



SPIRITUAL TRAINING
in family life



DEFEAT & VICTORY

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 fifth stage, **"Defeat and Victory"**, ready to build momentum for this family time!



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FAMILY MEDITATION



MEDITATION BY COLLEGE LA SALLE SAINT-DENIS SCHOOL

Three centuries ago in Saint-Denis, Saint John Baptist de la Salle and his teachers, known as the "Brothers of the Christian Schools", founded our school. Today, the La Salle Saint-Denis - Jean-Baptiste de la Salle - Notre Dame de la Compassion schools include an elementary school, a middle school and high schools (general, technological and professional). It is home to a community of brothers, who live in a house in the school grounds.

To be a Lasallian student, from first grade to BTS, is to be under the watchful eye of this saint who cared for the education of the poorest.

LET'S BUILD MOMENTUM

We're entering the last steps... We're very close to the end, the moment when everything is accomplished. Now more than ever, let's set our eyes upon Christ on the cross, let's set our eyes upon his victory, which looks like a defeat... It's the whole logic of failure and success that Christ has come to overturn!

Let's not listen to the mockery of those who don't believe. Let us not be stopped by those who complain. Let's take encouragement, however rare, from supporters or those who run alongside us.

Let's pursue to the end the goal God has given us, let's pursue the joy we chose when we embarked on this journey, right from our baptism.

OPENING PRAYER

Putting ourselves in the presence of God

We settle down together, facing a crucifix if we have one. In silence, we join hands and take a moment to breathe deeply.

We 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 guide us during this time of prayer, to help us better know the greatest victory of his Son, Jesus Christ.



MEDITATE WITH THE BIBLE

Introduction to the reading

After three years of proclaiming that God wants to save all mankind, Jesus is taken by the religious leaders and brought to Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. He is accused of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God. Pilate gives in to the demands of the priests and the crowd that he be crucified: he is taken to “Mount Calvary” to be put to death. The one who wanted to save us is hated by all and put to death: defeat? Yet it is by dying and rising again that Jesus wins the battle against evil. God transforms defeat into victory: here he is, the Savior of humanity, giving us eternal life!

Gospel of Saint Luke (Lc 23,26-27.32-38.44-49)

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

A few ideas for reflection

> Jesus, who saved and healed so many people, is now all alone, carrying a heavy cross. No one seems to want to help him. To this benefactor, we say "Save yourself".

Faced with the loneliness of Jesus, I recall the moments of solitude and trial I may have experienced.

> Jesus dies before the crowd, treated like a criminal. They all beat their chests, realizing too late that they have done wrong and can no longer make amends. And yet, it is for them that Jesus goes to win his victory over death.

I thank Jesus for having faced injustice to the end out of love for me.

Personal meditation

We read the biblical text again, paying attention to how this Scripture resonates within each of us. I can talk to God in my heart and confide in him the failures I've experienced. In return, I try to listen to him: where is the life he wants for me?

INTERCESSION

Lord, we entrust to you those who are given a second chance after having done wrong. May they use their conscience to recognize what is right and persevere in doing good.

OUR FATHER

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

CONCLUSION

Lord Jesus Christ, at the hour when you were lifted up on the cross to redeem the world, and darkness covered the whole earth, grant us always the light that will guide us to true life.

We draw upon ourselves the sign of the cross. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

MOVING FORWARD WITH A JESUIT

“*Victory, you will reign!
O cross, you will save us!*”



PRESENTATION

My name is Miguel Roland-Gosselin. I joined the Jesuits in 1982, and was ordained as priest in 1990. I then spent - what a privilege! - more than twenty years with students: ICAM in Nantes, then HEC, Polytechnique and other schools in Saclay. The joy of sharing the beauty of the Gospel in a thousand ways. I then spent six years at Saint-Ignace Church (Paris), where we developed a family ministry. I am now at Le Châtelard, a spiritual eco-center. Here, we offer spiritual guidance (Saint Ignatius' famous "Exercises"), for the most part...

IN SHORT!

In sports, defeats and victories are a source of inner turmoil. Sometimes because defeat seems bitterly unfair, sometimes because victory brings jubilation to an entire nation.

For Christians, however, there is one ultimate victory that surpasses all others: Christ's victory over death. Are we aware that baptism has marked us forever with this victory, which opens up a hopeful future?

I think back and I try to remember a few sporting victories that delighted me: a World Cup final, of course, when people were hugging in the street...

And just yesterday, that young Italian winning his first grand slam in tennis: what enthusiasm for him, for the public, for his country! All his fellow players on the circuit, those who had failed to beat him - but they'll make up for it next time! - sent him messages of congratulations and happiness. A well-deserved victory makes everyone happy.

On the other hand, I remember some painful defeats. This great cyclist, everyone's counting on him, and a cramp stops him; why this cramp today? We've seen champions crying on the side of the track, exhausted and disappointed... I'm thinking of the 10,500 athletes who will be in Paris this summer: they're all hoping to win a medal, but it'll all come down to so little! Some outsiders will surprise everyone and, as they say, win the day. And some of the favourites, who knows why, will remain at the bottom of the podium, angry or dismayed.

