

December Newsletter

Friends,

I hope your Thanksgiving experience was full of good food, good company, and gratitude. I just returned from Spain and Rome with Cohort 1 of the Ignatian Wisdom Fellows. We followed Ignatius Loyola from his cannonball recovery at his Loyola home and his age-30 transition and conversation through his journey to Manresa, Montserrat, and Barcelona; and then, his movement from pilgrim to author of the Spiritual Exercises, to calling his companions and forming the Society of Jesus in Rome as recruiter and then leader/general of the Society of Jesus. We ended with a celebration of the Eucharist in the room where Ignatius lived, worked, and died. We charted his adult development as we reflected on our own. Rich conversations, beautiful scenery, great food, and we were out of the country and, so, not consumed by the election or its results. Europeans are astounded by the outcome.

We came home to the transition from fall toward winter. The clocks were changed while we were in Europe, so we move into the darkness of winter as we begin Advent and the movement to the Incarnation, Christmas, and New Year. Our scripture passage is the great beginning of John's Gospel and the coming of the "light of the world."

For reading this month, I chose an article on the importance of retreats for reflection on leadership. It's by Harry Kraemer, former Baxter CEO and professor of leadership at the Kellogg School of Management. I also just received the 100th Anniversary *Commonweal* magazine and thought E. J. Dionne's reflective article captured the importance of the laity for both the Church and the country. He stresses keeping the windows open and the importance of "liberal Catholic virtues." Each article should provoke good conversations.

As for books, this month I recommend for you or as a Christmas gift *Your Values-Based Legacy: Making a Difference at Every Age and Phase of Life* by Harry Kraemer. I also recommend John Shea's latest book of Christmas poems and prayers, *Borrowing Wonder: Christmas Poems and Reflections to Open the Heart*. This is a follow-up to Shea's previous Christmas book, *Seeing Haloes*.

Finally, forget the stress of the season! Like the poor, it is always with us. Instead, focus on this time of enchantment and engage the mystery of the time in the eyes of children and the delight of the ageing as they see the joy of Christmas in family and community. Be captured by the stories of our tradition, the movies of the season, and the family stories of faith, hope, and love and laughter!

And have a holy and happy Christmas and a hopeful New Year!

AMDG,

John Fontana



MISSION

The Mission of the Ignatian Business Chapters is to establish and lead a national and international network of business executives to explore their respective religious traditions in order to help the individual executives

- integrate faith, family, and professional life,
- develop a corporate culture that is reflective of their religious faith and values, and
- exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large.

The chapters, grounded in the Roman Catholic tradition, welcome believers who are open to and respectful of one another's religious traditions. They are committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one's religious heritage.

SCRIPTURE READING:

John 1: 1-9

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

ARTICLES

[“Why do I participate in a 3-day silent retreat every year?”](#)

by Harry Kraemer.

www.harrykraemer.org,

December 11, 2023.

[“Keeping the Windows Open,”](#)

Commonweal, October 26, 2023.



REFLECTION

Reflection Questions

Be Attentive: Two end-of-the-year reflection articles, one stressing Ignatian retreat and the importance of reflection for leadership; the other another a reflection on Commonweal magazine's 100th anniversary as a voice of the laity with a focus on virtues and values. What caught your attention in these articles in the month of December?

Be Intelligent: What has been your experience with retreats? How do you carve out time for reflection in the midst of your busy life? And/or what was your reaction to EJ Dionne's reflective article?

Be Reasonable: How did these articles relate to or influence your end-of-the-year reflections or your post-election reflections?

Be Responsible: What were key insights that surfaced in today's discussion? Any food for further contemplation? Any action steps? What are the implications for you at work, in your community and at home? Leverage the conversation for good!

CLOSING PRAYER

Personal Prayer of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

Grant me, O Lord, to see everything now with new eyes;
to discern and test the spirits that help me read the signs of the times;
to relish the things that are yours, and to communicate them to others.
Give me the clarity of understanding that you gave Ignatius.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen!

The scripture passage is taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1989, 1993 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

