

Sacred Story



Week Five

Wisdom from the Sacred Story Community

The Sacred Story Community offers their wisdom to this question: What is the one idea or experience from St. Ignatius' life that gives you the most optimism/hope about your own life?

I can always improve

The concept that going to the sacrament of confession could possibly be a bad idea was a new idea that I had not considered before. I have had a very similar experience with the sacrament of confession that St. Ignatius had and seeing how he came to realize his error in seeking the sacrament for the wrong reasons has allowed me to see the same mistake in my own life. The root problem is not the sin itself but the pride that led to that sin. Repeated confession was a symptom of this pride and reading this story has allowed me to gain this very valuable insight. This week's exercises were very helpful for me. I think this happens often with a lot of people but no one dares to consider that confession might be a bad idea if not sought for the right reasons.

God can use anyone for good work when one surrenders. God will do great things when we rely on Him alone.

Punishing myself over my imperfections won't bring me closer to peace or God. Surrendering to God, admitting that I am powerless, brings greater opportunity for growth and self-acceptance.

Perseverance, faith, God's graces and personal surrender = eventual freedom, union with God.

It will happen

The guilt and shame he experienced

That it took St Ignatius a lifetime to work through his spiritual problems

That he faced great fear he would not be able to sustain positive changes and temptations to quit but still persevered.

Confirmation on my inner life journey for the past 25 years.

That God forgives my past lifestyle and will bring me back to innocence (if I allow it).

Understanding that he and I have a lot in common

Ignatius' dark side, although seductive, attractive, and captivating, ultimately lead him into a brick wall of decay, disorder, and unpeacefulness. Although he clearly retained all his human free will, his fundamental decision to fully embrace God's grace for him and admit his powerlessness over his past sins was his only reasonable decision. It is a beautiful surrender of a former soldier who was no longer fighting against God. This is a great lesson for all of us today.

More awareness of the truth of the saying: 'There is nothing more powerful than the familiar' & what it can do to undermine my growth & to keep me locked in to my negative beliefs about my 'lack of spirituality. I know that God has forgiven me but forgiving myself for my sinful life is another matter.

The reading talks about going to "places you might not wish to visit". If I'm not there already, I'm just down the block - headed that way.

I will find strength in surrendering.

That he was able to find the peace that God offers all of us. Turning away from the bad plot of his mental flaws. That he let God "be God."

I think I am "starting" to understand how "sin from the Original Fall and also sin inherited from one's family and culture" affect us. Original Sin is really a difficult concept. Understanding that "the counter-inspirer has been working through all the events of one's life and relationships" helps me to understand how I got to where I am and I am not totally overwhelmed with the guilt of bad choices as though I were the sole initiator of them all. Somehow this helps me face God in asking for reconciliation. Perhaps I am rightly starting to see this as "the human condition."

That control and willpower are defenses and not always strengths. There are other ways, submission in particular, that lead to a richer happier life.

Also, that pride makes us think we can do everything ourselves and that it's only through letting go and allowing God's grace to work in us that change will happen.

I don't feel any particular idea or experience from his life has given me any particular optimism/hope. Matter of fact I feel a bit let down.

I translate my own life's transgressions to St. Ignatius' when he constantly reconciled his life's transgressions where it became damaging to not only himself but also his faith. I frequently find it difficult to forgive myself, so much so, that it 'damaged' my parts of my life and self. I have made much progress in this area but it is often a struggle. I am learning as St. Ignatius did, that by giving myself to The Lord my internal struggles lessen.

Realizing that I cannot do this on my own. That I NEED God to help me and that God is there to help me.

That God uses where we are to gain connection with us and is ever merciful and loving. Ignatius thought he was doing the right thing by attending confession regularly, however, even that became a source of prideful sin. In my life I find that even though I may pray somewhat regularly, I still think I am in control and have more of an effect on how I progress spiritually than God does. This was such a heartfelt reminder that to truly trust the Lord is to let go and let God.

I am familiar with the life of St. Ignatius though praying along with week #2 and week #3 has given me more insight and understanding into his conversion. Just the idea that someone latter in life who has not been aware of his true self, could then transform into the person of St. Ignatius, is powerful.

