

Daily Prayer Patterns

[Participant Guide, page 173]

This section offers directions for the various methods of prayer and reflection used in *Meeting Christ in Prayer*. Every method has something to offer.

Like learning any other skill, new methods of prayer require the discipline of repeated effort. Some methods will come easily, while others will be more challenging. The daily discipline of prayer during the seven weeks of this program will have three periods: a brief prayer in the morning, a period of twenty to thirty minutes of scriptural prayer at some point in the day, and a brief prayer in the evening to review the day.

At times, the scriptural prayer method of *lectio divina* will be applied in the extended prayer period; other times the imaginative method will be used. Often throughout the eight weeks of the program, you will be asked to review your prayer and journaling.

Additionally, the sacraments are always a part of the Catholic's prayer life. During these eight weeks, consider attending a weekday Mass in addition to Sunday Mass. Also, you are encouraged to celebrate the sacrament of penance during the second and sixth weeks of the program if possible.

Routine for Daily Prayer

I. In the Morning

1. Take time to offer yourself to God, who will be with you throughout your day.
2. Ask for what you will need during the day.
3. Pray the Lord's Prayer.

II. Extended Daily Prayer Period (about 20–30 minutes)

Preparation

1. Read the paragraph that introduces the reading for the day.
2. Find a comfortable posture, relax, then breathe slowly and deeply for a minute or two.
3. Recall that you are in the presence of God, and consciously offer yourself to God.
4. Ask for God's grace (whichever specific grace is suggested for that week).
5. Read the Scripture passage prayerfully.

6. Follow the directions given or use the guide below for *lectio divina* or imaginative prayer.

Conclusion

1. Thank God for this time of prayer.
2. Ask for God's grace to come to the next prayer period with an open heart, ready to receive whatever God wants to give to you.
3. Pray the Lord's Prayer.
4. Take time to review your prayer and write down in your journal what the meditation evoked in you.

III. In the Evening

1. Look back over your day to see where you recognized God's presence and how God has given you what you needed for this day.
2. Express your gratitude.
3. Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Lectio Divina

Lectio divina, or “holy reading,” is perhaps the oldest method of scriptural prayer known to Christians. In fact, *lectio divina* probably has its roots in the Old Testament. In this method of prayer, the slow and repeated consideration of a text from Scripture leads to communion with God. *Lectio divina* is rooted in the belief that the scriptural word speaks in the human heart as the word of God and can articulate the thoughts of our hearts in response to God. The method of *lectio divina* is as follows:

- Find a comfortable posture, relax, then breathe slowly and deeply for a minute or two.
- Recall that you are in the presence of God, and consciously offer yourself to God.
- Read the designated Scripture passage slowly, either silently or aloud, letting the words sink into your heart. Listen for a word or phrase *that stands out for you*.
- Write down in your journal this word or phrase.
- Take some time to reflect on the word or phrase.
- Read the passage a second time. Listen for a word or phrase *that reflects what Christ is saying to you today*.
- Write down in your journal this word or phrase.
- Take some time to reflect on the word or phrase.
- Read the passage a third time. Listen for a word or phrase *that best reflects your response to Christ*.
- Write down in your journal this word or phrase.
- Take some time to reflect on the word or phrase.
- Read all the words and phrases that you have written down.
- Finally, let the Holy Spirit lead you in prayer to express your gratitude, ask for what you need, or communicate your sorrow.

Imaginative Prayer

The method for using imaginative prayer with the Gospels builds on *lectio divina*. In imaginative prayer, after an initial reading of a Bible passage, one can begin to imagine the story in detail, placing oneself in the scene. The pray-er becomes *engaged in the story*. He or she is there with the story—with the mystery of God's saving work. Most of all, the pray-er attends to the efforts that Christ is expending on behalf of his or her own salvation. The pray-er then enters into conversation with God or simply enjoys God's company and loving presence.

- Find a comfortable posture, relax, then breathe slowly and deeply for a minute or two.
 - Recall that you are in the presence of God, and consciously offer yourself to God.
 - Slowly read and reread the designated passage from Scripture.
 - Once you have become familiar with the text, put the Bible aside and begin to imagine the story in detail.
- Picture the setting.
 - Imagine the scenery, the landscape, the environment.
 - What do the buildings look like?
 - What time and kind of day is it?
 - What else is part of the setting (for example, animals, plants, wagons)?
 - See the people.
 - Who are the characters?
 - What do they look like?
 - What has been happening to them in their lives?
 - What do they bring to the present experience?
 - Hear the people.
 - Listen to their dialogue.
 - Pay attention to their tone of voice.
 - Imagine their thoughts and exchanges.
 - Consider the people's actions.
 - See and consider what the characters are doing.
 - Observe their actions.
 - Be there with the mystery.
 - Enter into conversational prayer with Christ or with others in the scene. This may take the form of gratitude, praise, petition, or sorrow.

Review of Prayer and Journaling

After the extended prayer period, take a few minutes to review your time of prayer. This is not meant to be an evaluation of your ideas but to help you be aware of how you were moved in prayer. Therefore, pay attention to the feelings that surfaced. Note any rhythms or patterns. Consider how this prayer experience has helped you to know Christ better.

Having reviewed your prayer, describe it in a journal entry. Your daily journal entries will allow you to trace the movement of God's grace during this program. Always focus on how you are coming to know Christ better.

Review of the Day

(an adaptation of the Ignatian *examen*)

- Find a comfortable posture, relax, then breathe slowly and deeply for a minute or two.
- Recall that you are in the presence of God, and consciously offer yourself to God.
- First, begin with gratitude. Start off by considering the things you are grateful for.
 - These can be very simple things, such as the sunlight on your cheek, a phone call from a friend, your child's face while sleeping—whatever comes to mind.
 - Now thank God for these things.
- Next, think back to the morning and see yourself waking up.
 - God the Father has created you again in Christ by the breath of the Holy Spirit; this is what it means to wake up.
 - Being created again in Christ means Christ is with you throughout your day. Imagine Christ with you as you begin your day.
 - Recall your surroundings, your feelings, and your mind-set as you began your day.
- Next, review the day, almost like a video replaying in your mind, and see Christ accompanying you as you move through your day, hour to hour, place to place.
 - Recall the circumstances you encountered, the people you met, and the activities you engaged in.
 - All these things are God's gifts to you, revealing Christ's presence in a new way.
- Recall the feelings and moods that were evoked throughout your day (for example, love, hope, contentment, joy, anger, fear, shame). Which feeling predominated?
- Now ask yourself the following questions: Where do I most recognize God's presence? Where did I see Christ today? Where did I feel Christ's love? Where was Christ inviting me to grow in my relationship with God?
 - God's invitation to us is constant, and God uses all things—the seemingly good and the seemingly bad—as means to deepen our relationship in Christ.
 - Try to find God's presence in the events, people, and feelings you just recalled. Try to recognize God's gifts and invitation.
 - You might focus on finding God's presence in one isolated person, circumstance, feeling, or activity.
- Now review your response to Christ's presence in the events and people of your day. Ask yourself: Where did I turn away from God's grace? Where did I accept God's grace?
 - Recall the choices that you made, how you responded to people, and your thoughts and feelings.
 - Consider how you would have liked to respond and what kept you from doing so.
- Now share with Christ in prayer your predominant feeling.
 - Express gratitude for a gift received or repentance for a time you turned away from God.
 - Ask for what is needed, or praise God for all that has been given to you in Christ.
 - Enjoy being in Christ's loving presence.