

A DEVOTIONAL FOR THE ELECTION SEASON

By Father Santiago Rodriguez

Devotional Five: Finding Calm and Connection with God.

*"I am worn out, O Lord; have pity on me!
Give me strength; I am completely exhausted." - Psalm 6:2*

PRAYERS FOR PEACE IN A CHAOTIC SEASON

Navigating the emotional rollercoaster of election season isn't just about knowing what sets you off - it's also about mastering the art of staying calm when the chaos hits. And let's face it, the triggers are everywhere. Maybe it's your coworker gleefully dissecting the upcoming vice-presidential debate during your precious coffee break, or your ever-persistent neighbor adding yet another yard sign to their ever-growing collection. Perhaps it's the hundredth text message from a politician asking for "just \$5 to save democracy!" These moments are like alarm bells that set off our inner stress machines.

The real challenge is learning how to short-circuit those stress responses. Developing calming skills is paramount, and prayer is key here. Not the lofty, perfect kind of prayer where you try to sound enlightened, but the kind where you show up with all your mess, frustrations, and 'I-can't-even-deal-right-now' moments. When someone pushes your buttons, a quick pause to lift it all to God can work wonders. It's like hitting the reset button on your emotional system, shifting you back to a place of peace.

When we're triggered, our brains don't exactly throw a party for logic and calm decision-making. Instead, they hijack our thoughts and send our nervous systems into overdrive. In those moments, a little prayer or moment of mindfulness can do a world of good. Those tiny breaks in the mental storm can help restore clarity, allowing us to re-engage with the present moment instead of being swept away by frustration.

'I SAY A LITTLE PRAYER FOR YOU'

So the next time a political ad pops up and you feel your blood pressure rise, try offering it up in prayer. You might just find that serenity is one vote you can actually win this season. These four prayer practices may help you:

1. Offer a Moment of Silence to God: When you feel your frustration rising, pause for a moment of silence. Offering that stillness to God can be a sacred act. In those few seconds, simply acknowledge the emotion without trying to fix it or analyze it. This pause allows space for God's presence to settle your heart and bring calm. Think of it as hitting the "pause button" on your emotional storm.

2. Pray the Psalms: The psalms are a treasure trove of raw human emotion - joy, anger, frustration, hope - all laid bare before God. When you're overwhelmed, pick up the psalms and read one that speaks to your current feeling. Psalm 23 can remind you of God's peace, while Psalm 137 might help you express anger in a way that acknowledges its intensity but leaves it in God's hands. The beauty of the psalms is that they validate every part of the human experience while always turning back to trust in God.

3. Pray "As Is": Sometimes the most honest prayer is simply showing up as you are. If you're feeling irritable, exhausted, or completely over it, tell God exactly that. You don't need to clean up your emotions or find the perfect words - God can handle your mess. It's about being real in that moment.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 6 is a call on God for comfort and strength. Read verses 2-7 slowly a couple of times. Pay attention to the words, images, phrases, or memories that are stirred within you.

2 Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint;
heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.

3 My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, Lord, how long?

4 Turn, Lord, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.

5 Among the dead no one proclaims your name.
Who praises you from the grave?

6 I am worn out from my groaning.

All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.
7 My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes.

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, in the whirlwind of life's chaos, I offer it all to you: my worries, frustrations, and fears. When the world feels overwhelming, remind me to pause, to breathe, and to rest in your presence. Help me to find calm in the midst of the storm, and peace in the midst of all the behaviors that trigger me. Teach me to trust in your steady hand, guiding me back to you, no matter how turbulent the path may seem. Grant me your peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

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