



BOSTON COLLEGE
School of Theology and Ministry
CONTINUING EDUCATION

Transcript of: "Called to Greater Love: Ignatian Spirituality for Today"

**Presented on November 6, 2014 by
John R. Sachs, S.J.**

Dean Mark Massa, S.J.:

Randy Sachs is associate professor of theology here at the School of Theology and Ministry and from the very beginning of his priesthood, and certainly from the beginning of a scholarly career, his interest has focused on the connection between theology and spirituality, a passion that has fueled his involvement in theological ministerial and spiritual formation for many years. Randy is... are you a double eagle or a triple? You've got a Bachelor's and Master's and then an M.Div, yeah we just can't get rid of him. I'm happy to say he was here for three different degrees and then he went on for his doctorate to Germany where he studied in Tübingen with the great Herr Doktor Professor and now Cardinal Walter Kasper. Randy actually was instrumental in bringing Walter Kasper to us. Well many of you were here last year during Cardinal Kasper's visit and it was quite extraordinary visit and so I want to personally thank Randy and acknowledge him his role in all of that. He joined the faculty of the Weston School Theology then in Cambridge in 1986 when he was 11, right Andy? Where he taught and then he served as academic dean until 2008 when the school came here and became the STM. He's the author of many works his book is entitled the *Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology* and his articles have appeared in *Theological Studies*, *Gregorianum*, *Concilium*, *The Month*, *The Way*, many, many others. It is a great pleasure to introduce- introduce to you one of our most respected and liked professors at the STM, Randy Sachs.

Fr. Randy Sachs, S.J.:

So let me tell you right away I have a cold. I'm not trying to impersonate any famous actresses (Lauren Bacall). I'm very happy, I'm very happy to be with you this evening and what I want to do is just highlight a few important characteristics of Ignatian spirituality. We wouldn't have time to even mention all of the important ones but and so the selection that I've made in some ways is idio-syncratic. I happen to think that they're especially important and we'll see later if you do I'm going to keep my remarks. I hope somewhat short so that there'll be plenty of time for questions and discussion. I imagine that many of you are familiar with Ignatian spirituality and perhaps have made the exercises even in some form or another so before I get to the particular things that I think are characteristic, not unique, not that they're only Jesuit or that they're only Ignatian, but that they are characteristic of an Ignatian spirituality. I just want to rehearse some of the roots the background of Ignatian spirituality, of course that means the life of St. Ignatius.

We know the basic outlines of his life because his fellow Jesuits begged him to write it down so that people would know what happened to him and how God had blessed him and how the way that God had worked in his own life bore fruit in a way of learning how to pray and pay attention to God's action in one's life. That in the 500

years or so since the time St. Ignatius, was born incredible fruit. Just on that note, I can remember the first time that I ever gave an Ignatian retreat way back in 1975. I think it was, for all practical purposes, the only people who were making retreats were priests and nuns and it was also, it was sort of like a new thing even of the idea of spiritual direction especially outside of the group of priests and nuns. In the meantime one of the most marvelous things that I've witnessed in the Ignatian ministries is that both in terms of spiritual direction and in the giving of the exercises there has been an acknowledgment of how valuable and how adaptable they are to people in so many different circumstances. Just as a kind of maybe I'll whet your appetite to take a look at Roger Haight's recent book on Ignatian Spirituality for Seekers which comes out of his own experience in the last, oh I don't know how many years maybe even ten years, at Union Theological Seminary where he's been responsible or has worked for the spiritual ministerial formation of the students in their non-denominational seminary in New York. In the course of that has done a lot of spiritual direction and led people, even non-Christians in a kind of retreat and a kind of spiritual accompaniment that's based on the principles of the Ignatian Exercises. That may sound strange to you but I guess in advance I'm just highlighting one particular characteristic of the for today element Ignatian spirituality for today that the legacy of Ignatian spirituality is something that has really shown a remarkable capacity for adaptation because its basic principles are so true, so useful.

