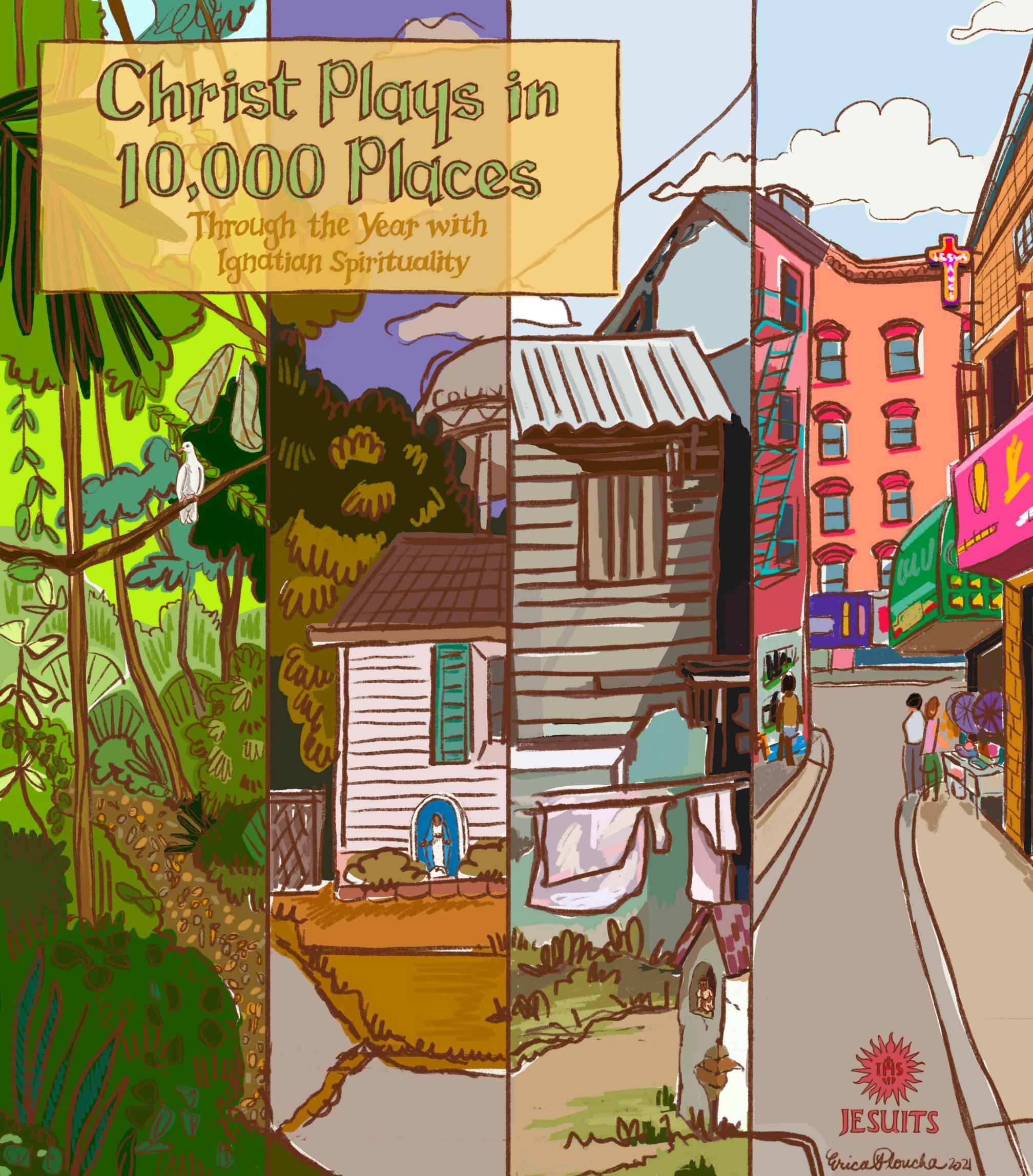


Christ Plays in 10,000 Places

Through the Year with
Ignatian Spirituality



JESUITS

Erica Ploucha 2021



Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: Through the Year with Ignatian Spirituality

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In Celebration of the Ignatian Year 2021-2022



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Introduction

Five hundred years ago, a man was hit in the leg by a cannonball at the battle of Pamplona. What does this have to do with us? Well, a lot. Because that man happened to be St. Ignatius of Loyola, although he was then known as Iñigo, a swashbuckling young man in search of glory and the hearts of young women. If there was honor to be earned in battle, he wanted it. If there was a lady to pursue, he was ready to win her over with dashing chivalry. But all of that began to change on the day the cannonball struck him.

