

**Making Connections, Finding Meaning, Engaging the World:
Theory and Techniques for Ignatian Reflection on Service for and with Others**

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You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others. (*Matthew 5.13-16*)

Jesus of Nazareth

An enormously richer self-transcendence emerges when one awakes. There is an endless variety of things to be seen, sounds to be heard, odors to be sniffed, tastes to be palated, shapes and textures to be touched ... So we ask why and what and what for and how ... Each of us has her or his own little world of immediacy, but all such worlds are just minute strips within a far larger world, a world construed by imagination and intelligence, mediated by words, and based largely upon belief.

Bernard Lonergan, S.J.

Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits II, 3, 1970

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

Dorothy Day

Pity may be the perversion of compassion, but its alternative is solidarity ... it is out of solidarity that ... [humanity] establish[es] ... a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited ... For solidarity, because it partakes of reason, and hence of generality, is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually, not only the multitude of a class or a nation or a people, but eventually all humankind.

Hannah Arendt

“The Social Question” from *On Revolution*

Jesus has no body on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which his compassion looks out on to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. And yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.

Theresa of Avila

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world ... the General Assembly proclaim this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society ... shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms.

United Nations

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

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**Never doubt that a small group of
thoughtful, committed people can
change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing
that ever has!**

- Margaret Meade

**Injustice is rooted in a spiritual problem,
and its solution requires a spiritual
conversion of each one's heart and a
cultural conversion of our global society so
that humankind, with all the powerful
means at its disposal, might exercise the
will to change the sinful structures
afflicting our world.**

- **Very Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.**
Superior General, the Society of Jesus

INTRODUCTION

Through direct service, service-learning education, service immersion programs, and social justice advocacy, Jesuit colleges and universities seek to infuse spirituality, solidarity, and community into a mission of education for justice. This involves direct involvement with and action on behalf of individuals, groups, and communities who experience educational disadvantage, poverty, hunger, homelessness, and other forms of marginalization.

Such a mission, though, is not a task to be taken lightly, for it moves us out of typical comfort zones, exposes us to real suffering, and inevitably challenges our view of the world and our role within it. With this reality in mind, the programs sponsored by the Center for Values and Service at Loyola College in Maryland, where I was privileged to work from 2002-2004, incorporates an intentional model of preparation, action, reflection, and evaluation – called the **PARE Method**¹ – to provide service participants with the education and follow-up that are crucial to service that is both for and with others. This method connects the experience of service to critical reflection that addresses the intersections between service, development of personal values, spirituality, or faith, and processes of decision-making that free us to make choices and commitments on behalf of those in need.

Such a dynamic echoes aspects of the spirituality and worldview of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). For example, from the Ignatian paradigm, Ignatius presents a twofold mission as the core aim of his *Spiritual Exercises*: to free oneself from “disordered attachments” (really, any form of short-sighted, self-seeking activity or worldview) so as to better serve God and others. At many levels, this fundamental approach of the Ignatian vision finds a parallel in education for justice and solidarity.

¹ The PARE model was developed by the Office of Community Service-Learning at the University of Maryland. A PDF version of the model is available from its resource page: <http://www.csl.umd.edu/Handouts/general/pare.pdf>.

To return to the aforementioned PARE method: why is such an intensive model needed, or important? Or, why would something as in-depth as the *Spiritual Exercises* (30 full days in their traditional form; or over a period of several months in an adapted version) be seen as integral to the mission of a Jesuit educational institution? Either form of intensive reflection is important because any significant life activity, and particularly that of service with and for others, involves various levels and dimensions of meaning, significance, content, and context. Service, in particular, is far from being a static activity, i.e., one which tends toward repetitiveness and simplicity. Rather, it is highly dynamic, because it involves the intersection of different corners of our global reality, the intersection of different people's experience and varied worldviews, the intersection of giving and receiving. It is also dynamic because these intersections are not unidirectional. Instead, they tend to flow both ways. With time it becomes clear that the experience of service changes the roles of giver and receiver, subverts preconceptions and prejudices, and encourages new thinking about oneself and about one's assumptions concerning others and the world at large.

Since service inevitably has a reciprocal dynamic that affects all parties involved, **reflection** on the experience of service facilitates the process described by Fr. Kolvenbach in the quote above: of personal, intellectual, spiritual, and cultural-structural conversion – the transformation of heart, mind, and spirit that can shape the foundations of a more just and loving society.

In the PARE model, reflection is the third of the four steps. It is important to grasp its uniqueness. For the process of reflection is more about “being” than about “doing,” while the first, second, and fourth steps more involve doing. In other words, we reflect not as another thing to do on the long list of things to do, but *to take a step away from what we are doing* to focus on **how** one is being changed, or challenged, or affirmed, or inspired, or invited, or renewed.

Reflection need not be elaborate, *but it should be intentional*. Though appropriate in certain contexts (such as when a group knows one another well, or the service experience is deeply familiar), reflection that involves simply sitting everyone down and saying, “now, please share how you feel about your experience,” or “I’m going to play a song – please think about it,” may turn people off. They may feel they have to ‘perform’ for the group, or that there is some right or wrong way to feel about an experience. Good reflection – whatever method is used – should be planned out ahead of time, bringing into mind *what* the one leading reflection hopes to accomplish, and *how* the time and content will be structured to that end. Especially in the context of (though, obviously not coterminous with) the Ignatian tradition of education, reflection as a component of education for solidarity and justice should challenge and form the individual for an interiorly or spiritually mature orientation of self that also is fundamentally world- and other-embracing.

REFLECTIONS ON "EXPERIENCE"

Introduction:

Experience alone – especially in the context of Jesuit higher education, where any variety of experience-enriching opportunities is available to students – can fascinate, but does not necessarily transform. The following exercise is designed for the introduction of a group (in class, in a service or immersion context, etc.) to a deeper level of reflection – one that goes beyond describing experience to plumbing its significance, to allowing experience to speak to and teach us.

1) A BRIEF EXERCISE (*go through this step-by-step ... don't read ahead!*)

- What words or images immediately come to mind when you hear the word **experience**?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

- What are the similarities and differences between what you wrote down (or, if you are doing this exercise with a group, between what you wrote down and what others wrote down)? What do you notice?

