

Walking Together in Prayer

A prayer resource for
individuals and groups

Ignatian Spirituality Centre

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Introduction

Walking Together in Prayer

What do you most desire?

Jesus asks this question to two people following him along the road. He asks the same question to each of us. Like those two uncertain followers he invites us to “Come and See” and to spend time with him. Time to get to know him and to find how very well he already knows us.

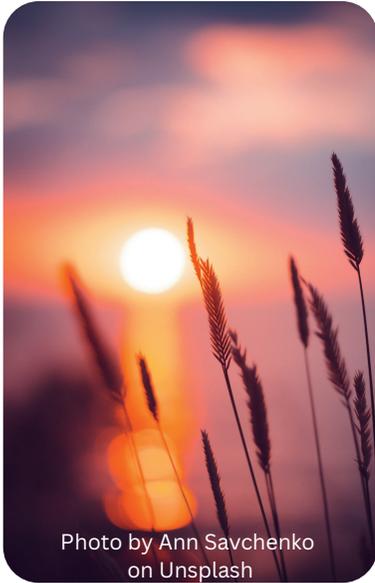
This is the adventure that awaits us in prayer, encountering Jesus in the market places, mountains, lakes, meals, joys, challenges, failures and surprises of our lives.

As we pray, in the word of William Barry SJ , we begin to notice and enjoy the gifts in our lives and our prayer “becomes an appreciative dialogue with the Giver who loves us.”

We hope this wee booklet will enrich your prayer and that you will encounter the Risen Lord.



The Morning Offering



A morning offering (or daily offering) is a brief prayer that places us and the day ahead in the heart of Christ and his mission as an offering to God. It is usually prayed at the beginning of your day.

Daily Offering

Loving God, here I am. I know you are always with me. I place my heart in the Heart of your Son Jesus, who gives himself to us in the Eucharist each day. May your Holy Spirit strengthen me to live the Gospel in everything I do and say. For my part I give you this day—all my prayers, works, sufferings and joys—all I am and possess. With Mary, mother of the Church, I pray for the mission of the Church, for all Apostles of Prayer, and for the intentions of the Pope this month. Amen

The Act of the Presence of God

This exercise helps us to begin prayer in the presence of God. In your imagination, become aware of God's presence and attention to you in this very moment. It may be that you can imagine God's face looking down upon you right now and smiling; or it may be that you can feel God's breath on your skin; or it may be that you can be aware of God's touch; or it may be that you simply sense God's presence.

Do whatever works best for you, whatever allows you to better recognise your Creator present with you, here and now with love. The following steps might help you to get in tune with God's presence:

Take a moment to acknowledge God's specific and loving attention to you in the here and now.

- Feel the warmth of God's love as God looks upon you, God's purposeful creation.
- God loved you into existence. God continues to breathe life into you now and sustains you in being. God is inviting you at this moment into an ever deeper relationship of love.
- Just bask in that experience for a few minutes – just as you bathe in the warmth of the sun on a warm summer's day, so now bathe in the warmth of God's love for you.
- And as you bask in the warmth of God's love for you, listen to what God might be communicating to you.
- As you listen, you may feel drawn to make a response, to say a few words to God in the silence of your heart. In responding to God, you may also want to ask God for something, or you may want to pray for someone.

- Maybe you want to thank God for your experience of God’s unique loving attention to you, perhaps in words like these:

“Dear God, I acknowledge that you are looking at me in love and attending to me always and most especially in this moment. I thank you for this time we have had together. I ask you now for the grace to be able to look upon you and attend to you this day. May I also receive the grace to see myself as you see me and to see others in this world as you see them.”

Most importantly:

- Take your time
- Keep your attention on God
- Listen



Photo by Davide Cantelli on Unsplash

The Four Anchor Points of Prayer



Photo by Jacob Meissner on Unsplash

Prayer is at its best when there is some shape and some flexibility. In this regard, the following four anchor points provide some structure in which the Spirit can operate freely.

1. Preparation

The following questions could be helpful:

How am I as I prepare for prayer? What sort of mood am I in?

Therefore... What do I want to ask the Lord for? Peace?

Generosity? Openness? Trust/Forgiveness? Or what else...?