So let me say a few words about St. Ignatius and what we know from his reminiscences or his so-called autobiography. He was a wounded soldier lying in on his bed at the family castle without much to do except a little reading there weren't many books in the family castle at the time. Basically some we would think of them as secular romance novels about knightly errands and book of the lives of the Saints. Wiling away the hours there he noticed that as he read these stories of great heroes and chivalrous knights his own desire and for glory and fame and being in the service that the King got fired up in him again. He also noticed that seemed to peter out pretty quickly. When he turned to reading the lives of the great saints he also found, I suppose it appealed to his desire to make the best of himself and serve well. And, as he read the lives of the great saints he began to feel something stirring in his heart. If it were such a noble thing to serve at the court of my king how much more noble would it be to serve Christ the King to give my life in the service of Christ. And what he noticed was that when he began to imagine himself in this kind of a life imagine himself being as great a saint as St. Francis of Assisi or Saint Dominic the fire that he began to feel in his belly it lasted, it didn't just peter out. And that was the beginning I think of how his knightly ambition and pride in service of the King began to change into a saintly discipleship and ardor in the service of God in his journey he went through many different periods where his experience taught him a lot, which became crystalized in the Spiritual Exercises. I suppose one could say that his own passion on the one hand and his perfectionism on the other hand led him to extreme periods of penance and prayer penitential practices so severe that they began to destroy his help and seemed to breed even more scrupulosity. Ignatius recounted however how God woke him up as from sleep so that these scruples disappeared they were driven away by a new clarity about God's unconditional love for him and with this he let go of all of those extreme practices of penance and piety that were destroying his health. The great grace he experienced that was the foundation of everything it was to be a sinner, yes, but I am a sinner who is loved by God and that is such an important foundation because Ignatius realized very deeply that God's love was unconditional. It wasn't a reward for a perfect life, it wasn't a reward at all it was a pure gift because it wasn't a reward but a pure gift. It was something that would never be taken away. Ignatius learned how to live out of this love and found in his own life what its power was the experience of God's love for him not just knowledge about God's love for me this is what the heart and soul of Ignatian spirituality is and what the spiritual exercises really are all about. It sounds funny to say it because we all value experience I think over just theoretical knowledge but in my experience as a priest all these years I've I run into people time and time again who for whom the main point about their faith does or at least the what they hear told to them. A main point about their faith is believing the things that the church teaches about God, and I wonder if it's also still not true in our own lives in our own time that not only the Catholic Church but many of the churches are just a slightest bit suspicious of experience. This was something that, was of course, dogged Ignatius in his own day. It was the worst thing in the world he could do. And in Spain at that time to be claiming that you really experience God that seemed

to be a threat to people who had offices in the church we all know the dangers of self-delusion and where enthusiasm for anything can take us but this is a simple but extremely important thing. I think today that God doesn't just want to be known by virtue of the doctrines of the church teaches the main point is not that we know correct things about God. God didn't come into the world in Jesus primarily to teach us things. He came into the world so that we could experience God's love as transforming our lives along the way. He learned to, from experience, what was helpful in sticking with this love of living out of it, of letting it have its way in his life, stretching him more and more into the proportions of its own greater love. He learned how important it was to pay attention to the effective movements of his heart. In other words, how important it is in trying to trace the ways of God in our lives, to pay attention to our feelings, to pay attention especially to our desires. I'll have some more to say about that later and I'd like to just a preview of coming attractions to say how important in Ignatian spirituality attention to desire is precisely as a way of finding out how it is that God is at work in us.

Desire is, desire as a comical thing in a way sometimes we're afraid of our desires. Even more disturbing too we all know people are in our own lives at times people who have given up desires perhaps out of great disappointment, perhaps for many other reasons, but Ignatius was convinced that paying attention to desires is so important because that's what the presence of God does in and of itself. God's presence is what elicits our deepest and truest desires. That's why for Ignatius it's so helpful in paying attention to what God may be inviting us to. This also means that our, at the project in an Ignatian point of view are the primary key or the primary style of God's way of relating to us, is not command and obedience. It's the eliciting of desire. I think that makes all the difference in a relationship. You, we all know how what a difference that would make in an ordinary human relationship. It's, it's the same as our relationship with God. Is it a relationship that works by command and desire a command and obedience or is it a relationship that works by the eliciting of desire? Ignatius thought the second. He learned from experience - how difficult it was to sort out in all of the welter of desires that fill of human heart at any given time, which ones are the truest and the deepest. And so Ignatius was very canny, very realistic, how important it is to be able to find those desires which are most authentic, that are leading me and you to our most authentic life with God. This and I'll have more to say about this in a moment, is why Ignatius place such an emphasis on a spir- on spirituality, a way of living in the world that paid attention to how I am either growing in freedom or I'm becoming less free. He also learned from experience how necessary real self-knowledge is so that we don't suffer from delusion very practically speaking, this is why one of the hallmarks of Ignatian spirituality is to seek out people who are wise, to talk to your experiences of God about some kind of spiritual direction, some kind of accompaniment. And I think this is also something, which is happy to see how many people do this and how many people now not just priests and nuns, but ordinary people, men and women are involved in this ministry. This whole understanding of paying attention to how it is that God is at work and beginning to trust our most deep and our deepest and most authentic desires was attached to paying attention to what brings me the greatest peace.

What causes confusion, what causes me peace another little indication of how it is that we can learn to pay attention to God. This whole understanding of recognizing the presence of God and what God's will might be for him. What has come to be called discernment in other words was grounded in his experience. And I think this is also one of the reasons why Ignatius was so confident that God deals directly with every person and to make a comment about spiritual direction, which I mentioned just a moment ago. That's why for Ignatius the point of spiritual direction is not to give people instructions about what they should do in order to grow in holiness but to help the person pay attention to how God is already at work in their life and how God will continue to be at work in their life so the spiritual exercises are the result of Ignatius experience of God's greater love and they're intended as a kind of guide with which a spiritual director can help a person learn how to discern God's presence and action in one's life to experience God's love more deeply, to grow into deeper freedom, and to make good decisions about what to do with one's life the Spiritual Exercises, to help us to appreciate some of the important characteristics of Ignatian spirituality in our everyday lives.

Ignatius was convinced that desiring to pay attention to how God reveals herself in our own lives and experience, learning how I am in my own life and in ways best suited to me, I can come to recognize and experience God's love for me, for us, and how that love can work powerfully in me, eliciting in each and every one of us a deeper desire to live in it, and act out of it in the world.

