



Discovering Ignatian Spirituality

Week 5 Freedom

Freedom from and freedom for...

Over the last few weeks we have looked at a number of different elements of Ignatian Spirituality, looking at the ways in which our prayer practise can help us to deepen our relationship with God.

Back in the first week we looked at the Principle and Foundation and how St Ignatius presents a vision of the world as a gift from God, where we are invited to recognise those gifts and give a return of love. At the same time he recognises that anyone of those gifts can also become an attachment that does the every opposite of what it was given for.

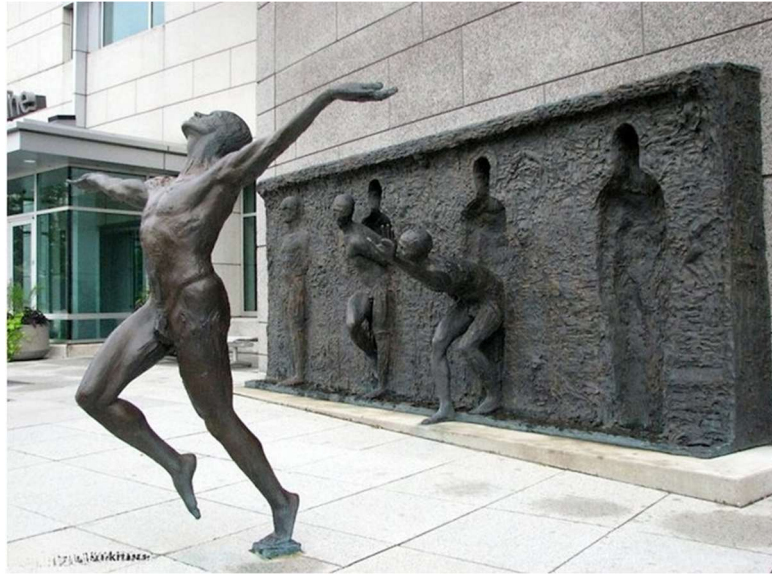
The spiritual exercises are often described as being a journey of 'freedom from, and freedom for...'

Freedom from what? Discovering that is part of the journey of our lives.

Through prayerful reflection, like with the examen, we can begin to recognise the things that stop us from being fully free. Whether they are things, people, situations or our own attitudes about ourselves. We name them and ask God for the grace to be free from them.

Spiritual freedom is an interior freedom, a freedom of the mind and heart. People who are spiritually free know who they are—with all of their gifts and limitations—and are comfortable with who they are. They are able to discern God's presence; find meaning in their lives, and make choices that flow from who they are, whatever the circumstance.

Fr Kevin O'Brien SJ



The Freedom Statue, by Zenos Frudakis, in Philadelphia

This surrender to God is not surrender to servitude; it is surrender to the deepest longings of our hearts, a longing to be free and to be life-giving, a longing to-be-at-one. Our frustrations, if we can acknowledge them and bring them into prayer, are invitations to discover the truth of our identity, a surrender into the very life of God, the source of all love, of all creation.

Gerard Hughes SJ – Cry of Wonder

And freedom for? Well that is also part of the journey. As St Ignatius put it – “we should not be deaf to His call”. When Jesus asks us to follow, are we free to follow – wherever that may lead?

Examen

This week consider praying a specific examen looking back at the day to see when you were most free, and what kept you from being free?

The Examen is about choosing freedom. We ask about the characteristic habits that mark or maybe hamper our spiritual freedom. Actions do not harm us spiritually because the commandments forbid them; the commandments forbid them because they harm us. God’s commands are to protect our freedom and even expand it.

The self-examination in this prayer means reclaiming our own freedom. It begins with naming the strengths and gifts that God gives us. Our gifts tell us what God hopes in us. Our lasting freedom lies in living the gifts—each and all of the gifts—that God gives us.

Joseph Tetlow SJ