


“Forming a Personal Conscience”
JCAP Education Conference
September 2017



A Prayer for Teachers

Enable me to teach with wisdom
For I help to shape the mind

Equip me with truth
For I help to shape the conscience

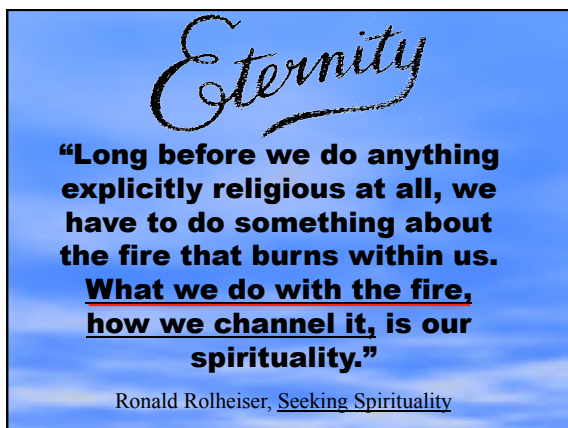
Encourage me to lead with vision
For I help to shape the future

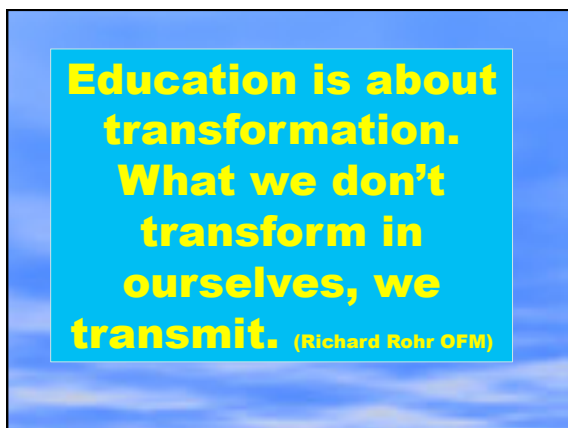
Empower me to form my students with love,
For I help to shape the world.

Amen

(anon.)

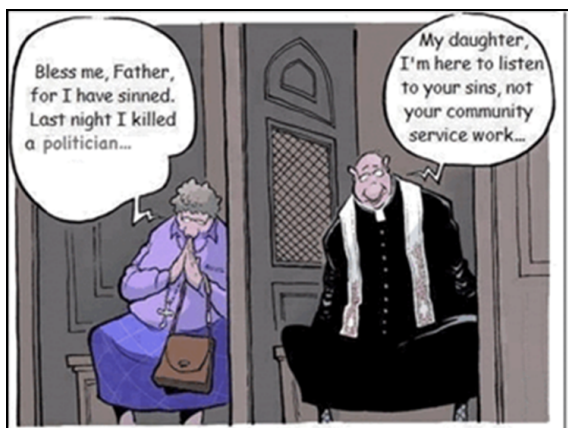








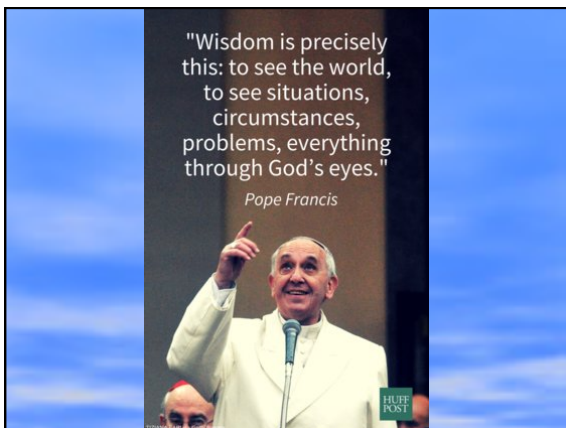




Any reference to 'sin' and 'guilt'?

The Seven Social Sins: Gandhi 1925

- **Politics without principle**
- **Wealth without work**
- **Commerce without morality**
- **Pleasure without conscience**
- **Education without character**
- **Science without humanity**
- **Worship without sacrifice**



“The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart...and a blunted conscience.”

