

■ Now continue the reflection...

The Longing of the Soul

O God, you are my God,
 For you I long!
 For you my body yearns;
 For you my soul thirsts,
 Like a land parched, lifeless,
 And without water
 (Psalm 63).

While we certainly do experience moments of deep and profound happiness, we quickly 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. While each of these may offer us temporary happiness, the satisfaction is always short-lived. We still hunger for something more.



Pause to reflect on your hunger. Ask yourself: "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?"

Notes

Handwritten notes area with horizontal lines.



Why do you
 think God loves
 the birds
 so well?

Often our answer reveals the areas of our life where we separate ourselves from God and where sin enters our lives. We don't much like being hungry. Aching and 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, 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 run from it.

What St. Ignatius suggests at the beginning of his *Spiritual Exercises* is that we need to allow ourselves time to be 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.



In God's Image

If we really believe that we are created in the image and likeness of God, we know that one of our most profound realities is that we hunger for fulfillment. Why? Is it because we long to return to the source of the superabundant love that created us? That nothing created ever totally satisfies our hunger? The entire story of salvation is about the overflowing love God has for us that constantly draws into the intimacy and companionship for which we were created.



Who is your
faith journey companion?

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. As St. Augustine tells us: "Our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in you."



Pause here and ask yourself: What thought or idea expressed in this reflection really stirs me? How would I repeat it in my own words? Take a few moments to collect and savor this reflection. Write down your thoughts.

Notes

A large vertical area with horizontal yellow lines, intended for taking notes.



Called to Give Myself

But if I am so needy myself, how can God possibly be suggesting that I offer guidance to other people on their journey of faith? If I am hungry myself, how can I, as a catechist or teacher, help feed others? How dare I, weak and still on my own journey, attempt to lead others to Christ?

Yet we believe this is exactly what God is suggesting. Perhaps it's not so much about what we have to give—how much knowledge, spiritual wisdom, or profound faith—but about letting God use us as instruments. When we read the story in the Old Testament where God calls out to Isaiah in the night and bids him to go speak as a prophet to the people, Jeremiah can't believe it. "Me? You can't mean me. I don't have the words or the faith to speak such great things, Lord." And God tells him not to be afraid. "I will give you the words to speak."

Perhaps those to whom we are sent as catechists and teachers are not so much seeking answers as looking for a pilgrim companion, someone who is willing to walk alongside them on the journey of faith. No one else is able to provide the answer their hearts seek. But what you can offer is companionship in faith, willingness to journey with them, asking the questions of life, searching out the answers together, walking the path of death and resurrection with them as spiritual friends.

Faith-Filled Living

Perhaps the most helpful thing we can offer each other on this journey of faith is a willingness to let others know the hunger of our own hearts, to know our hopes and dreams, and to see how we try to live them out. By offering others a glimpse into our own journey of faith, we give the best guidance possible. When we teach from our weakness, without the arrogance of thinking we have the right answers, we offer the greatest gift. By this we make ourselves secondary to the movement of God's Spirit.



Our goal is not to get
in the way of grace, but
rather to allow grace to work.

The words that we use to teach are only symbols of what resides inside of us. They are meaningless if our lives, the way we live our faith, do not show what we speak. St. Ignatius proposes also that love shows itself more perfectly in deeds than in words.

*Love manifests itself in the mutual sharing
Of what we have,
And who we are,
With those we love.*

*Love shows itself more perfectly in deeds
than in words.¹*

*(The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius
#230-231)*

So too, our faith-filled living speaks more loudly than any words we might speak about God or about faith. Our words become meaningless if our lives do not live out the faith of which we speak. The greatest gift we can offer those who God gives us to guide is allowing them to see faith alive in us. This is what will make us great catechists and teachers. This is what God calls us to. At the end of life, having completed this mission with grace and faith will be what matters most.



The Time of Prayer

■ Ignatius ends each of his exercises with a “colloquy,” a heartfelt prayer, in one’s own words, in the presence of God. It should be like a friend talking to a friend. Begin with the words below, and then continue to talk to God however your heart moves you. Stay with the prayer as long as it seems right to do so.

■ If you’d like to make notes to help you recall your time of prayer, you may do so in the space provided here.



Ever faithful God,
 open the doors of my heart.
 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 the midst of my longing.
 Deepen my faith, dear God,
 that I might walk in faith beside those you have entrusted to my care.

When you are ready, end by praying the “Our Father.”

1. Author’s paraphrase of #230–231 of **The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A New Translation** by Louis Puhl, S.J. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963.