the richness involved in the experience of "to serve." Our prayer will always center on the theme "in all things to love and to serve."

Another thought strikes me about our retreat. I believe that in each retreat, we are asking ourselves, at least implicitly, "what more?" What more can I, should I, be doing for Christ? What more is God asking of me? The same question is before us till the end of our lives. As I interact with the Jesuits in our own province infirmary, I am always edified by their willingness, even eagerness, to try to make sense of their own response to that question "what more?" at this time of their declining years. The "more" is always in terms of loving service.

So "what more?" is the question that also permeates every prayer period of our retreat. What more is God inviting me to, what more is God asking, what more can I give, what more do I want to give?

I identify this retreat as an Ignatian retreat for people somewhere on the way. It is an Ignatian retreat because it has movement and direction. True, in using a book like this for your retreat, it will not have for many of you the help of a director who listens to how you have prayed for a grace and how God has been answering your prayer in such a way as to better point the direction of the next day's prayer. In presenting these retreat conferences, I can only more generally point the direction of each day's prayer. But the direction for me and for you is always caught up in that question, "what more?" Our movement is in terms of responding to God's "what more?" asked of us.

At the same time I am presuming that all of us in this retreat are "somewhere on the way." We are not newcomers to Ignatian spirituality. We all have some previous experience of Ignatian retreats, perhaps even an experience of the full Spiritual Exercises in one of its forms. We all are "somewhere on the way." Being somewhere on the way, in this retreat we are centering our prayer about how we are serving God and others. What more is God asking of us now?

There is a long tradition that has associated a prayer titled "A Prayer for Generosity" with Ignatius Loyola. The prayer reads:

Lord, teach me to be generous.

Teach me to serve you as you deserve.

To give, and not to count the cost.

To fight, and not to heed the wounds.

To toil, and not to see for rest.

To labor, and not to ask for reward,

Save that of knowing that I am doing your will.

The spirit of the prayer is Ignatian. I want this prayer to permeate the time that we have for this retreat. The first two lines of this prayer will become a mantra that I will repeat at the end of each of our points period. And I hope that it will become the prayer mantra permeating the free time of your day.

There is no doubt that Ignatian spirituality is an apostolic spirituality. Our relationship with God develops through our loving service. It makes sense that we should pray that the Lord will teach us how to serve. Ignatian retreats are known for their movement or dynamic. Our movement in this retreat will be grounded in our seeking to have the Lord teach us how we are to grow in our service. The Ignatian goal of the Spiritual Exercises might be said to be summed up in the phrase "en todo amar y servir," "in all things to love and to serve." In this retreat adaptation, we pray that we might be empowered to serve in all the ways that God's grace leads us. As Ignatius emphasizes throughout the *Exercises*, "to serve" flows from "to love." God desires our loving service.

In our retreat, then, we want to be attentive to the ways that Jesus calls us to serve. The prayer mantra expresses our retreat direction: "Lord, teach us to be generous. Teach us to serve you as you deserve."

I suggest, then, that in our prayer as we begin this retreat might be this "prayer for generosity." I would encourage us to use Ignatius's second method of prayer suggested at the end of the *Exercises* book. We can take individual words or phrases and let them resonate inside our being, with all their meaning and affect for us. If one word or phrase holds us, let us stay with it for however long God is holding us close. At the end of our prayer time, let us pray the entire prayer through. And if we want, then we will close our prayer time with an Our Father.

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