

Introduction to reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius

The Introduction to a series of four podcast reflections on the life of St Ignatius Loyola as seen through The Spiritual Exercises.

These reflections are a collaboration between Pray as you go and the Jesuits in Britain and are based on the Spiritual Exercises, a prayer manual compiled by St Ignatius Loyola nearly 500 years ago. These reflections are different from many of the other reflections produced by Pray as you go, there won't be a text you'll be invited to listen to and reflect on. Instead, we'll be focusing on the life of St Ignatius and the themes of the Spiritual Exercises. St Ignatius believed that it was possible for people to come to a direct experience of God, present and active in their everyday lives. His book aimed to foster just this kind of experience, so that people could use it to re-shape their lives in ways big and small.

These four reflections correspond to the four major sections of the Spiritual Exercises. For Ignatius, the starting point is to realise deeply that you are loved by God just as you are, warts and all. You are, in truth, a loved sinner. Anyone who has this experience is then likely to hear themselves called by God to a life of loving service, and this forms the second section of the retreat. Such a life of loving service will inevitably include experiences of failure, misunderstanding, and perhaps even persecution, as Jesus found in his Passion, and the third session takes that up that theme. Yet the story doesn't end there, and the fourth and final part of the Exercises recognises how the risen Christ is joyfully present in my life, and the life of our world.

Ignatius drew up the Spiritual Exercises by reflecting deeply on his own life experience. Later on, he broadened this out to include the experience of others whom he directed in their prayer. So this retreat will also offer some snapshots of the life of Ignatius, and invite you to find examples from your own history too.

Why use these podcasts? If you want to meet for the first time, or come to know more deeply, the God who calls to you in the events of your day-to-day living, then this may be for you. But be aware that you might meet a God who has plans for you that you have as yet scarcely dreamed of.