



SPIRITUAL TRAINING  
*in family life*



COMPETITION  
& TEAM SPIRIT

# 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.


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

Here we are at the sixth stage, “**Competition and Team Spirit**”, ready to build momentum for this family time!



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# FAMILY MEDITATION



## MEDITATION BY LYCEE SAINT-LOUIS DE GONZAGUE

The Jesuit school in Paris, Saint-Louis de Gonzague-Franklin, welcomes 2,000 students from kindergarten to preparatory classes, including 6 primary school students with autism in the Soleil class. Here, everyone is committed to living up to our school motto "Shaping men and women for and with others" through catechism, Mission days, social action projects, student sponsorship, solidarity challenges and much more. Finally, at the heart of our school, the large chapel is the place where we gather to celebrate and pray throughout the year.

## LET'S BUILD MOMENTUM

*Final whistle! Is this really the end? One certainty must remain with us: "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Rom 8:37).*

*Strengthened by this confidence, the apostle Saint Paul carried out his mission to the end, but he did so not for himself, to obtain his personal crown and rest on his laurels. His last concern at the end of the race is to pass the torch to others, so that all may be saved.*

*This is the start of a new game. A game that requires us to expand our team, our league, our organization, to play with others we've never played with before. Who could we meet? Could we build a new team, a broader team: a Church?*

## OPENING PRAYER

### Putting ourselves in the presence of God

We settle down together, in silence. We stand in a circle and join hands. We stay this way for a while, then let go of each other's hands and sit down for a time of prayer.

**We sign 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 be attentive to his presence in our family and to foster a team spirit among us.



## MEDITATE WITH THE BIBLE

### Introduction to the reading

The end of the road for the apostle Paul. After many long journeys throughout the Christian communities of Greece, Palestine, and Turkey, he found himself imprisoned in Rome.

He chose to send a letter to his friend and disciple, Timothy. Timothy had grown in faith and was now coordinating a Christian community. Paul gives him some advice and guidance, so that Timothy himself progresses towards salvation, his own “crown of justice”, as Paul himself has done since his conversion.

But he doesn't stop there. For Paul, the gospel is a team effort. It's not just our own salvation we're seeking, but the salvation of all. Together, as the Church, we seek to lift the crown of righteousness.

### Reading of the letter of Saint Paul to Timothy (2 TM 4, 1-8)

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

## A few ideas for reflection

> We see Paul entrusting Timothy with the leader's role of Christ's team.

*Our family, too, is part of Timothy's team: everyone has their place, their unique and precious role. What do I contribute to my team? How can we build a more united, more joyful team?*

> Paul tells us that to foster trust, love and care in our family, we need to train regularly, as we do in sports.

*At what times have I felt achy, out of shape, or wanted to act alone? What gave me the energy to resume training?*

## Personal meditation

Let's read Paul's letter again, paying attention to what touches us most: listening to God within ourselves. We can also talk to God personally. We can think and pray for those around us, starting with our family.

## INTERCESSION

Lord, give us the strength to get through hardships together, remaining united and trusting one another. We entrust to you divided families, where lack of love brings sadness, loneliness and violence.

## OUR FATHER

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

## CONCLUSION

Lord, may your grace inspire our action and uphold it to the end, so that all our activities take their source in you and receive their completion from you.

**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

” *Carry each other’s burdens*” (Ga 6,2)



## PRESENTATION

My name is Marc Rastoin. I grew up learning Hebrew in my parish near Paris as an altar boy, and that’s where my vocation was born.

After studying political science, I joined the Society of Jesus. I finished my studies there with a thesis on the letter to the Galatians and now teach Bible studies at the Loyola Faculties in Paris and in Rome (Institut Biblique). I enjoy literature and cinema, but also tennis and soccer!

## IN SHORT!

St. Paul’s sporting examples of spiritual life can seem very performance-oriented and competitive. But what about the collective, community and ecclesial aspects that seem so important in our life of faith?

Rest assured, he doesn’t neglect it! Let’s enter into the culture of his time to better understand the way in which Saint Paul sees the Christian’s spiritual life as a personal and collective challenge.

## One thing strikes you when reading the letters of the apostle Paul.

When he speaks of Christian life, he uses two types of examples. Sometimes he refers to an individual sport, such as running (2 Tim 4:7) or boxing (1 Cor 9:24-26). Every sport has an individual dimension. Even in team sports, everyone has to give their all in training and in the game. The same applies to the spiritual life: it's up to each individual to pray, to think about what he or she can do for the Lord: each person is responsible for his or her own life and choices. But it's also true that everyone needs others: even a great tennis or golf player - sports in which the individual's training and mindset are decisive - needs coaches, physical trainers and, of course, family and friends. But why does the apostle Paul take as an example of Christian living individual sports in which athletes compete against each other? Shouldn't Saint Paul be using team sports instead? The question becomes more complex when we realize that, to speak of the Christian life in a collective way, Paul employs a military image. The reason is simple: there were no real team sports in ancient times!

