

Loyola Press in partnership with Creighton University's Online Ministry

## Introduction

# Retreat in the Real World

*Finding Intimacy  
with God  
Wherever You Are*

The Creighton University Online Retreat, from which this book originates, began with requests from our faculty and staff, which went something like this: "We understand that those *Spiritual Exercises* are really central to the mission of this university. How can I get a copy to read?" We would explain to them that St. Ignatius's Exercises are a 450-year-old collection of guidelines and prayer experiences, which Ignatius wrote based on his own religious renewal for people who would guide other people in opening themselves to an experience of conversion. The book is full of directions and exercises, which he continually suggests should be adapted to the person making the retreat. Ignatius tells the director of the retreat—the one reading the book—that the person making the retreat should give thirty days, away from family and friends, to make the experience. He adds that some people can't give that kind of time to the Exercises, so they should be adapted for a longer time and should be made in the midst of their everyday, busy lives. Often faculty and staff would look sad and regret that there wasn't something more accessible for them, so they could experience what these Exercises were all about.

Since our Daily Reflections on our Online Ministries Web site had become so popular, we asked ourselves, "How would Ignatius want us to adapt his Exercises for today? Wouldn't he urge us to adapt them for busy people today, so that people could make them online, over thirty-four weeks, 24/7, from anywhere in the world?" We spent eight months adapting the movements of Ignatius's Exercises into the Online Retreat. The central goal of the retreat is to grow in spiritual freedom,

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specifically to be able to make choices more freely. Another goal of the retreat is to help a person become “a contemplative in action,” finding “intimacy with God in the midst of action,” so we decided to design the retreat so that a person making it this way would learn how to practice this very contemporary spirituality. The retreat would not require much time in formal prayer. What would be more central would be learning how to place the material of the retreat into the “background” of one’s consciousness throughout each day and to let the material interact with the real events of ordinary life. That’s where the fruit of this retreat would be found and how the grace would be given.

The retreat that evolved became thirty-four weekly guides, accompanied by a series of resources. The first resource was thirty-four photos by our dear friend and colleague, the gifted Jesuit photographer Don Doll, SJ. From among his thousands of powerful photographs we chose thirty-four to provide a visual experience of the grace being prayed for each week. We asked Fr. Larry Gillick, SJ, a mentor, colleague, and the director of our Center for Ignatian Spirituality, to write a reflective piece, called “For the Journey,” to accompany each week.

We encourage people making the retreat to make the retreat with a spiritual guide, to do it with a group of friends, or to make it alone. In whatever way a person makes the retreat, we encourage people to use this book in conjunction with the online version. It can be found at the Creighton University Online Ministries Web site at <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html>. Since this book does not include the Readings and Prayers of the online version, these resources may be found there. We especially encourage people to take part in the opportunity to share the graces of the retreat and to give feedback online at the end of the retreat experience. Thousands of people e-mail their experience of the graces they are receiving each week of the retreat. Anyone making the retreat can go to the sharing and read

what others experience when they make the retreat. So, even if a person makes the retreat alone, the experience is one of making the retreat in the midst of a very large community.

It was Loyola Press’s idea to offer the text of the Online Retreat in this book form. We are delighted that it expands the availability of this opportunity to be touched by the Exercises of Ignatius. There are many other adaptations of the Exercises available around the world. This adaptation allows a person to make the retreat with nothing else but this book and an open heart. It has the added advantage of allowing a person, with Internet access, to use the online version for additional resources and to experience the sharing part of the retreat. While making the retreat, one can make the photo for the week the photo on his or her computer desktop, as a reminder throughout that week of the graces being prayed for.

Consider making this retreat with someone else or gathering a group together to make the retreat. A group could meet weekly, or even monthly, to share the graces of the retreat. Some people make the retreat with a close friend or with other members of a group, e-mailing their sharing to one another every week. Please consider contributing your reflections to the sharing available on the Web site [www.onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html](http://www.onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html).

We are grateful to St. Ignatius and all the Jesuits and lay colleagues who have taught us the power of the *Spiritual Exercises*. We thank all the people who have made the Online Retreat around the world and all who have supported us along the way. We are especially indebted to Creighton University for its generous support for our Online Ministries. Our office is very small, and we are deeply grateful for Carol Krajicek for her ongoing help and support.

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## How Do I Get Started Making the Retreat?

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Each of the weeks of the retreat begins with a Guide page that lays out how to make that week of the retreat. The Guide page gives the theme of the week, particularly the grace to pray for that week. Following the weekly guide are the resources you can use with that week.

- **The Photo** This image helps us focus during the week.
- **Practical Helps** Additional help for beginning a particular week and shaping one's reflection during the week.
- **For the Journey** Fr. Larry Gillick, SJ, writes a simple reflection for the week as an aid to entering the week more deeply.
- **In These or Similar Words . . .** A help for praying with our own words, with an invitation to personalize your prayer.
- **Readings** Readings from Scripture or other sources that support the graces for that week.



**Each week is different** in the graces asked for and in the material reflected upon. And one week builds upon another. The growth is progressive and step-by-step.

The Retreat uses the movements of the Spiritual Exercises to help us grow in spiritual freedom and the ability to find intimacy with God in the midst of our everyday busy lives.

**When should I start the retreat?** The retreat can be started at any time. We offer the option of making the retreat with the liturgical year, by beginning in about the middle of September each year. This is especially wonderful for people in a family or for friends, or for groups of people in a parish, making the retreat together.

**So, how do I do this?** It's simple. Early in the week, read the Guide page and the other resources provided for each week. They will shape what you do during the upcoming week. Usually, the invitation is to let the grace you are praying for become a part of the background of your daily life. Asking for that grace in the morning, and staying conscious of that grace throughout the day, will allow that grace, that reflection, to interact with the events, conversations, meetings, and challenges of each day. And spending a few moments each night to express our gratitude for what we have received will begin to shape each very interactive week with God—my asking and opening my heart, and God being patient and generous with me.

**Most of all, trust in God.** God will not be outdone in generosity.

## Prayer to Begin Each Day

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*Lord, I so wish to prepare well for this time.  
I so want to make all of me ready and attentive and available to you.  
Please help me clarify and purify my intentions.  
I have so many contradictory desires.  
My activity seems to be so full of busyness  
and running after stuff that doesn't really seem to matter or last.  
I know that if I give you my heart  
whatever I do will follow my new heart.  
May all that I am today,  
all that I try to do today,  
may all my encounters, reflections,  
even the frustrations and failings  
all place my life in your hands.  
  
Lord, my life is in your hands.  
Please, let this day give you praise.*