So, so much for a little introductory remark about Ignatius his own life, and just to establish that Ignatius, his own understanding of the Spiritual Exercises, and Ignatian spirituality that's flowed, has flowed from this. It's based in Ignatius, his own experience. So the first thing that I would like to sort of highlight as a characteristic of Ignatian spirituality is the conviction that God is present and laboring in all things. Those of you who recognize this statement that God is present and laboring in all things, or might recognize immediately that this comes from the fourth week towards the end of the Spiritual Exercises in a contemplation called the Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love. This conviction that God is present and laboring, I want to emphasize both of those things, in all persons and all things is so important for everything else. It means, for example, that not only is nature in some way revelatory of God, Ignatius was famously drawn to the beauty of the starry nights at night, but also the sense that God is a vital presence and force in the processes of the whole cosmos. I just wanted to read maybe from the end of the Spiritual Exercises a bit of this text, so that you can get some sense for this. Because it shows that fundamental to Ignatius's experiences not only that God is at work in his own personal life, but that God is immanent and active in everything that is. And this is important because it means for Ignatius, and an Ignatian kind of spirituality, that the- that dichotomizing the world and our experience into secular and sacred areas is wrong.

So for prayer Ignatius suggests "the first point to consider prayerfully is to bring to memory the benefits received, creation, Redemption, and all the particular gifts, pondering with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses. And, further how according to his divine plan it is the Lord's wish as far as he is able to give me himself." And then he goes on to say the second point is to prayerfully reflect on "to see how God dwells in creatures: in the elements, giving being; in the plants, giving growth; in the animals, giving sensation; and in humankind, granting the gift of understanding. And so how he dwells also in me, giving me life, and being, sensation, and causing me to understand, seeing how he makes of me a temple, and I have been created in the likeness and image of God."

"The third thing to prayerfully consider is how God works and labors on my behalf in all created things. That is, he acts in the manner of a person at work as in the heavens, the plants, the fruits, the cattle."

And finally, "the fourth point to see how all that is good and every gift descends from on high." This means that an Ignatian point of view. And I'll reflect on this not in the theology of the sixteenth century, but in the theology of our own time. This means: what does it mean that God is present and at work in all things? All things. Not just in human beings, but in all things. This means that when we say that the cosmos is God's creation, what we're- what we really should be meaning is that all that is the cosmos, our earth, is God's work in progress. I hope you- you might miss- may seem like a simple thing, but I can't remember the last time I ever heard anybody refer to the cosmos as God's work in progress. I think we think of, I think we think of the created order, something along the lines more or less as something that God made in the beginning, and it then has become something like the grand cosmic stage for the great drama of whether or not we're going to get to heaven.

But Ignatius's insight leads us to a much deeper truth that God is present and laboring in all of creation. It means that God's creating is an action. It's a work that isn't finished. We are tempted, I think based on the cosmogony of Genesis, Genesis chapter 1 and then Genesis chapter 2 to 11, understanding them literally to think that God created everything in the beginning and it was perfect and, and then it went south. And therefore, God decided subsequently "I better come in and do something about it." But, but a more careful reading even of the

Hebrew Scriptures will recognize that these, these portraits not only do they bear many, many traces of other origins of the universe of Israel's neighbors in the ancient Near East, but these pictures are pictures of what God's creation is going to become. One of the reasons why we- scripture scholars can tell us that we can infer this, is that all of you are familiar with the story of the creation of the world and Genesis 1 right? God created the world in six days and on the seventh day he rested. This is a cosmogony that comes from the so-called priestly tradition. It's based on temple worship when God rests that means the Sabbath. And so it's a way of understanding what happened in terms of religious life in Israel, the time in the temple worship. And so it means that we have God creating. So in other words, the Sabbath, this the time when God finally is- his creation is done and he enters into creation to live and dwell there. This is an idealized portrait of how it is that God creates: in the first three days, places of creation drawing back the chaos of the dark waters and liberating land and so forth and so on. And then, in the next three days of creation, creates all of the creatures that have- God has prepared the apt dwelling place. And we should read these- we should read this cosmogony not as a description of what was in the beginning, but what God's final plan is going to be when the Sabbath rest actually takes place. And if God's creation is not yet done, if we look in the, especially in the Old Testament, we see that God's creation is really not just setting an initial stage, but in the in the Hebrew Scriptures God's creation is intimately involved with what we call God's continuing liberating work. So the point I'm trying to make is that, if we look in the Hebrew Scriptures God's creation and God's redeeming saving work are two sides of the same coin.

Maybe I can help illustrate that by asking you, or asking you to think what you think the most significant act of God's creation in the Old Testament is? Maybe not jump quickly to the book of Genesis but perhaps the answer is found in the book of Exodus: the creation of a people and the covenant- the covenant and the covenant people out of the chaos of slavery. God creates a people and gives them a land in a future. So in a certain way we can look at the story of the Exodus and the covenant which seems to be a story of salvation. It's also a story of creation of the people the same way the stories of Genesis, which on the face of it are stories of creation, they are also stories of liberation. Liberation from the chaos so that life can come about and be formed. So God's creation is God's work in progress. Why is this important? I think it's important because if we really believe that God's creating is still going on, that at every moment God's creating power is what holds everything that is in existence, which the tradition has talked about as God's continuing creation.