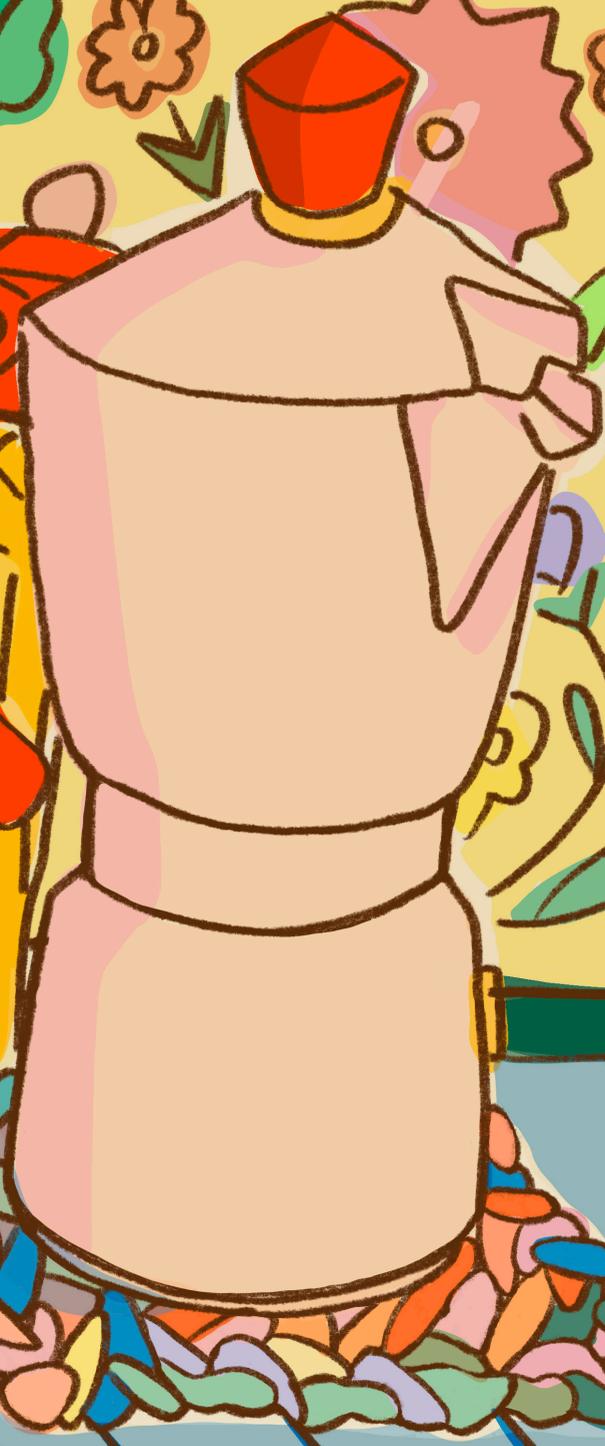
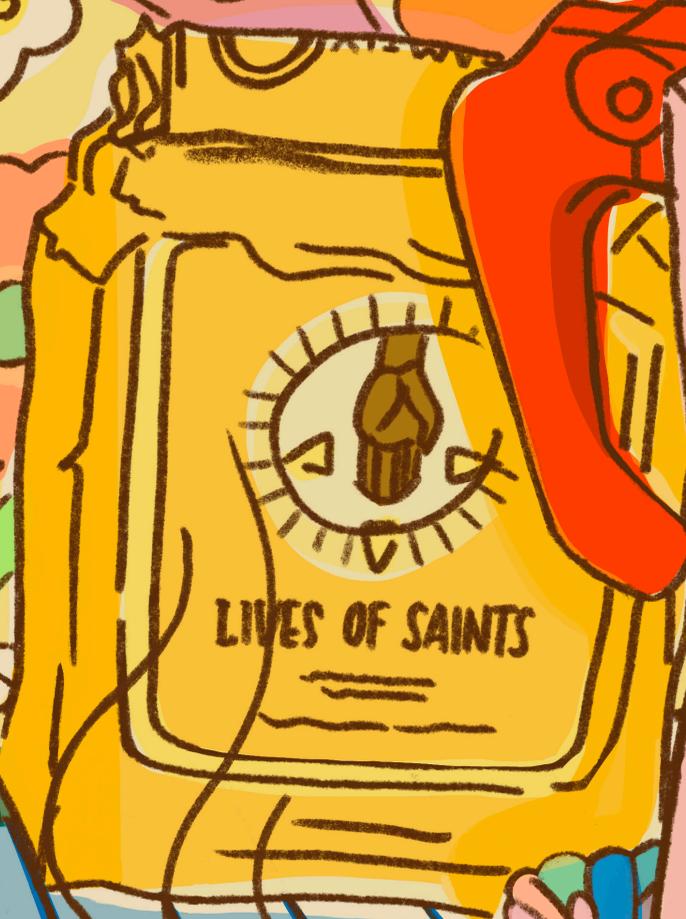
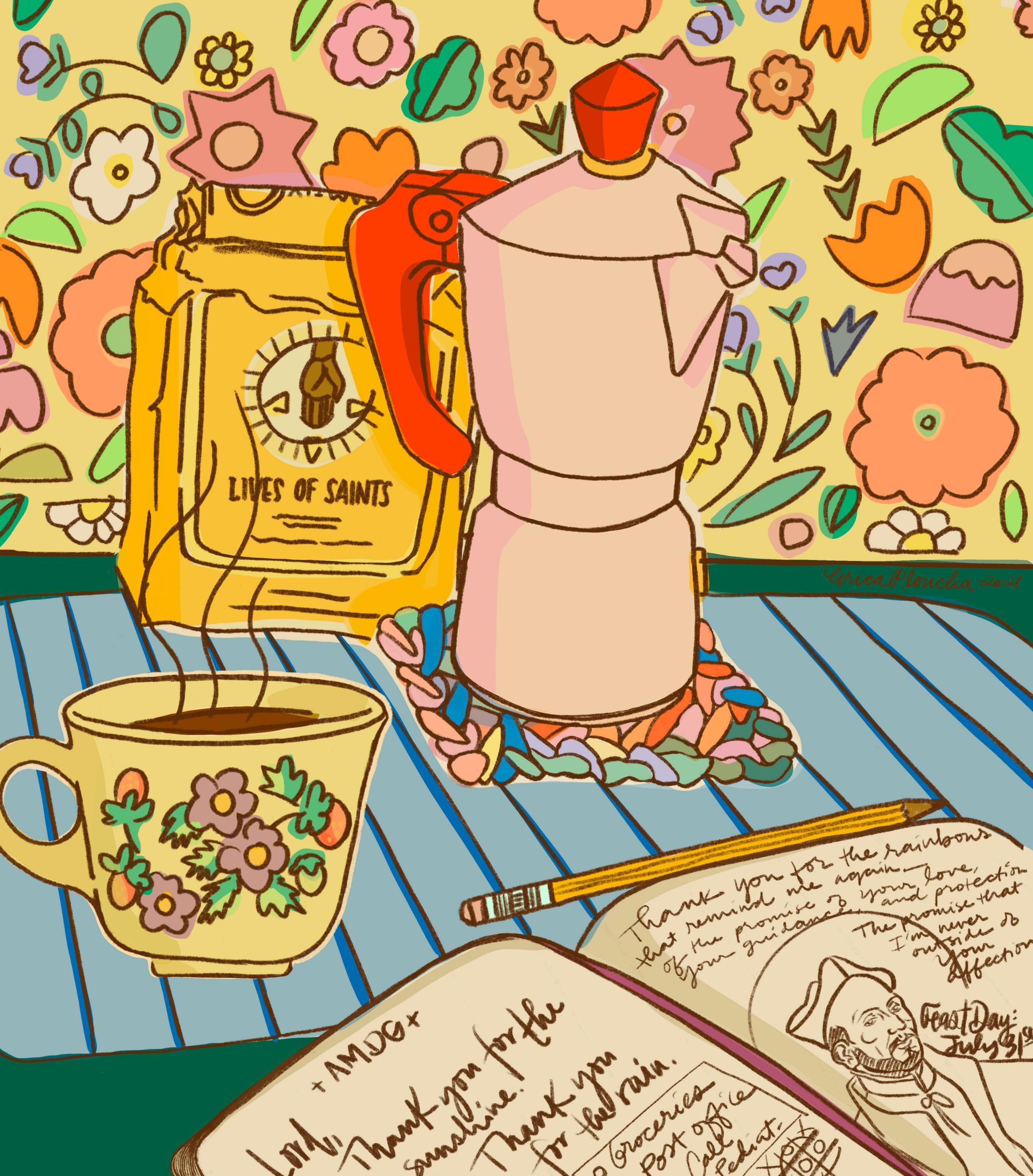
Recuperating in his family castle at Loyola, Ignatius wanted something to read during his long days in bed. He would have preferred tales of knights and romance, but they weren't readily available. There were only two books on hand: one on the life of Jesus and one on the lives of the saints. A strange thing started to happen. Ignatius noticed that the emotions he felt about winning battles and ladies' hearts were welling up in him after reading about Jesus and the saints, but instead of quickly dissipating, they would linger. Inspired by the love and peace he had found, Ignatius gave up his life as a soldier and committed himself to God.

He got off to a rocky start; he was a pilgrim with a limp from his injury, and he battled mightily with scruples, which led him to extreme practices of penance. But one day by a riverside he began to see his path more clearly. And the rest is history. Ignatius went on to compose the Spiritual Exercises and found the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. He gave us tremendous gifts, like the Examen, the central belief that we find God in all things and the wisdom of discernment in making decisions. And for centuries, brave and holy Jesuits have followed in his footsteps, seeking to serve, to educate and to draw people into deeper relationship with God.

In this Ignatian year, the 500th anniversary of Ignatius' conversion, we are called to remember, to celebrate and to renew our faith. Three centuries after that fateful cannonball struck, it was another Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins, who wrote the line from which this e-book takes its title. Christ does indeed play in ten thousand places, and we can imagine Ignatius smiling at Hopkins' poetic expression of this deeply Jesuit approach to the world around us.

In the prayers, poems and essays in this e-book we offer a map through this Ignatian year, from summer to spring, following the liturgical rhythm of the church and pausing to dwell at beautiful vistas along the way: the treasures of prayer and insight Ignatius left as his legacy and the stories of just a few of the Jesuits who have come after him and continued his mission. Whether Ignatian spirituality is brand new to you or something you've practiced for years, we hope that here you will find bread for the journey. Come, join this holy pilgrimage.

—Cameron Bellm



Louisa Ploucha 2011

+ AMDG+

Thank you for the
sunshine!
Thank you
for the rain.

o Groceries
Post office
Call office
Pediat.

