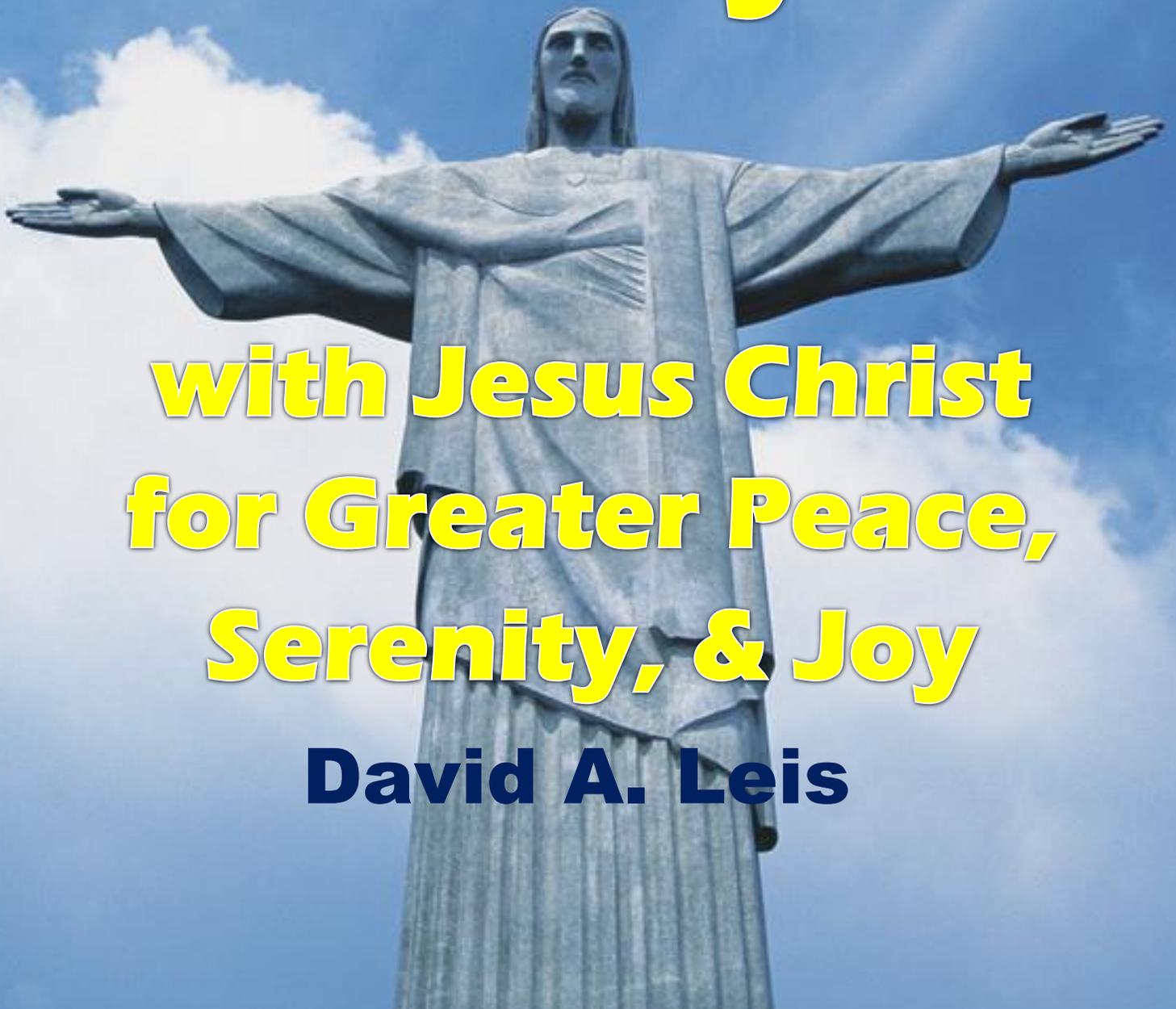


Orientation **to the** **33 Days**



with Jesus Christ
for Greater Peace,
Serenity, & Joy

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Orientation to the 33 Days with Jesus Christ for Greater Peace, Serenity, & Joy



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Orientation: 33 Days with Jesus Christ for Greater Peace, Serenity & Joy

Preface

Congratulations on taking the first step of turning that flame in your heart into a Blowtorch! Just getting the book, prayer journal & guide and participating in the 33 Days retreat says a lot about the disposition of your heart and spirit. God will honor that and provide the graces you need for whatever He intends for you as you go on this spiritual adventure! He is your guide! He set you on this path and He will not withhold anything you need for the journey.