Pope Francis

CONTEXT – Why ‘CONSCIENCE’ today?

In the Ignatian tradition, Father General Kolvenbach declared in 1993 that “our goal as educators is to form men and women of competence, conscience, and compassionate commitment.”

The 4 C’s – (some say we should add a 5th C – CHRIST –) have inspired the renewal of Ignatian education for the past two decades.

Our previous General, Father Nicolas, speaks about the excellence in humanity of the 4 C’s to which we want our students to strive

- Watch your feelings; they become your thoughts**
- Watch your thoughts; they become your words**
- Watch your words; they become your actions**
- Watch your actions; they become your habits**
- Watch your habits; they become your character**
- Watch your character; it becomes your destiny. (Author unknown)**

A healthy conscience enables us to perform this 'watching' role'

Conscience is "an individual's intrinsic ability to discern the rightness and goodness of their own actions." (George Nedumattam SJ)

"I just knew it was the right thing to do."



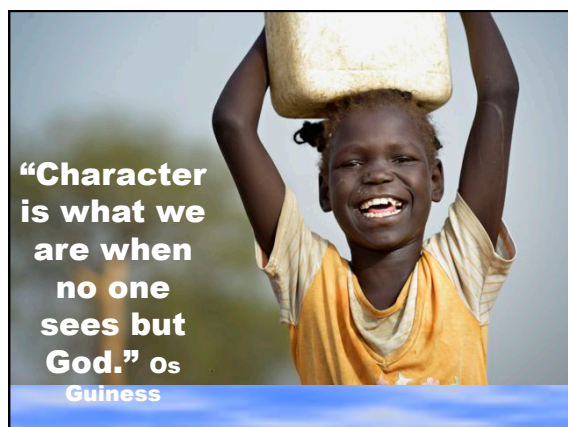
The dignity of Conscience according to Vatican II:

"Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There he/she is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths."

“Since many of you are not members of the Catholic Church, and others are not believers, I cordially give this blessing silently, to each of you, respecting the conscience of each, but in the knowledge that each of you is a child of God. May God bless you.”
Pope Francis



CONSCIENCE AND THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER ARE INTIMATELY LINKED









Dance as though no one is watching you

Love as though you have never been hurt before

Sing as though no one can hear you

Live as though heaven is on earth – from a Calendar

“Each totemic ancestor, while travelling through the country, was thought to have scattered a trail of words and musical notes along the line of his footprints, and....these Dreaming-tracks lay over the land as ‘ways’ of communication between the most far-flung tribes. ‘A Song’, Arkady said, ‘was both map and direction-finder. Providing you knew the song, you could always find your way across the country. ‘And would a man on ‘Walkabout’ always be travelling down one of the Songlines?’ ‘Yes!’.

Bruce Chatwin in ‘Songlines’



'After a bomb killed two dozen people at a Tel Aviv disco a few years ago, Israeli youth refused to be cowed. They resumed a robust nightlife. Today, outside the scene of the bombing, beneath a stone memorial listing the names of the dead, is a single inscription: *Lo Nafseek Lirkod*. It means 'We won't stop dancing'.'

**In the 4th Century B.C.,
ARISTOTLE WAS TEACHING THAT
MORAL VIRTUES,
LIKE CRAFTS,
ARE ACQUIRED BY
PRACTICE AND HABIT.
HE PUT FORWARD 4 KEY CARDINAL VIRTUES
•COURAGE
•TEMPERANCE
•WISDOM
•JUSTICE
TO THESE 4, THOMAS AQUINAS ADDED THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES
•FAITH
•HOPE
•CHARITY**

Some of the background to this so-called 'Virtue Theory' lies in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre who argued, in his famous book, After Virtue, that in practice we develop dispositions to act in certain ways. Practice forms habits. These habits make us who we are. In brief, there is a crucial link between habit and virtue.

