

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

St. Ignatius Loyola's Process for Reflecting on the Gospels

Fr. Anthony Co

Father Anthony Co: Good morning.

Crowd: Good morning.

Father Anthony Co: It's good for us to develop new ways of praying, to have new tools in our toolbox of faith. So, today I wanted to introduce to you a way of entering into the gospel. Has anyone ever heard of St. Ignatius of Loyola? Raise your hand. Okay, a good number of people. He's the founder of the Jesuits. Amazing man. And he had a 5-step process of reflecting on the gospel passage. So, are you guys ready to try it? Is anyone out there? Alright. We'll do it. It's really simple. It's Labor Day weekend, all you have to do is relax, I'll do all the work. You just have to pray with your heart and use your imagination as best as possible. And you know what? I don't have a very strong imagination. I have a hard time visualizing things unless I see something first. So, I'll do the best I can, you do the best you can, and let's begin.

The first thing we're going to do is close our eyes and kind of center ourselves. We close our eyes. And he says that the first step is to remember how Jesus looks upon you. Jesus is present in the tabernacle. There's no bread in there, that's Jesus. And Jesus is present in your very being. Imagine in your mind the image of the face of Jesus with His beard, and imagine Him smiling upon you. This is how He sees you. He's so pleased that we're here together. Let your heart connect with his heart. The second step is pretty easy. All we do is we offer a prayer of submitting to God. I'll say the prayer, and let my words echo through your heart and agree with it.

Lord Jesus, this is a beautiful day. It's a beautiful day because we are with you, and you're with us, and you have a beautiful plan for our lives. We submit ourselves to your will, which means we give our whole life to you. Help us to always follow your ways. And during this reflection we ask for a special grace, a very concrete grace. I'm going to name a few things, and you pick the one you want. I'll name 5 or 6 things. Do you want more joy? More peace? Do you want more hope? Refreshment in your spirit? Do you need more courage, or strength? Do you want to have a sense that God is close? Maybe you need clarity. Pick one of those things. I pick joy. Lord, I want is joy.

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

Now, for the third step. As your eyes are closed, we're imagining about 200 people around us. As many people as in this church right now. But instead of sitting in a church, in a building, a group of 200 people are walking through the countryside following Jesus and His apostles. Early this morning, you heard that Jesus was passing by your village, and so you got up and you went to your neighbor's house, who's your best friend childhood, and you said "Hey, you want to go on an adventure?" And he was like "Yeah, of course. Let's go." So you find yourself in the group, and you kind of worm your way to the front of the group, and now the only thing separating you and Jesus is about 15 feet. You're all walking, you hear the crunching of the leaves, and the grass, and the gravel underfoot, the rustling of clothing. People are talking. There's a few kids in a group. And as you look forward, you see Jesus, and he's standing to the right, and there's 2 men to his left as they walk. One guy's pretty big, he's burly. That's Peter. The guy in the middle of all of them is this little guy. Smooth face. His name is John. Peter and John are talking to each other. And Jesus, as He walks, has His head tilted a little bit listening to them.

And you're thinking to yourself. So you ask your buddy "How do you think those guys became His disciples?" Your friend says "I don't know. Maybe they're from the same town, or maybe they went to the same school." And you say "Boy, I've heard they've been following Him for a long time now. Years." All of a sudden, something happens. Jesus slows down, and the group slows down. Jesus stops, the group stops. And then He turns around and He looks right at you. Your heart begins to race, your ears and your face become flushed, you get this twisting feeling in your stomach, and He's just looking at you. Looking through you. He turns to the rest of the group, and He projects His voice and He says "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculates the cost. Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with 10,000 he could successfully win? In the same way, any one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

And Jesus turns His head from the whole group and He looks right back at you. He turns around and He begins walking. The group begins to follow. Now, as you're walking, you slowly turn your head towards your friend, and he has this big grin on his face, and he says with an even lower voice "Jesus has good hearing. He heard you." And you think out loud "Hate our father and mother?" And the guy next to you chimes in and says "You know, I've been following Jesus for 3 weeks now. And I left my business, I haven't been home. But recently, I had a chance to see

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

Him with His mom.” “You saw Him with His mom?” “Yeah. And I kind of felt bad, like I was kind of invading their privacy. But I couldn’t hear them, they were kind of at a distance, but they were sharing a glance. And she looked at Him with such a tenderness and love, and He looked at her with equally that much love. It reminded me of when I saw my wife for the first time hold her baby girl.”

“Now, He obviously doesn’t hate his mom, and I’ve been following for these weeks and He’s been talking over and over and over again about The Kingdom. When I was a kid, I thought The Kingdom was we get enough military strength and we push out the Romans. All of our enemies go away. And maybe that’s part of it. But I’ve got to tell you, I’ve seen stuff in Jesus that I’ve never seen before. He cast out demons, I saw Him heal a bunch of people, and just not so long ago I was with a whole bunch of people, thousands, bigger than this group. Thousands and thousands of people were sitting on this hill, and He took some baskets, He prayed over them, and then from these few baskets we were all fed. Amazing. And I keep following. I don’t care where this leads me, I’m going to keep following.”

The person stops talking as you’re walking, and you turn to your friend, and you say to your friend “How far are you going?” And your friend says to you “Look, I was just curious. I haven’t seen Jim do any miracles. At the next town I’m going to get refreshed and head back home.” And he says “How long are you going to walk?” And you stare off to Jesus, and you’re thinking in your heart “I want to keep following this guy. I don’t know where it will lead, and I can get overwhelmed by it, but I’ll just go to the next place, and make a decision once again to go to the next place, and to the next place.”

As you’re quietly thinking, reflecting, and walking, you still hear the crunching of the gravel, and the grass under feet, and you’re looking at Jesus, and Peter and John move away. These 4 women come up. You can’t hear what they’re saying. Jesus makes them laugh. They bow their heads, they walk away. Now you’re just watching Him walk as you walk. You happen to notice that His feet are all calloused, and dirty, and cracked in these really worn out sandals, and it comes in sharp contrast to a tunic he’s wearing, a tunic that was clearly made with deep love and attention. It looks perfect, something somebody noble would wear, but very simple. And contrasted against his broken feet and his worn out sandals He walks in a particular way. And so you follow.

Step 4 of Ignatian meditation is having a dialog with Jesus in our heart. And our eyes are still closed, and we’re thinking about what we felt during the meditation. It can be anything. Maybe you were distracted, maybe you were bored, maybe you

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

were annoyed, maybe you felt excitement, wonder, thanksgiving, joy. Whatever you felt in your heart, identify it right now, and tell Jesus what you felt. In an ideal situation, you would have a chance to have this conversation heart-to-heart with Jesus. And yesterday, as I was praying, I was thanking the Lord for the joy that I was feeling. Part of the joy was just knowing that we were meditating together on Him, and I had this image of me walking in the group, and at sometimes I'm at the front of the group and I can hear His voice clearly, sometimes I'm at the back of the group and I can't hear very well, but that He's very pleased that I'm still in the group. And if I can't hear His voice, then at least I can hear the voice of person in front of me and follow what they're doing. And so I give thanks to God in my heart.

And the last step is simply to close the prayer. We're going to close the prayer with saying a Glory Be, and if you want to do this in your own life, I put in the bulletin an outline of how to do this meditation. Cut it out, put it in your bible. But let's thank the Lord by saying Glory Be. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.