What piece of scripture, text, hymn, poem, etc, shall I use? If

necessary, e.g. with a Gospel scene, read the text slowly several times beforehand so that you are familiar enough with the narrative.

How long I am going to pray for? Be realistic. Where shall I choose to pray? How might I prepare the place? How might I avoid disruptions? E.g. put my mobile phone on silent.

2. Entry into Prayer

- Go to your place of prayer.
- Make yourself comfortable and become still – perhaps using an awareness or stillness exercise.
- Act of the Presence of God (see previous section).

- Make a very slow sign of the Cross (or some other prayerful gesture) – either externally or mentally – and slowly ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray.

3. Bringing Prayer to a Close

- Quietly bring your prayer together and in the light of this, speak with God as one friend to another. Have a heart to heart chat with God.
- Pray a slow Our Father, Glory Be, or another prayer.
- You could make a slow sign of the Cross – externally or mentally – or some other prayerful gesture.
- Slowly leave the place where you have been praying, with gratitude for the time God has been with you.

4. Review of Prayer

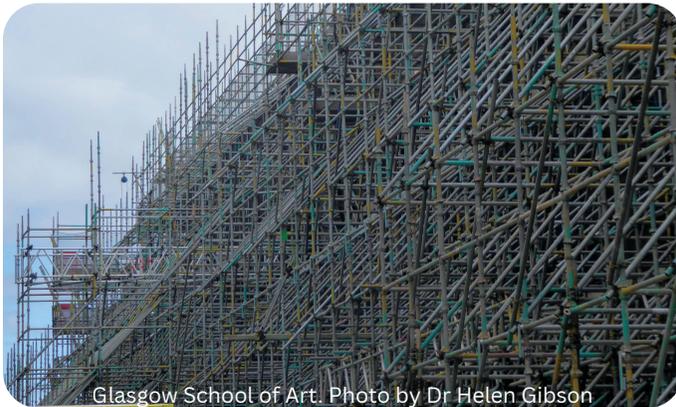
Reviewing prayer allows reflection upon a prayer experience that is not helpful during prayer itself.

It is also an aid to discernment of where and how God is at work, helping us to cooperate with what God is doing. The review can also be part of the preparation for further prayer, deciding whether to return to something ‘unfinished’, to savour longer or to move on to new material for prayer. If possible, do this in a different place from where you have been praying. Slowly recall the prayer period – rather like a video replay of the highlights. The following questions are helps. Do not try to use them all. Find the ones that work for you:

- Was it good to be to be at prayer, or not? Why?
- What did you do at the beginning of prayer?
- Did any major idea or ideas occur to you?

- Did you have any strong feeling or emotion? Peaceful, creative, loving – or disturbing, unsettling, confusing, fearful?
- Did you feel God’s love, or were you resistant towards God? Did you learn something during prayer? How does that change how you act?
- Did the Lord ask something of you?
- Did you find any unwillingness in yourself in face of what the Lord seemed to want of you?
- Note particularly the movements that were strong: high and low points.
- Is there something that feels unfinished, that you are drawn to return to in the next prayer time?

You may find it useful to jot down your answers!



There are very few people who realize what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves entirely to His hands, and let themselves be formed by His Grace.

— St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Lectio Divina: Praying with Scripture



Photo by Phil Reid on Unsplash

Lectio Divina is a slow, contemplative praying with scripture which has long been used in the monastic tradition. It invites God to speak into our life through scripture and for us to respond. The following step-by-step guide could help you pray with a Bible passage.

- Choose a text from Scripture that you wish to pray.
- Make an act of the presence of God.
- Ask for what you want from God in this time of prayer. Ask too for the help of the Spirit as you pray.

- Read the text slowly, until a word or phrase catches your attention, or somehow says, "I am for you today."
- Chew over, ponder upon the word or phrase. Let it speak into your life.
- Allow this reflection to invite you into dialogue with God, sharing what is staying with you.
- Rest in God. When ready return to the text and continue reading.
- At the end of your prayer time, finish with a prayer such as the Our Father.

Bear in mind that each person will engage with the God through the text in their own way. There is no right or wrong way! Don't worry if nothing gets your attention when reading the passage.

LECTIO DIVINA

Read...

Reflect...

Respond...

Rest...



Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

Praying with our Imagination



Imaginative contemplation is the process of imagining ourselves in a Gospel scene, taking up a character, being with Jesus and being aware of what's going on, and how we are feeling. When we pray with our imagination, we come into real intimacy with Jesus as we seek to place ourselves as fully as we can within a story from the Gospels.

We may have been told that we have no imagination or think we don't, yet we use imagination whenever we remember experiences from the past or engage in day-dreaming about possible future events. Most of us can do this readily in our own way, especially if we just do it rather than think about doing it.

That same imagination can be a very powerful tool for prayer. It's a gift from God to be used for encounter. What is important is being involved in what is being imagined, experiencing it rather than being an observer of yourself.

St Ignatius placed great importance on imaginative contemplation because he wanted each one of us to meet Jesus and develop a unique and personal relationship with him. I watch Jesus's face. I listen to the way he speaks. I notice how people respond to him. These details bring me to know Jesus as more than a name or a historical figure in a book. He is a living person that each person encounters in prayer so that "We have come to know him ourselves..." (John 4:42)

Step-by-Step Imaginative Contemplation

The following steps might help you to pray imaginatively:

- Read through the selected bible passage slowly twice beforehand so that you familiarise yourself with the narrative.
- Enter into prayer – with an act of the presence of God and asking for the Spirit to guide your prayer. You may also find it helpful to spend a few minutes with a breathing or stilling exercise to help you enter the prayer.
- Imagine the place where the narrative is set. Use all your senses - what you can see, hear, touch, smell, taste - to enter into the scene. Take time to do this. Don't hurry.
- Become aware of the different people involved in the scene. Then enter the scene, maybe as a disciple or one of the crowd or just finding yourself there as you are.
- Allow the scene to unfold. Be involved in what happens and let yourself engage with Jesus and/or the others around you as seems natural to you in the moment ... it may or may not exactly follow the scripture.

- If you find you get distracted and your attention has wandered, just gently bring yourself back to the scene.
- At some point, have a conversation with Jesus about whatever is uppermost on your heart in the moment, listening for his response.
- End the prayer quite deliberately, don't just fade out!
- Review your prayer.



Photo by Michael Held on Unsplash

Some examples are available at the following webpage:

<https://prayasyougo.org/category/imagining-prayer-21>

The Examen: Ignatian Review of the Day



The Examen, or Review of the Day, was a daily prayer included by St Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises. It offers a practical help to become more attentive to God's presence and activity in our daily life, finding God in all things, noticing the patterns of our interaction with God in our experiences.

The Examen is a good prayer for busy people - it takes only ten minutes at some point in the day – bedtime, before breakfast, at lunch. It is perhaps the most important ten minutes in the whole of the day! It is asking God to show us moments of the day that God invites us to pay attention to.

A Step-by-Step Simple Examen

- Take a few moments to recognise that you are here with the Lord, to have a few minutes quiet time together.
- Feel the warmth of God's love as God looks upon you. Bask in that experience. God is inviting you at this moment into an ever deeper relationship of love.
- With this loving God, bring your day to mind.

- What in this day am I thankful for? What are the moments that come to mind that have been received as a gift, that lead me to say “Thank you” to God.
- What in this day might I be sorry for? What are the moments of selfishness and unkindness and any other times when I did not manage to be Jesus’ hands, feet, eyes, his love, his compassion for the people around me. I say “sorry” to God.

And finally, please help me to be more attentive to you tomorrow.

Amen. Our Father...

A Shorter Examen

For those with very hectic schedules, there is a short version of the Examen that could fit in your busy day. This Examen consists of three steps:

1. **Thank you** for all that the day has been and for all God’s gifts.
2. **Sorry** Call to mind one or two moments of selfishness and acting without love for others.
3. **Please** These are some of the people and events that I want to pray for. This is what I ask for as I look towards tomorrow.

Praying with Art



Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery by Thomas Nugent (Wikimedia commons)

Art can speak to our deepest feelings, calling forth our own creative response to the creativity of the artist. Just as we can be moved by a beautiful sunset, or seeing the smile of a child, or hearing a wonderful musical symphony, often without knowing why, so a painting or sculpture can move us beyond words to some deep feeling, some movement of the heart towards God – a feeling of ‘I know not what’ as CS Lewis put it or, in another of his phrases, ‘being surprised by joy.’ Or, as Ignatius would say, allowing us to experience ‘inner feeling and relish’.