The great thirteenth century theologian, Thomas Aquinas, elaborated this thinking by highlighting the fact "that most of what we do primarily affects us...if it is done well, it betters us; if done poorly, it worsens us. For example, a good run makes the runner run better. A poised dance makes the dancer dance better... The effects of these activities redound to the agent. This is an important and wonderful insight, which says in effect, 'we become what we do.'"

CHARACTER influences how someone makes decisions or chooses to act.

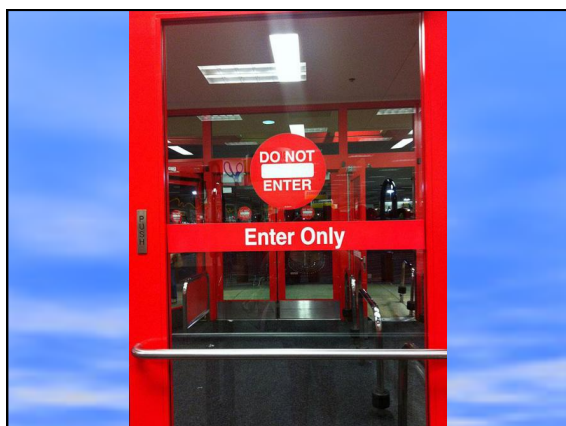
Conscience is our Compass in life - that "still, small voice" (Seamus Heaney, Irish poet)

Conscience has been an area of controversy in the Church:

- **Cardinal Pell and Frank Brennan SJ**
- **Whether a person's decision in conscience is objectively correct or not, he/she is obliged to follow it**
- **Conscience means more than squaring my conduct with a set of rules (rules can be limited)**
- **We have a responsibility to form and inform our conscience**

“Catholics should stop talking about the primacy of conscience....It is a short cut, which often leads the uninitiated to feel even more complacent while ‘doing their own thing.’” (Cardinal Pell, 1999)

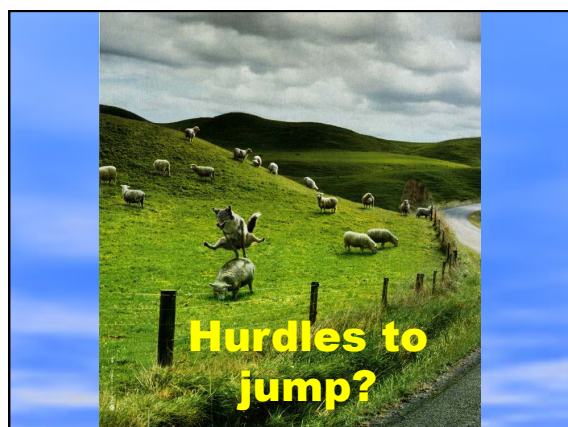
“In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God....” Vatican II



























“I’ve come to believe that each of us has a personal calling that’s as unique as a fingerprint – and that the best way to succeed is to discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service.” Oprah Winfrey in her last reflection before signing off her TV show





“Every day, passion speaks to us through our feelings ... beckoning us towards our highest good.” Oprah Winfrey (cont.)

“Pay attention to what makes you feel energised, connected, stimulated – what gives you juice.” Oprah (cont.)



Interview of Fr Antonio Spadaro with Pope Francis, 2013

“What element of Ignatian spirituality helps you live your ministry?”

“Discernment,” he replies. “Discernment is one of the things that worked inside St. Ignatius. For him it is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely.”

Discernment of spirits sharpens our internal radar and helps us to be people and form people of stronger conscience





POPE FRANCIS AND 'the Homeless Jesus'







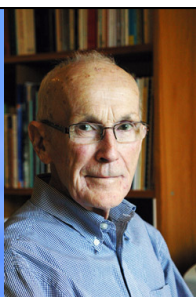
“Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor.”