The insight that it is ultimately God's grace, not our own strength, that overcomes our sin and weakness.

I thought about Ignatius trying to hold on to the confessing of his sinful life. I thought about how much I also hold on to those parts of my life I wish I'd done differently. His story reminds me that it's okay to let go of those things and not try to be in control, that salvation comes from grace.

I liked and found encouraging the constant rediscovery that St. Ignatius chose in revisiting his process for confession.

Being able to identify with St. Ignatius and his self-scrutiny reminds me of my own obsessive downward spiral which continued for years focusing on the betrayal, loss of innocence, and pain, adding guilt-upon-guilt in my life relationships. I am beginning to realize that although I thought I was facing each new day differently, the results of my behavior tells me I was in the same old groove. From an emotional perspective, now, I believe I am starting over again as a different person.

That it took him a lifetime of daily practice to become a saint.

Constant reminder of god's love

It is only through prayer that you gain God's Grace, which allows you to surrender yourself to God's plan for you. Surrendering Control & Admitting Powerlessness: To admit his powerlessness, and surrender CONTROL over his life and the unholy distortions to his human nature that evolved over the years.

His conversion

My true self can be recovered through God's grace. I just have to surrender everything to Him. (I pray the Ignatian prayer, Take, Lord receive all my liberty, etc. daily with a deeper understanding after this week's reflection.)

We aren't encouraged to hold onto the past, rehashing and obsessively replaying in our minds old sins and old patterns of being. We have been given the grace to move forward to a new way of life filled with love and service.

Getting past his obsession with superficiality -

That I can change and grow closer to God

The whole idea of moving past fantasies and daydreams is revealing. I find that I do a lot of that and I have felt that it wasn't helpful, but to see St. Ignatius had the same issue was interesting.

Somehow St. Ignatius was given the grace to not be controlled by his past sins. He found that he did not need to continue to confess and I am hoping that this lead to his ability to forgive himself.

The concept of allowing God to save me, and not mucking up His plans by frantically trying to save myself.

Actually, I found the story rather disheartening. Being powerless has not worked well for me; to be powerless is to become again a passive victim. Thinking of myself as narcissistic gave me the discouraging question, "Has all my work been for nothing?" I have been trying to reformulate the themes into words that make some kind of openness to God possible for me.

Letting go to let God do his work in me- trust

I see that for him it was such a long and difficult process. It's not just going to get easier and keep going in a positive direction. There will be setbacks. So, I see that I am on a difficult path and I can remain hopeful.

That his unconscious state continued to creep back into his life and he had to continually pray to God for help. Over time he let God work through him.

His overcoming of his guilt over his past sins and using those experiences to help himself and others become closer to God.

Don't give up seeking and praying, God has a plan bigger for us than we can imagine, if we allow him to work through us.

God will lead me through.

God is in charge! I don't have to take that responsibility.

That his becoming a saint - complete surrender into the hands of God, did not happen

"instantly" but took many years. I am frustrated with my inability to hand over as Ignatius did - but the patience paradigm is important. Also, I do not save myself so I do pray for his grace (his doing).

It is difficult and challenging to confront oneself, and sometimes one does not know if one is confronting oneself truthfully. It took Ignatius many years to become the person he was meant to be. Sacred Story is a process, not an immediate happening. Only through God's Grace can we be set free, by submitting our self to His will.

The fact that we must give our life over to God. It is not our will, but God's Will that is important. I tend to worry a lot. It appears that my worries are from the Ante Story and not the Sacred Story.

"That which so marred his early life became the very source of his strength and sanctity." The very idea that my failings can become my own graces fills me with tremendous hope.

He stopped going over all his past mistakes and dwelling on them. He did not seek to "undo" his life but to move on from it with complete trust in God.

The idea that God knows what the best path and can shape our lives is very hopeful. Hard to know how to let that happen though- or if it is already happening :)

Overcoming addictions

Ignatius admits his powerlessness to save himself, and surrenders control of his life to God.

The part he wrote at the end of his life that referred to allowing God to be the sculptor of our lives if we open ourselves to His grace, and what amazing results there could be.

