

The Dynamics of the Exercises
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Lecture 4: The Second Week of the Exercises
Kingdom and Infancy of Christ
Discipleship with Christ

Introduction. I want to offer a scriptural window that catches dramatically the spirit of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises. In Luke 22:59 Peter's first denial is a dramatic reversal of all that Ignatius offers in the Second Week of the Exercises. "Woman," He tells the slave girl, "I do not know him." These words are poignant both for Peter and for Jesus. Peter denies that there was ever any relationship between Jesus and himself. He denies all the confidence and trust that had been placed in him; he denies all the leadership that Christ had called him to assume; he denies the intimacy of friendship and the thrill of mission; he denies the company of Andrew and John and James and he denies the community of those who ate the bread and fish blessed by Jesus and, most probably, distributed by Peter; he denies having ever heard the voice of the Father: "This is my beloved son, listen to him" and he denies that he had just been asked "to do this in memory of me." Peter denies his history; and in that Peter denies himself.

The Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises is to affirm all that Peter denies. It is to say, "I do know the man and I love him and I want to serve him." It is to acknowledge that there are two foundations to the Exercises, that of creative fidelity spelled out in the Principle and Foundation and that of faithful friendship spelled out in the meditation of the Kingdom. The Second Week brings to our consciousness another moment within the passion narratives, this from the tradition of John: "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John. 15: 15). This perspective is important both in assessing who should move into the Second Week of the Exercises and in understanding the kind of logic that governs the prayer of this privileged movement through the ministry of Jesus. The Second Week of the Exercises presumes that the man or woman who enters into their rhythm is someone who is capable of friendship, not service but relationship, not working for the Kingdom but living within the Kingdom. Many can enter the Second Week of the Exercises and hear in the challenge of Jesus not an invitation to know him better but a command to perform more perfectly; and, therefore, many can lose the consolation of friendship in the details of servitude, following Christ the CEO, Christ, the Commander in Chief, Christ, the Guru. When that happens, then we equate all that he teaches us to efficiency and success or to finding the enemy and winning the war or to an exactitude in belief and conduct and, thereby, winning my own salvation.

The logic of the Second Week is not exactitude but relationship, learning from the fragile beauty of the first three days of the Second Week that God chooses to dwell in weakness not power, in poverty not riches, in obscurity not renown, in availability not pride. **The infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke** become in the Ignatian context a profound encounter with just how much God wants to be our friend and our companion. God places all his or her divinity into the hands of Mary and Joseph and asks them, in effect, "Teach me how to be human." For we dishonor the meaning of the Incarnation if

we act as if God only pretends to be human, if we treat Christ like Superman or Spiderman or Batman, someone who came to right wrongs by a series of tricks. For the gospels remind us that those who rubbed shoulders with him took his birth and growth seriously, “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him” (Mark 6:3). Ignatius treats the humanity of Jesus with reverence because it is the only way we can understand how he is God. **In the Second Week of the Exercises the prayer changes** so that in watching the humanity of Jesus, in dwelling peacefully with the ramifications of his humanness, in hearing him and seeing him and touching him through the prayer of contemplation, I come to know him as my brother and my friend.

Text: The Kingdom Consideration incorporates a transition from the First Week of the Exercises to the Second Week. This “exercise” is neither meditation nor contemplation; but a consideration, prayed twice a day, in something of a day of repose. The Kingdom offers the possibility of **an interiority** of friendship and **a mission to the world**. Both dynamics—inner and outer-- are important in understanding this important reflection. The dynamic feeds off a parable (the Call of the Earthly King # [91-94]), a transition to “Christ Our Lord” # [95] to # [97]. Following the day of consideration of the Kingdom, the one making the Exercises enters **the world of Ignatian contemplation** [the “how”], beginning with three days praying over the so-called Infancy Narratives from the Incarnation to the Finding in the Temple [the “what”]. The 3rd Prelude [“to ask for what I desire: an interior knowledge of the Lord who became human for me that I am better love and follow him”].

Pastoral adaptation: The one who gives the Exercises today has to adapt the parable half of the Kingdom. How? I would advise that you use something that captures both the interiority of Jesus that he shares with us and how his interiority impels him to engage with human need. [e.g., Luke 13:10-17]. In both Matthew and Luke you have two interpretations of what John calls “the Word made flesh.” The contemplation of Week Two moves into the heart of a person where words give way to intuition and affection, climaxing in the fifth contemplation of each day, the Application of Senses. It is a movement of personal appropriation not of performance. Here the one giving the Exercises has to support the personal, graced discovery of how the humanity of Jesus reveals to a man or woman the presence of the divinity of Jesus. A quick escape to the divinity, which effectively erases the humanity of Jesus, is not the authentic Exercises. Remember, too, the major hermeneutical tool to understanding the humanity of Jesus is the humanity of the person making the Exercises.

Ignatian spirituality: The **tension between humility and magnanimity** is a touchstone of Ignatian spirituality. That tension resides within the experience of the human as self-awareness and self-transcendence. Knowing myself as loved, redeemed, and called invites the gratitude that comes out of humility, i.e., all is gift. But the example and influence of Jesus calls me from the consolation of possession to the different consolation of self-donation, sharing, working for the Kingdom.