SIMILARITIES:

DIFFERENCES:

- Are there any conclusions you can make about these lists? Are there any particular insights you have? What do the different lists *say* about the 'experience' of experience?

2) FROM THE EXERCISE TO A MODEL FOR REFLECTION ON THE EXPERIENCE CYCLE

- Reflection on service offers a way to engage the intersection between our interior lives, desires, interests, concerns, and our outside world. There is a *dialectic* (a dynamic, mutually-influencing interaction) between self and world. The reflective process seeks to pay attention to that middle ground, to see how the self is affected and effected by the world, and how the world is, or can be, affected and effected by oneself through service. In this sense, **reflection** intends to look upon our varied experience as an **experience cycle** that follows a model, that is repeatable, of:

AWARENESS → CONVERSION → IMMERSION

- The first step is to become **aware** of *what* a given experience is. Then we seek a next step of **conversion** – a change in our awareness from one context or belief or feeling to another because of what the experience sparks in us. Finally, we seek **immersion** – a deeper diving-in that engages us at deeper levels within ourselves, and with others. In turn, immersion will serve as the basis for new experiences, new awareness, and so on.

LOOKING MORE CLOSELY: A THEORY FOR REFLECTION ON THE EXPERIENCE CYCLE

1) BACKGROUND THEORY - KNOWLEDGE AND THE EXPERIENCE CYCLE:²

- The philosophical method of Bernard Lonergan, S.J. can be helpful as we consider the reflective process. Lonergan believes that the process of becoming **knowledgeably engaged** – both of ourselves and of things/the world in general – comes about through a cumulative, processive, and repeatable movement from:

Experience → Understanding → Judgment → Decision

- This cumulative, processive, and repeatable movement is known as the *transcendental method*. This method seeks to underscore, or demonstrate, that it can be misleading to assume that experience immediately and alone leads to knowledge. In brief form, transcendental method suggests that, for all of our conscious activity in the world, we ought to ask three fundamental and recurring questions:

What? ... So What? ... Now What?

- Lonergan argues that the transcendent knower (which each of us is intended to become, both by our philosophical identity as rational animals and by our theological identity as beings created in God's image) operates according to certain precepts, which can translate into norms for ethical life – the 'Be-Attitudes' for service! – which are:

Transcendental Precepts:	Norms / 'Be-Attitudes':
Experience	Be Attentive
Understanding	Be Intelligent
Judgment	Be Reasonable
Decision	Be Responsible
Action	Be Loving

- The words in the left-hand column are called 'transcendental' because they always and everywhere serve as the foundation of our operations of cognition and consciousness. Experience provides a foundation; from there we have a desire to understand; from which we use our reason to make judgments; based on which our identity as ethical beings moves us to make some decision and a consequent action. The process is like a spiral, leading to ever-newer and higher insights, judgments, decisions, and actions.
- But for the process to remain dynamic in this way, we must practice the 'Be-Attitudes' which correspond to this cognitive framework. Doing so, is *conversion*, which Lonergan holds is a phenomenon that occurs on the intellectual, ethical/moral, and religious levels; continuous conversion is what leads to personal authenticity. In other words, authenticity derives from meeting the challenge of the 'Be-Attitudes.'
- By extension, such a notion of interaction between self and world can mean that personal gifts and challenges have social implications, and that social goods and challenges make some personal claim on us. This can be encouraging, in the sense that we feel a solidarity from others. It can also be a challenge, for it potentially obliges us, as participants in society, to be immersed in others' lives and needs, failures and hopes and aspirations.

² The following is based on the theories of Bernard Lonergan, S.J., as developed in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1957/1997) and *Method in Theology* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972/1999). Also see Joseph Flanagan, S.J., *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

- **EXPERIENCE** is the basic framework of living; we *encounter* people, things, places, ideas, hopes, failures, interests. This is the ‘stuff’ of experience. Lonergan’s insight, though, is that **experience alone does not equal knowledge!** It is a necessary, valuable component of life, but does not alone move us to be knowledgably engaged in our world.
 - Our cultural environment, where so many good opportunities abound, can foster a ‘cult of experience’ that suggests one is not whole without collecting series after series of ‘experiences’ (social, athletic, academic, extracurricular, affective, cultural, etc.). Experience *is* a good thing! It is the foundation of growth, new ideas, relationships, worldviews. But if we collect experience after experience without reflection on its significance in the broader sweep of individual identity as it relates to the needs and interests and values of others and the world at large, we can become passive recipients of experience, rather than learners from experience with which to effect change in ourselves and our world.
 - Sometime, step back and notice how many times the word “experience” is used without defining beyond the basics of “what I did” / “what I experienced” to include some critical self-reflection on *what* the experience *meant*, *what* was *gained* from it, *how* it *shaped* the individual’s beliefs and values, how it ties into broader community needs and identities. Then, notice how much richer experience can become when the element of reflection – and sharing that reflection – becomes a part of it.

- **UNDERSTANDING** is the framework in which the ‘facts’ of our experience take on meaning and identity for us. In order to **understand** *what* our experiences *represent* or *reveal* about ourselves and the interaction between ourselves and the world, we need to go beneath and beyond our experiences’ simple facticity. We can do so by applying reflective ‘lenses’ by which we step back and view our experience. This can involve:
 - paying attention to the structure and operation of our own cognition
 - becoming more deeply aware of our own affectivity
 - fostering integration and maturation of our values, whether ethical, intellectual, civic, spiritual or religious, etc.

- **JUDGMENT** (as a cognitive process – ‘judgment’ in a moral sense often implies a negative connotation) moves us beyond understanding to a deeper **evaluation of significance** of our given set of experiences and understandings. For example:
 - We can analyze a particular experience and our understanding of it and ask, “is it so?”
 - Or, we can ask whether it is good, bad, right, wrong, just, unjust, etc.
 - This develops our ability to approach the world with a certain non-judgmental but, rather critically-judging awareness of what is and what can be, the difference between them, and what *our* role can be in doing that.