Win or lose. Know how to win, know how to lose. Both can be learned. To use the French word "savoir vivre", both are a matter of "knowing how to live". It's true that in a family you learn to live - to live with others, to lead your own life - here are two precious lessons you learn in a family: "Go for it! do your best! be in the game! you'll win!" and "Come on, be a good player! is it so serious to have lost?"

And on this subject, does the Christian gospel have anything to add? Yes, because Christians believe very strongly in victory. On Easter morning, they sing: "Victory, you will reign! O cross, you will save us!" The cross we hang on the wall, a reminder of Jesus' death, we see as a sign of victory: Jesus Christ has killed death! When we mark our bodies with the sign of the cross, we express our confidence in a final victory over death; we proclaim that since our baptism - which united us to Christ - death can do nothing, nothing definite, against us. Nor can wickedness. Nor can our sins (poor sinners that we are). Forgiveness and life will have the last word, if we put our faith in the cross of Jesus. The evil in us will be vanquished, if we believe in Jesus the Living One, and if we decide to live with him, to follow in his footsteps.

A comparison comes to mind. Look at a sportsman who wins a gold medal at the Olympic Games: for the rest of his life, he will remain marked by this victory. When he's old, people will still say: "He's the one who won at the Paris Olympics!" The victory of one day will remain engraved in him, and it is hoped that he will lead a good life, worthy of the champion he was in his youth. But if this is true of a winner of a sports race, how much more true is it of a winner over death! For that's what we are. Baptized (the word means "immersed"), we have been immersed in Jesus' death and resurrection, and his victory has become ours. As Saint Paul says:

"If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Then we can move forward without fear, proud and confident. Life won't be easy every day, we won't be champions every day, sometimes we'll fail, sometimes we'll fall. But we'll remember Jesus, we'll remember his victory, and God will lift us up.

That's why we go to Mass on Sundays: we remember the grace we've received, which fills us with hope.

"We proclaim your death, Lord Jesus; we proclaim your resurrection; we await your coming in glory!" Christ's victory on the cross is not just an event of the past, it is a promise for the future. It gives us the assurance that we will know how to live a beautiful and victorious existence like that of Jesus. By the grace of the living God.



A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE



INTRODUCING THE WITNESS

Innocent lives in Saint-Denis (93). He is married to Chantal, with whom he has two daughters, Sarah and Erika. He grew up in Divo (Ivory Coast). The death of his mother compelled him to start working young as a garage mechanic to help his family. He and Chantal were already in love, but his parents were opposed to their marriage. In 2010, his garage was burnt down during riots and he had to leave to start a new life elsewhere. After a long journey, he is now in France, where he is custodian at Saint-Paul de La Plaine Church in Saint-Denis. His wife, Chantal, has joined him: the family is reunited.

TESTIMONY

“*Innocent, you’ve experienced several “defeats” in the past, but what’s your greatest victory?*”

It’s true that there were times in my life when I felt very discouraged: Chantal’s parents didn’t want us to get married because I was a foreigner to them, rioters burned down my workshop, I was the only boy in my family and my sisters were counting on me... First I found strength when my younger sisters called me from home, and I said to myself: “I didn’t leave my country to stay still. I’ve got to do something with my life, I’ve got a lot of challenges to overcome.”

And then I found strength in Chantal’s love: I promised myself never to leave her and never to fail her. But even in moments of defeat, I told myself, “As long as there’s life, there’s hope.” And finally, in my life, there are two great victories: the first is Chantal’s arrival. When I arrived in France, I said to myself: my goal is to bring my wife here. So I got a job, started saving money and was able to have her come here, and with the grace of God, she arrived. That’s a victory: mission accomplished. [Laughs] The second great victory is the birth of our daughter Sarah. We also have another daughter named Erika. The whole family is united, and that’s a great victory, and I thank God for it. Yes, I thank God for everything He has done and will continue to do.

ANOTHER SMALL STEP

FAMILY TIME TOGETHER

Let's choose a board game we like to play as a family. Let's play a few games, then take some quiet time at the end to express how we experienced defeat or victory.

- > *Taking turns, we can name the emotions we felt: joy, surprise, anger, sadness...*
- > *We can comfort those who have lost with a gesture of tenderness or an encouraging word.*
- > *Finally, all together, let's try to detach ourselves from the fact of having lost or won and write (or draw) on a sheet of paper the little joys of these moments spent as a family.*

AND NOW ...

We're back from the big stage! It was a long and difficult climb to the top of Calvary!

But it was not the last step! For Christ's death does not end here: the resurrection is coming, and the gospel will be revealed and proclaimed to all. Let's keep this hope in our hearts!

And now, strengthened by Christ's passion, let's set off for the sixth stage: **Competition and Team Spirit!**



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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