

Ignatian Prayer

Steps to help your Experience

Before we begin, it might be helpful to have a something near you to take notes with. It is something that I have found to be helpful for myself in this practice. Set your space the way that you would like it, maybe you light a candle, maybe you move from your desk to your favorite chair. Once set, take a few deep breaths to get comfortable. As you listen to the story as it is read several times over the process of this exercise, try to keep close attention to any feelings that come up for you – whether it be joy or excitement or fear or anxiety - and it may be helpful to just jot them down. Don't try to figure out why they are there right now but acknowledge them. Remember, through all of this, there are no right or wrong answers and ultimately this experience is simply between you and God that loves you.

1. The First Reading

- a. One of us will read the story, and as we do, close your eyes and engage your imagination. **Listen to the words and ask yourself: what does the scenery look like, how is the landscape is shaped? What do you see around me- are their birds, rocks, people? What do you smell? Through your imagination, engage all your senses.**
 - i. When I do this, I write down what I see in my imagination, the landscape, the color of the sky, the number of people I see, the smell of the air around me.
- b. When we are done reading the story, we will encourage you to pause your video and take as much time as you need to be in that space, to become familiar with where you are in your imagination and what it feels like. And when you are ready, resume the video and we will go on to the second part.

2. The Second Reading

- a. One of us will read the story a second time and once again, close your eyes and see where your imagination takes you. **This time, as you listen to the story, ask yourself: Where am I in the story? Am I on the outskirts watching, perhaps on a hill overlooking the scene? Or do I identify with one of the characters? Imagine yourself participating in the scene. What does it feel like? What do you do? What do you say?**
 - i. For myself, I find it helpful to write it out, as if I am writing my own version of the story from my own perspective. Nothing fancy, and I don't worry about spelling or grammar. The point is to personally interact with the story, like your trying on a new pair of shoes and are walking around to see what they feel like. And remember, there are no rules, so if you identify with Martha, that doesn't mean that the things that you imagine yourself doing or saying have to match what is written in Gospel account.

3. The Third Reading

- a. One of us will read the story a third and final time. Again, close your eyes and let your imagination go. **This time, as you listen to the story, focus on Jesus. Where is he in the story? Imagine him turning his head and seeing you. What does he do? Does he walk over to you? Does he hug you? What does he say, what is it that Jesus wants to tell you? How do you respond?** Often the dialogue that you have with Jesus will not match

the way the story is written in the Gospel. That is okay. Remember, the story is starting place for you to interact with Jesus.

- i. In my own experience, I often will write out my interactions with Jesus, just letting it flow. No need to edit or make it sound good or fancy. Writing helps me focus on the story unfolding in my mind. By all means, do what you need to do to be able to focus on the interaction with Jesus.
 - b. As before, when we are done reading the story this last time, we encourage you to pause your video and take as much time as you need in that space with Jesus, to feel what it is like to speak with him. And when you are ready, resume the video and we will continue.
4. The Response
 - a. It is important to look over and interact with what you experienced in your imagination. What were the feelings that came up for you in the process? What did you hear from Jesus? What part of the story stuck out to you the most? How does what you heard and experienced relate to your current situation?
 - b. One of the ways I often encourage people to respond is through art. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. It can be as simple as drawing stick figures or perhaps using crayons to color a series of shapes. Or maybe it is poem. The important part is to express in some form what you encountered in your imagination. This helps integrate your imaginative experience into your waking life.
 - i. I will often choose a scene from what I experienced in my imagination and will draw or paint it out. Sometimes I will come back to this piece of art for days after slowly working on it and remembering what happened and listening for new ways I can learn from it.
 - c. Remember, there are no rules, no right or wrong, no good art or bad art. This is just between you and the God that loves you.