

Entering the Joy of Christ

The graces we are seeking

The grace to share the joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead

“The grace to be glad and to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord” (SE 221).

The grace to meet Jesus through the experiences of his friends and disciples

This week we contemplate the experiences of those who first encountered Jesus after he was raised from the dead. We will ride an emotional rollercoaster with Jesus' friends as they move from grief to joy and from skepticism to certainty. As before, we will concentrate on the human dimension of these accounts. Our goal is to identify so deeply with the characters in this Divine Comedy that we can be moved interiorly, even as they were moved. We want to traverse with Mary, Peter, Thomas, John, Mary Magdalene and the rest of the disciples from disappointment and devastation into astonishment and celebration.

We also desire to enter into Jesus' experience of resurrection. What it was like for him to see his mother, Mary, for the first time? What was it like for him to meet Mary Magdalene in the garden and to be mistaken for the gardener? What were his emotions as he walked into the room where his disciples were hiding out? How did he feel when he saw Peter and John? What was his response to Thomas's skepticism? We desire to see ourselves in these stories and walk away with a deeper understanding of how Jesus feels towards us, even when we are sad, embarrassed or unbelieving.

Preparation: Begin each prayer period by quieting your mind and body. Place yourself before God with reverence, invite the Holy Spirit to influence your mind, your will and your imagination, and ask for the grace that you seek. The notes below are only suggestions, follow the Holy Spirit and your imagination where they lead you!

Scripture for this week

Use imaginative contemplative prayer to work your way through the following passages.

- Luke 24:1-12, **the angels and Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb**. Imagine this scene through the eyes of Mary Magdalene. How does her body feel upon waking? Walk with her from her home to the garden. What is her reaction when she sees the stone rolled away from the tomb and the angels? Kneel with her and put your face to the ground. Listen to the words of the angels. What is her emotional response? What is your response? Then run, find the other disciple and tell them what you've seen and heard. Notice their response and your response to their unbelief.
- John 20:1-9, **Peter and John visit the empty tomb**. Imagine this scene through the eyes of Peter or John. Begin by imagining his emotional state upon waking after three days of mourning and confusion. Then picture yourself in a room with the disciples. What

is the tenor of this gathering? What is your response as the women burst into the room? What propels you race to the tomb? As you stoop to look into the tomb, what do you see? The text says that “he saw and believed.” What does that shift from unbelief to belief feel like?

- John 20:10-18, **Mary Magdalene meets Jesus in the garden.** Stand with Mary at the tomb. What does her body posture reveal about her state of mind and her emotions? Listen to her as she expresses her desolation to the angels? Then turn with her and notice the “gardener.” How he is dressed? What is his tone of voice when he asks her why she is weeping? What happens for her when she hears him speak her name? Can you describe the movement within her from despair to joy?
- **Repeat one of the contemplations from Jesus’ perspective.** For example, what does Jesus notice about Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb? How does Jesus feel when he sees Mary weeping? What are his feelings when she does not, at first, recognize him? How does he respond when she finally realizes who he is and grabs on to his legs? If you were Jesus, is there anything else you might want to say to Mary?

Readings for this week

- “The First Day and the First Contemplation: The Appearance of the Risen Jesus to Mary.” Fleming, David L, SJ. *Draw Me Into Your Friendship: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises.* St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1996, 168-171.

Important prayer exercises

- Based on David Fleming’s reading of Ignatius’ instructions, use imaginative prayer to contemplate Jesus’ appearance to his mother.
- Journaling: Use your journal to keep track of what is happening during your prayer. As you work through these passages, pay attention to the characters that you identify with most strongly. Also, pay close attention to the desires that may rise in your soul as you encounter the resurrected Jesus in these narratives.
- Repetition: It is helpful and important to repeat some or all the gospel contemplations. Even the richest experiences of contemplation can be deepened and expanded by repetition. When a contemplation is difficult or wooden, sometimes it helps to repeat it from a different perspective. Try writing yourself into the story, so to speak, as a different character.
- Review: Regularly review your week of prayer. Write a paragraph or two in your journal. Summarize what has happened for you spiritually. When did you feel the presence of God or closeness with Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit or a person in a gospel story? What are you longing for as you move forward?

End of the day

- Pray the Gratitude Examen and plan ahead for the next day of prayer: choose the passage of scripture that you will pray with tomorrow and read it carefully.

Resurrection Life

The graces we are seeking

The grace to share the joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead

“The grace to be glad and to rejoice intensely because of the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord” (SE 221).

