



SPIRITUAL TRAINING
in family life



BODY & SOUL

PRESENTATION OF THE BODY & SOUL ITINERARY

On the occasion of this Olympic year, the Jesuits invite you to explore the spiritual dimension of playing sports and the relationship with the body, through the strains that are experienced in sports activities as well as in the spiritual life (strength & fragility, competition & team spirit...).

The “Body & Soul” itinerary offers spiritual training as a family experience. In each booklet, you will find a guided prayer, a time of sharing, a presentation by a Jesuit to explore the theme in greater depth, and testimonies from athletes. Each family is invited to come together for a time of listening, sharing, and praying.




1. GAMES & DISCIPLINE
2. BODY & SOUL
3. STRENGTH & FRAGILITY
4. HARDSHIP & STRUGGLE
5. DEFEAT & VICTORY
6. COMPETITION & TEAM SPIRIT

Here we are at the second stage, “**Body and soul**”, ready to build momentum for this family time!



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FAMILY MEDITATION



MEDITATION BY THE FAMILY PASTORAL MINISTRY OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

The Family Ministry of the Society of Jesus offers a range of online content to enable families, young and old alike, to enjoy times of prayer, sharing or activities together around key topics.

Each year, we offer online retreats for Advent and Lent, as well as themed retreats for families to enjoy together, in connection with current events and world issues. This year, on the occasion of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, we have also decided to offer an online itinerary on the theme of the spiritual dimension of sporting activities.

LET'S BUILD MOMENTUM

Let's continue our training by paying more attention to our bodies. God gave it to us by shaping us in our mother's womb. Let us realize that our faith is to believe that God himself experienced this body by becoming incarnate in Jesus! He was also conceived in a mother's womb, he experienced life on earth, hunger, thirst, fatigue, suffering... and also the joys, family life, friendships, good meals and celebrations!

When we encounter difficulties in our lives, we can say to Him, "You know what it's like, Lord!" And the story doesn't end here: if God became man, it was to give eternal life to our bodies and souls, and thus save humanity. That's right! We are called to resurrect "body and soul". So let's learn to take care of the body we've received, and to find God in all the things of everyday life!

OPENING PRAYER

Putting ourselves in the presence of God

Let's stand in a circle, silently. We gently wiggle our toes first, then our ankles, knees and so on up to our heads, aware that God has created us body & soul. Then we sit down and mark ourselves with the sign of the cross: **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Asking for grace

We ask God for the grace to thank him for the wonderful individuals we are.



MEDITATE WITH THE BIBLE

Introduction to the reading

In the Gospels, we often read of Jesus healing suffering people. In the text we're about to read, it's a paralyzed man. It seems obvious that his body needs healing, since he can no longer move... yet Jesus, who is able to see what's going on in people's hearts, acts first to heal his soul. Indeed, Jesus, the Son of God, has the power to heal our bodies and our souls! Let's listen intently to this story...

Gospel by Saint Marc (MC 2,1-12)

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

A few ideas for reflection

- > *What's holding me back? Do I dare ask for help? God cares about what paralyzes me, and I can confide in Him.*
- > I remember a moment when I was feeling unable to act, but it was resolved.
What made this resolution possible? Was it a word? What happened inside me and in my behavior?

Personal meditation

We read the passage from the Bible once more and let these words resonate within us.

I try to be attentive to my physical sensations, both pleasant and unpleasant. In my heart, I can share a few thoughts with God, who is listening.

INTERCESSION

We entrust to Jesus the sick among our loved ones. We pray for those who are sick in their bodies, but also for those who are sick in their souls.

OUR FATHER

To conclude this time of prayer, in the words of Jesus, we say together *Our Father, who art in heaven...*

CONCLUSION

Risen Lord, you care for each one of us, our bodies and our souls, help us to believe that we will rise with you and live eternally in the joy of being together.

We draw upon ourselves the sign of the cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

MOVING FORWARD WITH A JESUIT

“ *Yes, this is the purpose of my journey.*”



PRESENTATION

Nicolas Rousselot has been chaplain at Saint-Ignace Church in Paris since 2020.

Imagine a stagecoach, with its horses, coachman and passengers. In its own way, it speaks to us about our bodies, our minds and even our souls.

Look at the horses. They're impressively powerful. Nothing could be done without them. But they need to be stimulated, or channeled if their energy is too strong. Horses can show us where the body and emotions lie.

Above the coach is the coachman. He alone knows the direction, the routes, the difficult parts of the road, the clever shortcuts. The coachman represents our mind, our spirit (memory, intelligence, willpower, imagination). He and he alone directs the horses. But he has to be a good coachman if his horses are to trust him. He must be with them, neither too weak nor too firm.

Most of our contemporaries believe that we can lead our lives with just the horses and their coachman, our body, our emotions and our mind. In a way, they're not wrong. But they forget that inside the coach is the traveller. He alone knows where the coach is going. He alone has given the destination to the coachman. But we can't see the passenger. He represents our soul. It's the secret part that animates our body and mind. "It's in us, but it's not of us" (P. de Lubac). It is the place "in direct connection" with the One we call God. It mysteriously tells the coachman where it intends to go. Our soul trusts both the coachman and the horses. But the coachman won't be able to follow the road, to accomplish his mission, if he hasn't heard his passenger say: "Yes, this is the purpose of my journey."