Thank you for the rainbows
that remind me again — love,
and protection
The promise of your love,
and protection
of your guidance,
I'm never
outside of
your
affection



Feast Day:
July 31st

Summer

A Prayer for the Feast of St. Ignatius

July 31

St. Ignatius, teach us not to fear
The holy cannonballs that burst into our lives,
Blessedly interrupting our plans and priorities.
St. Ignatius, lead us with you
Into the cave at Manresa,
Where we may suffer
And yet emerge transformed.
St. Ignatius, let us sit beside you
On the banks of the Cardoner River,
And be awash, as you were, in revelation.
St. Ignatius, lock us with you
In a cell run by Inquisitors
And set alight in us your devotion to growth,
Even when met with distrust and disapproval.
St. Ignatius, send us out into the world
Like you did your first companions,
Making every moment a monastery
And finding God in all things.
Amen.

—Cameron Bellm



A Pilgrim's Summer Vacation

Our paths are never quite what we expect them to be.
They weave in a way that may confuse or thrill us
as we resist or embrace the unanticipated.
Yet, when we zoom out, and see the resulting tapestry,
the new perspective shows that our prayers have been answered.
(No, not in the way you necessarily planned, because did you absolutely need
to fill your bag with rolls of toilet paper and duct tape?)

Leave it all behind.

Please take a minute,
or two,
to rest by the river.
Allow the only rushing to be the current,
the wind in the reeds, the clouds in the sky,
the bees to their hives,
while you plant your feet firmly on the ground,
dig your toes in the sand,
or soak them in the water if you'd like.
Peace can be found
when you offer a moment,
or two,
to discover the passing pilgrim you are.

—Josh Utter

Creation Again

back to the drawing board square one
pre-dawn the first day of Creation as new
as another breath and as covered in cobwebs

plastic over armchairs paintings under old sheets
books boxed up beyond reading something
happened just before supper day six
that spooked empty the entire home

an exiled people prophet in tow told
to plant gardens paint doors cheery colors inhabit
a land outside their possession as if they really meant it

God in all things get used to it takes
a sick so-and-so to enter a church just to spit
on the floor God in all things a sentence
passed on displaced persons under house arrest in a sanctuary
wide as the world as quiet and calm as Creation
day seven.

—Fr. Greg Kennedy, SJ

The Examen

To pray the examen,
Settle in on the beach with God as the day's light
wanes.
Breathe as deeply as you can
Of salty air and Divine Presence.

When you feel ready,
Turn your eyes to the water
And watch with God what the tide brings in
As you look back together, lovingly, at your day.

Some of it will be beautiful—
Sea glass and sand dollars—
The moments when you saw and felt God,
When you chose to extend your heart and hands
in love
When you delighted in a child's laugh or a bird's
call.
Give thanks for them.

Some of it will be harder to confront—
Broken shells and tangles of seaweed—
The words you wish you could take back,
The opportunity you missed to be there for a
friend,
The moments when you drifted away from God.
For these ask forgiveness.

Pay attention to your emotions
As you listen to the song of the waves,
As you take in the relics of a day at sea—
For God is with you even in those.

Rise slowly when you are ready
And choose one item from the bounty on the
shore.
Bring it back to God and gaze upon it together.
Turn it over in your hands

As you listen to God's voice,
Helping you interpret it.

Then bend down in the surf with God and set it
free.
As the water tickles your toes,
Look out on the horizon
And ask God
Which way you should steer your boat
Tomorrow.
Amen.

—Cameron Bellm

Finding God in All Things

Earlier this year, I observed my daughter, Sofia, playing with wooden blocks. Standing a longer block upright, she called it “the mommy.” “Work, work, work ...” she said as she animated the block, busily bobbing it up and down and side to side. The “mommy” block called out to “the child” block: “Mommy loves you plenty! She always comes back!” as it rushed to the far corner of the couch to get to business. When the mommy block finished, my daughter laid it flat immediately. “Sleeep!” she pronounced.

I was aghast. After a pause, I slowly asked her, “Is this how it looks to be a mommy?” She nodded, proud that her message had come across. “Do you want to become a mommy when you grow up?” I asked tentatively.

“No!” she asserted. “I want to stay a kid!”

This was one of the more painful moments I have had as a parent. It came within the current pandemic, amid the many crises that erupted into fuller form, and I was spent. Stretched by all the loss, I hid in the compulsion and importance of work, perhaps as a shield, or at least a buffer, from reality. Sofia had shared the gift of honesty, and within her bluntness, God nudged me. At that moment, I could feel the uncomfortable ways I cling to the false security of productivity. I saw, with tenderness and sorrow, my daughter, who will only be four years old once. I contemplated Pia, as we call her, in her moss green T. rex sweatpants with the hole at the knee, who fiercely believes that a few of those clever dinosaurs must have survived. I don’t know why it takes hard moments to move us.

I would rather write about beauty. The way a friend and I hiked in Point Reyes through a

landscape wild with ferns and verdant green shoots bursting out of charred Redwood logs hollowed from fire. And the giddiness of seeing a doe who gazed at us, how it stirred us to look longer at the quiet ways life emerges from death. I’d prefer to describe how watching a Chloé Zhao film feels like prayer and a call to behold each other. Or relish the details of an afternoon eating pork bánh mì with an 89-year-old friend, discussing everything from the Eucharist, to cats, to the way her love developed for her husband in New York.

Truly, God speaks to each of us through beauty, which we all desperately need now more than ever. But this is the year that we celebrate St. Ignatius, back when he was Iñigo, and a cannonball frustrated his plans and changed him. Ignatius confronted losing what he valued the most as Christ redirected his life. I don’t want to miss the call of difficult moments, the truths I would rather avoid, the way God insists on waking me, again and again, to turn to the Spirit with my life.

When I was an undergraduate at Fordham University, a part of me interpreted “Finding God in All Things” simply as a slogan celebrating our Jesuit education. Now, this way of being has deepened into a practice to save my life. Thankfully, God works with us and through all things to urge us into greater freedom. God desires to connect with us through awesome moments like the burning bush, yearns to speak our belovedness like at Jesus’ baptism. In small ways, I have these experiences too. But I have also learned that when my daughter imagines me as a workaholic wooden block, it’s time to pay attention.

—Grace Salceanu



The Spiritual Exercises

“Having tried every other way but Him,” writes the poet Paul Mariani, “all I can do each blessed day is ask for His help.” God’s help arrived for Mariani, as it has for so many others, through the Spiritual Exercises: 30 days of prayer, introspection and reflection, guided by a spiritual director. There is comfort, in several ways, of knowing we are not alone.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, as often has been noted, resemble a training regimen; a focused program where repetition breeds focus. Yet I am often drawn to the very human elements of the Exercises. Although the goal is formidable—“preparing and disposing one’s soul to rid herself of all disordered attachments”—the instruction can be gentle. As Ignatius notes in his seventh annotation, “If the one giving the Exercises sees that the one receiving them is desolate and tempted, it is important not to be hard or curt with that person, but gentle and kind.”

It is in that way we feel supported, and therefore open to the important work that follows. The four weeks of the Exercises are structured so that participants first examine their sins, reflect on the life of Christ to Palm Sunday and deeply ponder the Passion of Christ, the Resurrection and the Ascension.