St. Ignatius also struggled in his faith journey. As the story said, even saints don't have it easy. It is consoling to be reminded that we all make mistakes and come up against obstacles. All we have to do is surrender everything over to God. He can take the mess of our lives and make them into beautiful stories.

Insights provide a basis for change

It's consoling to know he had many ups and downs during his life, even after his conversion. All the while, he was alert to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. His holiness did not come all at once...

That Ignatius struggled and almost gave up but he reached deeper inside and did not / give up.

When St. Ignatius was so discouraged and had a desired to stop living his spiritual life, he was alarmed.....a radar went on high alert. He was aware that this thought came from outside himself. The devil. I was helped by reading this because I believe I have had that same experience. At my mom's last moments of life, I was pacing around her bed and started to pray the Divine Mercy. A voice within me said, "Why are you being silly....your prayers don't matter, you're just being dramatic." I actually stopped praying and thought to myself that

maybe I was being dramatic. After all, who am I? At that moment, my heart leapt! I realized that it wasn't my own voice. I knew it was the evil one. I immediately prayed to God, asked Our Lady for protections as well and finished powerfully praying the Divine Mercy. My mother died within a half hour. I felt the spiritual battle and Jesus' victory.

The idea that he struggled for the rest of his life to accept God's saving grace despite his pride

His "spring-backness." He set his sights and even when he did it wrong, he persevered in the Lord.

The three steps back to hope

That his conversion did not happen all at once; it was an ongoing process and that he had to face multiple levels of fear and choose to recommit to God.

His total brokenness and his journey back to the light. I hope I am starting from a better place, and so maybe the journey will not be as difficult.

You don't have to do things perfectly - in fact perfectionism can be an addiction/obsession

His battles were so much greater than mine. If he can make it, then so can I--with prayer and commitment.

In his weakness and sins, Ignatius was strong in Christ.

That Ignatius couldn't make himself holy, that he needed to surrender to God and let God do it in him. I learned that I'm not to be afraid of going deeply into my compulsions because God is lovingly waiting there, eager to heal me.

When I read the paragraph about the Divine-Inspirer working with me, and in me, through difficult psychological traumas, being able to mend a broken heart and providing shelter and safety, I was very much relieved and enthusiastic about the possibilities of learning from St. Ignatius' experience and insight.

He was deliberate to a fault. He was able to start over and become closer to Christ.

Finding the courage and wisdom to admit powerlessness and surrendering control of whole life to God.

That "self-less aspirations were influenced by Divine inspirations."

Overcoming scrupulosity or not feeling actually forgiven for certain things felt familiar. What puzzles me is that the incident for which I still feel such strong regret was not something actually sinful as far as I can figure out or understand. My head went one way & my heart when another way. I decided against what my heart said.

To see myself staying with the program and making it part of my daily prayer life consoles me.

That as bad things can be there is hope and faith that all will turn out better than you can know.

I think that I can change my life and think that I am in charge- but God is in charge and only He can change what needs to be changed. If I truly trust that God is in charge, I will find changes I want to make will come much easier.

Realizing that everyone has to work very hard (over years) to really understand their motivations, reactions, and how to live a productive, holy life.

This idea: when I struggle to remain in a state of grace on my own volition, my efforts are pitiful. It is my reliance on God in all matters that gives me strength and grace.

It was consoling for me to see how Ignatius finally allowed God, not Ignatius, be the source of his holiness.

When he wanted to give up, he continued.

That saint Ignatius did not start out a saint. He developed over time to become one. It is a process and feeling struggles and fear in my own life to stop unholy behavior; it is refreshing to know that the Anit-story can become the sacred story in my life. When I am a better person it resonates to others around me.

Ignatius' mention of "Spiritual daydreams" (or something) was very nice. He would have daydreams of serving the Lord. I'm trying currently to reshape my daydreams to be like Ignatius, and it DOES leave me with a "happy afterglow" like Ignatius. A happy afterglow in contrast to my previous "I'm esteemed, I'm beautiful" daydreams which gave me an empty feeling afterwards. That was my favorite little detail from St. Ignatius' life

God loves each one of us very, vey much. He is very patient with us, not only with our faults but with our blindness. He surprisingly gives us time to understand some of His graces and presence in our lives every day.

