

## **Modern Spiritual Practice: Praying through the News (Tragedy, Violence, Crisis, Injustice)**

### **A Meditation in Six Movements, Inspired by Ignatian Principles**

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#### **First Movement:**

Begin by acknowledging the presence of God, who created the heavens and earth, and who cares deeply and intimately about each and every human being, all of whom bear His image in the world. Ask Him to open your heart and your mind as you read, and to lead you to articles that spur your participation in the great redemptive work of God. Before you begin, dwell for a moment on your privileged remove from the situation about which you are reading. Ask God to illuminate ways in which you can use your privilege for the benefit of others.

#### **Second Movement:**

Read the article. St. Ignatius teaches us that God speaks to us through our emotions, so pay attention to the places where your heart feels most engaged, whether it is a quote, a detail, an image, a person's name. Ask God to keep these moments aflame in your heart.

#### **Third Movement:**

Adopting a posture of prayer, begin by saying the names of each person mentioned in the article, for God knows all of their names and cherishes each one. Pray, too, for those whose names are not given. It is so easy to feel disconnected from large numbers of victims reported in the news. To feel a deeper connection, I like to kneel down, place my palms on the floor, and just sit with the number for a little while. Repeat it, meditate on it. Pray, as best you can, for each of these souls. For those who have died, pray for the peaceful repose of their souls. Ask that those who have been left behind will be held and comforted in the arms of God and of their communities. For those injured, pray for their healing and for God's tender embrace. For those enduring unspeakable suffering (this is horrifically almost always the case), pray for relief, for comfort, for fortitude. Pray that God will place at least one person in their path to speak a word of tenderness, of humanization to them. Pray for an end to their suffering. Throughout the day, ask God to remind you to offer your suffering as a prayer for the alleviation of theirs.

#### **Fourth Movement:**

Even though the news is often enraging, ask God to help you do something productive with your anger. Jesus tells us, no matter how angry we may be, to pray for our enemies. And Servant of God Dorothy Day reminds us that we really only love God as much as the person we love the least. Yikes. Let's get praying. Pray for those who inflict suffering to have a change of heart. Pray for inhumane policies to be changed. Pray for prophets and saints to be raised up during these dark days. As repugnant as we find the evil that takes place in our world, let us remember that we ourselves are not without sin. Ask God to illuminate the places in your own heart and life

where similar sins lurk. Ask God's forgiveness. Praise God that no human being, including ourselves, is beyond repentance and redemption.

**Fifth Movement:**

Pray in your own words for justice, or pray the following:

Lord Jesus, this world is so very far from the Kingdom you preached.  
Though we are tempted to give up hope, fill us with the strength to persevere in prayer.  
We long for the days when justice will roll down like the waters,  
And righteousness like a mighty stream.  
We grieve deeply for the suffering of our brothers and sisters,  
Even as we remember that You have promised to wipe every tear from every eye.  
Give us the courage, Lord, to believe in the things unseen that are eternal,  
And the fortitude to dedicate ourselves to bringing those things about here on earth.  
Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.  
If we are but pencils in the hand of God,  
Let us write only one word:  
Love, love, love.  
Amen.

(Take comfort, even for just a moment, in the knowledge that countless others are also praying for these people, this country, this situation, with their words and their hearts and their very lives. Take comfort, too, in the knowledge that we may take our broken hearts and place them right within the very heart of God.)

Join your voice with the millions of people of faith who have prayed these words for thousands of years:

**Psalm 46**

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change;  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;  
God will help her when morning dawns.  
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.  
The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has wrought desolations in the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with fire!

“Be still, and know that I am God.

I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!”

The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Amen.

**Sixth Movement:**

“When you pray, move your feet.” -African proverb

Remember that we are called, through our prayers, actions, and sufferings offered up, to be part of the redemption of all creation. Get googling to find ways you can help, whether it is a donation of time or finances, a phone call to your representatives, or a committee you can join. Who are the modern-day prophets of the injustice about which you read? Make it a point to seek them out and listen to them. If there is a patron saint of the type of suffering described in the article, consider praying a novena asking for their intercession. Offer your rosary for those suffering whom you encountered in the article. And, of course, unite your daily sufferings with those of Jesus and offer them for those about whom you’ve read. The beautiful thing about the Kingdom of God is that it is all around us: join the work begun by others, or, if there is a need not being met, begin your own. Ask God to direct you to the place where you may love the best, the most, the deepest.