- **DECISION** is what completes the whole process. Once we have developed a critical awareness of ourselves, our world of experience, and our role within that world, we can make a decision to choose one value over another, one set of relationships over another, one commitment over another. Decision is key to completing the experience cycle:
 - It shows how experience affects us and changes us, and also how what the experience does *to us* can also inspire or move us to affect or change our world.
 - It also serves as a foundation for the next set of experiences, and, hence, the repetition of the cycle (but now from a higher level, incorporating what has been learned).

2) FRAMING THE REFLECTIVE PROCESS:

- **The Process of Reflection on the Experience Cycle** thus asks two sets of questions in relation to our experience:
 - How am I being *affected*? How am I being *effected*?
 - How can I, in turn, *affect* our world? How can I *effect* our world?

- The distinction between affect/effect may seem tedious, but it focuses our attention on the fact that there is mutual influence between feelings and decisions, reflection and action. To return again to St. Ignatius: in the *Spiritual Exercises*, one of the key movements Ignatius directs one to be attentive to are those of the affect or the affections, as he believed they are an important key to how God is at work within the human person. Our affections signal our responsiveness to the world (and other people) around us, and they in turn contribute quite significantly to the cognitive dimensions of our response to the world. As there is a mutual influence between feelings and decisions, reflection and action, so too is there a mutual influence between **world** and **self**:
 - **The world** is the source of all experiences, and thus of all awareness. It leads to conversion because it:
 - **affects us**: it has an impact on our emotions, desires, and concerns; we need only consider how moving personal experiences (births and deaths in our family, new relationships, moving from one place to another) *affect* us
 - **effects us**: it makes us into the people we are, and are yet to become; for example, for some, the types of personal events described above change individuals' lives – perhaps losing someone to an illness will lead someone to dedicate herself to the medical profession, or working with a Big Brothers / Big Sisters program will lead someone else to a life of teaching, etc.
 - **The self**: because we participate in our world – or, *are called* by our very humanity or perhaps by faith to participate in our world – the dynamic of conversion goes the other way too, leading us to immersion, in the sense that each person:
 - **affects the world**: each one of us impacts the world, through our relationships with people and all of creation
 - **effects the world**: choices we make in and on behalf of our world (or *against* our world and all of creation) bear upon how the world evolves, what kind of a place it becomes; in the Judeo-Christian tradition we are 'stewards of creation' [Genesis] which continues to 'groan towards fulfillment' [St. Paul] through our participation in the evolution of society

TECHNIQUES AND OVERVIEW FOR REFLECTION

1) TO SUMMARIZE HOW TO FRAME THE REFLECTIVE PROCESS:

- Always consider how any given mode of reflection will heighten our sensitivity to the experience cycle, and hopefully stimulate conversion (whether understood affectively, intellectually, spiritually/morally, ethically – what have you).
- Formulate reflection sessions in such a way as to facilitate asking the key questions that draw from the experience cycle:
 - How am I being *affected*? How am I being *effected*?
 - How can I, in turn, *affect* our world? How can I *effect* our world?

2) GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

- When planning reflection, think about the following:
 - *Context*: what is the situation or reality under consideration? What are the relevant issues? What are the mood and interests and concerns and capabilities of the group that will be reflecting?
 - *Content*: given the context, what format will you use for reflection? What techniques, focus questions, or activities will be appropriate for the context? What themes will allow the reflection to be both enjoyable and educational?
- In terms of content, think about different things that will be effective. Many people find visual aids useful (posters or signs or material from a website), or contemporary music, or inspirational writing or poetry, or art. Or, consider using photos and asking your group to recall images of people whom they have encountered and served. From there, and in general, your reflection ought to proceed along two lines, suggesting ways that participants might:
 - 1) **recall** what their desires/hopes/expectations were when they first signed up for or took part in the event/experience, and comparing how that has evolved, where they are with it now in the midst of (or after) the experience.
 - 2) **consider** what they have learned/gained from those they have served; and comparing that with what they hope/believe they have offered in return.

3) PREPARATION - **planning, framing, focusing**:

- **PLAN AHEAD**: It will be helpful if you have sketched out ahead of time how you plan to organize the reflection, remembering the ideas about *context* and *content* outlined above. Also, you may want to let the group know of a brief outline ahead of time.
- **FRAME THE PROCESS**: Think about how you want to ‘frame’ the reflection so it is coherent and meaningful, something to hold onto. In this regard, opening and closing readings, prayers, or meditations can serve as bookends for the reflective process as a whole: the opening reflection ‘sets the stage;’ the closing reflection reminds the group of what has occurred, or how God has been present, and what the group desires as they go forward. A good template for the entire reflective process can be summarized from these two adaptations from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola:

Having surveyed all the gifts that I have in my life, and all that I have received from others, I reflect on myself and ask: What have I done for others? What am I doing for others? What ought I do for others?

Paraphrase from the text itself, Spiritual Exercises, n. 54:

Having surveyed all that God has provided, and all that Christ has offered, I reflect on myself and ask: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ?

- **FOCUS THE PROCESS:** Always ensure that reflection is directly tied to a particular question or aspect that draws on your service or the work involved, and avoid beginning vaguely, as in ‘so what do you want to talk about?’ This may intimidate certain group members, and frustrate others. It is the leader’s responsibility to plan the reflection ahead of time, and with a concrete focus in mind – at least one to begin from. For example:
 - “today we will focus on how we are both challenged and affirmed in our choice of this service site [*or: ... in our choice of serving in student government.; etc.*]”
 - “today we will focus on images from our work which stand out in our minds”
 - “today we will consider concrete ways of bringing about a change in the situation of those with whom we work”
 - “today we will consider how academic work informs our service, and vice versa”
 - “today we will consider ways in which our experience of service both affirms and challenges particular notions of faith and belief systems”

4) CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR FORMAT:

- **SILENCE:** Begin reflection with a period of silence. Inform participants that the time will begin this way, so they are comfortable. Silence allows us to become aware of various movements (hopes / fears / expectation / etc.) rather than pushing them away.
- **OPENING:** As mentioned above, it is helpful to begin reflection with a reading, poem, prayer, or other meditation that introduces the gathering, and serves in some way to appeal for openness of mind, heart, and spirit, or to appeal for God’s presence, such as:

O Spirit of God, we ask you to help orient all of our actions
by your inspiration, and carry them on by your gracious assistance,
that every prayer and work of ours may always begin from you,
and through you be happily ended. Amen.³
- **CONTENT:** See the attached sheets for various models.
- **JOURNALING:** Encourage participants to journal about their reflection, either before your time together has ended, or shortly thereafter on their own.
- **CLOSING:** Close with the other half of the ‘bookend’ that you began with – whether another reading, poem, or prayer, or a song, or even just silence. But in whatever form, close in some way that allows the group:
 - 1) meaningfully to summarize what has taken place
 - 2) to have some sense of gratitude, or hope, or resolve going forward

³ A Prayer for Spiritual Freedom, from Michael Harter, S.J., ed., *Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993), 13.