“I am always wary of decisions made hastily. I am always wary of the first decision, that is, the first thing that comes to my mind if I have to make a decision. This is usually the wrong thing. I have to wait and assess, looking deep into myself, taking the necessary time.” Pope Francis

“The test of whether our education is one of depth is whether we are able to produce people who can ‘decide from inside’if we are able to produce people of discernment.” Fr. General Adolfo Nicolas, Manila, 2009

“All leadership begins with self-leadership”



Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership*
p.98

Discernment of Spirits
is variously known as




- discovering God's will in our lives
- the place where prayer and action meet
- learning to read the body's signals
- a way of sifting through our desires and passions, so that our lives may be shaped by the best of them
- sifting feelings, moods and movements within to determine:
 - which are from God or another source
 - which lead to God or elsewhere
- dealing in faith with all these mental/emotional states to note how they influence the shape and direction of our lives.

Discernment of Spirits



- it is a science (the rules) and an art (techniques to practice and refine)
- it is not about choosing between good and evil (a matter of conscience) but about choosing between two goods – which one is the *better choice for you, now?*

Spirituality is about DEPTH



'He who knows about depth knows about God' (Paul Tillich)

**Ignatius was
always focusing
on our deep
desires as a way
of discovering
God's presence in
our lives**

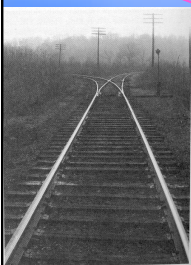
**Q. What are you
passionate about?
Your deep desires in
life?**



*My wife said "Watcha doin' today?"
I said "Nothing"
She said, "You did that yesterday"
I said "I wasn't finished."*

Sandi V.
www.wackywits.com

Discernment of Spirits
- long a venerable part of
Christian tradition




**"Honour the
symptom
and let it guide us
in close care of the
soul"**

Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*

Discernment is very Ignatian. It is the art of looking into our hearts and minds to see what parts of our life lead to God and which parts lead away from God.

Discernment focuses on DIRECTION – the END POINT
what leads to God and what leads away from God
Where am I headed with this?



CONVALESCENCE
at home after Battle
at Pamplona 1521

2 sorts of Daydreams
had 2 different effects
on Ignatius

The Beginnings of
Discernment

**The Walls of
PAMPLONA**



**In the
spring of
1521, a
French army
of 12,000
marched on
Navarre**

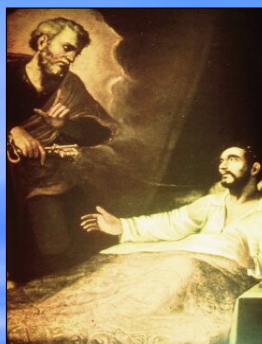




Inigo goes down!

**“I spoke not a word,
and gave no other sign of
pain
than to clench my fists
tightly.”**

**On the eve of
the feast of
Peter and
Paul
precisely at
midnight
he began to
recover**





Inigo' s bedroom



To while away the time he was given books to read

His dream was to win the favour of this Lady





He also dreamed of doing great things for God

There are 3 levels of discernment

- ◆♣ **Discerning our every day/
Rewinding the day/Tuning in
(‘the tender moments’)**
- ◆♣ **Discerning and Decision-
Making**
- ◆♣ **Discerning as a group of
people/a community**

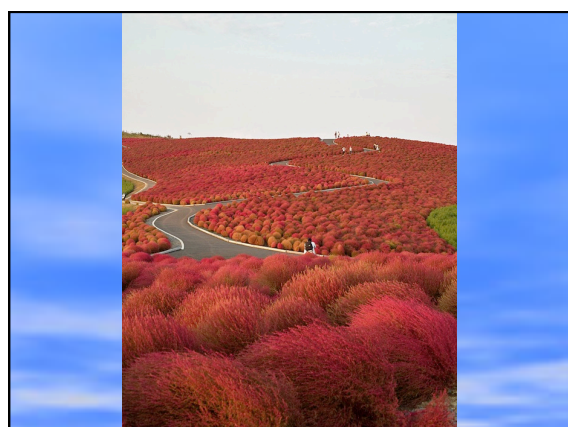


**Discernment of Spirits is the
place where prayer and action
meet**

**As the centre of Ignatian
spirituality, DoS is
getting inside ourselves
every day to understand
why we do things/make
decisions**

