

Contemplating Justice: We Are One Body

An Contemplation on The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

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Introduction

Ignatius proposes contemplation as a way of praying frequently in his Spiritual Exercises. You are invited to use your imagination to enter the scene, to take part, to let the scene unfold. As Ignatius suggests, notice the people, listen to them, watch what they do [SE, 106, 107, 108]. You might feel invited to take on the role of one of the people in the scene. Tonight, we will be praying with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In this contemplation, we will invite you to take on the role of the person who is robbed on the road. If this feels like too much, particularly if you have experienced physical violence in the past, I recommend instead taking on the role of an observer or another character in the scene.

If this way of praying is new – simply relax and try to become engaged in the scene. Try not to worry about what you are “supposed to” be doing. If you find yourself distracted during your prayer, very gently bring yourself back to the scripture text or your imaginative contemplation. If at any point during the guided contemplation your imagination comes to life in such a way that God invites to you stay with a particular moment, follow the invitation that you sense, rather than move on to where the written contemplation is going. After the prayer, we’ll take a few minutes to do a written review, so just make sure you have paper and something to write with nearby.

We begin by quieting our bodies and minds:

- Choose a position where you can feel relaxed, but alert.
- Breathe deeply several times and let your body relax
- Breathe out any worries or stressful thoughts and put them in God’s hands
- Become aware of God’s presence here with you now, looking at you with love.

Ask for a Grace

Ask God for the grace to embrace a culture of encounter and to see each person as our neighbor.

Scripture

Luke 10:25-37

“There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to

inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Contemplation

Have you begun to see the story in your imagination?

You are traveling down the path. What does the road look like?

Is it nearby or in an abandoned area?

Are there sounds around you, or are you immersed in your own thoughts?

What does the air feel like?

Is it day time or night time?

What do you have with you?

Are you affluent or poor?

Do you have an animal with you, or are you walking on foot?

Pause for a moment to really experience yourself there.

Robbers approach you, take your items, and leave you stranded while lying on the road. Do you try to fight back? What are you thinking as the robbers run off? How do you feel as you lay weakened on the side of the road?

A traveler whom you vaguely recognize, but whom you share similar beliefs appears on the road; however, they avoid eye contact with you, and they pass by you on the opposite side of the road. Not long afterwards, another traveler who is a part of your community appears on the road. However, this traveler also ignores your condition.

How do you feel as you cry out for help, but both of these people, people whom you might consider allies, avoid any sort of encounter with you?

A third traveler appears as you lie stranded on the road. Your stomach twists and you quickly lose hope as you recognize this person is not someone with whom you would normally get along; their beliefs are far too different from yours. However, unlike the other travelers, this traveler approaches you and bends down to help you.

What does their gaze say to you? What emotions surface in your heart as a result of this traveler's actions? Are you surprised by their desire to help you?

The traveler gently binds up your wounds, assists you with transportation, takes you to a place of refuge, and offers to cover your needs.

How does this affect you?

Have a conversation with Jesus about this prayer experience. Share with him your thoughts and feelings, and listen to his response to you. Pay attention to your own feelings, and offer them, whatever they are, to Jesus.

And when you are ready, 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?

In your own life, what are some of the thieves that you have witnessed? What cultural and structural forces might be the “thieves” that rob people of their dignity?

When have you turned a blind eye in your own life? What are some of the rationalizations you have used to justify passing by or looking the other way when you have the opportunity to encounter someone?

Who in your life might you identify as the Samaritan? What compels you to reach across a similar divide and encounter the people in your life?

How might you begin to become a neighbor to those who are wounded in our own society and in the global community?