God creates and sustains, but Ignatius's insight is even deeper than that. God is not just sustaining, God's laboring. And to me that means that God's laboring means that God's work is still incomplete, and that the fullness of God's work is still ahead of us. And this means that we may not look at this God's creation as something only temporary as if God were not ultimately and eternally interested in what happens in our lives and in our work. As- as my colleague Dick Clifford once said, as if the point of creating an earth were to provide something like a cosmic sandbox in which human beings were placed, and if they didn't throw sand at each other they would at the end of their lives be brought away to another place where they would be in paradise. In other words a view of this world, to make it even more ridiculous, but I think it's not so far about what sometimes we might be tempted to believe, that this world and the effort we put into it, what we actually- what the fruits of our labor really are, as if that were something like a first stage of a rocket ship. Once it blasts us into the orbit of getting us to heaven falls through the atmosphere and is destroyed. Ignatius's insight that God is laboring in creation means that there is something in God's eyes that is worth laboring for. He's laboring in creation transforming creation, until, finally God's kingdom will be complete, and God's creating work will be finally transformed. A lot more to say about that later.

So God viewing the creation as God's work in progress we could call it God's labor of love, not once and for all at the beginning, but every day. And the other thing that is evident in Ignatian spirituality is that human beings, and this picks up right from the first book of Genesis, human beings have a unique place in this work-in-progress by virtue of their relationship with God. This is what the Bible really is getting at in Genesis when it talks about you and me as created in the image and likeness of God. It means that we have a special role, we are capable

of representing, of being the place among all of the creatures where God can, in a personal way, be present and active in the ongoing work of creation.

I don't know if you realize, but these terms, "images" and "likeness" of God, they come from the ancient Near East. They refer to these kind of stone pillars, steles, in which the picture of the monarch is engraved so that it marks whose land it is. So it's the way that the king is represented to mark out that Kingdom. And so to talk about the human creatures as Genesis does in royal language means that the human creatures, although part of the whole creation, have a very particular role to play by virtue of their relationship with God. And this is what Ignatius picks up in God's work in progress. You and I, each one of us in some way, is called to play a role in in God's continuing action. In order to do this, Ignatius was convinced that we should strive for the kind of freedom that allows us to have a basic disposition of being ready, poised. Those of you who are familiar with the Exercises will know that I'm talking about his term "indifference." We should be free. But indifference doesn't mean "I don't give a damn," "I could care less, you make up your mind." No, it means more equipoise. It means I am not hindered in any way but I'm ready to go.

Equipoised, ready, and desirous of using things that help us play our role in God's ongoing labor for the world and to be free of things that hinder us. You may recognize that basically what I've just done is rephrase what is called the Principle and Foundation, which is at the beginning of St. Ignatius's Exercises. That's his vision really of what this world is and what our role in it is. It's God's work in progress and you and I have a unique role to play. Ignatius says in order to do that you have to be free enough, and we're talking about real freedom here, he says we need to be free enough so as not to prefer health more than sickness, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one, but in everything desiring and choosing what will help me to respond more fully to God's invitation and calling in my life.

I'd also like to- as I conclude reflections on this first characteristic about God's presence and laboring in all things, not the distant God who created and is somewhere off watching, but the God who is here to be encountered everywhere, I'd like to close by reflecting a little bit on this mystical insight of Ignatius in terms of our own situation now in the church. Ignatius told us that we may seek and find God at work in all things and all persons. It has particular relevance for the church today. First of all, the church has come to a much deeper appreciation in the time since Vatican II of the universal presence and action of God's saving Spirit in every human person. And here is where Pope John Paul II made a big step even beyond the Second Vatican Council. When Pope John Paul II said that God is at work, yes in the heart of every human person, but God is not at work in individual hearts in the manner of circumventing all of the false religions that other people are probably living in. But Pope John Paul II said human beings of their very nature are social beings, they live in cultures. And the Pope said yes the saving spirit of Christ is at work in cultures and in religions. So this, this insight of St. Ignatius that we may seek and find God at work in all things has a particular- particular promise and challenge to us in our own- in our own times. The challenge is: do we really believe that God is at work in and through other religions and not just in spite of them?

It might mean that part of an Ignatian spirituality could be an interest in what God is doing in other religions. I bring this out too because I think we all have experience especially in- in spiritual matters in- in retreat houses how in the last 50 years there has been a real engagement of different religious practices. For example, techniques of prayer and meditation that come from Buddhist traditions that have been found very helpful and by Christians. Anthony de Mello is a name that comes right to my mind, but it's important to reflect just for a moment that this isn't just sort of the latest bandwagon we can jump on. I mean there's a substantive theological point here that the Church is only recently beginning to fathom it. And, I think this is also a particular promise and challenge when we talk about an Ignatian perspective or Ignatian point of view. And the second, the second thing that I think in this insight of Ignatius about God present and active in all things has to do with a renewed appreciation for the natural world as a sacrament, a sacrament of God. I think of a wonderful article that was written several years ago

in America Magazine by the Himes brothers, professors here at Boston College. The Church is on it- on a journey of appreciating this. We have learned, we have developed a deeper appreciation for the fact that we're called to be stewards of God's creation, all of creation, that it's important to God. The recent book of Beth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, is a marvelous, marvelous reflection on what the very diversity of our planet says about God.

