

TRUE HEART

Spiritual Exercises

Daily exercises will help you to build your faith, knowledge of your vocation and discernment ability—your ability to discover your true heart. Thus, you can become more peaceful and content. The rituals of True Heart comprise the highly effective methods St. Ignatius developed many centuries ago to discover his own True Heart. The program consists daily of:

THREE PERIODS

THREE PRAYERS

THREE EXERCISES

Each day True Heart invites you to take three special periods of quiet, tech-free “spiritual time,” engage three different prayer disciplines and do three spiritual exercises. They are described here:

THREE PERIODS

When I Awake in the Morning—20 Minutes Total

For the first twenty minutes after getting up in the morning, keep free of all media and technology so that your heart has the necessary quiet to access the spiritual world. Make your bed, shower and get ready for the day but be quiet and reflective, thinking about the day ahead.

When I Go to Bed at Night—20 Minutes Total

Turn off all technology and media twenty minutes before going to bed. This will help you access the spiritual world and also sleep better. Use this time also to spend 1-2 minutes to do your Training Journal.

Day True Heart Time—45 Minutes Total

Have forty-five minutes in the day where you use no media or technology. The time should be contiguous and not several non-sequential time segments added together. You can do your fifteen-minute True Heart prayer, read the reflection exercise for the day, walk, exercise or rest but be alone, quiet and reflective.

THREE PRAYERS

TRUE HEART Prayer—15 Minutes Total

Take fifteen minutes to do the True Heart spiritual discipline reflecting on Creation, Presence, Memory, Mercy and Eternity. Do it mid-day, mid-afternoon or just after the evening meal or during your Day True Heart Time. Use one of the MP3 meditations found in the MEMBER section of sacredstory.net website under True Heart Resources. Membership is free.

Find a quiet place apart, a place where you will not be disturbed by family, friends, or the things of the world. Bring with you any specific annoyances or strong emotional events you experienced today. Bring also your self-centered and selfless daydreams.

When I Awake in the Morning for 1-2 Minutes Total

When your alarm goes off, keep your eyes closed and “feel” the day before you. Are you anxious or hopeful? Ask Christ to help you overcome the specific anxieties you experience. Thank Him for the hopes you identify and the graces you will be given that day. Before opening your eyes, offer your day to God and by praying for protection to St. Michael, Christ’s Lead Guardian in the battle against evil. ^u

When I Go to Bed at Night for 1-2 Minutes Total

Before falling asleep, pray for your True Heart companion and mentor by name. Feel your heart to determine if you are you anxious or hopeful. Ask Christ to help you overcome your specific anxieties. Thank Christ for the hopes you identify. Ask God to be present in your dreams. End by asking Christ to stand watch through the night.

THREE EXERCISES

Spiritual Exercise—15-20 Minutes

Each day True Heart gives you a specific spiritual exercise. You can do this exercise in the morning, evening or during the day quiet times.

Reflection Exercise—1-3 Minutes

Most of True Heart’s spiritual exercises have reflection questions. Use your Log to jot these reflections down. You can do this at the end of your spiritual exercise or at the end of the day during your quiet time.

Journal Exercise—1-2 Minutes

Once you begin the True Heart training you will be aware of new spiritual movements in your life. Briefly writing two items your True Heart Exercise Journal will help you build the discipline to understand your spiritual life and begin to discern the difference between vain and holy fantasies.

On the “holy” end of the scale, you are looking for gratitude, hope, and peace linked to your True Heart and the daydreams and fantasies coming from the Divine-Inspirer—(selfless dreams). So look for those fantasies, dreams and actions that increase your faith, your hope and your love of God and your neighbor.

On the “vain” end of the scale, you are looking for patterns of sin, compulsion and addiction linked to your false heart and the daydreams and fantasies coming from the counter-inspirer (self-centered dreams). So look for those fantasies, dreams and actions that decrease your faith, hope and love of God and neighbor. Be brief in your two items but specific, and address Jesus in your notes. Only you will see this journal so strive for honesty. Here is an example to help you focus:

Vain & Self-Centered:

Jesus, my desire to be number one made me envious
and dismissive of others.

Holy and Selfless:

Jesus, the argument I witnessed today made me realize I want to help people find peaceful ways to resolve problems.

Journal Weekly Summary

At week’s end, read over your short daily journal entries and decide which vain and which holy fantasy/daydream/action was the one you considered the most significant for the week and write them down in your journal.

