

## REPETITION II

Repetition is an important way of disposing oneself to listen to the Lord. Saint Ignatius would recommend its use frequently during a directed retreat.

### WHAT REPETITION IS NOT

1. Repetition is not the repeating of the material for prayer as one repeats a study assignment for more thorough understanding.
2. Nor does it mean that one returns to the same matter for prayer in order to dig for something new or different.
3. Nor does it mean that one always returns to all the material of the last prayer period.

### WHAT REPETITION IS

Repetition means that I return to those points where I have experienced “greater consolation, desolation or greater spiritual appreciation” (*Spiritual Exercises* #62). Hence I return to those points where I have experienced significant movements; not to the experience itself but to the points, parts in Scripture where the experience occurred.

### SOME EXAMPLES

1. I have prayed over the Scripture account of the Last Supper. In my review I notice that I have spent much time absorbed in the adoration of the Sacrament; I also notice that I had a struggle reflecting upon the persons present at the Last Supper. In the following prayer period I return to both the real presence and to the various persons present.
2. I am using my imagination in praying over the Baptism at the Jordan. In my review after the period of prayer I notice that I was with Jesus but His back was to me and I had a feeling of sadness. So in the next period of prayer I return to the place where Jesus was turned away from me and the experience of sadness occurred.
3. I am praying over the hidden life of Jesus. In the review I notice that I could not get settled and that I was filled with distractions and anxiousness. So in the next period of prayer I return to the same material.
4. I am praying over my sin history and requesting from the Lord the deeper awareness of the sin effects on my life. This is now being given to me. In my review I have a sense that the Lord desires to show me more. So I keep on returning to the same material.

- Repetition fundamentally repetition helps one listen more carefully to God's communication.
- First, repetition allows spiritual movements to take place:  
Since one of the goals of the directed retreat is to discern the interior movements in one's being, repetition is the way we allow these movements. If a person praying moves from Scripture passage to Scripture passage, even within the same theme, one tends to cut off the interior movements.
- Second, repetition is a help to NOTICE interior movements:  
Since many of our interior reactions at prayer happen without our noticing them, repetition gives the time for the interior reaction to be experienced more distinctly.
- Third, repetition is the way we can respect God's communication:  
Just because a prayer period has ended, we should not suppose that the Lord has nothing more to say to us through the particular passage we have been using. Repetition respects His communication for we keep on returning to the same material until we sense that the Lord wishes us to move on.
- Fourth, repetition is a means by which desolation becomes consolation:  
As stated above, repetition is used where there has been struggle, distraction, discomfort, ennui. Often these latter experiences indicate that the Lord is trying to communicate with us at a deeper level and we are resisting His approach. When we return to those points which were experienced 'negatively' we often discover that the Lord overcomes our barriers and desolation gives way to consolation; darkness to light; struggle to surrender.
- Finally, repetition helps one to experience God's mystery more deeply:  
When Ignatius writes, "I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire without any eagerness to go on till I have been satisfied," he means not only within the one period of prayer, but also over several periods of prayer, and even days of prayer. Through repetition we allow the Lord's mystery to touch our mystery at deeper levels of our being. Often, through repetition a kind of simplification of our own activity takes place as we become more and more passively receptive to God's activity. Often what starts off as meditation, through the use of repetition, subsequently becomes contemplation and stillness.

## REPETITION III

1. What is repetition *not*?
  - It is not related to some failure on your part, e.g. ... repeating a lesson to get it right such as with piano, sports, etc.
  - It is not repeating a class because you have failed it.
  
2. What *is* repetition?
  - It is essentially going back to where I found fruit or where I was impressed as I reviewed my prayer.
  - Repetition is connected to and flows out of the *review of prayer*.
  
3. The technique of repetition
  - Through repetition you begin to see and cooperate with the graces given to you by the Lord as you experience various movements with your interior.
  - Through repetition you discover where the Lord is calling you ... where are you being pulled ... what pulls you away from cooperating with the Lord.
  
4. Purpose of repetition
  - The purpose of repetition is to allow the movements of God to unfold and touch me at deeper and deeper levels of my being.
  
5. What criteria do I use for repetition?
  - Repetition flows from the questions asked in your *review of prayer*:
    - “What happened in me during my prayer?”
    - “How did it go with me?”
    - “What will I pray with the next time I pray?”
  - What I will pray on next time depends on:
    - “What satisfied me in my last prayer period?”
    - “What went well with me?”
    - “Where was I impressed?”
  
6. The secret of prayer is to stay where I am being impressed or where I am finding fruit or where Jesus is touching my heart. If I am being touched by the Lord, why move on? We are trying to know and appreciate the person of Jesus and in repetition a movement begins to unfold itself so that we can enter deeper and deeper into a mystery, a reality, or an insight.

7. Saint Ignatius writes: "... for it is not knowing much, *but realizing and relishing things interiorly that contents and satisfies the soul.*" (*Spiritual Exercises #2*)
  
8. Two ways in which I am contented, impressed or find fruit:
  - I am feeling comforted, consoled
  - I am feeling challenged
  
9. Saint Ignatius asks us to return to the thoughts and feelings where I was comforted or challenged or which struck me forcefully in my previous prayer time, "where the person has felt some *knowledge, consolation or desolation* (*Spiritual Exercises #118*) ... or *greater spiritual feeling* (*Spiritual Exercises #62*).
  
10. What are the kinds of things that happen in prayer related to repetition?
  - I am being consoled, comforted or experience spiritual appreciation through:
    - some form of enlightenment
    - something about Jesus' life or my life
    - new insights that allow me to look at myself in a new way as a person of faith, etc.
  - While saying a particular Psalm, I became conscious of something new, or I felt lifted up, or became conscious of God's presence to me (*consolation*), I return to that place and stay with it until I no longer draw fruit from it. In other words, accept and respect the experience that you have having and do not move on until you are satisfied.
  
11. Saint Ignatius writes, "... if I find what I want, there I will rest without being anxious to pass on, until I content myself" (*Spiritual Exercises #76*)
  
12. Saint Ignatius also advises us to return not only to points where I experience being consoled, but also to movements where I experience:
  - sadness
  - absence of God's presence
  - confusion
  - desire to cut our prayer time
  - turmoil
  - desolation
  - discomfort

13. We go back to where this is happening, repeat it, to see what unfolds in order to see what is behind the following feelings:
- often anxiousness ends in sweetness
  - often fear ends in covenant
  - often things we resist move us towards peace
14. Some texts can threaten us: “Take up your cross” ... “Follow me” ... “Feed my lambs”
- If I feel frightened, depressed, anxious, impressed somehow then go back to where you were feeling these and ask questions such as: Was it the event? scene? Jesus? His words? or what in the text bothered you?
  - Is my anxiety challenging me? What is my cross? How will I carry it? Often we worry about crosses that never come. Discuss these feelings with your spiritual director.
15. It is therefore, through the instrument of repetition that we go back to our own experience of prayer to where we moved so that you may dispose yourself to allow the Creator and Lord to deal directly with you his creature. (*Spiritual Exercises #15*)