For those who have purchased the book, “***That Flame in your Heart? Turn it into a Blowtorch!***”, you are aware that it is structured as a 30 Day program, one chapter for each Day of the readings found in “*Volume Two*” by Anne a lay apostle.

There are actually three additional Days, an Orientation Day, an Introduction Day, and at the end of the 30 Days, an Assessment Day. Interestingly, that brings the number of Days in the program to 33, similar to the highly recommended Marian consecration book, “*33 Days to Morning Glory*” by Michael Gaitley.

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The preparation material for the Orientation Day consists of 1) Eight Principles to a More Enduring Faith, which can be downloaded from the web site www.turnitintoablowlowtorch.com , 2) Foundations for an Interior Life which can be found at the front of the Prayer Journal and Guide or in the back of the Blowtorch book, and 3) this Orientation article. These should be read before starting the 30 Days program as Day 1 of the retreat.

Day 2 of the retreat consists of reading the Introduction in Volume Two, the Introduction in the Blowtorch book and doing the questions at the end of the Introduction in the Blowtorch book. Then there are 30 Days of messages in Volume Two and corresponding reflections and questions at the end of each Day in the Blowtorch book. Day 33 of the retreat consists of doing the Assessment in the Blowtorch book followed by a celebration for completing the retreat! Yes, really, have a celebration! Celebrate your new or renewed relationship with Jesus Christ, the Returning King!

This journey will not be without its bumps and setbacks. And given your unique circumstances, who knows how long it will take you to do the 33 days? In a sense, it took me 33 years! Yes, it is structured as 33 Days and hopefully you will be able to do it in 33 Days, no matter what else is going on in your life. But you could do it in 33 weeks if you so desired. An ideal time to do it would be during Lent, finishing before Holy Week. Any time is a good time, however.

The first time I went through Volume Two, it took me 30 days. I immediately started it a second time and this time, it was much more contemplative – it took me over a year of reading nearly every day.

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Sometimes a single sentence would hold me for several days. The key, however, is persistence or more accurately, spiritual resilience!

At this point, you should have read the Eight Principles to Develop a More Enduring Faith, essentially how to develop spiritual resilience. Also, you should have read the article on Foundations of Prayer article in the book (duplicated in the Personal Prayer Journal). Both are essential to getting the most out of this retreat. Finding a time and place for your daily prayer, and being in the right disposition is critical to your dialogue with Jesus and the development of spiritual resilience to maintaining the peace, serenity and joy through all the circumstances of your life.

And then finally, read the following instructions for using a prayer journal and then, after you have read these materials, read the Orientation which follows.

I have learned that no matter what level of use I have made of a prayer journal, it has never been enough. I regret my lack of response when I was prompted by the Spirit to use it and did not.

By the way, your guardian angel has some interest in your spiritual journey! After all, that is his assignment, is it not? Pray that he guide your mind through his promptings to be open to the Will of God, your heart to the Love and Mercy of God, and your soul be filled with the Light of Christ.

The value of a prayer journal is that it can help you become more alert to how God is working in your life. When you write, you evoke your souls to 'speak' what is there so that it comes forth and you can see what God sees.

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When you use the journal to note what inspires you, disturbs you, to lay out your needs and desires, your struggles and joys, then you can look at them in a new way – more and more as co-observers with God, on the progress of your spiritual life.

From the science of neuroplasticity, we now understand that when you write your reflections, they become embedded in a different part of your brain where you will remember them longer. And then as you go back and reflect on what you wrote, it becomes more a part of you as you recall them time and again. In fact, you rewire your brain doing that!