5) OTHER SPECIFICS:

- **FREQUENCY:** 2-3 times per semester
- **FORMAT:** in a large group (8-10), or in smaller groups (3-5)
- **PARTICIPATION:** Some students will take to reflection more than others. It is important that all students involved in service have some regular exposure to the reflective process. Others may desire more; suggest that they plan, on their own initiative, to meet regularly.

6) EVALUATION: Be sure to spend some time evaluating your reflection, on your own, but also through getting some feedback from the group that participated:

- What worked well?
- What worked less well?
- Any ideas or suggestions for follow-up? Any themes that developed from this reflection that could follow through at the service site, or in future reflections?
- Make some notes for yourself on the reflection, and discuss your evaluation of it with your supervisor, mentor, or colleague.
- If you believe the format you used worked well, consider posting it to JusticeWeb or otherwise making it available to colleagues at your or other Jesuit institutions.

THE IGNATIAN EXAMEN

In an article on the Ignatian *Examen*, Dennis Hamm, S.J. discusses this reflection on consciousness as “living in dialogue with God”.⁴ The idea here is that God’s Spirit permeates all of creation, all of experience, is a part of every human life. What we seek, then, is an experience of the divine, of the Spirit, in the context of our everyday experience. The spirituality of the Ignatian *Examen* is firmly rooted in concrete, practical experience and activity. And, it also presumes that we are active participants in God’s plan for the world. If we’re meant to be active participants, then, we do well to pay close attention to how our life experiences and relationships call us to hear God’s voice, and to respond in love.

Preparation Suggestions:

- In order to cultivate a regular practice of the Ignatian *Examen*, it is helpful to review its context and foundational premises:
 - Prayer or meditation is often about dialogue; even silent or meditation often is for the purpose of hearing the voice or feeling the prompting of the Spirit.
 - Thus, in whatever manner or tradition, prayer is never just about oneself, but rather about opening oneself to another: a community of worship, a prayer companion, peers, those in need, the world at large, the very voice and power of God.
 - The Ignatian *Examen* seeks this very awareness of what is going on around me, and seeks a dialogue so as to become more keenly aware of *how* God is speaking to me in and through my experience and environment and encounters with others.
 - The Ignatian *Examen* always considers the context of the here and now of our everyday, diverse, rich experience! *But it is not just “my” experience – rather, my experience as immersed in the life of God, which is the life of the world of creation in its diversity.*
 - It considers five key points: light / thanksgiving / feelings / focus / future.
 - You can use the *examen* for any period of time: part of the day, at the end of the day, after a key experience, at the end of a week or semester or year.

Format:

- Sort through this time frame according to Hamm’s five ‘steps’ of awareness (“LT3F”):
 - **Pray for light:** ask for “some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading” you.
 - **Review this period of time in a spirit of thanksgiving:** what have been the gifts of existence, relationships, challenges? *Be thankful!*
 - **Surface your feelings associated with this review:** “our feelings, positive or negative, are clear signals of where the action was” – so pay attention to the whole range of feelings you have: delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, peace, contentment, impatience, desire, hope, regret, shame, uncertainty, compassion ...
 - **Focus on one of those feelings and pray from it:** whether it be positive or negative, what stands out as the major movement in your life in this period of time? Just express spontaneously the prayer that springs from this feeling: praise, contrition, gratitude, hope, desire for help or healing or insight.
 - **Look toward the future:** as you look ahead – whether to the rest of the day or week or month or season, you are shifting from one mode of living and set of experiences and relationships to a different context. Look to this immediate future. What feelings surface now as you anticipate your experience? Anticipation? Some anxiety? Hope? Excitement? Fear? Self-doubt? Withdrawal? Engagement? Whatever this feeling is, turn it, too, into prayer – for help or healing, for inspiration or guidance. To conclude, pray the Lord’s Prayer, or another prayer of significance to you.

⁴ Dennis Hamm, S.J., “Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day” in *America* 14 May 1994.

SENSORY-BASED MEDITATION REFLECTION

This method of reflection is helpful in circumstances – like immersion trips, service in places and with people where there exists great suffering and material poverty, or unfamiliar spiritual experiences – when it may, initially, be difficult to put the experience and reflection on it into words. Think about times when a particularly challenging experience has presented itself, and listening to music, some kind of meditation, or a walk in the woods, offered comfort or clarity. Often when our minds race, or when we can't quite get our thoughts around a given experience, our senses are a better aid to insight.

Sensory-based meditation can help us to make the connections between our interior personal experience and reactions to things, and the world around us. This is a 'holistic' type of reflection, in that it seeks to integrate our entire selves – mind, body, spirit – with our surroundings. In this sense it can serve as a foundation for a deeper personal immersion in or commitment to the world. From a spiritual standpoint it reflects on who we are and what we have, and moves to an awareness of the world around us and a more thorough consideration of how God's Creation, from which we have come and towards which we are called to be good stewards, draws us into it through the senses, and draws itself into us through those same senses.

This method loosely draws on principles of the Application of the Senses and the methodology of the various Contemplations and Meditations from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, and is intended to stimulate the cognitive and affective processes necessary for personal conversion, solidarity with others, and ongoing vocational discernment.

Preparation Suggestions:

- Have participants begin with something that contextualizes the experience which is the basis of the reflection. For example, have participants look at a photograph that relates to the context; or read a journal entry; or just spend time in silence recalling the experience.