And beyond the idea of human beings called to be good stewards of creation, the Church has also slowly but surely begun to realize that this stewardship is- is not primarily a stewardship that is self-directed to be good stewards so our resources don't run out. And this is what I think that the writing, for example of the Himes brothers is bringing to our attention, that as the Catholic Conference of Bishops in the United States, and also interestingly in Canada, to have publicly declared, that we have to realize that all of God's creatures have, by virtue of their being God's creation, an intrinsic value and worth. They are good in God's eyes, not just because they are utilitarian-ly helpful for human beings. And I think this is a- this is something which is a welcome development in the deeper realization that the Church has for our engagement with non-human nature.

The second point I want to highlight is, is something that is prominent in the second week of the Spiritual Exercises where the call of Christ the King is so prominent. This is a- this is not just a call that goes out to a few chosen people. This is a call that Christ makes to every human being, to each one of us, to be his companion. In Christ and his life, ministry, death, and resurrection, and in the sending of the Spirit, the eternal plan of this Creator God, who is still laboring, still his work in progress: do you want to know what it's supposed to look like? The shorthand version of that is the Kingdom of God. The shorthand version. Where do we- where do we learn what it is that God's creative work is up to? I suppose the shortest way of us answering that question as we know it in the Christ event, and Jesus tried in his words and his deeds to illustrate what this, what God's vision, what God sees when he is laboring in all things. Edward Schillebeeckx, the great Dutch theologian, called this God's dream. I suppose it has to be a dream because we don't see much of this dream being fulfilled when we just look out the window. So we look to Christ, and what Christ spoke, and what he did to get an image of what it is that God has in mind. My former colleague Kevin Burke, previously at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, used to say, and I think it's true if you want to understand that phrase in the New Testament, the Kingdom of God or the Reign of God, what it means is the way God wants the world to look. The way God- let's make it a little more forceful- the way God is determined to make the world be. So this whole work in progress is truly a labor of love, that from the very first intended to share itself with us, and in some way with every creature. Might be another opportunity to realize that the- that God's desire to share divine life with us, it's not something that God intends to affect only human beings.

When you go home and you have a little peace and quiet, open your Bible to Romans 8. And in the middle of that beautiful chapter that begins, "I consider the sufferings of this present time to be nothing in comparison with the glory that will be revealed." If you read and thoughtfully pray on that passage you will see that St. Paul has the same insight that all of creation, even the non-human creation, is going to share in God's transformation of the cosmos at what we call the end of the world. Most of us were not brought up to believe St. Paul, if we're honest. They just think of the common saying that says you can't take it with you. I suppose the truth of this saying to me is, no none of us can take it with us. The only one who can and will take it with us is God. It's God who can finally transform all of the fruits of our labors, all of the creatures that are part of a single giant cosmic ecosystem. If you want to say it's only God who can rescue and transform all of this into eternal significance, but I think that's very difficult for us to believe. Perhaps if we did believe it, we would have a different kind of attitude towards God's non-human creatures. God's creating work finally attains its purpose and destiny in what the Bible calls new heavens and a new earth. This is why St. Ignatius's meditation about the call of Christ captures my imagination. It's not because God needs to. I suppose we should tap-dance around God's power and, and everything- and not because he needs to. But let's just say, mysteriously in God's freedom God chooses not to act without us. So this is this beautiful meditation in the second week of the exercises where Christ calls for companions in his battle against the

anti-human forces, against the anti-Kingdom of God forces, very heavily laden in the chivalric language of St. Ignatius. But what it means is God needs- God freely decides to do God's creating work with- think of the prayer which my colleague Cathy Mooney some time ago mentioned to me (is falsely attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila but which I nonetheless frequently use at baptisms at the anointing of the baby or the person) that famous prayer you probably know. "And in this world God, you have no hands but our hands. In this world you have no eyes but ours," so forth and so on. God's creating work finally attains its purpose and destiny in what the Bible calls new heavens and new earth. What Jesus calls the reign of God, the kingdom of God.

Interesting, that we don't often think so much about this metaphor of the final destiny of the world and God's work in terms of a new heavens and new earth. I think we already think that there is a heaven there somewhere, and we're going to go to it. But the Bible doesn't have another place in mind and it doesn't have a different replacement earth in mind. At least in some traditions in the Bible, it has a transformed earth in mind. And to- and to make this a- call attention to how this might rest in our Christian consciousness is today that wonderful document of the Second Vatican Council: *Gaudium et Spes*. There's another little bit of homework. When you go home and you have nothing better to do and you can pull out *Gaudium et Spes* and look at chapter 39. The Council makes the breathtaking statement that in the end what God will transform is not just our virtue and love. What God will transform is the very fruit of our labor. I think that's an astounding statement. In other words, God's transforming work at the end of history, it needs something to transform.

