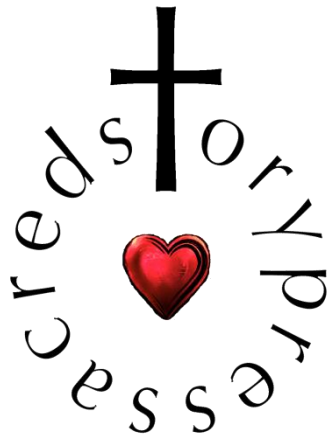




# Sacred Story Institute

Ignatian Spirituality for Third Millennium Evangelization



William M. Watson, SJ

# Praise for Sacred Story

William Watson's *Sacred Story* is an exceptional work. It masters the difficult task of integrating spirituality and psychology and creates an original, rigorous, brilliant and scholarly book. It is an excellent contribution to Ignatian Spirituality and spirituality in general. The author has the ability to take the classic Ignatian Examination of Conscience and recreate it with great originality and scholarship. It illuminates with brilliant insights and accuracy the fields of both psychology and spirituality. Books like this rarely come along once a decade.

**Javier Melloni, S.J., Th.D.**

**Author, *The Spiritual Exercises in the Western Tradition*  
Professor, Faculty of Theology of Catalonia**

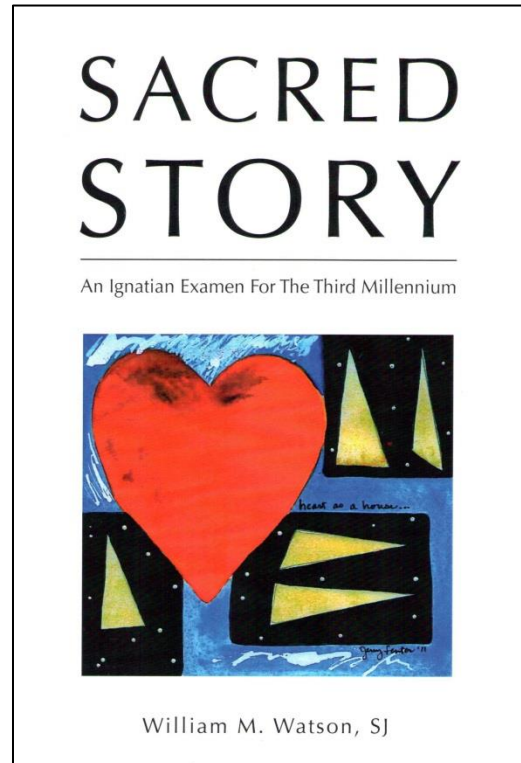
William Watson's *Sacred Story* is a huge undertaking. It is a new, enlarged and redeveloped book of Ignatius' *Examen*. *Sacred Story* probes profoundly into the dynamics of Ignatius's personal journey—into his sacred story—and the discernment of spirits that embellish and enlighten it. William Watson's treatment of the Discernment Rules, so essential to the practice of *Examen*, is very well done. Watson finds the integral development of Ignatius's own life as essential elements for the *Examen*.

He uncovers a paradigm of the *Examen* in the *Autobiography* with the two conversions of Ignatius, which is very insightful. Despite my familiarity with the *Autobiography*, I had never thought of this before. Also, I can see now after reading *Sacred Story* that the key insight of Ignatius' surrendering his scruples over confessing past sins was the most important decision of his life—a tipping point for him personally and a defining element of Ignatian Spirituality.

**George Aschenbrenner, S.J.**

**Washington, D.C.**

William Watson's *Sacred Story* is a seminal, brilliant tour de force—erudite, well researched and deeply pondered. It is a passionate book, full of the urgency of one who is speaking of what he knows and of what he lives. It is a book born not merely from well-grounded scholarship but from deeply personal experience and struggle. Read it and be amazed, as I was.



Watson does for the Examen what Jerome Nadal did for the Jesuit Constitutions (when Nadal explained the Constitutions to the Jesuit communities he visited in the very early days of the Society of Jesus). Watson links any proper and full appropriation of the *Examen* to the experiences of St. Ignatius' life, particularly to his conversion, and to the programme of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This is a novel approach, and one, in my opinion, which is holistic, rich, fertile and fruitful.

