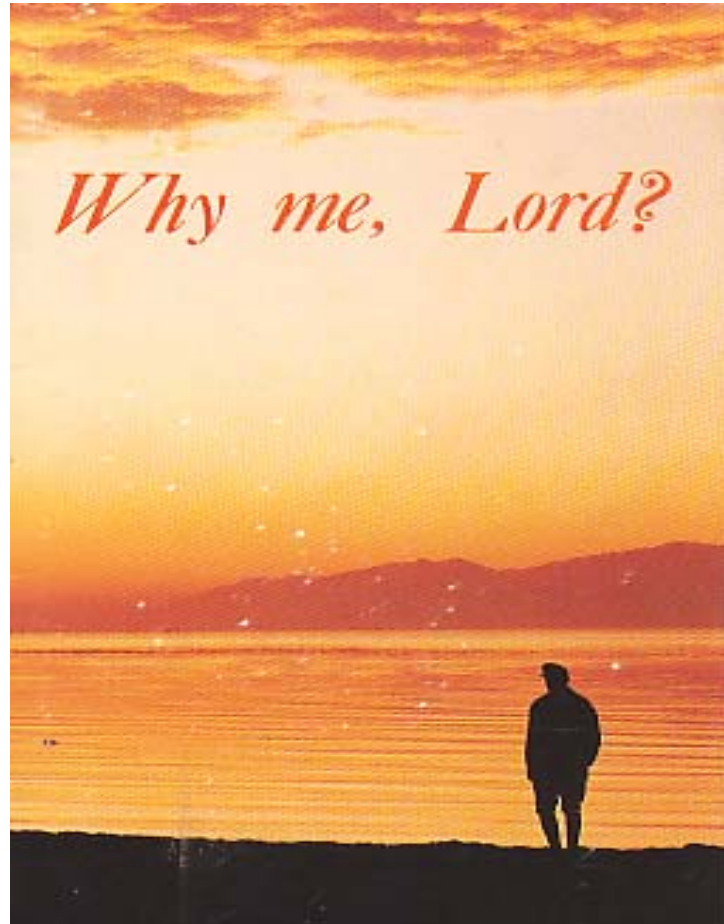


# The Experience of God, Then and Now



## AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD BEYOND IMAGINING

*Monthly Recollection*

February 2007

An Encounter with God Beyond Imagining  
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“We ... envision a transformed world, touched by God’s love beyond imagining.” (Vision of the Retreat Ministry).

Grace: Gratitude and Fidelity to the mystery of God’s encounter in our lives especially in our monthly recollections and annual retreats.

Introduction:

St. John the Beloved, disciple of Jesus has paraphrased this experience of God beyond imagining when he says that “eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love him.” As each person is unique, each person has a unique experience with his/her God that only s/he could describe but not enough to capture the shining or graced moment. What s/he could only say was that after the experience treasured in his/her heart, s/he was no longer the same that affected the world around him/her.

Our monthly recollection deals on this touched by God’s love experience beyond imagining. Let us borrow what Richard Johnson has to say in his book “All My Days: A Personal Review of Life.” He states that “*the goal of all this is to recognize the lessons of love we learned. God’s love is the cohesive and energizing force which ties our lives together and gives us the energy to proceed. God’s love is the foundation upon which we build the structure of our lives. As we move through the transitions of life, we are called to revisit this vital fact of God’s abiding care by recognizing the divine power working on our behalf along the way.*”

We have time and again reflected on this truth of God’s love during retreats and moments of prayer. In today’s recollection, we beg and desire for this special grace to experience once more this tremendous love of God. We desire for an honest and sincere transformation in our self, our community and society which can only be achieved through love. Let us implore the help of the Holy Spirit to make us feel deeply how much God loves us and his desire to help us along the way to transformation and conversion. This recollection gives us the space and time to

retrace the periodic experiences of God's love in our life and discover the goal of this recollection as well as the graces we beg from the mercy and goodness of God.

Opening Prayer: (To be prayed alternately from right to left.)

R Praise the Lord Who is so good, God's love endures forever.  
L Praise the God of Gods, God's love endures forever.  
R Praise the Lord of lords, God's love endures forever.  
L Who alone has done great wonders, God's love endures forever.  
R Who skillfully made the heavens, God's love endures forever.  
L Who spread the earth upon the waters, God's love endures forever.  
R Who made the great lights, God's love endures forever.  
L The sun to rule the day, the moon and the stars to rule the night, God's love endures forever.  
R Praise the God of the heavens, God's love endures forever.  
All Glory be to the Father, etc.