The new heavens and the new earth are not going to be God creating from nothing. Again, God wishes to transform what we in some way are called to contribute to God's action. In this sense, the call of Christ to be his companion, I think, takes on new meaning, especially since the Church in *Gaudium et Spes* 39 the Church today has a deeper appreciation of this worldliness of God's reign. It doesn't mean that God's reign in its fullness can ever appear in a particular period of history. No, just as we believe that our glorious life in the resurrection involves a real death. But we also try, if stumblingly, to conceive of this new glorious life by looking at what the Scriptures tell us of the risen Lord. The risen Lord was not a replacement with somebody else. I take it that that's one of the reasons why they bother to talk about the Lord's wounds. It's really Jesus but gloriously different. And *Lumen Gentium* asks us to look at the world this seriously. God wants to transform this world, not just replace it with something, not a replacement that means all of what we sweat and work for somehow just goes down the drain, and the whole point of it was just to prove that we are can behave ourselves. In a way the call of Christ today places a challenge with us. Do we take this world and its problems and people as seriously as God does? Or do we end up resigned or just gritting our teeth until we die and then we don't have to worry about it anymore?

I know I'm making it sound ridiculous but you know another- another point here which is, we're thinking about- we all, in very traditional piety, talk about the Communion of Saints and how the Saints are really intimately connected with our lives. And if this- if being a saint means being with God and if we believe that God is not there, or there, or there, but God is here, and if we believe that God is still laboring, we believe that the Saints are there in some way. We can't possibly imagine laboring with God and that's presumably why we pray to them. So, it's not such a funny idea, really, even put in traditional piety terms the call of Christ is an invitation to companionship, to be with him, to live with him and his company, to discover ways in which we can actually actively choose to cooperate with God's working in the world.

So this companionship, I want to single out two aspects of it. It's a- it's a companionship that involves both intimate love, and, also there's a lot of work to do. Love and work. Sigmund Freud was not the only person who, I believe Coco Chanel also mentioned those two things as the most important things in our lives. It's an invitation to a real personal relationship of love. But it's a love in action. Not merely the command of "follow the commandments" and lifting up- living up to a list of do's and don'ts. That's the thing, a relationship of love with Jesus means a relationship with someone who is on the go, who is doing something. So it would be an odd thing to

say: I really am a companion of Jesus and I really love him, but I'm not really interested in what he's spending all of this energy on.

You know, and it's also a sign. I'll get to this. It's also a sign of having an adult relationship with Christ. Adult relationships involve intimacy. And they also involve generativity. Adult relationships of intimate love are not relationships where it's just you and me baby, and that's all the people are seeing. Is that- it's a relationship in which two people also have the kind of love that they can look out into the world and see what it is that this love can accomplish together. So Ignatian spirituality it's often said incorrectly is Christocentric, but I suppose the point I'm trying to belabor perhaps here is that we- it's centered on Christ, who is mission centered, and Christ who is in action, who is announcing and enacting Christ's reign, God's reign. The Ignatian Spirituality understands that at its core, Christian faith means entrusting oneself to God's kind of justice. That's what the kingdom means: God's rule, how God wants things to look. And we know in Christ that God's form of ruling is- God's form of Justice is mercy and love, so that it might transform and make me an agent of this justice in the world. This is why in recent times Jesuits have recognized that Ignatian spirituality means a living faith that does justice.

The third point is an adult relationship of friendship with Christ. Just to make a few more comments on this. Ignatius, time and again, in the Spiritual Exercises encourages people to speak with Jesus as with a friend. I think this is so important because so many of the traditional, even biblical ways of- images of God make Jesus the Shepherd and we the sheep, or- which is fine. Or God is our Father and we are the children. But you know we're adults. Maybe we're adult children, and what God wants with us is really an adult relationship.

An adult- what's so good about having an adult relationship? Well, I think these are some of them. I can be real in an adult relationship that's functioning. I can be real. I can be real with Christ. I can be honest with him and myself. I don't have to pretend. How wonderful is that? His love takes the initiative and his love is unconditional and that's where I can maybe begin to experience some new freedom. This means it's being able to express our real desires and fears in prayer. It's one of the things that I think is so moving to me, and one of the reasons why I think the Psalms play such a great role in the prayer of the Church is because, my gosh, how real they are! How real they are. Yes they're full of praise and thanksgiving, and- but they're also- they're also full of cries. Why have you abandoned us? Why don't you do something? Anger. It's one of the elements that appeals most of all to me. That do we- do we really believe that we can have a real relationship with God? This is the thing that I think Ignatius was convinced of and invites us to.

Fourth: contemplative in action. This is a big kind of motto of Ignatian spirituality. In the 16th century religious life was essentially a question of either the contemplative life of the monastery like the Carthusians or Cistercians, or the itinerant preachers' life, like that of the mendicants like Dominicans and Franciscans. Eventually Ignatius's vision was to establish a new way of living, the contemplative life of the monk outside in the world. On its most basic level, such contemplation meant something fairly simple for Ignatius, not the extraordinary prayer of the mystic, but the discipline of paying attention. I'm reminded of a beautiful line in a poem of Mary Oliver. I think the title of the poem is "A Summer Day." And in the poem she says something like "I don't know what a prayer is but I do know how to pay attention." And it seems to me this is the heart. This may be. There's many hearts of prayer, but this is certainly what prayer is all about in its many different forms: paying attention.

