



THE LISTENING BOOK

Field Hospital • First Spiritual Exercises

# LISTENING BOOK

## Hospital Records

### What is a Listening Book?

A Listening Book is a special journal book that I listen to after giving it my reflections. It's a bit like a good friend. So, after a spiritual exercise, I write down in it the more important things I experienced. These I record in the Listening Book. Then I close it.

After some time, two hours, a day or week, I open it and read what I have written. I 'listen' to my Listening Book as it reveals new meanings, deepens understanding and evokes fresh feelings. The original prayer experience in a spiritual exercise virtually always has much more in it than I might realize at first. Indeed, most spiritual gifts only grow over time. Furthermore, if you record your experiences, you can give this exercise to others and pass on what you found helpful.

Using the Listening Book also gives my unconscious self, and my deep inner self, both time to absorb my prayer experience and a way to tell me what they know. I may also be certain that the Spirit will speak to me through my Listening Book.

My Listening Book is like a compass or map of my desires and the Spirit's directions as I move through an unknown territory. It charts my journey over time, all the ups and downs, the dead ends and the places of rest and refreshment. I learn so much, and discover where there is life.

### How do I use a Listening Book?

#### 1. Identify the most notable experiences

- a. What were the more important things in my prayer? What were the hot or cold spots?
- b. What were my stronger feelings? What detail gave rise to them? Note them.
- c. Did I receive, in some way, the 'desire' I asked for in my spiritual exercise? When?

#### 2. Focus on the relationships

- a. What moved me in my prayer relationships?
- b. Was it something said, an action done or a person, or the movements in the prayer itself?
- c. What do I desire now? What does the Spirit desire of me? Is there an action I wish to take?

#### 3. Ponder the deeper movements

- a. Did I experience any interior spiritual movements?
- b. Did I experience any spiritual gifts that called me forward – e.g. increase of hope or love, a loss of fear or confusion, a joy or lightness?
- c. Did I feel an underlying inner peace, a gentle serenity, feeling safe and close to the Spirit?

You could well begin by reflecting and writing your responses to one question from each of the three groups above. Then return for the others. These are more questions than you will need after any one exercise, so spend time with those you find especially useful. Finally, as a general rule, it will be helpful to record your feelings and desires, and their circumstances, in detail.

To summarise. First, I write my reflections after prayer in my Listening Book. Then I return, as often as I desire, to 'listen' to further meanings and insights.

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