

Online Retreat

<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html>

The Collaborative Ministry Office - Creighton University

Printer Friendly Version: Week 4

Guide

A Picture of Harmony - Living in Balance

This week we move from giving thanks and praise to God - from the big picture of ordered, purposeful creation - to the concrete picture of living in that harmony of purpose, in balance.



Throughout this week, we desire to be *inspired* by women and men who seem to be in harmony with the end for which we are created, and who seem to use all of Creation with this freedom.

St. Ignatius put it so simply:

We should use God's gifts of creation however they help us in achieving the end for which we were created, and we ought to rid ourselves of whatever gets in the way of our purpose.

In order to do this we must make ourselves indifferent to all creation, to the extent that we do not desire health more than sickness, riches more than poverty, honor more than dishonor, a long life more than a short life, or anything at all in and of itself. We should desire and choose only what helps us attain the end for which we were created.

We all know what a handicap it is to lack the "indifference," or balance in our lives Ignatius talks about. When my *desire and choice* moves in the direction of "I want my health; I want success; I want to take care of myself; I crave honor and attention," I know I'm not in much balance and I'm becoming too self-absorbed.

However, when we see someone who seems to be care-free in loving, in giving of themselves, in living freely for others, we are *inspired*. They seem to have gotten it right.

Let this week be one of naming and being inspired by people who seem to be models of freedom for me. As always, make use of the photo and the helps to the right. Look back at past helps, if you'd like. But, in the every day busyness of our week, we can let ourselves be conscious of the ways people live lives of praise, reverence and service, perhaps heroically, perhaps in profound simplicity. Who are the people who show us the way to getting it right ourselves?

Some Practical Help for Getting Started This Week.

Who are the people who show us the way to getting it right ourselves?

A very practical way to get started with this week is to get out a piece of paper and make a *list* of the people who inspire me. Start with people I don't know. They can be people in history - a St. Ignatius or St. Theresa of Avila or

Martin Luther King, They can be people I've at some time been inspired by - that guy who owned the textile plant out east, who when his plant burned down kept all his employees on the payroll until he could rebuild the plant. Then name the people I know personally who inspire me - it could be that great aunt who lived a heroic life, or my pastor or someone I love.

Once we've come up with this list of people, we can spend our week reflecting on *what qualities in each of them* inspire us. How is their life in balance? What is it that they seem to be *free from*? What is it that they are *free for*? What were/are their *choices and desires*?

Be sure to click on the photo and to look at the photo enlarged on the Photo Gallery page. Consider making it your desktop wallpaper for this week. The young woman to the right is one of our students here at Creighton University. She is in one of our mountain village *campo* clinics in the Dominican Republic. Just look at her face this week. What is she feeling in her heart? It took only a little freedom to go down there, but we can see how in her service she is receiving far more than she is giving.

This is not a week for judging ourselves. We may become more aware of the unfreedoms in our lives, but it is not a time to become self-focused. There will be time later to let all these graces work together for our own spiritual freedom. This is simply the next step in our journey. Admiration precedes imitation. This is a week to walk around with a growing gallery of images of inspiring people, with qualities and dedication that show us the power of freedom.

Remember to let this process fill the background of our life this week. Upon waking, putting on my slippers or my robe - for the briefest of moments - I can say a simple prayer of desire: "Lord, I want to be inspired this week. Let this day draw me closer to how people live their lives in great freedom." When I'm driving or walking down the hall or preparing dinner or perhaps as I'm reading the paper, someone on my list is in my mind, and some part of their grace-filled way of living is touching me. When I go to bed, perhaps as I'm turning out lights in the house, I can say, "Thank you, Lord, for those moments that stirred my heart today."

Check in with our progress throughout the week. How many people on my list have I reflected upon? Do new names come come to me? It will be difficult to keep focused this week. It is easier for us to be negative than to give ourselves over to sustained admiration. If I find myself losing focus this week, just return to these pages and re-focus. Act against any negativity by returning to the photo.

Remember to say "thank you" throughout this week.

For the Journey

We are facing a prelude or overture this week to the *Spiritual Exercises*. Usually this opening section of a musical play gets us familiar and comfortable with the score which will be developed later in the work.

The difficulty with what we hear as openers this week can make us a bit uncomfortable and questioning about whether we want to continue. Here near the beginning of the *Exercises*, Ignatius displays what he means by "freedom". I know that each of us wants a long life, health, a good name and sufficient wealth. It may appear that right here after such gentle prayer, the "other shoe" has finally dropped. In order to continue making these exercises you must already have this complete detachment from such natural desires and life, health and wealth.

In truth, Ignatius points to the universal human inclinations, which if not tended to, can drive, dominate, imprison and destroy our experience of life. We are invited in this overture simply to look at the areas which most commonly take us out of harmony. For the first time in the Exercises we are asked to check whether we are free enough to

face our unfreedoms. It is only when we do this that the rest of the symphony of the Exercises will make any sense.

We must be very clear about this then; Ignatius assumes that as human beings we will experience disordering tendencies. Can I be honest and gentle with the uncovering of what plays such a loud part in my personal orchestra, that there is disorder in my life's symphony? Later in the Exercises, Ignatius will be inviting us to watch Jesus as the conductor of our own, and the world's, musical play. When Ignatius uses the term "indifference", he does not mean "not caring". He is literally *up front* about where we are all going, by making the *Exercises*. He here indicates the areas of "over-caring" which will take us away from trusting in the "God-caring" which is true freedom. Will we in time, be freed to watch, listen to, and follow the divine conductor?

This week we are guided towards a freedom that will be the result of honest reflection and prayerful surrender, but that takes time and God's good grace. The basic freedom of this week is the simple recognition of our human tendencies which when softened by our contact with Jesus and God's ways, become elements of harmony and balance. "Be not afraid;" the God Who calls is faithful and that God is constantly inviting us into the symphony of life.

In These or Similar Words

Dear Lord,

It was easier last week. I looked at the balance and harmony in the world. I could see it in the changing of the seasons and the sunrise and in lots of wonderful things that didn't risk anything from me.

But now: now I'm being invited to look at the harmony - or lack of it - in my own life. I was so struck by the words in the guidepost: "Can I be honest and gentle with the uncovering of what plays such a loud part in my personal orchestra, that there is disorder in my life's symphony?" Something in me is stirred by that, Lord. There are parts of me that are too loud in the symphony of my life. I hear the horns too loudly as I worry about failing or being seen as a failure. Drums are banging as I am too much attached to the admiration of others and it feels shallow because all I want is to somehow give my life to you.

Please, Lord, I beg you. Give me the grace to see how to balance my life. How can I have the kind of calm and peace the woman in the photo this week has? She is sitting in a poor clinic and laughing in the midst of the tragedy around her. The peace she has doesn't have anything to do with money, pride or how other people see her. She has given her life to you. Help me find that kind of peace in my own life.

But then I get afraid. What are you asking of me, Lord? How much do I have to give up? Can I do this? I am so torn between wanting my life to be 'at balance' and in harmony with you and not wanting to give up anything that I now have. I'm just afraid. In my fear I turn to you and open my arms, asking for the help I need.

Please, God, help me to live my life in a way that draws me closer to you. Help me give up anything that doesn't do that. Thank you so much for your love and your care for me. Thank you for creating me and desiring me to be in harmony with you.

Prayer to Begin Each Day:

**May all that I am today,
all that I try to do today,
may all my encounters, reflections,
even the frustrations and failings**

all place my life in your hands.

**Lord, my life is in your hands.
Please, let this day give you praise.**

Scripture Readings:

Ephesians 2

Romans 8