Here's a practical suggestion. You probably thought you weren't going to get any practical suggestions from me. This kind of contemplation involves a simple use of the imagination. Imagination is so important for Ignatius. God didn't give it to us to turn it off when we pray. It's not hard. I remember in the Jesuit novitiate there was this book in the library. Yeah, the title of it- and it was a classic of its time. The title of it was *The Difficulties of Mental Prayer*. Well, I mean, in a certain way when you hear someone say contemplation or mental prayer and so on, it seems though prayer was nothing more than one difficulty that you overcame after another, until you reach

the height of- you know- mystical vision. That's not what Ignatius has in mind of for contemplation. Use your imagination. Begin by asking God to be with you while you pray. Choose a passage of Scripture. Read it over slowly, and then if you like, use your imagination to picture the scene and what's going on in it. What's going on in it? Just watch for a while, just watch for a while. Who is there? What are they doing? What are they saying? What are they feeling? Am I in the scene?

Use your imagination. The gospels don't provide all of the dialogue, but that's why I think Ignatius encourages us to use the imagination, because it will get the dialogue going that is not the dialogue of the people that Jesus met in the gospel, but that's the dialogue that needs to get going when the living Lord Jesus, here and now, wants to have with you and me when we're praying. And when you've watched the scene enough- how difficult is that? When you've watched the scene enough, take a few minutes to recall what you did. What did you feel? Did you find yourself desiring anything? Do you want to ask the Lord for anything? This is also very biblical. How often when- when the Lord in the Gospels meets somebody: "What do you want me to do for you?" Many other times people come to him and ask him. Says to the Lord, "I wish I could-" So desire and trust is so important to Ignatius. And he's convinced that this simple way of praying can help a person get in touch with those desires.

Then spend some time telling the Lord what you are feeling, and if you are aware of it, what you desire from him. And finally close with a prayer of thanks. It's a way of again- maybe this is beating a dead horse, but the Word of God comes alive that way, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It can't be just a coincidence that we talk about the Spirit inspiring. That's got to have something to do with imagination in our lives. And the Word of God is not a catechism, or like a moral handbook that the only- it's only purpose is somehow we're supposed to squeeze out and read a passage, and squeeze out, you know, the latest commandment for us to follow, or latest little insight into the mystery of God. The Bible is a kind of sacrament. The Word of God is a sacrament. It's a place where the Holy Spirit makes a real encounter with Christ possible.

So spending this kind of prayerful contemplative time with Christ, we can find ourselves at times deeply touched by his love. And just as we know from personal experience how, being in the presence of someone that you love, a friend, has a profound effect on a person, this is how one can get to know Jesus, and how Jesus's presence can begin to have an effect in my life. We can find ourselves growing in the desire to be with him, and more like him, to love him more dearly, and follow him more wholeheartedly. Ignatius knew that only love and relationship ultimately have the power to transform. The love of Christ can do what my own self-imposed resolutions cannot do. If I choose to be in Christ's company, I will find myself being transformed. It is he and his love that will make me freer, get me out of myself, help me recognize where I am still un-free and in need of His Spirit, and who can stretch me to be able to love more like he does. Ignatius recognized that such a contemplative posture, the simple, but sometimes difficult habit of paying attention was something that was important not only for prayer but for our way of being in the world.

Everyday life means paying attention to God's world in all its dimensions and all of its needs. I'm sure you also have the experience that disciplines like this, of the sort of contemplative prayer that I've just described, they have an after effect. They make you more centered in your everyday life. And, you probably also have the experience that sometimes the most profound experiences of God do not happen in a time in which you have decided to give over to prayer. But those times, all themselves put together, the habit of those kind of times, is what makes us better able to pay attention, more centered in our everyday lives, which makes up the vast majority of our lives, to recognize where it is and when that God does encounter us. Another valuable Ignatian practice in this respect is called the Examen. I'm sure many of you have heard of it. I just want to highlight this too because it's distinctive- it's not anybody's- we don't have a copyright on it- but it certainly is distinctive of Ignatian spirituality. By that practice I mean taking time at the end of the day to reflect on where and when God seemed present, or absent in the activities of the day. Five or ten minutes will do. What do you- how to do it: Ask God to become more aware of

his presence. Review the day with gratitude, pay attention to your feelings, the movements of your heart. Choose one event of the day, perhaps talk to Jesus about it, and ask for the grace you desire for the next day. This too is a simple practice that is not difficult and it can help make one much more attentive to the way one lives. In a way, it's asking when and where did I feel in tune with God, and where not. Why might that have been? What do I desire from God most deeply?

Ignatius's wisdom that we don't always meet God first in the silence of our rooms, and then go out into the world of action. We often meet God in startling and unexpected ways, in our work, and in the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of men and women everywhere, especially those who are poor and oppressed. And yet, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we often meet Christ in our daily lives without recognizing him, and practices like the examen can help us look back and recognize him. Like those disciples we might, looking back, notice where our hearts were burning, where we felt in tune with Christ, with other people, with what is happening in one's life and in the world. And we can also notice where we felt out of tune or afraid of the possible cost and consequences of being Christ's companion. I remember one Jesuit, I think it was Dennis Hamm- he wrote a book on the examen called *Rummaging for God: Praying Backwards Through Your Day*, your day being sort of like my right hand drawer of my desk. You open it up, it's got- you know- it's filled with junk. You just have to get through all of the stuff looking for what you are trying to find. If we live prayerfully and contemplatively, we should not be surprised to find people and things and events that challenges some of our views and opinions about what is of God, and what is not of God, or what is important, and what not. We will meet God where we never expected to. That's why a contemplative in action needs not only Christ of the Gospels, but also to the world in its needs. I think of two theologians both German, one a Catholic man and the other a Protestant woman, Johann Metz and Dorothy Sölle- they both spoke about the mysticism with wide eyes open. Not the mysticism say, of the Buddha with eyes closed, but a mysticism of open eyes. In one way, it's- it's trying to be able to look both at Christ and at the world.

