

Session 4: The Resurrection

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

Saint Luke tells us in his gospel that at first light, a couple of days after Jesus had been violently killed, a few of the women who had been his disciples came to his tomb to wash and anoint his body. Take a moment to put yourselves in their shoes as they make that journey in the grey dawn. Can you get some sense of what they might have been feeling, of what they might have said to each other as they walked along?

Within a day or two, this situation has been turned on its head. These women, and his other closest friends, meet Jesus again in all sorts of different times and places. The one whom they thought had they had lost forever is suddenly with them again. What would that have been like, and, if you were there, how might you have found yourself reacting?

It's not easy to move from darkness and despair to joy and excitement. It normally doesn't happen in a single moment. So in the fourth part of the Spiritual Exercises you're invited to take some extended time to pray with the different accounts of the appearances of the risen Jesus, and slowly let their atmosphere sink into you. As always, it helps if you can relate this to your own life. When have you known your hopes to be realised unexpectedly? Or found a dark situation giving way to brightness? What was that like?

In this part of the Exercises, Ignatius invites you to share the joy of the risen Christ. This joy isn't something that you have somehow to work up in yourself. It comes from getting in touch with the joy that Jesus experiences in this part of the gospel, and sharing something of that in the same way as, praying with the Passion, you shared his suffering. Try to imagine, for a moment, what Jesus felt as he was reunited with those closest to him, with his disciples, with Mary his mother.

It was said that, by the end of his life, Ignatius had a real gift for being able to recognise God at work in any situation he found himself in. For him, this is what it meant to meet the risen Christ today, still present and active in our world. Much of the teaching on prayer that he offers in the Spiritual Exercises points towards this. As you come to the end of these reflections, notice how you yourself have met the risen Christ in these days. Ask Jesus to be able to continue to meet him in the days ahead.