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE



INTRODUCING THE WITNESS

Bertrand Hériard Dubreuil shares his time with the Jesuit students on rue Blomet. He is national chaplain for the Mouvement Chrétien des Cadres et dirigeants (MCC). He was a professor at ICAM engineering school in Lille, then director of Ceras and the Revue Projet, based in La Plaine Saint-Denis since 2005. There, he saw the positive impact of the Stade de France stadium on the neighborhood.

IN SHORT

“Doctors encourage me to do more than one hour of sport each day to help my chronic back pain. Several times in my life, I’ve heard in prayer: “Get up, take up your mat and walk” (Mk 2 and Jn 5). These words have helped me to realize how much I have been carried by others, and to put my health worries in their rightful place.”

TESTIMONY

March 15, 2023. One of my sisters and I were admitted to a leading hospital.

We were suspected of having a rare, orphan genetic disease. I had been suffering from back pain for over 35 years. An initial diagnosis had enabled me to make a lot of progress. I was treated at a specialized hospital in Lyon. On the other hand, my sister’s diagnosis was contested by the Caisse primaire d’assurance-maladie. We appealed. The doctor specializing in this disease wanted to see our family. Another sister was also very affected by this disease.

That day, however, the opinions were reversed. My sister's diagnosis was confirmed, but mine was surprisingly not! I was painfully perplexed by what had already been recognized as a disability.

March 21, 2023. The Lenten liturgy invites us to meditate on chapter 5 of Saint John: *"When Jesus saw a paralytic lying by the pool of Bethesda, he said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?'"* Jesus' request resonates in my prayer, like an unanswered question. I finally muttered: *"Lord, I have been suffering for over 35 years. You only have three more years to lift me up!"*

October 5, 2023. A new appointment at the referral hospital. This time, the doctor is confident. I have been diagnosed with another rare orphan disease that causes similar pain. He changes the medication list and gives new guidelines to my physiotherapist. That evening, I reread John 5 and stopped at the verse: *"Get up, take your stretcher and walk"*.

The paralytic from Bethesda had waited 38 years for this advice. Until then, he had found no one to take him to the pool. Recent archaeological research has raised the question of whether Bethzatha was once a sanctuary dedicated to Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine. It was in this situation of religious and social isolation that Jesus came to visit him.

February 14, 2024: Ash Wednesday. I see the first doctor again, who moderates the recommendations of the hospital. A professor of medicine, she thinks I have the two diseases she's known about for a long time. She completes the treatment.

In the evening, I meditate on Jn 5:10 *"It's the Sabbath! It is not lawful for you to carry your stretcher."* A new conflict of authority! Then the man met Jesus, who told him: *"You're getting better. Don't sin anymore, something worse could happen to you."* Why talk about sin? What could be worse than waiting for an impossible cure in a crowd of sick people? Yet he knows that sin can undermine his desire to live. Hadn't he already been led astray by superstition? Recluse in Bethzatha, he believed his healing impossible: *"Lord, I have no one to plunge me into the pool when*

the water is boiling; and while I'm going, someone else goes down before me." Jesus undoubtedly visits the most desperate of the sick and tells him: "your faith has saved you."

Looking back over the long history of my illness, I can also say: my faith saved me. How many people have said to me: "*Get up, take your stretcher and walk*"? And when I could no longer walk, how many friends and companions carried me toward Christ? For John 5 resonates with Mark 2: "*What's easier? To say to the paralyzed man: your sins are forgiven, or to say to him: get up, take your stretcher and walk.*" Sin makes us feel hopeless about our suffering. Faith opens us up to the grace that enables us to pick up our stretcher and walk with Christ.

In retrospect, 35 years of therapeutic wandering may have been a grace. This uncertainty has sustained my desire to live. The word of Jesus, received in prayer or through others, sustained me. It helped me find my way through the contradictory advice of health professionals. Today, the sport I have been practicing every day for 35 years is prescribed to me.



ANOTHER SMALL STEP



FAMILY TIME TOGETHER

We can organize a family blind test about our 5 senses.

For each sense (except sight), one team has its eyes closed and the other team tries to get it to guess objects or people by using each sense in turn:

1. **Hearing:** sounds to recognize
2. **Touch:** objects to be identified
3. **Taste/Smell:** flavors/smells to identify

For sight, we can use optical illusions such as those found here:

<https://www.futura-sciences.com/sciences/photos/photos-top-15-illusions-optique-plus-surprenantes-691/>.



AND NOW ...



And now we've taken the second step!

Let's continue our race, confident in the body God gives us and in the soul he puts in us, and in his power to save us.

Let's head for the third step! Watch out! Things are about to get a whole lot tougher, because we're going to talk about our strengths... and our weaknesses!

This itinerary is put together by the **Family Ministry of the French speaking Jesuit Province of Western Europe (EOF)** in partnership with Prie en Chemin, 4 Jesuit schools (Saint-Louis de Gonzague, Sainte-Marie La Grand'Grange, Provence, Saint-Marc), a Christian Brothers school (La Salle-Saint Denis), the church of Saint-Paul de la Plaine and the diocese of Saint-Denis.

The Family Ministry, EOF Province brings together many initiatives offered by Jesuits for families: summer vacation sessions, weekends and online retreats, simple and creative proposals "to be experienced at home"... All in a joyful spirit united in Christ!



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