

ST. IGNATIUS'

Call of the King

A Prayerful Meditation



The call of the King is a meditation in The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius that has meant a lot to me personally. It focuses on the leadership of Jesus in the world, right now, today. Specifically, it focuses on Jesus' invitation to you and me to partner with Him in working toward the completion of the work He began on earth.

On these two pages, allow me to walk you through the meditation process in general and the meditation of the *Call of the King* in particular.

by Fr. Mark Link, SJ

Step One

We begin by placing ourselves in God's presence. One way to do this is to close our eyes, relax our bodies, and monitor our breathing. As we focus on our breathing, recall that breath points to God's presence within us. The Book of Genesis says, "The Lord God...formed a man... he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live." Genesis 2:7 (TEV)

Breathing also points to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:21-22

If God makes his presence felt (for example, if we feel deeper inner tranquility and peace) we do not move on. We simply remain in a posture of openness and silent communication with God as long as it lasts. Trying to make ourselves feel God's presence, however, is almost always wrong. Feeling God's presence is a gift. If God wishes to give it to us, He will. Our role is to keep our mind and heart open to God's will.

We conclude the first step with this prayer of presence: Father, you created me and put me on earth for a purpose. Jesus, you died for me and called me to complete your work. Holy Spirit, you help me carry out the work for which I was created and called. In your presence and name—Father, Son, and Spirit—I begin my meditation. May all my thoughts and inspirations have their origin in you and be directed to your glory.

Step Two

This step involves setting the mood for meditation and asking for the grace we seek through it. An episode from J.S.C. Abbott's two-volume work, *The History of Napoleon Bonaparte* helps to set the mood for the meditation.

Napoleon Bonaparte and General Bertrand were discussing Jesus. Bertrand expressed the view that Jesus was not divine, but simply a remarkable human leader. Napoleon disagreed, saying that Jesus did what no human leader has ever done. He imparted something of himself and his power to his followers.

Napoleon expressed it this way:

“I know men, and I tell you Jesus Christ is not a man... I have so inspired multitudes that they would die for me... the lightning of my eye, my voice, a word from me, then the sacred fire was kindled in their hearts.

I do, indeed, possess the secret of his magical power that lifts the soul, but I could never impart it to anyone. None of my generals learned it from me; nor have I the means of perpetuating... love for me in the hearts of men.”

It is right here that Jesus differs from other leaders in history. Other leaders can only fire our emotions and excite our imaginations. They cannot transfuse us with their own spirit. They cannot reach inside themselves and give us a portion of their own power and strength.

Jesus, on the other hand, can do this. He can put his spirit inside us. He can share his power with us. He can enter our minds and our hearts and help us do what we could never do alone. This brings us to the grace we ask for in our meditation.

Lord, enlighten my mind to see how you differ from other leaders and move my heart to desire more and more to partner with you in carrying out the work you began on earth

Step Three

This step involves the meditation proper. It has three parts.

One

We begin by recalling these words of Jesus in the 16th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew: “If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry the cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16:24

Next, we ask ourselves this question: “To what extent am I open to the challenge these words set before me?” After thinking about the challenge from every angle, we speak to Jesus about our feelings, and then conclude by listening in the depths of each of our hearts to however Jesus might wish to respond.

Two

This part touches on the motivation and inspiration we need to accept Jesus’ challenge. Saint Paul writes to the Philippians in the second chapter of his letter:

“You must shine among the people of your day like stars lighting up the sky.”

We set the mood for this part of our meditation by recalling the moving conversation in Alan Paton’s book *Ab, But Your Land is Beautiful*. It’s between a black person and a white person who put their lives on the line for racial justice in South Africa. When one remarks that they may end up with a lot of body scars the other says: “Well I look at it this way. When I get up there, the great judge will say, ‘Where are your scars?’ And if I haven’t any, he will ask, ‘Were there no causes worthy of getting scars?’”

We take to heart that provocative question. After thinking about it for awhile, we speak to Jesus about our feelings.

Again, we conclude by listening in the depths of our hearts to what Jesus may want to say to us.

Three

It begins with these words in chapter six of the Gospel According to John: “Many of Jesus’s followers turned back and would not go with Him anymore. So He asked the twelve disciples, ‘And you—would you also like to leave?’” John 6:66-67

We set the mood for this final part of our meditation by recalling a dramatic scene from the Broadway musical 1776. The musical dealt with the critical days when our forefathers debated whether or not to declare independence from England.

At one point in the debate, the fate of our nation was like a pole standing in wet sand. It could fall either way: backward into the past and continued domination from abroad, or forward into the future and newfound freedom.

One night John Adams, one of the leaders of freedom, was terribly worried about the outcome. Standing all alone in the darkness of Independence Hall, where the great debate was taking place, he began to sing in words like these: “Is anyone out there? Does anyone care? Does anyone see what I see?”

In a real sense, these are the same words Jesus is singing today in the darkness of our world:

*Is anyone out there?
Does anyone care?
Does anyone see what I see?*

I end my meditation by speaking to Jesus about how I can become more involved with Him working for the completion of the work He began on earth. ■



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This meditation was adapted from *Challenge: a Daily Meditation Program Based on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*.

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