Paul has no choice but to borrow the image of a Roman legion: that elite unit where the life of each soldier depends on the courage of the man on his right. If the latter gives in, he will be threatened. Just as the strength of legions lies first and foremost in their discipline, so Christians must stand together in times of trial:

**"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." (1 Co 16,13).**

In this battle, Christ is the one who leads the troops. There is joy in running and in encouraging one another. Christians don't run alone, and we need to encourage each other to run together. Just as the front lines of the legions must not bend under the shock, so the persecutions and sins of one another must not scatter the community. "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you (...), I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the



gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.” (Phil 1:27-28a). Here, too, the strong can help the weak, and the risk of individualism inherent in all individual sports is counterbalanced by the insistence on supporting the weakest.

“Brothers, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak” (1 Thes 5:14).

It’s very fortunate that we have these two kinds of images to talk about the Christian life. Both are useful. The Spiritual life rests first and foremost on each one of us personally. It’s up to each of us to talk to Christ and decide for ourselves; it’s up to each of us to make Lenten efforts or not; it’s up to each of us that the Lord will ask what we’ve done with our lives. But it’s just as true that we’re only truly human in relation to one another, and that we only live our Christian life thanks to others, thanks to the Church. You can never be a Christian on your own. That’s how it is in a family. Each has his own character and talent, each has a particular color in his faith and spiritual life, each has his own race to run. But it’s also true that brothers and sisters are called to be our first supporters. In the family, as in the Church and in society in general, we need to move away from a logic of jealousy and individualism and enter into a true spirit of teamwork and solidarity.

The apostle Paul had a brilliant way of expressing this stress at the end of his letter to the Galatians. He underlines the communal aspect of life (Christian life, and life itself) by saying: “Carry each other’s burdens”, and then goes on to highlight the unique personal dimension of faith (and life): “for each one should carry their own load.” (Gal 6,2 and 5).



# A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE



## INTRODUCING THE WITNESSES

At the end of our journey, we meet again Pierre-Alexandre and Paul-Emmanuel. They are 18-year-old twins brothers living in Saint-Denis (93). Alongside their studies in Year 12, they play soccer with the Paris 13 Atletico club, training three times a week and playing a league game on Sundays. They will do their utmost to continue in this path, but are also considering studying journalism to become sports reporters.

## TESTIMONY

☞ *Pierre, Paul, you are twins and soccer players on the same team: quite a team spirit! But soccer isn't just about good times together, it's also about competition and seeking victory: do the two go together?*

— *As twins, we've been playing soccer together since we were young. We've played together in all our teams, from youth classes to the present day. It's an asset to always be together, and a benefit for the team too, because since we know each other so well, we can achieve a lot for the team.*

— *We try to surpass ourselves: if my brother does something well, I'll be happy for him, if I do something well, he'll be happy for me. **Good competition**, but no jealousy between us. And when we succeed, we're happy: we like to win, we're competitors.*

— *But sometimes victory isn't there. When you're too disappointed, you mustn't break down, because you can go and see the referee, you'll say something out of place, he'll hand you a red card and that will affect your team. **Thinking about your team means putting your team before yourself.***

— *It's the team that comes first, not you individually. And it's the same in life, **you have to think of others and have that discipline that helps you get ahead in life.** Personally, I think that for me, this discipline of thinking of others, of knowing how to channel oneself, of always knowing how to respect the rules, can also help us get ahead in everyday life.*

## ANOTHER SMALL STEP



### FAMILY TIME TOGETHER

Let's organize a relay race. There are two teams, and each has to fill a bowl with water.

To do this, you have to carry the water from your team's side in a soup spoon. There's only one spoon per team, so you have to wait for your partner to come back with the empty spoon before taking your turn!

When we've finished, we can congratulate the winners, comfort the losers, have a snack and chat:

- > When I went to fill the bowl carrying the spoon, I was alone: how did I feel? Pride? Responsibility? Pressure?*
- > When I was waiting for my partners to bring back the spoon, what did I feel? Urgency? Impatience? Gratitude?*

### AND NOW ...

Let's cross the finish line! This is the end of our journey! Congratulations and thank you all for following it!

Let's keep with us what we've learned or discovered. Of course, it's not a question of remembering everything, but of keeping one small thing: a word, a gesture, a moment that touched us and that could help us for the future.

Because the game goes on! We're not Christians only when we pray, we pray to be Christians in all aspects of our lives! So, all together, let's keep moving forward!

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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