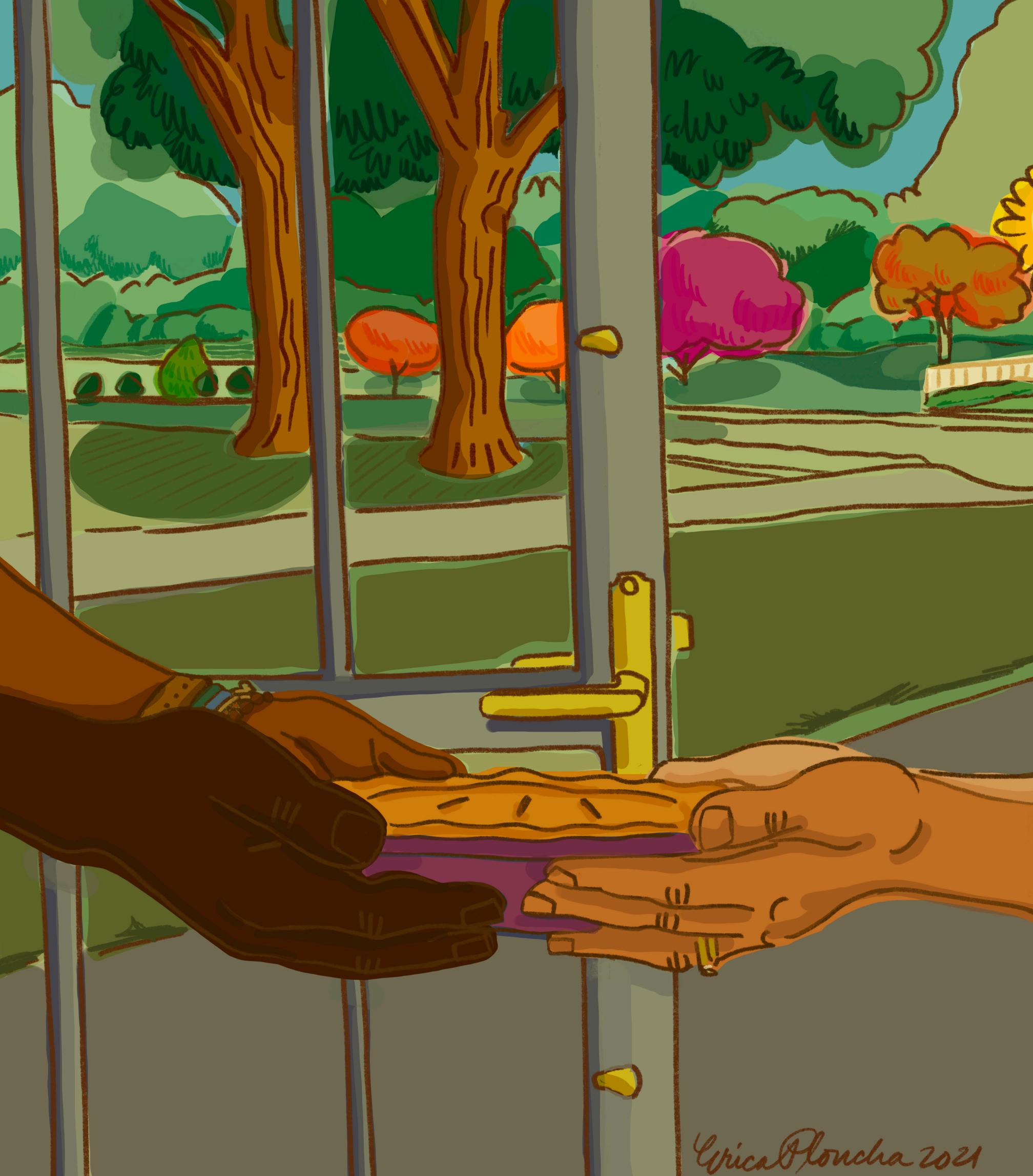
In the first week, we are called to overcome the self; to identify the “particular sin or defect that he or she wants to correct and reform.” The usage of the singular is not grammatical convenience; the work that is necessary to

turn ourselves away from a single, entrenched sin is significant. Perhaps the greatest gift of the Exercises is its structural foundation; an affirmation that we must anchor and steel ourselves, for the enemy is great.

Even Ignatius knew that a traditional 30-day program was often not possible for many. In one of his last annotations, Ignatius stipulates that the Exercises “are to be adapted to the capabilities of those who want to engage in them.” In our contemporary world, that has included online direction. Although we might encounter the Exercises in different modes and at varied points in our lives, the practice is unified by the truth that “the more we are alone and by ourselves, the more capable we become of drawing near to and reaching our Creator and Lord, and the more we reach Him, the more we make ourselves ready to receive graces and gifts from His divine and supreme Goodness.”

The Exercises, like God, meet us where we are.

—Nick Ripatrazone



Erica Ploncha 2021

Autumn

Divine Presence in the Season of Creation

my
oh my,
how the tree leaves dance
between shadow and light
a sign of grace, rather a fight

what a beautiful sight
to experience renewal, in budding and rising
to uncover glory, in growing and surviving
what a long journey it is,
changing and arriving

I feel like a child when I
stretch my arms toward the sky
when I, stretch my soul and ask *why*
when I stretch my heart to another, and we *sigh*

~ ~ ~ ~
we groan and labour
looking beyond this world
caring for our neighbor,
learning to praise and worship our Creator

but when we recognize
the vulnerability that is
in you and I
we begin to see with new eyes
Creator in all creation
gift-giver, in all gifts given
divine mirror and divine reflection

the season of creation
is a season of relations
it is a holy moment
of reconciliation and restoration

~ ~ ~ ~

oh,
what a sight to see
divine presence in the trees,
divine presence,
in you and me

oh, how I feel so free
to discover what it means
to be
divine presence
for you, for me
but most especially
for we

—Ashley Hải Vân Trần

St. Alphonsus Rodriguez and the Call to Hospitality

October 31

Many words have been written about St. Alphonsus' famous hospitality and humility. A man who worked as a doorman for most of his life, largely overlooked, must have been as humble as he was holy. Less has been written about the many doors closed to Alphonsus. His thriving family business failed; his wife that he adored, along with their three children, died. Even the door to the Society of Jesus was closed to him. Twice. He was not admitted entrance, deemed unfit, too old, too sickly, too uneducated.

I can't help but think that repeated exclusion, dashed dreams and inconsolable grief inspired Alphonsus' own ministry of mercy and hospitality. He knew what it was to be left out in the cold, to be alone, to need someone to talk to. He opened the door, and his heart, to all he met: homesick students, future saints uncertain where to go and lonely winos.

For 46 years he opened the door for all of them. He made space for them. He loved them.

God, inspired by St. Alphonsus, help me see You in all people. Help me remember what it feels like to be left out and overlooked. Remind me that all of me can be used at your service, especially my heartache and grief, to welcome in those who are easily overlooked and readily discarded.

St. Alphonsus, model of mercy and hospitality, pray for us!

—Br. Matt Wooters, SJ



A Prayer for Black Catholic History Month

November is Black Catholic History Month

There is no looking forward without looking back,
No building an equitable Church without an honest reckoning
With our unjust past, with all the ways it seeps into our present,
Spilling over into our future.

Lord, give us clear eyes to see
Not only the heroes of our history—
Augustus Tolton, Thea Bowman, Julia Greeley,
Mother Mary Lange, Pierre Toussaint, Henriette Delille—
But also the unjust systems in which they worked for change.

Let us not clip these extraordinary flowers from the garden
And prominently display them in our churches,
So proud of their bright blooms and vibrant colors,
Without taking hoe and shovel to the weeds that nearly choked them.

As we celebrate our beloved Black women and men of God,
May we never cease to ask ourselves:
Is the Church today a place where they would feel welcome,
A place where they would feel free to be their truest selves?

We have such a long way to go
Before the Church they dreamed of will be a reality.

Get your gloves, and I'll get my trowel.
We'll dig, we'll uproot, we'll prune
Until only good things can grow
From this holy soil.
Amen.

—Cameron Bellm

A Prayer for All Saints' Day

November 1

Loving God,
On this All Saints' Day, we pray in gratitude for all the holy women and men whose lives teach us to devote ourselves to the greatest commandments—loving you and loving our neighbors.
Hear our prayers as we seek the help of those who have gone before us.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, help us experience ongoing conversion to a life devoted to love of God and neighbor,
St. Maximilian Kolbe, help us to make sacrifices for the sake of solidarity, justice and peace.
St. Marianne Cope, help us to follow God's call to love others wherever it may lead us.
St. Óscar Romero, help us to have the courage to stand unflinchingly with those who are poor or oppressed,
St. Teresa of Calcutta, help us to be a shining light of mercy and kindness for all of our sisters and brothers near and far.