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins with a song, poem, reading from a text connected with students' academic coursework, prayer or some form of meditation or reflection.
- **Guides for Personal Reflection:**
 - I consider the many gifts of creation that I possess; I consider by what means they have come to my possession ...
 - I then recall the context of the experience I choose to reflect upon, and ask of myself or reflect upon the following questions:
 - What, and who, do I hear?
(perhaps nature, or car alarms; voices happy or sad; young or old ...)
 - What, and who, do I see?
(a well-dressed professional woman; a tired old man; playing children; a laughing homeless person; mansions and Mercedeses; ghettos and go-carts)
 - What, and who, do I smell?
(flower beds and cool water; trash and road tar; musty tenements and mildewed school books; hospital antiseptic; Church candles)
 - What, and who, do I feel?
(the person next to me; my best friend; the silkiness of a baby's hair; the rough hands of a migrant worker; a steaming dishwasher at a soup kitchen)
 - What do I taste?
(the metallic aftertaste of city water, or the smoothness of Evian; the hot meal I know I'll have every day, or the stomach ache after having gone without a meal)
 - Having surveyed my surroundings, real or imagined, I take stock: what are the needs? What can I give from what I have?
 - Taking a line from St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* (#52), I can ask of myself:

- What have I done for Christ's people [for the world]?
 - What am I doing for Christ's people [for the world]?
 - What ought I do for Christ's people [for the world]?
- Close with a review of the movement and inspiration of the reflection; prayer; journal.
- **Sharing:** each group member briefly shares, as appropriate, from her/his meditation. The sharing should be rooted in the specific work (e.g., service, retreat ministry, etc.) and the person's immersion in that work. If they feel so inclined, participants may then choose to relate their personal reflections to things from their own life (family, friends, school work or projects, aspirations, etc.).
- **Group Discussion:** after everyone has shared their meditation, have the group talk about what they have heard. Are there similarities in the reflections? Common themes? Challenges that can be discussed or engaged? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice?*
- **Closing:** summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

SCRIPTURE-BASED CONTEMPLATION

Scripture has long held power for evoking connections between our interior movements and our outward experience. You may want to use Scripture as a way of providing symbols, metaphors, and images which hold power because of their familiarity – or, in some cases, because of their *unfamiliarity*.

Scripture-based contemplation lies at the core of St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, for Ignatius saw it as a primary means for connecting the individual's interior conversion, to the larger picture – the tradition of the faith, and the future of the church and of society. Because so many of the stories in Scripture, especially parables, either appear unfinished, or subvert common wisdom and popular prejudice, Ignatius seems to have seen that it could be a powerful tool in sparking that connection between interiorized conversion, and one's subsequent immersion in service of God in others.

Given this background, when using Christian Scripture for reflection on those contexts germane to education for justice, select passages which deal:

- 1) with the direct ministry of Jesus and his followers (more so than abstract teachings)
- 2) with the way Jesus interacts with those in need and at the margins, and vice versa.

If you are using sacred texts from other religious traditions, similarly select passages which speak to a context of direct ministry or service. The point is to draw on common themes so as to connect them with a specific experience of service, ministry, or immersion, and to hold them in dialogue, to see what the sacred text says to the present experience, and what the experience says to the tradition. In this way, the experience can be transformed from something individualized, to something that we can come to know as being united with the ages-old struggle to realize God's reign of peace.

Preparation Suggestion:

- Ahead of time, select a passage of Scripture. Suggestions from the Gospels are:

Sermon on the Mount / Beatitudes (Matthew 5.1-12)	Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Luke 19.1-10)
Similes of Light and Salt (Matthew 5.13-16)	The Cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21.12-17)
The Magnificat (Luke 1.46-56)	The Greatest Commandment (Mark 12.28-34)
Healing of a Paralytic (Mark 2.1-12 or Luke 5.17-26)	The Raising of Lazarus (John 11.1-44)
Healings and Discipleship (Matthew 9.27-38)	The Washing of the Feet (John 13.1-20)
The Woman at the Well (John 4.4-42)	The Vine and the Branches / Love Commandment (John 15.1-17)
The Canaanite Woman's Faith (Matthew 15.21-28)	The Crucifixion/Good Thief (Luke 23.33-43)
Pardon of the Sinful Woman (Luke 7.36-50)	The Resurrection (Luke 24.1-12)
Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.29-37)	The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-35)
Cure of a Woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13.10-21)	Resurrection Appearance / Call to Follow (John 21.1-19)
Children and the Kingdom (Matthew 18.1-5 or Mark 9.33-37, 10.13-16)	The Great Commissioning of the Disciples (Matthew 28.16-20)
Healings of Jairus's Daughter and Woman with a Hemorrhage (Mark 5.21-34)	
Cure of Bartimaeus (Mark 10.46-52)	
- Ask each participant to read and reflect on the passage ahead of time, individually.

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins by prayerfully reading the passage to the group. When praying with Scripture, read slowly and intentionally; pause where a word, phrase, or image is striking, and even repeat that word/phrase/image several times. Note that in hearing/reading the words reflectively can bring fruit in itself; avoid rushing ahead to 'read' the passage as you would a book; pause to notice details you never noticed before.
- **Guides for Personal Reflection:**
 - Use your imagination to picture this scene: what does it look / smell / sound / feel like?
 - What are Jesus and other characters in the story doing / saying / feeling? How do they interact? What emotions are expressed / unexpressed?

- Imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story, or as Jesus, or as yourself, transposed into the scene. What do you say? Think? Feel? Experience? Hope for? What do you say to Jesus, or to the others?
- **Sharing:** encourage participants to share their experience of reflecting on the Scripture, and to respond, in some form, to the following questions:
 - What movements in my own mind, heart, spirit, affect did I notice?
 - What particular attractions, distractions did I notice?
 - What desire am I left with?
 - How might I unite my experience of prayer with my work of service? How do Jesus or the other characters in the story who labor in the service of others, invite me to unite my work with the women and men who follow him/her/them?
- **Group Discussion:** after everyone has shared their reflection, have the group talk about what they have heard. Are there similarities? Common themes? Challenges that can be discussed or engaged? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice?*
- **Closing:**
 - Encourage participants to journal about their reflection, and to return to the same passage again a few days later, and to begin by granting special attention to those images, words, or points that struck them from before.
 - Summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

NARRATIVE REFLECTION

Narrative reflection draws on the basic human experience of story-telling. Think back to the stories that inspired, impressed, or encouraged you as a child, and the impact they had on you. Or think of how people tend to tell stories after visiting friends, going on a trip, or encountering a new kind of experience. Good stories usually communicate a context so well that we can imagine it ourselves. They mention various people, describe what people were saying and doing and how they felt, and often conclude with some type of a 'moral' or insight or conclusion.

