



*Lent 2023, Week 2 Reflection*

## OPENNESS, LISTENING, AND RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL

*Welcome to the Second Week of the Lenten audio retreat, presented by Ignatian Young Adult Ministries, an initiative of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality. If you haven't listened to last week's reflection about "Choices, Boundaries, and Redemption," that's okay! You can always revisit past audio clips at your convenience. For now, we invite you to pause, breathe deeply, and notice the Spirit of life around you, wherever you are. If it will help you to light a candle, brew a cup of tea, move to a more comfortable spot, or close your eyes, do it! Simply be here, now, as much as you are able today, feeling yourself held by the floor, chair, or ground. And for a few more breaths, imagine you are resting in the hands of God as we explore this week's theme: "Openness, Listening, and Responding to God's Call." This reflection was written by Declan Foley, a member of the 2021-2023 Contemplative Leaders in Action program in Boston...*

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On this Second Sunday of Lent we have readings from Genesis, Psalms, Timothy, and Matthew, so there is quite a bit of wisdom to digest! How do we orient ourselves with so many readings? I contend that the themes running through all the readings are the ideas of openness, of having a calling towards something larger than self, and of listening.

In Genesis we have God telling Abram to "go forth from his land," away from the people Abram knows into an unknown land with unknown others. Incredibly, the only incentive God offers Abram is that God will make Abram's name great. On the surface it is an unidirectional calling, one that Abram simply accepts without refutation, leaving all that he knows to carry out God's command. Abram exhibits true belief, trusting in something larger and responding to God's direction - all of which is reflected in our week's responsorial psalm.



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Timothy compounds our original understanding of the difficult path taken by Abram and those thereafter, underscoring our need not only to go out and do good work, but holy work, and that we live a life well-fashioned by God to do so. This calling is not special only to Abram. It is for all of us who desire to orient in this way, on our own paths, in our own worlds, so that we are all uniquely positioned to carry out this work.

Finally, Matthew describes the transfiguration of Jesus, where Peter, James, and John are instructed to listen, and eventually to "rise and not be afraid." As noted before, threaded through the three readings are interrelated themes of listening, openness of heart, orientation of faith

towards something greater, and a call to live this faith out in practical ways to improve those in our respective worlds.

And here we are in 2023. If Lent is the time in which we intentionally reflect on ways to fast from our indulgences, to be giving of others, and to pray to become closer to God, then listening and openness are the vehicles by which we achieve this end. The late Fr. Michael Himes, a theologian and professor at Boston College, my alma mater, invited us to reflect on Three Key Questions as we discern our life's calling: to consider what the world needs, what we are good at, and what brings us joy - to listen to ourselves and bring good into the world. So, how would you answer these questions? And do your current roles attend to the needs of the world, draw from your strengths, and bring you joy? Are you a parent, a caregiver, a sibling? Are you a colleague and a friend, and are there individuals that operate in your life in a tertiary way that you can make a more intentional effort to see fully and serve as their paths cross with yours?

Conversely, where is the noise in your life preventing you from listening? What distractions can you cull from your day-to-day to afford yourself a more robust expression of life? What relationships are faltering that you could put energy into, and what do you need to pray on? Are there conflicts in your life for which you can seek a more charitable explanation, to try to see the other side? How can you commit to going out into your world, listening to the needs of others, and committing to Good works?

As we prepare for the Easter season, when we will all have Lent in our rearview mirrors, what do you hope to take from your Lenten reflections that you desire to live out more fully? How do you have Abram's openness, how do you incorporate missionary work emboldened in Timothy, and how do you listen like Peter, James, and John did? Chances are high you know the answer in your gut, in your heart, and in your mind, you just have to respond to the call!

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*Thank you for joining us for this week's reflection, presented by Ignatian Young Adult Ministries, an initiative of the Office of Ignatian Spirituality. Tune in next week for another original reflection to support you on your Lenten journey...*

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## **Reflection questions:**

- *To what extent do your current roles attend to the needs of the world, draw from your strengths, and bring you joy?*
  - *Where is the noise in your life preventing you from listening to God's promptings? What distractions can you cull from your day-to-day to afford yourself a more robust expression of life?*
  - *Which of your relationships are thriving, which are faltering that you could put energy into, and what do you need to pray on as Lent gets underway?*
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## Opening & Closing Prayers

### **The Gift by Mary Oliver**

*Be still, my soul, and steadfast,  
earth and heaven both are still watching  
though time is draining from the clock  
and your walk, that was confident and quick,  
has become slow.*

*So, be slow if you must, but let  
the heart still play its true part.  
Love still as once you loved, deeply  
and without patience. Let God and the world  
know you are grateful.  
That the gift has been given.*

### **Take, Lord, and Receive (Suscipe)**

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,  
My memory, my understanding,  
And my entire will,  
All I have and call my own.  
You have given to me.  
To You, Lord, I return it.  
Everything is yours;  
Do with it what you will.  
Give me only your love and your  
Grace, that is enough for me.*

*-Spiritual Exercises 234*