My fifth little highlight of Jesuit- of Ignatian spirituality- Oh my gosh. Yeah. Just- this will be the last one. Discovering God's will for me. Does God have a specific plan for my life? If she does, how can I discover it? I've just spoken about two forms of contemplative prayer that are practical ways of staying in tune with Christ in God's ongoing labor of love, to bring about the Kingdom. I think the image of attunement can offer us an Ignatian way of understanding what God's will is for us. I have no doubt that God's general will is that every person, and all God's creatures enjoy the final fullness of sharing in God's life. This is what is revealed in the Christ event, and it is God's will for each and every one. But frankly I find it hard to believe that God has a particular will for each person in the sense of a plan for life that God is already decided, and which the person must somehow figure out. There are several reasons for this, and I could be wrong. It's just- this is what I think. You don't have to think it, but my reasons for thinking this are, that while many people apparently do experience a specific calling from God, many others do not. And God has created human beings with freedom, imagination, and creativity. It would seem that God intends us to use them as we make decisions about our life. And when I consider the way God has freely chosen to create the whole cosmos in a long process of evolution, a process which is marked by both chance and by a certain constraining order in which creatures like you and I have appeared, when considering these factors it makes more sense for me to think of God's general will is that God's reign appear in fullness. But that as far as what one ought to do, specifically in obedience to that will, God's particular will for a person, I think he leaves that up to us. I think he leaves that up to us.

How is it that the love and gratitude I experienced in companionship with Christ finds joy in responding? How can my love for Christ come to greater expression? -is what I meant earlier when I said is our relationship with Christ one that is ultimately based on command and obedience, or is it based on the eliciting of desires? How does my relationship with Christ engage my freedom and creativity?

I think God actually enjoys it when we use the gifts she's given us, our freedom and creativity. The gifts of our own particular talents and life histories. Recalling what Irenaeus said about the glory of God: it's the human person fully alive. I believe this is part of what it means to desire the greater glory of God, and that God desires you and me to be fully alive in the engagement of our freedom and imagination and creativity and deciding what to do with our lives with him, and for him. After all, all this, my very existence is God's will. The first and foremost thing before we even imagine "does God have a particular will" is God wills each one of us to be and exist, just the way we are. So all the particular gifts, talents, idiosyncrasies, God is- God's willed all that in a certain sense. That's what God has to say to us before he starts whispering any other things. What God is saying is- this is you. I remember the Jesuit philosopher at Fordham, William Lynch in his book *Images of Hope*, had a beautiful image for this. He said, you know when you see children playing with their little toys, a little boy may be putting all these little tin soldiers, and making little battles, and moving them all around? That they can do that for hours, oh boy. But then it comes there's an electric battery operated toy that moves by itself, and the mentioned boy, the kid's eyes just pop right open. Like how open? How does he do that? And then he says, maybe God would be like that. Maybe God, who gave us creativity and freedom would really get a huge kick out of it if we used it. I'm exaggerating here, but I mean instead- instead of feeling like one is trapped into the relationship with God, where one is saying, "tell me what to do, just tell me what to do," wouldn't God be so delighted if we actually had the courage to use our freedom and creativity?

So when I speak of attunement or being in tune with God's love and labor in the world, the reason why I find that so helpful is because I'm thinking of a jazz combo. There is definitely a main theme and a melody but the musicians make beautiful music by improvising by variations on the theme. How boring it would be if they all played the same notes. Might we consider Christ the melody, or the kingdom, the reign of God as the melody line, and think of the Spirit as the one who inspires infinitely many different Christ-like variations. Seems fairly clear that Ignatius believed that God has a specific will or plan for the individual. I grant that and indeed he viewed the Spiritual Exercises in their full form as a reliable way in which the person could discover what God's will is. as far as making a major decision in one's life. At the same time, Ignatius also was convinced that God's will could be discovered in our deepest and truest desires. In other words, one way or the other God is inviting us to trust our desires when we are companions of Christ His Son.

That will be it, and I apologize for holding you captive to my words for so long. Yeah, please stand up and leave if you want. Don't- don't feel like you're, but if I would love to hear your reactions or your own insights, questions or insights.

Melinda Donovan:

And we just ask that you wait for the microphone, for the sake of the video.

Fr. Randy Sachs, S.J.:

I don't blame you. Goodnight. Well, all I can say then is I invite you to reflect on anything that I said and if there's anything at all that's useful, try it. And, if it's not, don't try it. One of the last things I would have said in this presentation is that this is one of the most important practical things about St. Ignatius- is the complete and total flexibility and adaptability. There is many different ways of living an Ignatian spirituality, and as many different ways of praying as there are people in this room. It may sound somewhat cheap to say it but try it and if it works, stick with it as long as it does work.

Thank you.

