

The First Week

First Exercise

A meditation (a way of praying in which I need to spend more time in thinking through the matter) about the reality of sin and its effects.

Preparation: The Examen, or a simplified version of gratitude, recollection and offering.

Grace: Asking for Grace about the subject matter and our disposition during the prayer helps focus our love. It could also be a preparation of my inner being for an openness to God working in a particular area of my life. For this first exercise, we are asking God for the gift of confusion or alienation (even shame) as I consider the effect of one sin (even compared to our own sinful life).

The Setting: The angels who rebelled against God

The first rejection of love and the good creation is from the angels, exemplifying the radical choice of self before God and highlighting the terrifying consequence of that rejection: from grace to death-hatred of God, their own choice of hell. Let intellectual contemplation lead strike deep to the heart.

The Angels Are Kicked Out of Heaven

Revelation 12:7-12

Focus: Self-love (pride) replaces self-gift

I saw Satan fall like lightning

Luke 10:17-24

Focus: God has authority over demons

The History of Sin

Psalms 106

Focus: How many times human beings continue to reject a loving God

Prayer of Repentance

Psalms 51

Focus: I ask to experience God's mercy

Prayer of a Sinner

Psalms 38

Focus: I cry out to God in my need

The Setting: The sin of Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve show the simple but direct rejection of God's love. They seek to escape responsibility by shifting the blame to someone or something else. The effects of the story are catastrophic: the loss of God's special sharing of life, coupled with a continuing flow of evil. I consider the effect of this sin on them and all posterity. I let the destructiveness of evil become fully present. If one sin can wreak such havoc, what about my own sinfulness?

The Setting: The person who goes to hell

The possibility of making a definitive "no" as a response to God's love, ratifying that no even in death. A person who chooses no forever closes off all love and life flowing from the one source of God. How can I measure the number of no's which I have spoken to God up to this time of my life? What can I say to God about myself?

Colloquy: I put myself before the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. I talk to him about how he creates because he loves and then is born from that love, so emptying himself as to pass from eternal life to death here in time, even death on a cross. By his response of love for the Father, he dies for sin. I look at myself and let these questions penetrate my being:

In the past, what response have I made to Christ?

How do I respond to Christ now?

What response should I make to Christ?

As I ponder Jesus on the Cross, I ponder whatever God brings to my attention. I close with the Lord's Prayer.