

Contemplating Justice: A Prayerful Approach to Racial Injustice

An Ignatian Meditation on John 13:31-38

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Introduction

In the Ignatian tradition, meditation is: “a reflective process by which we enter the richness of God’s word and hear that word as spoken to us personally today” [*Timothy Gallagher, OMV in Meditation and Contemplation: An Ignatian Guide to Praying with Scripture*]. We hear the word of God, and we ponder it. We notice any words, images, or ideas that speak to our hearts. We stay with those words, images, or ideas and pay attention to any feelings, memories, or thoughts that arise in us. We then speak to God about it.

This evening, we will offer a meditation inspired by a reflection published by the Ignatian Solidarity Network in Lent 2016 and written by Anne Marie Ladlad. It will focus on Scripture from John’s Gospel and our call to lay down our life for God and for racial justice. We invite you to approach this meditation with an open mind and heart, refraining from self-judgement. Just be honest with God and with yourself.

Read the Gospel passage twice. The first time, read to get a sense of the story and to hear what is being said. The second time, pay attention to any words, phrases, images, or ideas that seem to speak to your heart. Stay with that word, phrase, image, or idea and ponder its meaning. Notice how it makes you feel. Let the Holy Spirit guide your thinking, imagining, remembering. Savor the experience.

Begin by choosing a position that is comfortable, where you can be both relaxed and alert.

- You may want to close or lower your eyes.
- Become aware of your breathing as it goes in and out.
- Take a few deeper breaths, breathing out any preoccupations into God’s hands.
- Become aware of God’s presence, here and now, God looking at you with love.

Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and help: “*Lord, open my eyes and my heart and shine a light on this difficult topic.*”

Ask for the grace you need: “Lord, give me the courage to move past easy responses for combating racism.”

Scripture

John 13:31-38

When he had left, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, ‘Where I go you cannot come,’ so now I say it to you. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Simon Peter said to him, “Master, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, though you will follow later.” Peter said to him, “Master, why

can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times."

Guided Meditation

Pay attention to any feelings, responses, thoughts, desires that have arisen within you. How are you moved by what is said in Scripture?

How do you feel when you hear Peter make the statement, "I will lay down my life for you."?

Like Peter, we may be quick to name the things we are doing right. In the case of working toward racial justice, claiming the ways we are not racist is easy.

"I don't use racial slurs." "I have friends of color." "I read this in-depth article about racism in our country."

Do any of these statements sound familiar or resonate with you?

When Peter quickly said to Jesus, "I will lay down my life for you.", Jesus questioned, "But will you really?" In what situations in our world today do you hear Jesus asking a similar question?

Peter's fear caused him to deny his friend Jesus. In your life, how has fear gotten in the way of identifying your own racism and complicity in racist structures?

Can you identify any fears that have prevented you from following Jesus by working toward racial justice?

Peter was later forgiven by the resurrected Christ and committed his life, eventually laying it down, to follow Jesus' teachings. In what ways might Jesus be inviting you to lay down your life for racial justice? What could that look like in your life?

Close with a favorite prayer.

Review of Prayer

St. Ignatius recommends this practice to help us see how God is moving in us. Some questions to assist with your review appear below. There is no need to answer all of them:

What happened in your prayer?

What feelings did you experience?

During prayer, when did you feel encouraged?

When did you feel discouraged?

Did you receive the grace you asked for?

What did you receive?