God of compassion,
Let your Spirit guide us to act on our love for our neighbors throughout the world, especially those in greatest need in whom we recognize your Son.
We pray for:

Those who are poor, that they may build lives consistent with their inherent dignity as your beloved children,
Those who are hungry, that they may share in the earth's bounty,
Those who are thirsty, that all people have

access to clean water,
Those who are strangers fleeing their homes, that they may find refuge and protection among us,
Those who are sick, that they have access to the support and care they need,
Those who are in prison, that they have the opportunity to choose reconciliation and redemption.

We ask for the wisdom to learn from the saints who teach us to live the Gospel throughout our lives.

And we ask for the strength to join them in following you on our journey of discipleship and solidarity.

Amen.

—Joan Rosenhauer

All Souls' Day

November 2

St. Ignatius and the very first Jesuits, who called themselves “friends in the Lord,” loved praying and serving together in the Society’s earliest days in cities like Paris, Venice and Rome. But they discerned that God was calling them to split up and spread out, to take the Good News of Jesus with them to faraway places. No longer in the same physical place but united by their vows and their faith, they referred to God themselves as a *communitas ad dispersionem*—a community in dispersion.

This lovely Latin phrase is perfect for All Souls’ Day, which is one of those Catholic celebrations that is hard to explain to members of other faith traditions: Technically, we’re not just remembering those who have died today, we are praying for the souls in purgatory as if they were ailing (but still breathing) relatives. I used to find this tradition weird and outdated, but now it’s a huge source of consolation. If I think prayer works and that souls are real, praying for the dead is a concrete action I can take that keeps me in a community of dispersion with my grandparents and three uncles and billions of people I never met.

My meditation, then, on this day of closeness-despite-separation, is from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Mike Jordan Laskey

The Challenge of Blessed Miguel Pro

November 23

A few hours ago, I wrote a piece to submit to this e-book. It was pious and quaint: a reflection on the Eucharist and Miguel Pro, a 20th-century Jesuit martyr. It was finished just in time for Mass, and I was relieved. I even got to the chapel early, a rarity for me. As I sat, congratulating myself, another community member arrived. This man is a wonderful Jesuit, but we do not get along. With the best of intentions, we misread one another in hurtful and frustrating ways. Upon seeing him, I could feel myself tensing up, and I could tell from his lack of eye contact that he felt the same way. It was community night and every seat was filled ... except for one ... next to me. He sat stiffly. I thought of something he said that offended me, and I began to get annoyed.

Mass began. I went through the motions but remained irritated. At the Our Father I repeated those words I say every day: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Hearing myself say them, my annoyance gave way to shame. I had just written an essay about how important simply showing up to Mass is (and it is!). Yet. Showing up is not enough. Having just written about a saint who forgave his executioners there I was standing—at Mass, right in the presence of Jesus—brooding about a petty snub from a good man.

In the Eucharist, Christ comes to touch us. This gift is not just for us, though. Christ comes to heal us so that we can heal a world which is racked with suffering: physical and spiritual. Healing is not always easy, fun or painless. Sometimes it is downright terrifying: Just ask anybody facing a root canal. Many people refuse to have illnesses treated because of fear of the procedure itself. So too, many of us refuse to let Christ permeate our deepest hurts because we are scared of what he might ask

of us. So we remain ... brooding and unhappy. This is exactly what I was doing in the chapel. Miguel Pro's life is an example which challenges folks like me. He didn't just show up to Mass and leave it there. He showed up to encounter Christ, where and when Christ called him. He left everyone and everything he knew behind to become a Jesuit. This was terrifying for him, but he trusted, and Christ opened his horizons broader than he would have ever imagined. He was not very bright and struggled through formation, but he allowed himself to be vulnerable, and he persevered. He was constantly ill and endured several painful surgeries without anesthesia. Yet, he believed that God was working, even through his illness, and let go of control. He did not shrink from Christ. He survived it all and lived to see his dream come true: He was ordained.

As a priest, he was sent back to Mexico in order to minister to the faithful in Veracruz. His work was illegal, and he risked execution if captured, but he believed the sacraments were worth it. He was remarkably successful: giving out hundreds of Communions a day and hearing dozens of confessions in disguise. Eventually he was arrested on a false charge. On November 23, 1927, he was led out of his cell and told he was being taken to court. The jailers took him to the firing squad instead. Taking a moment to pray, Pro stood unblindfolded and forgave and blessed his executioners. Stretching out his arms, fearlessly, he shouted, "Long live Christ the King" and was executed. His last breath was a total surrender, in trust, to Christ. A testimony to us of the freedom that we can attain from surrender, if we let Christ heal us.

After the Our Father, I quietly asked God for a grain of Miguel's courage. I was ready to be healed. Turning to my brother I said "peace be with you" as I stretched out my arms, and this time, I meant it. Blessed Miguel Pro, pray for us!

—Christopher Smith, SJ

Autumn Speaks

It's tempting to become nostalgic about the changing seasons, but I prefer these days to be attentive instead. For instance, as I observe autumn, how might it speak to me?

Autumn reveals the season after fruitfulness.

The luscious farmers' markets are dying down as plants cease producing. The multi-green bloom of the landscape has lost its rich, moist glow as leaves and grasses begin to dry. We can no longer walk down a garden row and take joy in ripe, colorful fruit. We see this change as fine in nature, yet we panic when entering a time of little or no fruit. We're not as productive as we'd like to be. Processes aren't bringing the results we want. Our prayer life feels as if it's drying up. What's WRONG? There's a good chance that nothing is wrong. We have entered a tapering-off time, that's all. Often, we experience this after a period of hard work and productivity. It never occurs to us that perhaps it's time not to focus on fruit but on rest and replenishment.

Autumn reveals the harvest.

In Ignatian spirituality we refer to "savoring the graces": pausing to enjoy fully the gifts we have received. We are encouraged to return to prayer content that has helped us. Jesus is saying, "You were uplifted by that psalm? Well, go back to it!" It's a habit of celebration. Especially when living in a culture that focuses on productivity and monetary profit, we can fail to enjoy what we've already produced. Did we manage to spend good time with family over the summer? Then let's spend time now reliving those good memories and thanking God for them. Did we finish a tough project this year? Then let's find a way to celebrate. I've been writing books for 20

years, and I have learned to give myself a day or two when the book is published to carry it around with me, read parts of it, show it to my friends and family. Jesus has taught me to take pleasure in the work of my hands.

Autumn strips the landscape to prepare for new growth.

Many of us do a major sort-and-pitch in the autumn. It makes sense that, as the landscape is stripped of its leaves, we feel compelled to strip ourselves of what is no longer full of life. We get rid of physical stuff we don't really need; we free the calendar of commitments that no longer fit us; we trim our long to-do list, relieving ourselves of goals that simply aren't important now.

Autumn invites us to regather our memories.

For me, autumn often becomes a "thin place" in which I feel close to earlier versions of myself, to loved ones who have died, to other autumns I have lived. As if time has a little warp in it, and I could be 14 again, or 35 again. This may be a simple, physiological reaction to the scents on the air that bring me back to other times when I have smelled wood smoke, the first sharp aroma of autumn air or a pumpkin pie just out of the oven. It doesn't matter if these feelings are triggered by my nose or my soul: They provide an opportunity to do an autumn Examen. Because I remember more vividly being 14, I can give thanks for the gifts of that time. Because pumpkin pie brings Grandma back to me, I can celebrate having had her in my life.

Smell that autumn air! And allow it to stimulate your prayer.