Reflecting on connections between academic work, and service, ministry, or other forms of justice education involvement on or off campus as a story can help us to pinpoint who the crucial people are, pay closer attention to the details and concerns of their lives, and can help us to pay closer attention to what, in the end, they teach us or how they inspire us.

This method loosely draws on principles of the Composition of Place and the methodology of the various Contemplations from the *Spiritual Exercises*. It too is intended to stimulate the cognitive and affective processes necessary for conversion, solidarity, and ongoing vocational discernment.

Preparation Suggestions:

- To use this format, inform participants ahead of time that you will use a narrative approach. Ask them to think about some key questions that narrative stories tend to consider:
 - What is the context? For example, if the context is service in the community, what does the agency, neighborhood, or service site and their surrounding area look like? Smell like? Sound like? Feel like? Adapt this as necessary to another context at hand.
 - Who are the key players? Who is involved? Who is there? What roles do they perform or fill? Who are you in the context of this place?
 - What goes on there? What do people say and do? How do they interact with one another? How do you interact with them?
 - What is the 'moral' of the story? What insights or conclusions or lessons do you learn through being a part of the story?
- It may be helpful if participants have journaled a bit ahead of time about the above questions.

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins with a song, poem, reading from a text connected with students' academic coursework, prayer or some form of meditation or reflection.
- **Sharing:** each group member briefly shares from her/his narrative. The sharing should be rooted in the specific work (e.g., service, retreat ministry, etc.) and the person's immersion in that work. If they feel so inclined, participants may then choose to relate the story of the immersion context to things from their own life (family, friends, school work or projects, aspirations, etc.).
- **Group Discussion:** after everyone has shared their own story, have the group then talk about what they have heard. Are there similarities in the narratives? Common themes? Challenges that can be discussed or engaged? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice?*
- **Closing:** summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

AESTHETIC-BASED REFLECTION

Particularly striking (or even jarring) experiences can benefit from a process that transforms complex emotions and thought patterns into symbolic or interpretive form. The aesthetic-based format for reflection allows great freedom and creativity of interpretation, and the translation of something abstract or obscure into a form that is easier to grasp or appreciate. Various media will do the trick: using photos to recount an experience and to reflect on it in retrospect; listening to music associated with the experience, or, intended to inspire a particular way of re-appropriating the experience; writing exercises; viewing or producing a work of art and relating; etc. Given the nature of this form of reflection, there is little by way of structure to recommend: simply begin with some silence, prayer, or meditation; then open up the time to a group encounter with whatever aesthetic media is your focal point.

Preparation Suggestion:

- Following is a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke. It could be distributed to reflection group members in advance of a meeting, or at the beginning with time for silent reading/reflection. Then, similar to a literature or film criticism class, invite individuals to reflect on the poem, targeting their reflection and interpretation to their service work:

*Catch only what you've thrown yourself, all is
mere skill and little gain;
but when you're suddenly the catcher of a ball
thrown by an eternal partner
with accurate and measured swing
towards you, to your center, in an arch
from the great bridgebuilding of God:
why catching then becomes a power –
not yours, a world's.⁵*

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins by re-reading the poem slowly and meditatively.
- **Guides for Personal Reflection:**
 - What are the things I have 'thrown' and 'caught' (received) myself, of my own initiative? That is, what in my life is mine and mine alone, reserved to me?
 - What are the things I have caught, which I have received from another, from God? What is the qualitative difference between these things, and those that are more self-generated?
 - What is 'my center'?
 - When I receive from God and from others, do I keep it for myself, or receive it as received-and-returnable, such that what I do with it becomes not my own, not just skill, but a power that benefits the world?
 - What images does this poem evoke? Feelings and sentiments?
 - If I close my eyes and hear the poem repeated, what images come forth? Feelings?
- **Sharing:** each group member briefly shares, as appropriate, from her/his reflection. The sharing should be rooted in the specific work (e.g., service, retreat ministry, etc.) and the person's immersion in that work. If they feel so inclined, participants may then choose to relate their personal reflections to themes in their own life.
- **Group Discussion:** after everyone has shared their reflection, have the group talk about what they have heard. Are there similarities? Common themes? Challenges that can be discussed or engaged? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice?*
- **Closing:** summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, quoted in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1999), v.

COMMUNITY ASSETS / PERSONAL ASSETS MAPPING REFLECTION

Service experiences, as well as academic work especially (though not exclusively) in the social sciences, often open our eyes to very difficult realities that people and communities face as a result of structural problems endemic to a given context, e.g., racism, maldistribution of resources, etc. Often in these settings, it becomes so very clear what a community lacks: e.g., affordable health care, good schools, solid neighborhood coalitions, healthy family structures. We then may tend to overlook (or become too despondent to see) the strengths of the community, the good things that are in place, the great gifts that have enabled people to survive – even to thrive – in a disadvantaged setting. In their book, *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight offer a model for identifying these community assets, suggesting this is a much more positive – and potentially useful – way of reflecting on and serving a community.⁶

Following are models, adapted from Kretzmann and McKnight, for reflecting on a community's assets, as well as on one's own personal assets. The premise here is that conversion, solidarity, and discernment for vocation all possess dialectical characteristics; students very often come to see that their 'helping' in a given service or immersion context is quite dim in comparison with what they learn and gain from those they encounter.

While this exercise is more directly suited to a service site or immersion experience, it also may be adapted to academic study if the context under analysis is a specific one (e.g., housing and homelessness in Baltimore, MD; migration along the Tijuana-San Diego border; education in the South Bronx) about which students have become relatively familiar or knowledgeable, even if from afar.

