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William E. Stempsey S.J.

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The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life, by Kevin O'Brien, S.J.

Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011 Paperback, 300 pages, \$14.95

By William E. Stempsey, S.J.

Although the Spiritual Exercises were intended not to be read but rather prayed for 30 days with the guidance of a spiritual director, St. Ignatius of Loyola realized that not everyone would be able to devote 30 days to nothing but prayer. In the 19th of his introductory annotations, he encourages making the Exercises in the course of daily life. Kevin O'Brien, S.J., has adapted the Spiritual Exercises, which he calls an adventure, to the everyday life of the 21st-century adventurer. He well knows that the Exercises are not to be read, but his adaptation is eminently readable.

Adventures are journeys, and Father O'Brien aptly describes the purposeful adventure of the Spiritual Exercises as a journey of growth in union with God, growth in freedom to make good decisions, growth in desire to "help souls." He explains the prayer of the Exercises, which involves meditation and contemplation, and offers helpful guidance about how to pray. The book is enlivened by O'Brien's ongoing reflections on his own spiritual journey.

St. Ignatius divides the Spiritual Exercises into four "weeks," which are temporally flexible. The First Week focuses on recognizing God's unconditional love, the reality of social and personal sin, and the promise of reconciliation. The Second Week involves

reflection on the life of Christ and his mission so that we may freely choose to follow him more closely as disciples. The Third Week highlights the passion and death of Jesus and leads us to identify more closely with his suffering and deepen our commitment to him. In the Fourth Week, we pray to experience the joy of the Resurrection and our call to share in continuing Christ's mission.

The Ignatian Adventure guides the adventurer through the four weeks of the Exercises over a course of 32 weeks. Each week has suggestions daily prayer, taken from Scripture or the various meditations given by St. Ignatius. O'Brien intersperses helpful tips at appropriate points, for example, how to deal with distractions and boredom in prayer. He provides good explanations of Ignatius' rules for discernment of spirits.

There are a few alterations in the presentation of St. Ignatius, such as moving the meditation on the call of Christ the King from the beginning of the Second Week to the point just before the beginning of Christ's public ministry, and moving the events of Palm Sunday from the end of the Second Week to the beginning of the Third Week. These alterations make sense and were done with careful deliberation. O'Brien makes note of the many sources he has used in the preparation of his book. While *The Ignatian Adventure* is written in a style that makes it accessible to a wide audience, it is backed by solid research.



The book may be used in various ways. Primarily, it provides a guide for a 19th-annotation retreat lasting 32 flexible weeks. The retreat might be made by an individual or by a small group, each with the guidance of a spiritual director. Parts of the book might also be used for a shorter prayer experience; the Third Week exercises, for example, could be the basis for a Lenten retreat. Parts of the book might be used for personal prayer on a particular theme. Someone who has already made the Exercises might use it as a way to seek deeper graces.

There are many available adaptations of the Spiritual Exercises. This one is a welcome addition; it is an engaging and faithful reworking of the sometimes-difficult text of St. Ignatius, and it should animate not just reading but also prayer. ■

William E. Stempsey, S.J., professor of philosophy at the College of the Holy Cross, is a member of the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education.