—Vinita Hampton Wright





Erica Ploncha 2021

Winter

Advent

The pale linoleum is cold underfoot
on the morning we decorate for Christmas.
My mother unfurls the calendar as if it were
Simeon's own sacred scroll, revealing
a simple barn, empty, save for a manger.
Twenty-six plush figures wait expectant in their
numbered pockets,
to assume places upon the tableau—to witness.
Shepherds, angels, livestock, far-traveled kings,
the baby.

I favor one—Mary. Her dress is simply cut,
lithe folds of cerulean blue conjuring a feminine
gravity beyond my childish comprehension.
I pluck her, Joseph and the donkey from their
pockets as I reenact their journey.
Judea's deserts span the blotted landscapes of
our kitchen table.
I assign Nazareth to the salt shaker, sliding its
pepper companion, Bethlehem, what seems an
approximate distance. My imagination imbues
the plush Holy Family with anticipation, as if
they, too, were children impatiently awaiting
Christmas morning.

My fingers remember the feel of those figures.
Only now
do I sense a weight against my palm. The not-
yet-mother's exhaustion,
a profound fatigue made holy in her. A tiredness
hanging off her steadfast shoulders.
The cerulean threads strain toward the floor.
Her conviction strains harder towards the
heavens.

—MegAnne Liebsch

In the Nativity

I imagine the nativity, a space and place of wonder.

There, You meet me.

I behold the Holy Family, uncertain and in awe.

There, You invite me.

I smell the manger, a birth in an animal dwelling.

There, You surprise me.

I taste the sweat and tears of a journey just now beginning.

There, You guide me.

I sense a perfect tension of fear and trust.

There, You calm me.

I hear the voices of those arriving in celebration, for what they do not know.

There, You welcome me.

I recognize a peace so unfamiliar, and yet I experience it so deeply.

There, You teach me.

I wonder who You are and who I am with You.

There, You love me.

—Elise Gower



Imaginative Prayer: Where We Meet

Close my eyes.
Deep breaths.
Quiet my spirit and open my heart.
The invitation:
"Come see Me—Come hear Me
Come walk with Me—Come dance with Me
Come...be with Me."
Where are we going today, Lord?
Cana? The Sea of Galilee? Jerusalem?
Calvary?
The Syrophoenician Woman-whose daughter is
ill.

I am scared—yet I am bold.
I know You can heal my daughter—Gentile
though I am.
The need propels me-pushes me forward.
I see the disdain in your friends' faces;
I hear the whispering: "Why does she bother
him?"
I hear your words:
*"It is not fair to take the children's food and
throw it to the dogs."*
But...I see your eyes:
"Dance with me...it's bigger than you and I
today."
SO MUCH LOVE.
"Even the dogs eat the children's crumbs."
YOUR SMILE IS RADIANT!
"The demon is gone!"

I dance my way home.

May I continue
to be bold
to push forward
to live in faith

May I continue to dance.

—Danielle Harrison



M. F. F.

A New Serenity Prayer

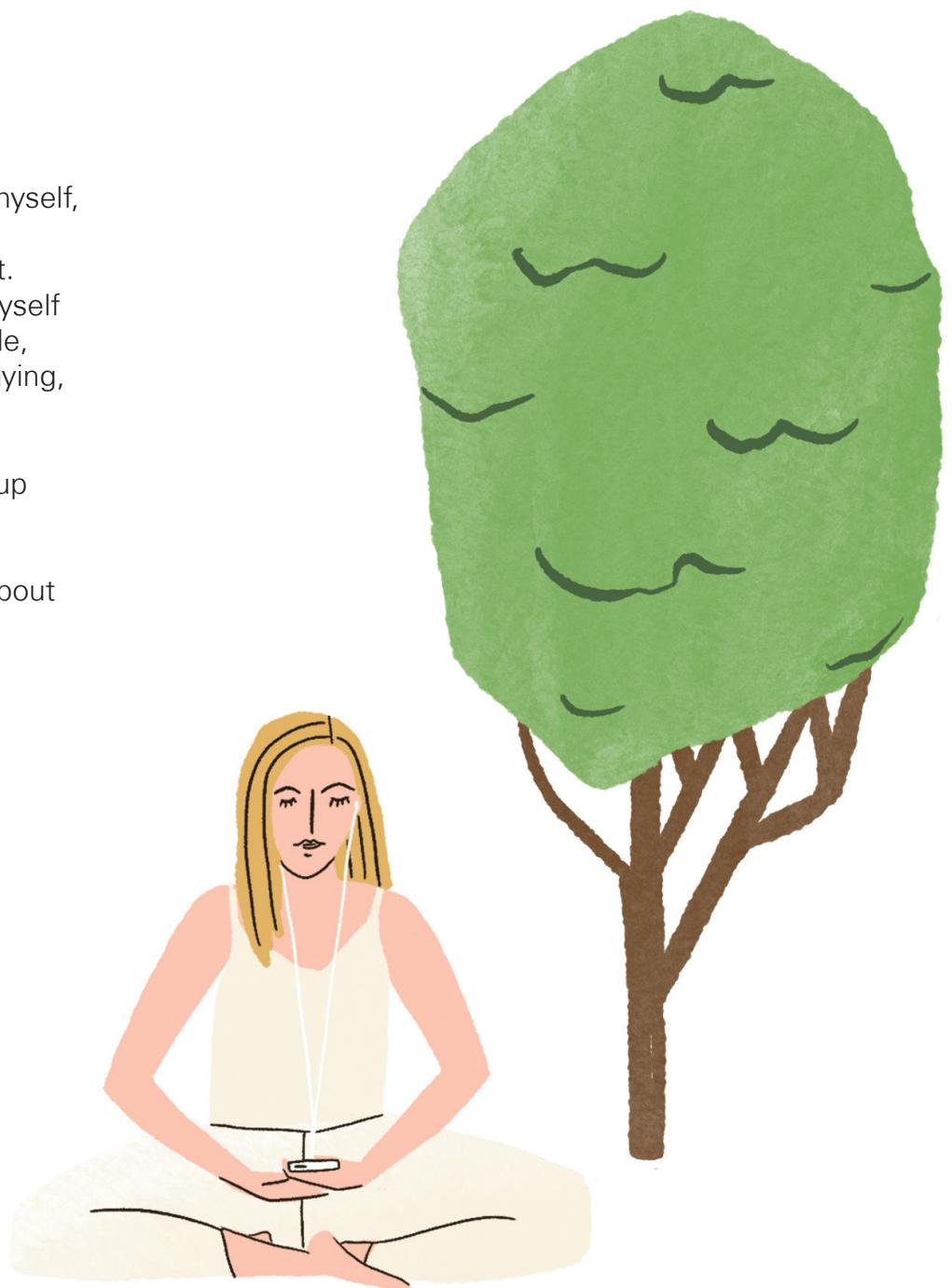
God, grant me the serenity
to accept the people I cannot change,
which is pretty much everyone,
since I'm clearly not you, God.
At least not the last time I checked.

And while you're at it, God,
please give me the courage
to change what I need to change about myself,
which is frankly a lot, since, once again,
I'm not you, which means I'm not perfect.
It's better for me to focus on changing myself
than to worry about changing other people,
who, as you'll no doubt remember me saying,
I can't change anyway.

Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up
whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter
than everyone else in the room,
that no one knows what they're talking about
except me,
or that I alone have all the answers.

Basically, God,
grant me the wisdom
to remember that I'm
not you.
Amen.

—Fr. James Martin, SJ



St. Francis Xavier

December 3

There is now in these parts a very large number of persons who have only one reason for not becoming Christian, and that is that there is no one to make them Christians. It often comes into my mind to go round all the Universities of Europe, and especially that of Paris, crying out everywhere like a madman, and saying to all the learned men there whose learning is so much greater than their charity, "Ah! what a multitude of souls is through your fault shut out of heaven and falling into hell!"