Preparation Suggestion – Community Assets Mapping Exercise:

- Ahead of time, ask participants to pay close attention to the context at hand, and ask themselves the following questions:
 - What talents and abilities do you observe in those you encounter (or, if this is done in the context of coursework, in those you read about)?
 - What are the strengths of the community context? What is beautiful about it? What are signs or sources of hope?
 - How do various organizations and constituencies – churches, schools, businesses, parks, community associations, hospitals, service centers – play a role in the community? Try to be as specific as possible. In other words: who or what is there, and what positive difference do they make to the community?
- Also ahead of time, ask individuals to reflect on the following questions:
 - What talents and abilities do *you* bring to those whom you encounter? [If in the context of coursework, from what you have learned, what *could* you contribute to the community you are studying, if given the opportunity?]
 - In what ways have you been open to and learned from those at your site [or, about who you read/study]?
 - How have you shared something of your own life with others, and how have you allowed them to share with you? How has it affected you?

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins with a song, poem, reading from a text connected with students' coursework, prayer or some form of meditation or reflection.
- **Group Process:**
 - Make a map – be creative! – that includes, as specifically as possible, the following categories as they pertain to your given service site / context under study:

⁶ See John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993). See especially pp. 1-11.

- gifts of Individuals: e.g., youth, elderly, artists, 'labeled' people, etc.
 - associations: e.g., faith groups, cultural groups, block clubs, etc.
 - local Institutions: e.g., businesses, parks, hospitals, schools, libraries, etc.
- Engage in group discussion about the following questions:
 - Has everyone identified similar assets? Is anything missing?
 - What are the dominant assets of the community? What do they contribute, and what is their significance?
 - How are the various assets inter-related? Who controls them? Does it say anything more significant about the gifts of this community?
 - How might the experience of mapping the community's assets improve or affect the way you engage the community? What can you take/learn from this?
- **Group Reflection:** what have you learned (individually/collectively)? Is there any particular insight you can bring back to the community where you work? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice? Is any action or follow-up called for?*
- **Closing:** summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

ALTERNATIVE: The Personal and Emerging Assets Mapping Exercise

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer may want to read from the Simile of the Light and the Bushel Basket (from the Gospel of Luke 11:33-36):

No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light. The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is sound, then your whole body is filled with light, but when it is bad, then your body is in darkness. Take care, then, that the light in you not become darkness. If your whole body is full of light, and no part of it is in darkness, then it will be as full of light as a lamp illuminating you with its brightness.

- **Guides for Personal Reflection:**
 - Using this image, create a map of your own personal assets, the "rays of light" like from the simile, of your life, especially in the context of service. What shines forth to others?
 - At the same time, sometimes our light can be covered up; a slice of wicker from a basket can interrupt a ray of light. What 'wicker slices' – fears or anxieties or senses of disappointment in yourself or towards others or limitations – cover over these rays of light? What would it take to remove these? As the wicker is cleared away, what new rays will emerge (new skills, virtues, ideas, gifts)? What new rays do you envision or dream might emerge with time? What "emerging assets" – emerging rays of light – are developing because of your service experience? How will you develop them?
- **Sharing:** each group member briefly shares, as appropriate, from her/his reflection. The sharing should be rooted in the specific work (e.g., service, retreat ministry, etc.) and the person's immersion in it. If they feel so inclined, participants may then choose to relate their personal reflections to themes in their own life.
- **Group Discussion:** what have you learned (individually/collectively)? Is there any particular insight you can bring back to the community where you work? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice? Is any action or follow-up called for?*
- **Closing:** summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS / THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Socially-informed theological reflection is a programmatic and dialogic form of reflection that incorporates group dynamics, theology, and analysis informed by the insights of various academic disciplines. It is best used after longer, more consistent involvement in a given service, ministry, or immersion context, when participants have more data – experiential and academic – with which to understand and deepen the experience in retrospect. It is also useful if there is some concern for evaluating a given context for the purpose of change or action-planning. Social analysis for pastoral action pays close attention to what is termed “the pastoral cycle,” which seeks to demonstrate the close, inter-dependent relationships between four “mediations of experience”: insertion into a given pastoral (/service) context; social analysis; theological reflection; pastoral planning.⁷ The format outlined below seeks to give a broad overview of different components of social analysis and theological reflection, which you can choose from to fit with your given context and the interests and background and abilities of the group involved.

Preparation Suggestion:

- Select a theme in advance. The theme could be religiously-oriented, such as: Christ as teacher; Christ as poor; being a counter-cultural witness; hope and resurrection. Or, it could be more generalized, such as: justice vs. injustice; hope vs. disappointment; the joys and struggles of laboring with those who suffer; forms of discrimination; issues of economic disparity; considering models of socioeconomic development, etc.
- Ahead of time, the leader or a volunteer should inform the group of the theme and suggest points for prayer and reflection, for example, from Scripture, from articles or books relevant to a specific discipline, etc.
 - The specific points for reflection prepared ahead of time should ask participants to relate the chosen theme to the explicit context (e.g., service site, immersion program, work experience, etc.) which serves as the basis for the reflection: draft points or questions for reflection that are directed to the intersection of personal experience with the relevant work – not just to personal experience!
 - Examples include: “what does Christ teach us about being a good teacher?” “What does it mean to ‘read the signs of the times?’” “How do I incorporate Mother Theresa’s philosophy of service?” “What do some of the basic principles of _____ [economics, sociology, political science, history, philosophy, anthropology, etc.] have to say to this particular experience?”

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins with a prayer or some form of meditation or reflection specifically tied into the theme/focus of the meeting.
- **Group Process:**
 - Each group member briefly shares what came to her/him in reflection or prayer. Again, the sharing should be rooted in the person’s immersion in the specific work/context.
 - Identify the ‘heart of the matter:’ the leader or a volunteer helps the group discern and articulate a theme that is common in what has been shared: what issues, questions, experiences, desires, or tensions are common among the shared stories? Is there an operative theological category we can work with, e.g., grace; redemption; sin and forgiveness? Or, is there another more general and not necessarily explicitly theological operative category we can work with, e.g., injustice, urban poverty, racism, economic development, education?
 - Examine the theological tradition: how various theological traditions speak to the heart of the matter? For example, does Scripture, an encyclical, a development within the history of the

⁷ See Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, revised and enlarged edition (Washington, DC: Orbis Books / the Center of Concern, 1983 / 1990), p. 7.