Journal Monthly Summary

At month's end, read over your short weekly journal summaries and decide which vain and which holy fantasy/daydream/action was the one you considered the most significant for the month and write them down in your journal.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

True Heart Companion and/or Mentor—10 Minutes Total

(1 or 2 times a week)

If I am doing True Heart with others I know, I will consider touching base with my True Heart Companion once or twice a week. I will ask how they are doing and if anyone needs help or prayers. They will do the same for me. We will help and pray for each other.

True Heart Cohort/Pastor—45 Minutes Weekly

I will consult with the men in my cohort and our pastor guide weekly throughout the course of the ten weeks.

NIGHT VIGILS

The Night Vigil meditations are modeled on Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. You use your senses (imagination, smell, sight etc.) to enter the Gospel stories and “see” them in your mind’s eye. They provide a step by step way to enter the Gospel stories. However, feel free in praying them differently if you find them too scripted for your prayer style. We recommend doing them at night to model some of St. Ignatius’ most important moments in his conversion process. People find them very powerful ways to integrate the daily prayer experiences and draw close to Christ. We know you will benefit from them profoundly and these will prepare you for the Night Vigil that concludes the TRUE HEART journey.

True Heart Exercise Log Book

To help you keep track of your spiritual development, fill out this training report daily. It will help you to see the trainings you complete and don’t complete. A sample for a single day is below but **You can find a free downloadable PDF booklet version of these daily reports for the whole program with the PDF in this Section. See Below.**

THREE PERIODS

1. Morning True Heart Time—20 Minutes Total

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

2. Evening True Heart Time—20 Minutes Total

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

3. Day True Heart Time—A Contiguous 45 Minutes

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

THREE PRAYERS

1. When I Awake in the Morning Prayer—2 Minutes Total

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

2. TRUE HEART Prayer—Fifteen Minutes Total

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

3. As I Lay Down to Sleep Prayer—2 Minutes Total

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

THREE EXERCISES

1. Daily Spiritual Exercise—15-20 Minutes Daily

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

2. Daily Spiritual Reflection Exercise—1-3 Minutes Daily

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

3. Exercise Journal—1-2 Minutes Daily

Location_____ I Trained Yes___ No___ (If no, why?_____)

JOURNAL ENTRIES

-- A “vain, self-centered” fantasy or action that decreased my faith, hope and love of God and neighbor.

---A “holy, self-less” fantasy or action that increased my faith, hope and love of God and neighbor.

ROADBLOCKS?

Because you are doing a serious spiritual journey, expect the one St. Ignatius calls “the enemy of human nature” to try and disrupt your commitment. He has ways of doing it designed uniquely for each one of us based on our fears and weaknesses. Just realize you are “being played” and keep moving forward. Your heart will become peaceful soon when you resist the temptations of the enemy.

Also, if you are doing this with a cohort of other men discerning a vocation to diocesan priesthood, reach out to them for support. The friendship you will develop with them and with Christ Jesus will be a true blessing for you. We need that encouragement to simply complete the process that will carry you through this course and hopefully to clarity on your vocation. Just keep trying and remember: Do Not Be Afraid!

Your heart is prepared and you are ready to begin True Heart training. Trust your heart! Part of trusting your heart is focusing on each day's disciplines and not worrying about the future ones.

So, remember: Do not train ahead, don't look ahead. Stay in the present moment. Take each day, and each training as it comes. Say to yourself, "I can't do True Heart training better by going faster."

Now, before beginning your journey, say these statements aloud, and slowly.

I am starting a Relationship that will
carry me for the rest of my life.

I will be faithful to my training and
open my heart to God every day.

I trust that God will lead me to selflessness
in knowing my True Heart.

I thank Jesus for giving me the companions and mentors I will need in the journey of life.

I believe that Jesus always awaits me with His
Strength, Grace, Mercy and Love
even when I am self-centered.

What do I need for this journey?

A generous true heart.

The willingness to train daily.

The humility to always ask God for help.

[\[1\]](#) Invite God to be with you all day long:

Traditional Morning Offering

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day
for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart,
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world,

for the salvation of souls, the reparation of sins, the reunion of all Christians,
and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father this month.

Amen.

I Arise Today

I arise to-day:

might of Heaven

brightness of Sun, whiteness of Snow

splendour of Fire, speed of Light, swiftness of Wind,

depth of Sea stability of Earth, firmness of Rock.

I arise to-day :

Might of God, Power of God

Wisdom of God, Eye of God

Ear of God, Word of God

Hand of God, Path of God

Shield of God, Host of God

(From *The Book of Cerne*, 9th C)

St Michael Prayer Before Opening Eyes

Holy Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do you,

O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits

who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Amen.