-St. Francis Xavier, Letter from India to the Society of Jesus in Rome, 1543

This famous letter from St. Francis Xavier may not stir us in the way it struck its 16th-century readers. Many people today do not spend much time worrying about people falling into hell. Church documents in the last 60 years have reflected an "inclusivist" perspective—seeing Jesus Christ as *the* Savior, but seeing salvation as still possible for those who are not Christian. Some today may associate missionaries with colonialism and past sins done in the name of Christ. If I ever want to make people feel uncomfortable, a foolproof way is to say that I want to be a missionary.

While we may need to translate St. Francis Xavier's witness for our contemporary context, we ought to learn from his heroic example. Xavier demonstrated zeal and adaptability in sharing the Gospel in India, Japan and elsewhere in Asia. He endured language barriers and years at sea to baptize a reported 700,000 people. Granted, some experts estimate he baptized "only" 30,000.

A different Jesuit named Francis can help us integrate the example of St. Francis Xavier. Pope Francis writes in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)* that he prefers "a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." He continues, "If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life."

We don't have to travel around the world to find people who are living without the strength, light and consolation that Pope Francis discusses. They're right here. Perhaps we, too, are also searching for meaning and a goal in life. Our home, school or office could be our Asia.

Following Xavier's example might look different for us today, but we can still draw inspiration from this Jesuit saint. We could use a bit more of his zeal and his willingness to be a "madman" for Christ. There are so many today who go without a community of faith to support them. Even if we do not go around the world, we can at least go "out on the streets" to meet them.

—Fr. Michael Rossmann, SJ

Christmas

The Word became flesh
and dwelt among us.
The Word that existed before all things;
the Word that holds all things together.
This Word—*the* Word, the Sacred Word
that spoke life and breath into being—
became flesh.

The Word became flesh and dwelt in skin;
in bumps and bruises;
in sickness and longing;
in laughter and grief;
in loneliness and fear.
The Word became flesh and knew us, oh
how we have been known!

Come, let us adore the Word.
Come, let us adore the Flesh.
Come, let us revel in our humanity;
this condition that Divine Love has declared
Sacred.
For the Word became flesh
and dwells among us.

—Shannon K. Evans

Mappers of Space and Time

*The greatest consolation
that he received at this time
was from gazing at the sky and stars
and this he did
often
and for quite a long time.
(From the Autobiography of St. Ignatius)*

Father Ignatius looked into the stars and found consolation.

Fifty years later, mapping the rhythms of the sun and the moon and the planets with mathematics, Fr. Christopher Clavius, SJ, expounded the Gregorian calendar.

Fifty years later, Fr. Christoph Scheiner, SJ, and Fr. Orazio Grassi, SJ, and Fr. Niccolò Zucchi, SJ, built telescopes, mapped the motion of comets and sunspots, and debated Galileo.

Fifty years later, Fr. Giovanni Battista Riccioli, SJ, mapped the moon, naming the craters on it for those who were pioneers of astronomy ... including Copernicus and Kepler and Galileo ... and two dozen Jesuits (including himself).

Fifty years later, Fr. Roger Boskovich, SJ, proposed a theory of atoms while determining new ways to map the spin of the sun and planets.

Fifty years later, Fr. Maximilian Hell, SJ, observed Venus transiting the disk of the sun, an observation which set the scale of the solar system, the first leg in the cosmic ladder that

mapped out the distance to the stars and the immense size of the universe.

Fifty years later, Fr. Francesco de Vico, SJ, was among the first to use a telescope in order to find and map the orbits of faint new comets.

Fifty years later, Fr. Angelo Secchi, SJ, found the connection between sunspots and terrestrial magnetism, described the surface of Mars and determined what had been thought to be impossible to know—the chemical composition of stars—with a scheme of stellar classifications that has become the roadmap of modern astrophysics.

Fifty years later, Fr. Johan Hagen, SJ, led a team of astronomers using photography to map the positions of the stars in the sky.

Fifty years later, Fr. Alois Gatterer, SJ, mapped the spectra of the gases that make up the stars.

Fifty years later, Fr. William Stoeger, SJ, mapped the observable consequences of the Big Bang; he described how that event was only one moment in the eternal *creatio ex nihilo* of the universe.

“Universe” means all things. Ever since Ignatius, Jesuits have found consolation in the universe, in all things. In every corner of the universe that they have mapped, they have found God.

—Br. Guy Consolmagno, SJ



Erica Plouche 2021

Spring

Ash Wednesday

Dear God,

As we begin our Lenten journey, ashes are smeared on our foreheads, and we hear the words, “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

St. Ignatius of Loyola calls us to the grace of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises—to remember that we are not the people that you created us to be. We need you, God, to rescue us and return us to Eden. We return to dust so that, as you breathed life into the dirt that became Adam and Eve, so you will do again with us.

We remember that we are dust, Lord. But we also remember that we are *stardust*—carbon dust from which all life in the universe comes. Breathe new life into our dusty souls, Lord. With your strong but gentle hands, lift us up from the ashes. Then we shall be recreated. And you will renew the face of the Earth. Amen.

—Fr. Mark Thibodeaux, SJ



Lent: Resurrection Journey

They set out without knowing
where the tides of faith would take them
a people choosing to be chosen
as they crossed the parted sea

They pursued the One who called them
Into a desert parched with promise
Each step a move toward freedom
A spark of hope amid the darkness

So, too, the Chosen One got started
Heading out into the desert
To deepen and discover
That which only he could find

Now ours becomes the journey
to choose the path of freedom
to take the steps most needed
to draw ourselves to Love

It is the walking that will make us
the journey that creates us
Finding us at times with purpose
and at others wandering aimless

We search and choose repentance
Renewal and dependence
A call of reconciliation,
with our neighbors, self, and God

With this trinity we travel
United as companions
each step a grounding moment
in the mystery of grace

Forty chances lie before us
To enter into the wild
To find the boundaries of our being
And walk humbly with our God

Stripped bare by choice or circumstance
The Spirit will sustain us.
The Way we walk is one with us
on our Resurrection journey.

—Sr. Colleen Gibson, SSJ

The Novena of Grace

March 4-12

Since early Christianity, the desire for closeness with the Lord has been fundamental to our understanding of who God is and who we are as God's beloved creations. It was understood that "Jesus became what we are that He might make us what He is" (St. Athanasius of Alexandria). In other words, as followers of Christ, we are created for oneness, or union with God. As St. Augustine famously writes, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

The beauty of Catholicism is that throughout our history, sacraments, sacramentals and pious devotions have mediated moments of encounter with the Divine. But over the years, they have lost their meaning and relevance.

Growing up in a Filipino-American household, devotional practices like the rosary, novenas and traveling statues of Mary or the Santo Niño (i.e., "the Infant of Prague") were part and parcel of my Catholic upbringing. However, I never paid much attention to their meaning or purpose. They were simply challenges for my eight siblings and I to see who could make the other laugh first, ultimately getting the "stink eye" from our mother or grandmother!

As a Jesuit priest, I now understand that these pious devotions are a way for us ordinary human beings to not only express our love and devotion for God, but also to receive God's love and care for us. The powerful "Novena of Grace," attributed to St. Francis Xavier, is just one of hundreds of novena prayers that serve this purpose.

This miraculous novena is said to come from Italy, where a 17th-century Jesuit priest vowed to go to Japan during the great persecutions,

but was severely injured when a hammer accidentally fell on his head. Near death, he had a vision of Francis Xavier, who said that if he prayed to him for nine consecutive days and received the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist, he would ensure that his vow would be fulfilled. The injured Jesuit emerged from the vision healed and fulfilled his vow of going to Japan. Several miracles and changed lives have since been credited to this powerful "Novena of Grace," becoming a tradition in Jesuit parishes ever since.

