

Jesus is Crucified and *Unforsaken* (Luke 23:39-49)

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Guidelines: Protect confidentiality and follow the leader's prompts.

Ignatian Meditation Process: Ignatius chose this Gospel reading for Week 3 of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Read the introduction and then "Ask for the grace". Then quietly read the passage by using your imagination to enter into the story, sensing and feeling what's going on. Don't analyze the passage or seek insights — *experience yourself as a character in the story*. After the second reading have a "colloquy" (short, personal conversation) with the Lord. You can use the prompts and questions at the bottom to guide your prayer time and journaling (and sharing with others).

Introduction: When Jesus is being crucified we see him abused, alone under a black sky, and abandoned by God, which is the picture that Mark and Matthew emphasize. But Luke and John show Jesus with his beloved mother, disciple John, and other friends huddled close to him. Luke adds the detail that next to the Lord on either side are two thieves on crosses: one persecutes Jesus but the other defends him. The Lord invites the repentant thief to join him in Paradise. The evangelist-doctor features Jesus praying on the cross, placing himself into the loving hands of his Father as he dies.

Ask For the Grace: Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I ask for the grace I desire: To sorrow with you, to be broken with you, to cry with you, and to suffer internally with you — doing this with gratitude for the great suffering you endured to obtain God's mercy for me.

Imagine Yourself in the Gospel: Luke 23 (MSG)

39 One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him: "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!"

40-41 But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same as him. We deserve this, but not him—he did nothing to deserve this."

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom."

43 He said, "Don't worry, I will. Today you will join me in paradise."

44-46 By now it was noon. The whole earth became dark, the darkness lasting three hours—a total blackout. The Temple curtain split right down the middle. Jesus called loudly, "Father, I place my life in your hands!" Then he breathed his last.

47 When the captain there saw what happened, he honored God: "This man was innocent! A good man, and innocent!"

48-49 All who had come around as spectators to watch the show, when they saw what actually happened, were overcome with grief and headed home. Those who knew Jesus well, along with the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a respectful distance and kept vigil.

1st Reading: Visualize yourself in the Gospel story. Don't seek intellectual insights — stay with the imagery. Use your senses to see, touch, feel, and hear. What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with or are you a bystander?

2nd Reading: Experience the story in the role of the character God led you to. Then talk with the Lord. What do you feel? How does this relate to something in your life today? What is God saying to you?