

Ignatian Prayer of the Senses – Part 2

Reflecting as a Character

We did a modified version of the Prayer of the Senses a few weeks ago in Small Church. That modified version was actually the first half of the prayer exercise. Below are instructions for the second half of the prayer exercise, which focuses on reflecting on the characters in the text.

As a reminder, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was the founder of the Jesuit order and developed many ways of praying which help people to discern God's will in our lives and God's activity in the world around us. Prayer of the Senses is one way Ignatius taught others to pray with Scripture. If completed in a retreat setting, the Prayer of the Senses unfolds slowly and might take half a day to complete the whole exercise.

Steps to practice the Prayer of the Senses as a group:

REFLECT AS A CHARACTER

Note: This exercise can be completed on its own, but you can also go back to Part 1 and journey through the text with the different senses.

- Begin with a preparatory prayer, inviting the Spirit to speak through Scripture.
- Have one person slowly read the text aloud.
 - During this first reading, take note of all the characters, notice who interacts with one another, where they go, what they do.
 - Take note of which of the characters interest you most, intrigue you or you gravitate toward. Also take note of which characters you are resistant to, or you ignore.
- Select one character from the story to imagine yourself as. There is no right or wrong character to select but pay attention to your reaction to the different characters from the first reading.
- Have one more person slowly read the text aloud.
- During this reading reflect on your selected characters' experience:
 - What do you feel in your body as you walk through the story? Is the sun hot? Is your back sore? Are your feet dusty, or are your legs tired? Is your stomach full of food, are you thirsty?
 - What does the character feel like in her or his body? What do you do, physically, as you participate in the story?
 - What emotions does the character feel? How do they react to the events or the other characters?
- Continue this time of prayer and as the character, imagine that you are talking to the other people in the story. Ask them questions. What do they say in response?
- Pause and listen for God speaking through this time of dwelling in the word.
- Concluding this time with a prayer of thanks.