That sometimes our best efforts to be "good" people are unsuccessful because we try to have too much control over the outcome when what we need to practice is more acceptance and less control, and that God can use these experiences to help us grow and to better understand others.

The idea that YOU can't save yourself and that through GRACE we,, hopefully, will experience God's will and be able to go from 'our present state of being' and "open our eyes" to God's grace so that we can live in our own SACRED STORY.

The example of Ignatius surrendering completely to God: I have struggled so much with this. The thing that really gives me hope is the encouraging statement: be patient and kind to yourself.

The most inspiring is when Ignatius reached the point where "he gradually learned, by grace along, how to unite mine and spirit, action and contemplation, the eternal and the present moment, and the Divine Presence in all people and in all creation: to reengage life's duties

and obligations with a serene heart and with clarity of purpose. That he allowed God to write his Sacred Story...hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly." Reflecting on this provides the grace to persevere through struggle with grace, knowing God is with you at your side every minute, hour, and day.

The conversion of St Ignatius over 28 years gives me hope that in spite of my weaknesses and sinfulness, my Lord and God is always there to help me. The Lord is truly my shepherd.

Patience

Ignatius clearly had much more willpower than I do subjecting himself to strict physical disciplines. His realization that he needed to surrender to God inspired me to recognize that if Ignatius couldn't do it alone, then neither can I.

Ignatius' "scrupulosity" in how he went about his confession, etc. I find I'm scrupulous about following directions and carrying out certain tasks and that that may be where I need to look the closest at what's keeping me from God! It's hard to explain, but this was a hopeful idea from this past week's reading.

I can relate to the way St. Ignatius turned something holy, confession, into an idol. It gives me hope to know that he was a man, just as human as I am.

It's never too late to change.

He gained greater joy (as evidenced by his three near-death experiences) as he progressed in his spiritual journey, as his Sacred Story unfolded.

We are all human. We all have failures. It is difficult to voice these failures and ask for help from God. I am also noticing that as much as I try opening up to God there is still more to give and to open to.

If he could do it, so can I.

That though he went into despair, he did not let it rule his life.

My Journey is not that different from St. Ignatius. But it intrigues me how pride kept him from hearing God speaking to him. A secure person has pride and self-confidence. Should we not be proud of ourselves? Knowing that it took St. Ignatius 28 years of struggling to perfect himself tells me I hopefully have time to get this right.

It takes time to realize one's Sacred Story; it's a process to fully accept the grace of God in one's life.

That his Sacred Story Journey was a process that took years and he continued to be graced by God's love.

The powerless paradigm meant the most to me. One has to give up the pride and just let the grace in. I can't do any of this myself...even though I thought for years I could control everything in my life.

Any one person can become a saint.

The idea that gives me the most hope is that St. Ignatius was able to learn to surrender to God by his God's grace and find peace and his authentic self.

Ignatius' conversion and full awakening to his Sacred Story was not a single event but a gradual life long process expressed in his Patience Paradigm.

His ability to deal with his fear

Probably the most helpful is the realization that you will find god if you look, but it may not happen in the way that you expect. That you should keep searching and you will find the way. It may happen after you have exhausted many paths and felt like giving up, but if you look you will find god.

When he realized all his effort was getting him nowhere and he accepted his powerlessness and gave control of his life to God. This is what I struggle with, always being in control of my life.

I liked the thick and shapeless tree trunk analogy!

That he was able to change his life so completely.

My time is not God's time. Although I am beginning this journey (Sacred Story) late in life, I trust that God's plan for me will be accomplished in the perfect amount of time. My job is to continue on the journey, accept God's grace, and be attentive.

Chance to examen my life and see my narcissistic tendency. And to see how often I have tried to write my own story and have become discouraged with my attempts to grow spiritually. It has given me hope that surrendering my life to God and letting Him be the author of my sacred story is both a huge relief and a humbling experience. That God will show me the way to expel my pride and narcissistic pleasures that keep me from 'freedom'.

