"Lord, Teach Us to Pray"
Night 4

Opening Reflection

1. What were the **struggles** you experienced in praying? Is anything consistently a struggle? Did it remain difficult to pray? Is it difficult to encounter God?

2. Did you notice any **fruits** from trying to pray regularly? Did anything grow or change or develop over the three weeks? How did you see the Lord acting over the three weeks?

Staying in Love

- Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. *Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything*. (Fr Pedro Arrupe, SJ)

- The crisis of faith in our lives and in our societies also has to do with the eclipse of desire for God. It is related to a kind of slumbering of the spirit, to the habit of being content to live from day to day, without ever asking what God really wants from us…*We are sated with plenty of things, but fail to hunger for our absent desire for God. We are fixated on our own needs*, on what we will eat and wear (cf. *Mt* 6:25), even as we let the longing for greater things evaporate. *And we find ourselves living in communities that crave everything, have everything, yet all too often feel nothing but emptiness in their hearts*. (Pope Francis)

Repetition – Remaining with God

- Repetition is NOT:
    - Repeating the material of prayer as one repeats a study assignment or reviews notes for a more thorough understanding
    - Returning to material from prayer to dig for something new or different

Notes

- "Ignatius does not aim his repetitions at expanding concepts, spiritual theology, or noetic faith, but rather at simplifying and intensifying an awareness of spiritual realities, especially personal presence to the Lord…*What counts in repetition is not content, therefore, but renewed encounter*." (David Asselin, SJ

- Ignatius' definition of repetition: "I will return to those points where I have experienced *greater consolation, desolation*, or greater spiritual appreciation…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…For it is not in knowing much, but *realizing and relishing things interiorly* that contents and satisfies the soul." (From *The Spiritual Exercises*)

Nuts and Bolts of Repetition

- Reviewing my times of prayer and journaling help me to notice the movements that God might be inviting me to return to. Some questions might help you to notice:
  - What happened in me during my prayer?
  - How did it go with me?
  - What went well? What did not?
  - Where was I impressed?

- What do I return to?
  - Where I felt comforted, consoled, encouraged, aware of God's presence, feeling of peace
  - Where I felt challenged, confused, anxious, sad, distracted, unaware of God's presence, agitated, angry

- What's the goal? Why should I do this?
  - Most of our interior reactions in prayer happen *without us noticing them*, so repetition gives us time for these reactions to be *noticed and experienced* more deeply.
  - Repetition is a means by which *desolation becomes consolation*. Repetition is used where there has been struggle, distraction, discomfort. 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.
  - *Prayer is not fundamentally about content but about relationship*…what if God isn't finished talking? How often do you repeat conversations with someone to get to a deeper unity?

Notes

Remain in Me (John 15)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Reading Plan

Repetition!!!

Notes