Discernment of Spirits is known variously as:

- ◆ **Discovering God's will in our lives**
- ◆ **Learning to read the body's signals**
- ◆ **Sifting feelings and moods to determine which are from God or some other source/which lead to God or elsewhere**

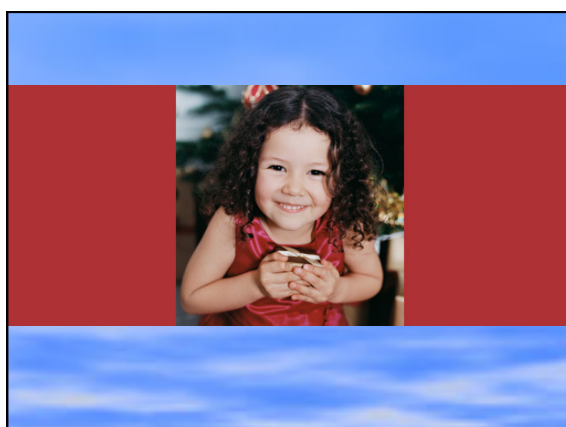


Discernment is about choosing between two goods – which is the better choice now
(not between good and evil)

Discernment and making decisions/ choices

1 Fundamental Rule
=

Never make a decision in the dark



Discernment and Making Choices

SUBJECTS	CAREER
♣best teachers	♣most money
♣highest marks/career	♣most prestige/status
♣enjoy most	♣make most difference in the community
♣most competent	

Good choices are those which

- ▲consider the impact on others
- ▲consider the longer term
- ▲consider the bigger picture
- ▲draw me towards the good spirit
- ▲promote life in me and others



An African sits on a seat reserved for whites only

“I cherish my own freedom, but I care even more for your freedom. I will not give any undertaking when you and I, the people, are not free.”

Mandela’s response to an offer of freedom from the South African Government, read by his daughter Zindzi in a speech in 1985

“I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then...”

Deuteronomy 30:19



**The
Two
Wolves**





**The good spirit/wolf of
good brings us....**

Peace

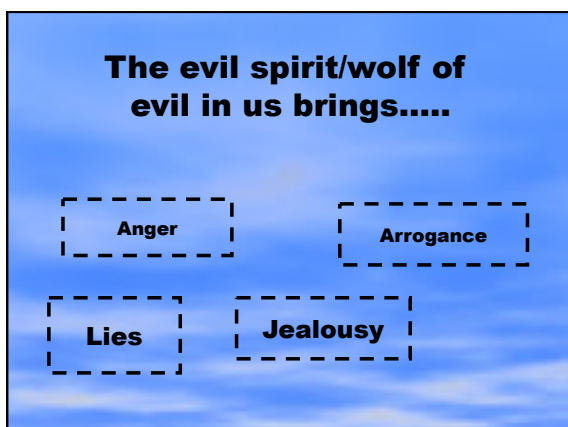
Love

Generosity

Joy

Hope







Which wolf wins in us?