**David Keith Townsend, S.J.**

**Director, *The Seven Fountains Spirituality Centre, Chiang Mai, Thailand***

Making St. Ignatius' practice of the Examen meaningful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, useful for self-knowledge and self-transformation, and respectful of the complexities of each individual psyche immersed in modern culture seems at best to be daunting and at worst, impossible. Yet that is precisely what Fr. William Watson, S.J. has accomplished in his fresh, clear, interdisciplinary and contemporarily relevant approach to the Ignatian Examen – *Sacred Story – An Ignatian Examen for the Third Millennium*. This book would have achieved great purpose if it had accomplished but one of its objectives -- presenting an insightful and valuable cultural critique; unearthing new scholarly insights into the texts of St. Ignatius Loyola; or probing the depths of interaction between spirituality and psychology.

But he does so much more. His real quest is to find a practical, usable approach to a profound relationship with the Lord, which avoids superficiality in its practicality and needless complexity in its profundity. By taking the time he needs to develop his insights into the human psyche, the stories he needs to illustrate his points, and the scholarship that underlies a deep understanding of the spirit of St. Ignatius Loyola, Watson weaves a rich unified tapestry of practical, sage instruction on how to find the Lord in the depths of self-examination and the sacred story that emerges from it.

*Sacred Story* is a "must read" for those seeking knowledge of the spiritual and psychological obstacles that may present themselves in our individual spiritual quest – along with the tools for discernment and authentic reflection needed to overcome them.

**Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.**

**President, *Magis Institute***

**Author, *Five Pillars of the Spiritual Life***

Fr. Watson has written a thorough and reflective guide for the *Examen*. He has surveyed many recent authors on one or other aspect of the *Examen*, how to present it and how to understand it. Ignatius' spiritual genius is on display in his discernment principles linked to the *Examen* practice. He teaches us to discriminate between feelings that come from God, expressing our true human nature, from those whose origin reflect inspirations from the one Ignatius identifies as the "enemy of human nature." Fr. Watson has shown how the *Examen* can help priest and laity alike navigate the confusing currents of human sentiment to find the authentic expression of one's human nature.

This study clearly illuminates how Ignatius' discernment rules always lead one to the authentic expression of that human nature, discoverable through one's affect and feelings. And as Ignatius'

teaches, the authentic expression of human nature always aligns with Scripture, tradition and the teaching Church. The need of a thorough re-consideration of Ignatius of Loyola and his teaching about our direct relation to God has been obvious for some time. The insight and thoroughness of this book is to be commended. Father Watson has given us a chance for an in-depth second and third look at the great *Examen* tradition of Ignatius and his "thinking with the Church."

**James V. Schall, S. J. Georgetown University**

**Author, *A Philosopher in Society: The Political Philosophy of Maritain***

In his *Sacred Story*, Fr. William Watson invites followers of Ignatian Spirituality to enter more deeply into this mystery by the understanding and practice St. Ignatius of Loyola's general and particular *Examen*. His new exposition of Ignatius' conversion story in the *Autobiography* reveals the genesis and practice of the *Examen* in Ignatius' life. In his new hermeneutic of its origins, Watson demonstrates how this essential Ignatian prayer discipline, so vital in the early history of the Society of Jesus, gains a powerful new relevance in for our contemporary spiritual, theological and psychological moment in these early years of Christianity's Third Millennium.

*Sacred Story* is invaluable for anyone sincerely interested in understanding the *Examen* as Ignatius used it: to follow Christ in the most concrete details of day-to-day life. What we have through Fr. Watson's *Sacred Story* is a new roadmap to achieve St. Ignatius' *Magis* in our own day.

**Thomas Sherman, S.J.**

**Professor of Philosophy, Arrupe College of Philosophy, Harare Zimbabwe**

Fr. Bill Watson, S.J., has created a landmark study on the Ignatian *Examen*. The *Sacred Story* offers profound new insights into the *Spiritual Exercises*, *Examen* and the Rules for Discernment. Fr. Watson accomplishes this critical achievement through a detailed analysis of Ignatius' progressive conversion in the *Autobiography*.

As a Jesuit for 50 years, I now appreciate the *Autobiography* in a completely new light and understand for the first time St. Ignatius' unique version of the Examination of Conscience. In a creative, fresh, and very accessible fashion for contemporary Catholics and Christians, Watson unlocks the personal, daily life spiritual tool of the *Examen*.

I highly recommend *Sacred Story* for anyone who desires a greater intimacy with God and a better self-understanding through this practical, holistic, and experiential spiritual growth method."

**John Mossi, S.J., Santa Clara**

**Spiritual Director and Retreat Guide**

# Sacred Story Press