Ignatius' struggles are similar to mine.

I know what the afterglow of holy behavior feels like and I also know what the feeling inside for having done wrong feels like and one learns from that with God's grace, as did Ignatius.

How important it can be to get away from your regular daily life to make a retreat and reconnect with God. It was in going to Montserrat and being able to truly focus on his spiritual health that he could recover from his past sins.

That he struggled with the idea of his sins and his past life and that finally realizing God was the one who could forgive him, rather than his own human idea of forgiveness was powerful.

His example of recognizing that God is always there and giving each of us the opportunity to step ever closer to Him in our lives and in doing so experience the subsiding of fear and despair getting replace with peace and clarity of purpose

Finding my true gift or "divine sacred story"

That it took a long time to achieve his Sainthood life

That identifying and surrendering the root cause of my anger and impatience will lead me closer to God and to my true self, to a peace.

That he wasn't perfect and often failed in his spiritual journey. But despite this, God was always there when he tried again, and his perseverance helped him get closer to God.

His desire to regain his lost innocence and let God lead him in his life.

His quest to lead an authentic life

Changing addictive behaviors

Finding your authentic self is important.

It is a lifelong process of conversion.

I feel that we as human beings need to let go of all our sinful experiences, the sin and the penance both and hand them to God.

The existence of a counter inspiration that plays on our fears but that Divine inspiration has power over that

I think it was the realization he came to about re-confessing his past sins. As a Catholic from birth my earliest attempts at confession seemed to involve this practice. That continued throughout life. In some ways I see that as been counter productive.

That grace is at work helping me examine my narcissism and sinful tendencies and weaknesses so that I may be sensitive to the movements of grace in me that are making me into the image of Christ for others.

Ignatius realizes he can't continue to beat himself for his past sins and understands he needs God help - accept God's forgiveness.

He surrenders his life to God. He was powerless over his sins; could not release them from himself.

I can do this. I know I need to do this for my relationship with God and for myself.

That grace and insight follow times of struggle

Presence of counter inspiration to divine inspiration

The idea that it is never too late to start a life of faith.

God's faithfulness does not depend on me. It encourages my own faithfulness.

That Ignatius could have had such a difficult beginning spiritually and yet still be blessed with the understanding of how to finally let go and let God lead him in the direction that was intended for his Sacred Story.

St Ignatius going through the 2nd and 3rd steps of despair is I feel where I'm at at this time of my journey. Realizing that my experience is real and that these are just the steps I have to go thru, I have hope that this will eventually pass and if I continue to seek God's grace, I will be able to accept my powerlessness and surpass these difficulties and despair I'm experiencing.

Recognizing that when I get discouraged or just want to give up and go somewhere where I will be all alone, that is exactly the time I need to increase my prayers for guidance by the Holy Spirit and continue the process of discernment.

That holiness is possible for all people.

His success in meeting reality and his ability, with God's grace, to persevere.

The idea that giving control over to God is the best way to re-shape my life.

Ignatius reminds us all that commitment requires recommitment - this is the human condition - not a sign of failure.

That change happens slowly

Just that feeling: 'if he can do it, so can I'. It's the whole thing for me, not so much one thing.

By releasing the weekly prayer that God will heal my sinful nature and thus allowing God will to control my life.

That he worked so hard on overcoming his demons, but still couldn't do it ON HIS OWN so he GAVE UP AND LET GOD HELP. I keep forgetting how important it is to ask God for help to come alongside me day by day. That way I don't need to obsess (in my case, on being a successful dieter) and just ask God to let it happen in his time. In other words, I need to surrender control.

In my life I also struggled with addiction to many different things and from reading about his compulsive addictive behavior of changing from one addiction of many poor choices and then his changing his addiction to confessing shows that he was still not turning his life over to God completely and keeping his will involved. I find myself having to be sure to give it ALL up to God all day long as I go about my day as my will is very strong and things does not go right if I do not turn these so called addictions, mannerisms, or whatever u want to call them up to God, everything makes me end up in a panic mode. I then realize OOPs ... Give it up to God and let him deal with it, as it is his way not mine. When St Ignatius finally turned his life over completely and saw the light his life then became better.