To that end, it is a valuable exercise to review the prayer journal every few weeks or months and summarize your insights. As you read your entries, it will begin to form a larger picture and you will often note a pattern to how God is working in your life. Perhaps He is challenging you on a particular issue. Or encouraging you to action in an area.

Remember from the book, I have used an unconventional method of putting the questions in the first person tense as though Jesus were asking them of you. I have done this to help you enter the dialogue with Him more easily. They are my words, not His, of course, but I think you can easily imagine them coming from Him. I do not presume in any way to speak in place of Him.

Once you have read the preparation materials and the above article, and have a prayer journal, proceed on to read the Orientation. Use your prayer journal to record your reflections from your reading of the preparatory materials.

Orientation

The mental state of preparation might be our first reaction when we see that word. But to be fully oriented to prepare to the fullest extent possible requires the mental, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical state of preparation for an event.

For example, being properly oriented for Advent in preparation for Christmas or the proper orientation for Lent in preparation for Easter is the work prior to each season. And within each liturgical season are smaller feasts with their preparation days for which the proper orientation is beneficial.

Stopping at each preparation point to consider our mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and psychological orientation is critical to receiving most fully what God intends for us as we prepare. One can imagine the same exercise of orientation by an Olympic athlete prior to the final practices and preparation period for the Olympics. Or the orientation of the Special Forces elite soldier prior to the rehearsals for an upcoming secret mission. Their comment might be “Your head and heart have to be in the right place for you ever begin even the preparation.”

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So it is with each spiritual adventure we undertake, whether within the liturgical cycle or any other outside of it, such as a retreat, novena, Bible study, spiritual reading, etc. Orientation begins with a pause and reflection our current state in each of those areas acknowledging honestly our condition. Otherwise, we may encounter difficulties during our preparation when we are 'surprised' by something in one of those areas and become 'disoriented' as it were.

When we have fully acknowledged our current state, we can make a decision of the will as to our desired orientation in each of those areas. And then take each of those desires to Jesus through Mary, Mediatrix of all races, begging for the grace and strength to remain in that orientation as we prepare.

So let us consider our orientation for what is in front of us now as we begin this 33 Days retreat in each of those areas: mental, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical.

- What is my current state of being? Let me pause.....
- What do I choose it to be? Let me pause.....

Let us resolve to take the desired orientation for what we are about to undertake to Jesus through Mary, Mediatrix of all graces, and ask her to give us the grace to prepare for our upcoming liturgical feast or spiritual adventure.

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As we consider embarking on this 33 Day retreat, it is critical to have the proper orientation both within ourselves and to the materials we will use. The second part of that will come in the Introductions Day which follows this Orientation Day.

One needs to understand the origin of the materials to begin, however. For Volume Two, it is best to read Volume One to appreciate how it happened to come about. One can also read the history of the Mission of Direction For Our Times on its web site www.directionforourtimes.org

With regard to the book, "That Flame in your Heart? Turn it into a Blowtorch!" writing it was not really my idea. Rather, I felt strongly prompted, even compelled by God to write down what He was giving me. Some of that will be covered in the Introduction. However, what I did not reveal was that much of it came to me while sitting in front of a picture of the Sacred Heart so fast that I could hardly keep up with typing it.

I do not presume to judge this work or its value to the Kingdom. I simply do as I believe God asks me each day and leave the results to him (easier said than done some days).

But your view of the book is important, so the right orientation is critical to you getting the most from this retreat. While there have been a number of reviews that correctly saw the book as a guide for a spiritual journey, one reviewer stated that he was put off by diaries, even those of saints. Gosh, that excludes a huge part of Catholic tradition, even the Doctors of the Church!

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I can see how the book could be taken as a diary. It is an easy mistake to make without an in-depth reading.

It is not.

As other reviewers have pointed out, this book, “Turn it into a Blowtorch!” has less to do with the author’s journey than the reader’s. It is in fact, structured as a 30 Day, or really 33 Day, retreat or journey into the interior spiritual life of the reader. More on that later.