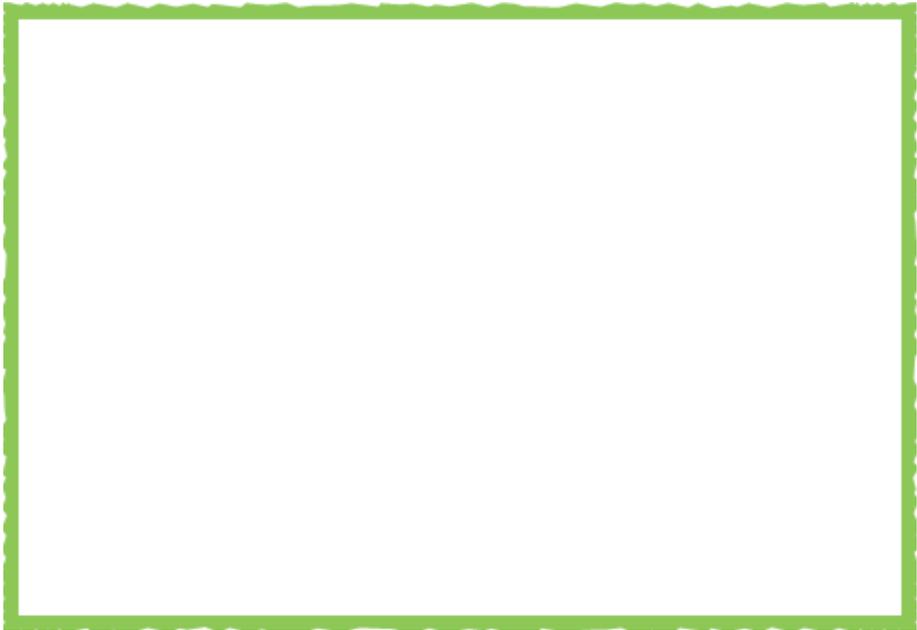
We do not need to like or admire the art... as we notice our ‘inner feelings’ even responses of unease or discomfort are telling us something... and we can bring this movement to God in prayer.

- Settle yourself into quiet. Take a moment to enjoy God's long loving look. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in your prayer and ask for what you desire in this time.
- Now look at the image before you. Look long, linger, sit with it in a quiet space. Allow your eyes to roam around the picture ... to notice the colours ... the shapes ... the moods... the texture ...
- Refrain from immediate interpretation of the image. Hold back from judgement. Allow thoughts and feelings to emerge gently – perhaps like water seeping into dry ground. Wait, let it be. Be still. Let the image speak.
- You might then wish to use one or more of the following questions to help your ongoing reflection:
 - Where do you find your attention most resting?
 - Which thought/s do you find yourself thinking?
 - Which feeling/s or desire/s in you does the image evoke?
 - Which memories are stirred?
 - Is there something in the picture you wish to change?
Do you know why?
 - Does the image invite anything of you?
- Take some time with God to talk about the picture or what has stirred within you and allow God to respond.
- Finish your prayer with an 'Our Father' or 'Glory be ...' etc.
- Afterwards, review your prayer and, if you find it helpful, make some notes.

Photo by Veronica Lorine on Unsplash



*Or Create your own image
... below or on a separate
sheet of paper*



- Offer the time to God, then allow the colours, lines and shapes to arise in your imagination. Don't judge your artwork. This is your space.
- What do you notice?
- What does your eye fall on?
- Speak to God about your artwork.

Praying with Nature



View to Arran: Photo by Dr Helen Gibson

Notice what captures your attention, what draws you. Now speak with God about what you are noticing. What might God be saying to you? How do you respond?

Walking with Creation

- Look at the earth, plants, insects, other animals that are close to you. Take time to be attentive to details, to small differences, e.g. colours, shapes, contours, lines, lights, contrasts, movements, etc.
- Listen to the noises of human activities, insects, birdsong, dogs barking, the rustle of wind, echoes, and so on. Close your eyes and take your time. Let yourself be cradled by all these sounds. And if there is nothing, listen to the silence...

