The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius is a programme of praying over events in the life of Jesus Christ in order to know him more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly. This grew out of Ignatius of Loyola’s personal experience as a man seeking to grow in union with God and to discern God’s will. He kept a journal as he gained spiritual insight and deepened his spiritual experience. He added to these notes as he directed other people and discovered what “worked.” Eventually Ignatius gathered these prayers, meditations, reflections, and directions into a carefully designed framework of a retreat, which he called “spiritual exercises.” This retreat is often given as a 30 day residential guided retreat or as a guided retreat in daily life over a period of about 9 months.

For many reasons this may often not be a realistic possibility for most people. But The Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow have produced, initially as an online Lent retreat in 2020, a shortened form of the Exercises called “Journey into Freedom”. This is a lovely and easily accessible way of deepening one’s faith and can be used at any time. It can be done by groups or by individuals over a period of 52 days, praying with the resources provided, for about 20 or 30 minutes a day. Ideally it is better to be part of a group and/or to have weekly meetings with a guide, as this is likely to improve the experience of the retreat.