TO: The Gonzaga Community
FROM: Frank E. Case, S.J. and Shanea Giroux
SUBJ: Moment for Mission
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**Rules for Imaginative Prayer**
Margaret Silf

*There are two absolute rules for imaginative prayer: 1) Never moralize or judge yourself; 2) Always respond from your heart and not your head. Neither rule is as easy as it sounds. Many of us carry judgmental attitudes toward ourselves, and we are habitually critical of ourselves. We have also been taught to study the Word of God, and of course it’s right to do this. But there is a time for recognizing that our heads can never grasp the truths of God, and that our purpose in prayer is not to defend or condemn ourselves or to come up with any kind of analysis or sermon, but simply to respond, from our inmost depths, to what God is sharing with us.*

*So allow your feelings and your moods to have their say. If you have a feeling of tenderness or apprehension or anger in the Gospel scene you’re imagining, this tells you about what is happening between you and God at that particular moment. Just as you take notice of how you are feeling and reacting in your human relationships, so, too, your feelings and reactions in your relationship with God are significant, even if they appear to be negative. We often learn more from our negative reactions than from the more comfortable ones.*

*Inner Compass, adapted*

Margaret Silf discusses imaginative prayer, a type of prayer you may not have practiced before. Perhaps this is, in part, because it is so difficult to follow the two absolute rules. Many of us dwell on events of the past and feelings of inadequacy in our lives forgetting that, in God’s eyes, we are beautiful, wonderful, and capable of change. It is hard to shut off your brain, so to speak, and let your heart lead the way to the understanding of a deeper truth. Our yesterday does not have to be our tomorrow; that is God’s promise to us.

Take a moment today, perhaps after the work is done and before you sit down to a program on television, and center yourself. Let go of the events of yesterdays and thoughts of tomorrows. Listen with your heart to what God is saying to you.