- Feel the air, the wind, its strength, its effect on your body. Feel the ground supporting you. Touch the earth, the plants in front of you. Welcome their touch and what they help you perceive, e.g. gentleness, roughness, heat, cold, dryness, humidity...
- Smell the smells, open yourself to the scents, notice their differences. Notice their effects on you, e.g. joy, disgust etc.
- At the end of the exercise, what new things are you aware of? Where have you experienced God's goodness in creation?

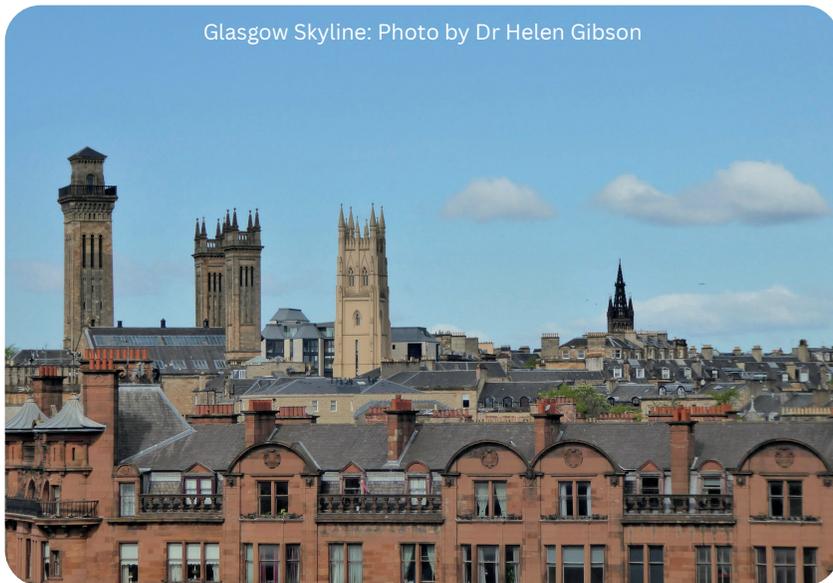


Praying the ‘Our Father’

I say one word of the Our Father aloud or in the silence of my heart. I let it echo in my mind, delighting in it so long as meanings, comparisons, and consolations are found. No matter how long it takes I remain with that one word without hurrying on. When I am ready I move on to the next word and once again let it echo in my mind.

When I have finished my time of prayer, I briefly pray the remainder of the Our Father.

Based on Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola (249-257)



The Lord's Prayer – Our Father

Ar n-Athair, a tha air neamh,
gum bu naomh a bhios t'ainm ;
gun tigeadh do rioghachd,
gun deanar do thoil air talamh
mar a thathas ga deanamh air neamh.
Thoir dhuinn an diugh ar n-aran lathail
math dhuinn ar fiachan,
mar a mhathas sinne do luchd ar fiach.
Agus na leig ann am buaireadh sinn.
Ach saor sinn bhon olc. Amen.



Islay Pilgrimage: Photo from ISC Archive

Peace

The peace of God, the peace of men,
The peace of Columba kindly.
The peace of Mary mild, the loving,
The peace of Christ, King of tenderness,
The peace of Christ, King of tenderness.



Be upon each window, upon each door.
Upon each hole that lets in light.
Upon the four corners of my house,
Upon the four corners of my bed.
Upon each thing my eye takes in,
Upon each thing my mouth takes in.
Upon my body that is of earth
And upon my soul that came from on high.

'Prayer from Carmina Galetica - ancient Celtic prayers



Photo credit: Romano Capocci on www.rcdai.org.uk

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This booklet is provided free of charge however, we would welcome donations to help with the production and distribution costs. If you are able to contribute then please visit:

www.iscglasgow.co.uk/donate or scan the QR code below:



Alternatively you can post a (UK Sterling) cheque payable to 'Jesuits in Britain CIO' to ISC, 35 Scott Street, Glasgow, G3 6PE, Scotland. Thank you.

Further details of the ISC's programme including prayer workshops, retreats and courses are available - see our websites on the back cover.

Prayer belongs to everyone: to men and women of every religion, and probably also to those who profess none. Prayer arises in our innermost self, in that interior place that spiritual authors call "heart" Therefore, it is not something peripheral, it is not some secondary and marginal ability that we have, but rather it is our most intimate mystery.

(Pope Francis, 6th May 2020)



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