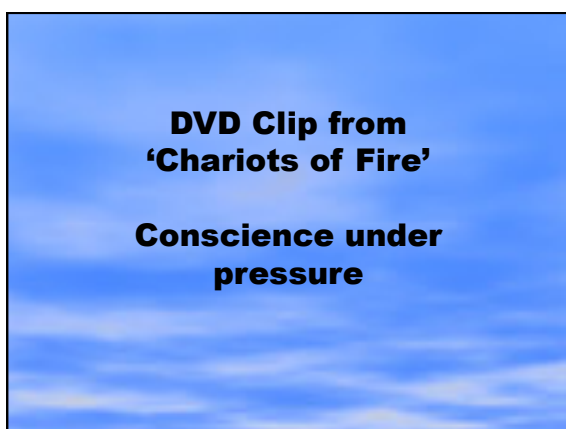
The wolf you feed

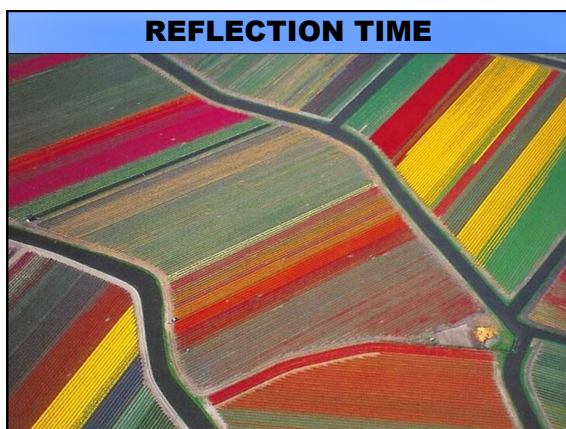
Discernment	
Away from God	Towards God
▪Locked into my view	✓Open to growth and change
▪Quick to judge	✓Taking time to listen and reflect
▪Rigidity	✓Flexibility
▪Moralising (shoulds)	✓In touch with real desire
▪Self-centered	✓In relationship

Away from God	Towards God
▪Discouragement	✓Encouragement
▪Cynicism	✓Hope
▪Exaggeration	✓Balance
▪Fear, anxiety	✓Confidence, trust
▪Illusion	✓Truth
▪Absolutes	✓Ordinary reality
▪Bullying	✓Gentleness
▪Guilt	✓Sorrow
▪Rejecting difference	✓Respecting difference
▪Impatience with process	✓Trusting in process









Personal Reflection Time


Reflect back on a time when your conscience dictated the right personal decision/the right path you needed to take.

How difficult was it?


What factors helped you to form your conscience?

HANDOUT - Use if it helps

'Where your treasure is' - a Song about Freedom based on Luke 12



**Where
your
treasure
is
There
your
heart
shall be**





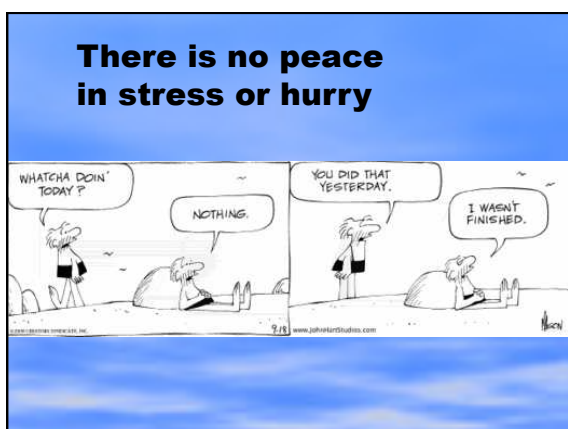
**All that you
possess
Will never
set you free**

**Seek the
things
that last
Come and
learn from
me**





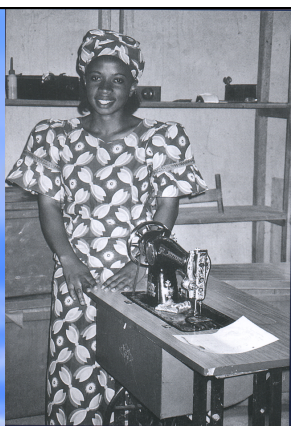




**Do you not know
that you are held
within God's care?**



**Where your
treasure is
There your
heart shall
be**




**All that
you
possess
Will
never set
you free**



Seek the things that last
Come and learn from me




Where your treasure is
your heart shall be

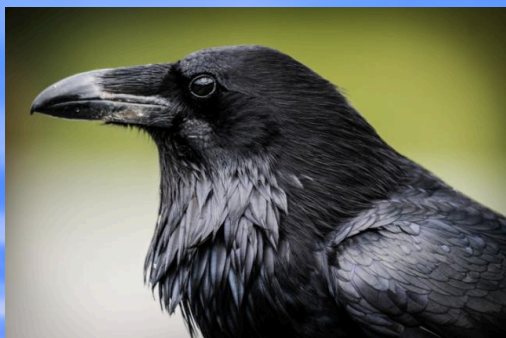


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Look at the ravens high above you