The grace to meet Jesus through the experiences of his friends and disciples

The grace to desire Jesus' companionship and to follow him faithfully

Following Jesus' resurrection from the dead, it was surprisingly difficult for his friends and disciples to recognize Jesus. The Gospel writers do not speculate about what has happened, they simply describe the effects: he can suddenly appear in closed rooms and he vanishes without warning. But he still does many of the things he did before, he speaks, walks, breathes and eats. His appearances are brief and poignant. They are still awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the future of their relationship with Jesus is entirely uncertain.

It is beneficial for us to linger with the early disciples in this place of uncertainty. You may find that your desire for Jesus' companionship increases as you pray with these narratives. And you may find yourself asking Jesus some of the same questions we asked in the first part of the Transformation Intensive: What have I done for you? What am I doing for you? What can I do for you?

Preparation: Begin each prayer period by quieting your mind and body. Place yourself before God with reverence, invite the Holy Spirit to influence your mind, your will and your imagination, and ask for the grace that you seek. The notes below are only suggestions, follow the Holy Spirit and your imagination where they lead you!

Scripture for this week

Use imaginative contemplative prayer to work your way through the following passages.

- Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-22, **Jesus appears to his disciples**. Place yourself in the room with the disciples. What do you notice? Who do you recognize? Who is present at this gathering? What is the mood? They have all heard the reports of Jesus' resurrection. Are they arguing about it, perhaps? Whose side are you on in this debate? Why? Then notice what happens as Jesus walks into the room. What is it like to hear Jesus' voice and to see his wounds? What happens to the disciples when Jesus breaths out the Holy Spirit on them?
- John 20:24-30, **Jesus and Thomas**. Start with vs. 24-25. Place yourself in a room with the disciples including Thomas. Watch him closely as he responds to the news of the resurrection. What do you notice about his body language? Do you feel compassion for him, or something else? Then sit in silence for a few minutes. Sit with Thomas's feelings of unbelief and with your feelings toward Thomas. Then read vs. 26-31. Place yourself in the room eight days later, when Thomas and the disciples are gathered again. Find

Thomas in the room and try to read his body language. Then watch Thomas respond as Jesus walks through the locked doors. Can you describe the movement within him from despair to joy? If you identify with Thomas, is there something you want to say to Jesus or that Jesus would say to you?

- Luke 24:13-35, ***On the Road to Emmaus***. Place yourself in the story as one of the two disciples, or walk with them. Pay attention to your surroundings. What is the emotional tenor of the conversation? As the third person – Jesus – approaches, do you notice anything unusual about him? As he begins his explanation, how do you feel in response to his words? Pay attention to your interior moments. Are you ready to believe or does something hold you back? What is happening for you that makes you want more time with him? Finally, what happens that causes you to recognize Jesus? What do you want to say to Jesus, what does Jesus want to say to you?
- John 21:1-14, ***Breakfast with Jesus***. Begin by joining the group of people gathered beside the Sea of Tiberias, either as one of the characters or as yourself. What is being discussed and what is emotional tenor of the conversation? What happens on the boat during the long hours of the night? How do you feel? What are you thinking about? As the sun rises, turn your attention to the shore. Do you see the man on the beach? Does he see you? At what point are you convinced that the man on the shore is the Lord Jesus? Does this recognition move you in any way, physically or emotionally? What do you want to say to Jesus? What does he want to say to you?
- John 21:15-19, ***Jesus and Peter***. Turn your attention to Peter as breakfast is concluding. How are you feeling? What do you notice about Peter? Does he look Jesus in the face? What are his emotions during this exchange? Do you notice any changes in Peter as the conversation moves along from one question to the next? How does he respond to Jesus' last imperative, "Follow me?" Place yourself in Peter's role, what question is Jesus asking you? How do you respond?
- **Repeat any of the contemplations from Jesus' perspective.** Repeat this contemplation from Jesus' perspective. Notice Jesus attitudes and feelings toward his friends. What happens when you place yourself in the story?

Important prayer exercises

- **Journaling:** Use your journal to keep track of what is happening during your prayer. As you work through these passages, pay attention to the characters that you identify with most strongly. Also, pay close attention to the desires that may rise in your soul as you encounter the resurrected Jesus in these narratives.
- **Repetition:** It is helpful and important to repeat some or all the gospel contemplations. Even the richest experiences of contemplation can be deepened and expanded by repetition. When a contemplation is difficult or wooden, sometimes it helps to repeat it from a different perspective. Try writing yourself into the story, so to speak, as a different character.
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presence of God or closeness with Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit or a person in a gospel story? What are you longing for as you move forward?

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