I'm not sure yet. Still ruminating on that.

He was a sinner before a Saint.

That with grace from God, we can all reach our potential, even though we may not know or even begin to imagine what that can/would be.

I think the idea that it is never too late to grow closer to God gives me hope.

Discerning the spirit of daydreams. I have a lot of them. It is wonderful to think that God can be found in them!

St Ignatius was tempted and would want to fall back to the old way and he would, through the Grace of God, find his way back.

That I can find forgiveness with God.

This week his life story helped me to look back at my life and recognize the event that triggered my loss of innocence and to begin the journey back to innocence in Christ!

"Everyone walking this path will be given the graces he or she needs as well---just for the asking."

The fact that he was not 'perfect' for the first 30 years of his life. He was a "bad-boy - partier" kinda guy... the kinda guy I would probably have had a crush on. I know that sounds weird, but - it gives me HOPE!! I'm a grown woman now and the kind of guys I liked when I was younger - seem so shallow and self-absorbed, now. How a person's life - everything about that person, how they 'change' - for the better, when they finally let Jesus in. It's amazing and beautiful. And to be perfectly honest, I am seeing A LOT of the infamous "12 Steps" (of AA) in St. Ignatius's life. Very comforting.

I am beginning to understand that I need to confess all sins from young adult life that I knew were not things I should be doing but didn't necessarily classify them (in my on vacation Catholic mind!) and just get them off my chest...let the guilt go and really try to focus on letting God lead me. Its not a done deal, I can keep trying because God is there to help...just for the asking.

I find that I also keep repeating the sins I have made to God.

Progressive growth to an awakened conscience and holiness, Ignatius conversion from his anti-story to his sacred story didn't happen over night. It was not one single event, but a gradual process. Patience paradigm stuck with me this week. There are no short cuts to holiness - not even for saints.

The fact that Ignatius surrendered to God and was given the grace to face his demons to their core and by doing so increased his spirituality and relationship with the Lord

The idea of letting go of sin rather than continuing to dwell on how I "haven't measured up" and moving forward was very helpful.

He started late in life and was still able to transform his life actions, thoughts, feelings.

Perseverance, that out of his injuries he found a better life.

No matter how deep in desolation that we may feel we are in, God is always there waiting patiently for us.... With an invitation for a fresh new start!

St. Ignatius had conflict with his family and what he thought was right religion, and God still met him.

That there is hope for turning a long sinful life into a saintly life by surrendering to Gods grace.

That conversion is possible for one so badly damaged in all ways.

The knowledge that change is possible no matter how difficult.

The one idea/experience from St. Ignatius' life that gives me the most optimism/hope about my own life is that God was able to bring him from the depths of despair to a new life full of meaning and joy and that the surrender on the part of Ignatius was gradual, that it took years for conversion and that I need to be patient with myself and recognize that it is my pride that desires immediate gratification from my own efforts. Also, the part that he had to overcome scrupulosity really resonated with my own circumstances and how that was also tied into pride was profound.

Christ working so hard to meet Ignatius in "this harrowing place" - as many blocks as Ignatius put up, Christ worked that much harder to get to him - so I can believe that He will work this hard to meet me too!

The concept of persevering through to one's "authentic self." The "Patience Paradigm" is also quite interesting, since I have a strong fear of what happens after death. Who really knows?

That if I stick with it long enough I might come be open to God's graces and discover my Sacred Story

The fact he felt discouragement at never feeling clean and pure enough even after confession felt familiar. He could not really forgive himself and so the shame of his sins would linger. Finally he surrendered control of this when he realized that he was ultimately powerless. This was the beginning of true freedom for him. This is encouraging to me.

God knows what needs to be healed in our lives, and offers opportunities for us to cooperate.

His commitment to pray unceasingly, is what is has worked in my life.

It took St. Ignatius the years to work through his "matrix of narcissism." I feel like there are so many layers to peel away that I'll never be done with the process, never come to know the person God intended me to be. But I can pray for patience and hope! That I can do!