Let us pray:

Loving God, thank you for loving us and for sharing with us your life, happiness and goodwill. You search for us in times of confusion and lead us in times of darkness. Your love is not conditioned by our goodness and good deeds, but by the overflowing love that comes from the depths of your being. May your love transform us to greater holiness as consecrated persons who can respond to this love. Amen.

Opening Song: Magnificat or Facilitator's choice

### **First Hour of Prayer: DESIRING GOD**

Scripture Passage: Psalm 63; 42 Isaiah 55:1-13; Mathew 11:28-30

St. Thomas says, "The greater the love, the greater the desire." This desire prepares and opens the one who desires to receive the one who is desired. A genuine love and desire for God is of great importance to Ignatian as well as Ignacian spirituality. St. Ignatius de Loyola's desire led him to an experience of God beyond imagining resulting in his Spiritual Exercises and the foundation of the Society of Jesus. In like manner, the desire of Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo to

seek and do God's will in a retreat brought forth bold initiatives to found and pioneer God's plan for His people in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

What unforgettable experience can you recall regarding your desire to enter the religious life? How were you touched by God? What were your feelings? your thoughts and the effect of that event in your life? Can you unravel the mystery behind your call? Does it still have a connection to the present? If so, connect the learning experience to the present.

Closing Prayer: "O Lord I come to you"

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Hour of Prayer: DESIRE TO LOVE & FOLLOW JESUS**

Scripture Passage: John 15: 1- 13 Romans 6:28-39  
John 17:20-26

As we contemplate on the mysteries of Jesus, we allow ourselves to live so closely to Him and be immersed into his very presence. This immersion develops depths in our relationship with him leading us to relish the companionship and intimate following of Jesus which he desires for us.

Go back to your past experience in the retreat where Jesus beckoned you to follow Him as He let you feel His love. What was the challenge? How did you respond to the challenge? What effect did it have on you, on the people around you, the community? the ministry? How was the surrounding changed because of this experience? What is the experience telling you here and now as you become aware of your feelings?

Close this hour of prayer with your own spontaneous response to this experience. What passage/s in the Scripture can capture this hour of prayer.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Hour of Prayer: Silent Adoration followed by Journaling**

A Repetition of the Two Points of the Two Hours of Prayer

St. Ignatius has emphasized in the Spiritual Exercises: **Not many but much.** This means that the depth of the prayer experience is primary, rather than the number of texts meditated on and the range of insights acquired. The repetition naturally becomes a prayerful exercise in discerning where God is communicating himself to us in quest of the divine will. So at this point it is good to go back to the texts given above or some other familiar Scripture texts that have inspired you in your past retreats to feel or to experience God's love. In these moments of silent adoration, beg the grace that this hour will help produce the intimacy you desire beyond imagining.

Closing Prayer:

O Divine Presence, you have danced your way into my innermost being. O Mystery of Life, you have tended and nurtured me. You have enriched my spirit and watered my dryness. You have poured your abundant love into the veins of my soul. In the darkness of nights, you have surrounded me with your love. O Divine Presence, your radiant energy surges through my being. I bow to the profound mystery of your sacred life within me.

Beloved of my soul, I long to embrace you and savor the love which you offer to me. I accept the truths meant to transform me. Grant me the courage not to run away and to let go of my expectations.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all goodness. The boundless beauty and unlimited love of your presence blesses me at every moment of my existence. May your goodness radiate from me and bring the blessing of your loving touch to each person with whom I share life.

I thank You, God, with all my heart.  
I will tell of your wondrous deeds.  
I will be glad and exult in you.  
I will sing to you for you have dealt  
bountifully with me.  
Your steadfast love endures forever.

References:

Manny Flores

Understanding the Dynamics and Formulating Strategies of Adapting the Spiritual Exercises for Leadership Retreats

Richard P. Johnson All My Days: A Personal Life Review

Speak Lord, your Servant is Listening

*Contemplation...has four major connotations: (i) it implies an **experiential knowledge**; (ii) it implies **direct contact** with someone or something; (iii) it is a **form of obedience**, a bringing of one's life into conformity with God; and (iv) it is an **experience of reality in a way that is not reduced, distorted, or manipulated through narcissism or pragmatism**. In brief, contemplation is "seeing face to face," without the "glass, reflecting darkly."*

Ronald Rolheiser "The Shattered Lantern:  
Rediscovering A Felt Presence of God"

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