

Getting Started with Ignatian Prayer

Focus

- Quieten yourself, focus, centre. A biblical symbol to focus on may be helpful (a picture of a rainbow or a tree, bread, water, wine, a palm cross, some silk to represent Jesus' empty grave clothes, an icon, a candle ...). Or you may be able to look through a window at something that has symbolic significance

Think back over the day

- As you recollect what happened, what made you smile? What makes you grimace? What are you grateful for? What are you ungrateful for? What are you proud of? What are you ashamed of?
- Think about the fact that Jesus is sitting with you. Listen for what he says when you tell him your answers to those questions.
- Over the days, are there any patterns to the answers to those questions above? What does all this tell you about God's vision for you?

The Ignatian Exercise

- Start reading the passage slowly. Mouth the words. Put the feelings into them. Do it slowly.
- If the passage is a story, enter into it as a story. Use your imagination to recreate the scene. Put yourself in the position of one or another or all the characters and imagine what is happening for them and what they are saying. And/or eventually insert yourself into the scene and do what you want to do, or imagine what you would feel, or say what you want to say to God or to Jesus or to other characters, and listen for what you hear back.
- Stop as soon as something strikes you - as soon as you feel something. You may sense something encouraging, or some puzzlement, frustration or anxiety. This may be just a word that resonates with you and pierces into you for reasons you may not immediately know.
- Shut your eyes and explore the feeling. Ask what is going on in you. Stay with that for as long as it takes. If you never get back to the passage, that is fine.
- Ignatius uses the terms 'consolation' and 'desolation' to refer to experiences that may come to us through this process. Consolation denotes a positive awareness such as being loved or loving or joyful. Desolation denotes the more negative-seeming awareness of darkness, turmoil, restlessness, hopelessness, loss of love, tepidness or sadness. They may put us on the track of something very important or may refine or test us, so they are positive experiences in disguise.
- Talk to God about what has been happening - joys, griefs, praises, resentments, promises...
- End in a psalm or prayer

An Old Testament Reading Scheme

1. Knowing Who God Is and Knowing Who We Are

Week 1 - Psalms of Praise

Psalm 8

Psalm 19

Psalm 33

Psalm 66

Psalm 96

Psalm 100

Week 2 - God As Creator and Us As God's Created

Genesis 1:1-10

Genesis 1:11-19

Genesis 1:20-25

Genesis 1:26-2:3

Genesis 2:4-17

Genesis 2:18-25

These notes have been taken from Grove Books B24 Ignatian Approach, available in leaflet form or ebook for £3.95 at grovebooks.co.uk. The entire reading scheme covers 30 weeks.

Some of my reflections on Ignatian Prayer are on my blog: www.annamtownsend.wordpress.com. There is a category list at the bottom right of the page and if you select 'Ignatian Prayer' you'll see a list of them.