

So great our hunger

SUGGESTED MUSIC

"Beyond the Moon and Stars"

PREPARATION

Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed or distracted. Take a comfortable, relaxed sitting position. Recall that prayer is more about listening than speaking, so do not worry about what words to speak. Prepare yourself by closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing. Spend a couple of minutes sitting quietly, inhaling and exhaling deep, long breaths. There's no need to rush. Slowly become mindful of God's loving presence, both around you and within you. Sit and take in the comfort and peace that the Lord's presence brings. When you're ready, continue by prayerfully reading the following reflection.

REFLECTION

*O God, you are my God,
I seek you,
My soul thirsts for you;
My flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land
where there is no water.*

✪ PSALM 63

Hunger motivates us. In both the physical and spiritual realms, our energies are often focused on satisfying our hunger. St. Ignatius of Loyola understood this. In his handbook for spiritual growth, the *Spiritual Exercises*, he invites us to reflect prayerfully on our deepest desires. What do I most want in life? What excites me? What are my hopes and dreams? In his wisdom, Ignatius knew that getting in touch with our deepest desires and longings is the key to finding where God is working in our lives.

In our living we do experience moments of deep and profound happiness. But we also realize that the satisfaction they bring is only temporary. Before we know it, we've moved on to the next dream, ever hoping that the next horizon will make us happy. We hunger for love, for intimacy, for belonging, for accomplishment, for peace, for justice, for the happiness of our children, for our first home, for a life companion, for health, for wealth, and for security. And even though we experience the joy that these bring, we still hunger for something more.

No one likes being hungry. In our hurry, we often look for satisfaction in things that ultimately are not good for us, and maybe even hurt us or the ones we love. Sometimes we turn to unhealthy relationships, addictive chemicals, food, sex, alcohol, or work because we are frantic to do something about this ache that exists at the core of our being. We hate it. It's not a comfortable feeling, and so we often try to run from it. Instead, at the beginning of his *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius suggests that we need to spend time with our hunger. Rather than running from it and trying not to feel it, we are invited to stay with our hunger and learn from it.

Where does this deep down, soulful hunger come from? The ache that you and I experience deep in our souls was created by the One in whose image we are made. We are meant for God and God is meant for us. While we look for many ways to satisfy the hunger of our hearts, ultimately we will only find satisfaction in the heart of God.

If we really believe that we are created in the image and likeness of God, it makes sense that the same hunger that is so much a part

of us is somehow a part of God's being as well. Our insatiable thirst for happiness and intimacy was created by a God who longs to be in union with us. The entire story of salvation is about the unre-served love of God that constantly draws us into the intimacy and companionship for which we were created.

Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell with me.

Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities, for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

✿ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:8-11

Perhaps the most precious thing we can offer each other on this journey of faith is a willingness to let others know the hunger of our own hearts. This means that we must find the courage to be vulnerable to each other. This is never an easy thing. But by offering others a glimpse into our own journey of faith, we give them hope and let them know they are not alone. When we speak from our weakness, without the arrogance of thinking we have all the answers, we offer the greatest gift.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Take some time to pray about the following questions:

- In the depths of my soul, what do I most desire?
- What are my greatest hopes and dreams?
- How do I try to satisfy the longings of my soul? Where do I seek happiness?
- What do I seek that really doesn't satisfy my hunger?
- During this time of reflection, what most moves my soul?

If you have a prayer journal, write down your answers so that you can remember them and come back to them later.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ignatius ends each of his exercises with a “colloquy,” a heartfelt prayer, in one’s own words, addressed to the God who loves us and is present here with us. It should be spoken like a friend talking to a friend. You may begin with the following words, and then continue to talk to God however your heart moves you.

*Ever faithful God,
open the windows of my heart
to allow your peace to enter those places
where I most need refreshment.
Help me, O Lord,
to recognize the hunger you created in me,
to be aware of the deepest desires of my heart,
to know that I will find you in my longing.
Deepen my faith, dear God,
that I might walk in faith beside you
in companionship with those you’ve given me to
love.*