But the point of any novena is not what you get from it, but rather expressing our love and devotion for God, the giver of all gifts and graces. This is why the "Novena of Grace" ends with the words, "but if what I ask is not for the glory of God or for the good of my soul, obtain for me what is most conducive to both."

It is said that "we value most what we love the most." In other words, we spend our time, energy and resources on those things, people and events that mean the most to us. I think of people who wait in line for hours and sacrifice their hard-earned money to be the first to buy the newest technology or get tickets to a concert, a sporting event or a Broadway show like "Hamilton." So, it stands to reason that if we value our relationship with God and our faith, we will make time for it, not out of obligation, but out of our sheer desire and love for God. Isn't an encounter with Christ worth the sacrifice of our time, energy and discipline of nine days of a novena?

During this Ignatian year, where we're asked to "see all things new in Christ," why not incorporate the "Novena of Grace" into your life? Check it out and see how it draws you closer to the Lord.

—Fr. Radmar Jao, SJ

Venerable Rutilio Grande: The Feet of The Gospel

March 12

If Christ is not to remain in the clouds
then “the Gospel has to grow little feet,”
Fr. Grande used to say.

The first Jesuit priest martyred in El Salvador,
Fr. Grande insisted on an inclusive liturgy—
Not just the ordained, but the lay.
That is the call for us to live out—
To be people with and *for* others, always.

It is a motto that we all know and love,
but Fr. Grande genuinely models the way.
As he told us in Apopa—we cannot simply stay!

We cannot stay put or stay silent,
We must *act* and go out from our homes and
churches.
We must pilgrimage to the places in our
community that need prayer,
To bring light and love to the suffering and pain
we encounter there.

When one of us suffers, we suffer, all.
When one of us is lifted up, we are all lifted up
together.
We must speak and demand human dignity and
basic rights for all,
even the offenders.

We can be a reminder to others that they are
good and loved,
Angels in disguise.
That this is a life worth living, and maybe even
dying for.

May we be that prophetic mirror for others—
To remind them they are perfection in God’s
eyes.

If Fr. Grande were here today—
who would he be walking with?
what would he be fighting for?
Now is the time for us to pray with our feet,
mine and yours.

How can we be the presence of Christ out in the
world?
How can we be the little feet of the Gospel?

Pray to Fr. Grande. We are not alone.
He began living out the Gospel in his own
hometown,
So take a prayerful moment to pause and look
around.

Fr. Grande was a man of social action,
So let us join him and begin.
Not despite our belief in the Gospel,
But *because* of it.

Amen.

—Alyssa Perez

Easter

Bring in your dead.
Bring in your flattened.
Bring in your hopeless cases
and your lost causes.
Bring in your trampled hearts.
Bring in your dry eyes
that have long shed all tears.
Bring in everything that has lost its pulse.

And wait.

There is a resurrection song;
can you hear it?
There is a promise that hangs overhead.
There is a life to come,
a world unseen,
a presence of something too real to believe.
There is an angel in your ear, whispering,
no really, all shall be well.

Today we profess what we don't r
hoping that our hearts can change
hoping against all logic
that logic does not exist.
Today we ask for grace to believe
once and for all,
and instead we are given the grac
to believe just one day more.

—Shannon K. Evans



The Cannonball Anniversary: Inevitable Invitation

*St. Ignatius was struck by a cannonball
on May 20, 1521, during the Battle of
Pamplona.*

We get hit, regardless
of our dreams, our desires, our hopes.

*It can't happen to me. It won't happen to me.
Don't you know who I am?*

The cannonball, hardly precise in its aim,
wrecks all in its path.

That stammering insistence of power, wealth
and privilege
is no shield at all.

We cast about in the wreckage,
sifting debris,
wading through rubble,
overwhelmed by the structures we thought
immutable,
now nothing more than dust.

And we make a decision:
Was this life's foundation firm,
or built on sand?

Where might I build anew?

—Eric Clayton

Madonna della Strada

May 24

Our Lady of the Way,
stay with us when we grow weary of the journey;
for the road is long
and our hearts are weak.
Strengthen us with the patience and fortitude
to continue on
in pursuit of a whole and just world;
in pursuit of a whole and just self.
Come, be our guide.

Our Lady of the Way,
lead us when we cannot see the path.
Take us by the hand as a Mother;
whispering comfort in our ears,
steering us through the dark,
guarding us from the terrors of the night.
Infuse us with your courage,
with your refusal to bow to fear and the unknown.
For in you we find the Light that moves us forward.

Our Lady of the Way,
show us the mystery you revealed to Ignatius
so many years past:
the mystery of letting go.
That we would not cling to our packs nor our sandals nor our cloaks
but release to the path what the path requires.
Because for all that we lay down,
we pick up something greater;
we pick up freedom.

Our Lady of the Way,
show us the way.
Amen.

—Shannon K. Evans

Discernment

Few things in life are as paralyzing as facing a big decision. Fear plays such a large role in our consideration of our options—fear of the unknown, fear of closing the door on something good, fear of making the wrong choice.

Thankfully, St. Ignatius offers us the wisdom to be able not only to decide, but to *discern*. Instead of a solitary experience, discernment welcomes God into the process, reminding us that we are not alone as we stand at the fork in the road.

How do we do this? Our first step is to strive for indifference, which isn't to say that we don't care about the decision, but rather that we remain in a place of openness, willing to let go of any biases we may have in order to hear the voice of God more clearly.

One of St. Ignatius' great gifts to us is the assurance that God speaks to us through our desires and emotions, and this is a helpful point to remember when making a decision. Ask yourself what your deepest desires are, and remain open to the possibility of being surprised by the answer. As you imagine yourself into the different paths you might take, pay attention to your feelings. Do you experience fear, freedom, doubt? Bring those emotions to God and ask for the Holy Spirit to help you interpret them.

Some of the toughest decisions we make are not between a good and a bad choice, but between two or more good options. Which one is the best? St. Ignatius always strove for more, as evidenced by the Jesuit motto "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" ("For the Greater Glory of God"). If you are stuck, try looking at your options through

this lens, taking time to ask how your unique gifts and abilities might best be used to give the most glory to God. If that feels too abstract, ask yourself which choices would lead you closer to God and which ones further away. The answer might not be obvious at first, so make sure to give yourself time to contemplate the possibilities.

Above all, St. Ignatius reminds us that discernment is a process, as we take time to listen to God and to our emotions while considering our options. But discernment can also involve community, as we seek advice or even just a compassionate listening ear from trusted friends or spiritual directors. Sometimes they can hear things in our words that we might have missed, a fear unvoiced or a preference just under the surface of our considerations. When others are able to share with us what *they* hear us saying, we often realize that we are saying more than we thought we were, that our interior knowing simply needed to be reflected back to us so that we could see it clearly.

Finally, once a decision has been made, we can ask God for confirmation of our choice. This need not be a booming voice from the sky, but perhaps something as small as an encouraging conversation with a friend or an inner stillness, a sense of peace. Whatever decision you have to make, you do not face it alone. And, of course, you have already made the most important choice of your life: to journey in communion with God. Be assured that whichever road you choose, Jesus' words will ever ring along the path: "I will never leave you or forsake you."

—Cameron Bellm

Benediction

During the course of this Ignatian year, we've wound our way through summer fields, autumn leaves, and winter snows, and we've found our way into spring with its promise of new life. It feels like we've come full circle. And yet our pilgrimage has just begun. There are so many more Ignatian paths to explore.

We hope that throughout this Ignatian year there have been many flowers pressed into your pilgrim's notebook, many sketches of snowflakes or sunsets, many precious words exchanged between you and God. But most of all, we hope that you have found your place in the Ignatian family, and that, with fresh provisions and an encouraged heart, you will journey on. May God make holy your every step.

—Cameron Bellm

Contributor Bios

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