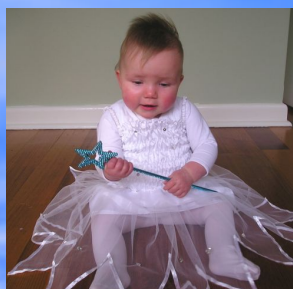
They do not work their whole life through



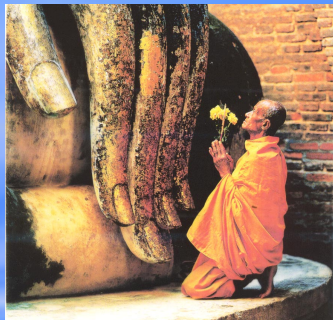
And yet God feeds them and protects them



So how much more will God protect and care for you?



**Where your
treasure is
There your
heart shall
be**





**All that you
possess
Will never
set you free**

**Seek the
things that
last
Come and
learn from
me**



**Where your treasure is
your heart shall be**



**Behold the lilies in
their splendour**





**In grace and
beauty are they
dressed**









**All that you possess
Will never set you free**

**Seek the
things that
last
Come and
learn from
me**



**Where your
treasure is
your heart shall
be**



Do not fear little flock



For God delights to give you

The blessed reign of God

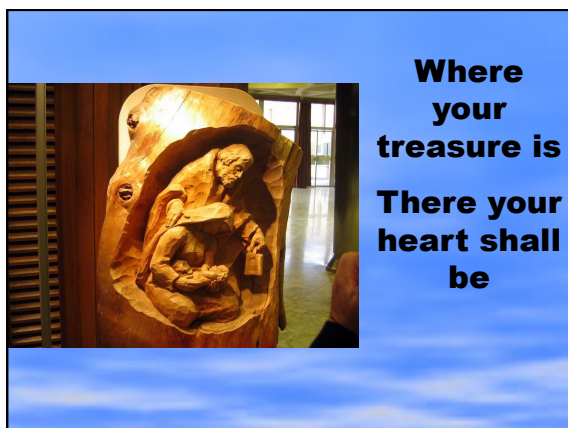


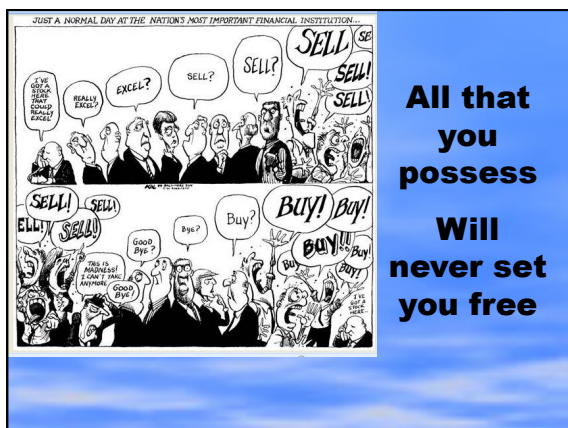
Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness.

Give your possessions to the needy










Seek the things that last
Come and learn from me




Where your treasure is your heart shall be
Where your treasure is your heart shall be



The goal of freedom in the Spiritual Exercises is summed up in the final prayer – ‘Take, Lord, receive....’




“I seek no other liberty than that of being bound to Thee.” Hymn of St. Ignatius



IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

For those of us endeavouring constantly to seek and find God in all things, the prayer of that great Jesuit and cosmic adventurer, Teilhard de Chardin, is very appropriate:

‘Lord, help me see the world with the same beauty it had when it tumbled from your creative hand. Help me see that nothing here below is profane. On the contrary, everything is sacred.’



“INCARNATION”