- Church, a particular devotional practice help address the issue(s) raised? Is there an applicable school of theology (e.g., moral, liberation, feminist, environmental, ecclesial, sacramental)?
- Examine insights from society, culture, and academic disciplines: how does our cultural or social context help us understand the dynamics underlying our experience and our questions? How do we read the signs of the times, and what are they saying to us? Do psychology, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, political science, or jurisprudence have anything to say to us? How do their insights mesh, or not mesh, with our insights from theology?
 - Engage in analysis: given the above insights, analyze the context according to the following questions [see Holland and Henriot, pp. 98-100]:
 - What does our historical consciousness reveal about the given situation?
 - What major economic, political, social, cultural structures influence the situation?
 - What key values (ethical, religious, psychological, etc.) operate in the situation?
 - What is the future direction or orientation of the situation?
 - Reflect on action steps: What is God calling us to do? Or, if we prefer not to operate from an explicitly religious or theological perspective, what does our own educated awareness propel us to do? Do we need to make any changes in the way we go about our work, or in the work itself? Is there any additional individual conversion to which we are called? Or, if an explicit action is not called for – or not possible – why is that the case?
 - **Closing:** the closing in this exercise should be more elaborate than in many of the others. It involves several steps:
 - Claim something new: are there any new meanings or insights about the ‘heart of the matter’ from our reflection? What one thing – word, image, phrase, insight – do we take away from the process?
 - Engage in some self-reflection:
 - How have we been affirmed or challenged at the level of faith? The level of justice?
 - Is there any inconsistency between our professed theology (what we say we believe about God) and our operative theology (what our actions tell us we really believe about God)?
 - Or, is there any inconsistency between our professed academic methodology or perspective (what we say we believe _____ [art, economics, political science, sociology, etc.] contributes to society) and our operative methodology (what our actions tell us we really believe about _____)?
 - Evaluate: did this model work? And changes for next time? Theme for next time?
 - Closing Prayer

A SYNTHETIC MODEL: Sensory/Aesthetic/Theological Reflection

Opening Reflection:

In his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," (April 1963), Martin Luther King addresses his audience from the intertwined perspectives of faith and justice, philosophy, theology, and humanism. In claiming that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," he makes a claim for the inter-relatedness of persons and communities because of a common end, the "single garment of destiny" of the human person. Religiously we might ground such a claim in the Genesis vision of every human person being created in the very image and likeness of God. Or we might ground such a claim in a basic philosophical vision of human uniqueness as possessing the capacity for reason, love, and inter-relatedness. In any case, King goes on to claim:

"Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help [people] to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood."

This might serve as a model or vision for any service, ministry, or immersion context. We might reflect on how, concretely, the immersion into a different context creates tensions in our own minds, so that we might come to understand our experience, make some judgment concerning its significance, and come to some decision as to how to appropriate it in our everyday lives.

Suggested Format:

- **Opening:** the leader or a volunteer begins with a prayer or some form of meditation or reflection specifically tied into the theme/focus of the meeting.
- **Personal Reflection:**
 - Think back over a period of time (e.g., the past few weeks or months or even years) to an experience of being immersed in some new kind of context: place, group of people, new academic environment, social setting, etc. What were your concerns and hopes, desires and expectations? What sensations do you remember (smells, sounds, feelings, etc.) and what interior sentiments do you remember? Specifically, what sorts of 'tensions in the mind' were present? [write these down:]
 - Now, consider what 'myths or half-truths' you may have possessed which that experience revealed to you. [write these down as well:]
 - Re-read King's words from above. In light of what you have recalled from your own experience and understanding, consider the following words, and select one which strikes you as particularly relevant to what you have written above. That is, which of the following (or write another word if that seems best) best encapsulates the judgment or evaluation of the significance of that understanding that you came to?

GRATITUDE

UNDERSTANDING

INSIGHT

FREEDOM

DOUBT

ANXIETY

WISDOM

RENEWAL

QUESTIONING

CLARITY

SURRENDER

CHALLENGE

- Jot down a few ideas, or images, or feelings, or thoughts that connect to this word. What is the significance of this word – or what does it represent or mean – to you?

- Now, in the spirit of this reflection, consider the following (either now, or later on your own, possibly in a journal):
 - Given what you have written above, what would you say your service immersion experience was like for you?
 - How has your immersion in the world of another/others created a tension that has moved you to some kind of “creative analysis and objective appraisal,” and “majestic heights of understanding” – in your work, with others, and within yourself?
 - What understandings have you come to surrounding this work, and how might you now apply them to the context of your ongoing (or future) service?
 - Or, what do you understand or know that you have yet to come to an understanding of – i.e., that is the next point of departure in your preparation, service, or reflection?
 - What difference does this make in your life? Given your talents and abilities and interests, is there any decision you see yourself coming to, or possibly needing to come to, in regard to how you will live and serve in the world?
- **Sharing:** each group member briefly shares, as appropriate, from her/his reflection. The sharing should be rooted in the specific work (e.g., service, retreat ministry, etc.) and the person’s immersion in it. If they feel so inclined, participants may then choose to relate their personal reflections to themes in their own life.
- **Group Discussion:** what have you learned (individually/collectively)? Is there any particular insight you can bring back to the community where you work? *How does it relate to broader themes of education for justice? Is any action or follow-up called for?*
- **Closing:** summarize if you can any major common points or insights. Conclude with a closing prayer, meditation, or reflection.

A Closing Prayer ...

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability –
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually – let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
And accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense, and incomplete.

- *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.*

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Bibliography of Ignatian Readings and Resources

The following materials represent a selective sampling of basic, introductory texts intended to be of use to faculty, staff, administrators, and students of Jesuit colleges and universities who desire greater familiarization with source materials that touch upon the history, spirituality, and commitment to the intersection between faith and justice of the Society of Jesus and its founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola.

This bibliography is far from exhaustive. If you have read something that does not appear here but that you believe would be helpful to others, please contact Kurt Denk, S.J. (kdenk@jesuits.net) with a full citation and description, and it will be added to this list.

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