I learned a long time ago as an officer in the Army, as a corporate executive, a trainer of thousands of people and a leader of hundreds of groups in the Church, to never advocate or expect more of those I lead than I am willing to do or have done myself. I have a miniature of the statue in front of the Infantry Headquarters at Ft. Benning, GA on my desk. The inscription reads “Follow me!” Jesus used the same words. (Mt 4:19. Mt 16:24, Lk 9:23)

I have absolutely nothing to gain by publishing the book (proceeds go to charity) and everything to lose by exposing my interior spiritual journey for public scrutiny. I do so only in service to the reader and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. I am simply pointing the way, providing the path in hopes of shortening the reader’s time to learn the same lessons.

As can be said in every age past and in ages to come, we are facing a time of great turmoil and upheaval. St. Pope John Paul II, before he became Pope, characterized the uniqueness of this time we are living in, in a speech in Philadelphia, PA, USA, however, as the “.... final confrontation” between the Church and the anti-Church, the Gospel and the anti-Gospel. He went

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on to say it is coming upon us and is inescapable. You can find a link to St. Pope John Paul II's speech as well as a column by Francis Cardinal George on the blog at www.turnitintoablowltorch.com

By profession I am a corporate and individual growth strategies expert. The book was written from that fundamental orientation. I have never had an individual or corporation tell me I have helped them get ready for the next major change too early. I have had some regret that they did not heed my advice seriously enough or quickly enough.

I feel a great sense of urgency in my own life and also to help others if they so desire it, to be more deeply rooted in an active, meaningful, and ongoing daily dialogue with the Person of Jesus Christ. The fruit of which is a peace, serenity and joy that only He can provide a pure gift, no matter what is going on in our lives or what is about to happen. When you possess Him and that fruit, the flame will become a blowtorch! The icon of His Sacred Heart reveals His own blowtorch of love and what He wants for our own hearts!

The message of the book, "That Flame in your Heart? Turn it into a Blowtorch!" is very simple. Yes, I have walked through a proverbial 'hell' but managed to find peace, serenity and joy beyond anything I could have ever comprehended.

The reader can walk that path with someone who has already been there and discover it for themselves, now. While there is still time, before their own time of need is upon them.

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And in doing so, they will attract others to an intimate dialogue with the Person of Jesus Christ.

We are at a tipping point, now is the time of preparation. We are in, using the words of St. John Paul II, the time of the "...final confrontation...".

The book was written for the singular purpose of helping the reader enter into a deeper, more intimate dialogue with the Person of Jesus Christ than they have previously known, no matter where they are in their spiritual life. The guarantee, if I may be so bold to call it that, is that if you open yourself to Jesus in new ways, you cannot help but be changed from what you were formerly!! He will not withhold his grace from anyone who does that and that IS guaranteed!

Final Words to the Retreatant

These 33 Days are structured in such a way that they become a retreat and the reader becomes more than a participant, they become a retreatant – a person on a religious retreat!

To help the retreatant plumb the depths of their own hearts and initiate a deeper, more intimate dialogue with Jesus, I have opened up my own interior spiritual journey sharing a short reflection on those same words from *Volume Two*. One can use my reflections as kindling for stoking their own flame of love for Jesus into a Blowtorch.

Lastly, the set of questions encapsulated in THE POINT exercise for each Day are there so that as you answer them, you are immediately drawn into a dialogue with Jesus. Don't make the mistake of just answering the questions – make the effort to respond to Him and to His questions. See Him there as you answer, for surely He IS there! It is there that the opportunity for the most intimate dialogue with the Person of Jesus Christ can be initiated and developed. It is there that His Graces can become manifest to the retreatant.

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The 33 Days transformed my life radically. I trust that it will do so for you if you put the time and effort into it and trust Jesus with the outcome just as you would with any spiritual retreat.

May peace, serenity and joy be yours as Jesus turns that flame in your heart into a Blowtorch!