

Creating a Daily Contemplative Prayer Practice

Beginning Prayer

1. Once in your prayer place, intentionally place yourself in the presence of God. Take a few deep breaths.
2. As you breathe in and out slowly, remind yourself that you are never alone, and that God is with you right now.

Name the grace you seek

1. Each week, there will be a suggested grace of the week. In addition to asking for that grace at the beginning of each prayer period, St. Ignatius invites us to name the grace we seek at the start of every prayer period. After placing yourself in the presence of God, simply go to God with the question...what is the grace I seek?
2. Notice what word arises within you. Are you seeking rest? Peace? Clarity? Courage? Hope? Light? Love? Mercy? And on and on the list might go. When a word arises in your thoughts, turn this into a prayer.
3. *God as I begin, I seek the grace of _____.*

Review of daily prayer

1. At the end of your prayer time, St. Ignatius also invites us to do a review of prayer. This simply involves a look back over the minutes spent in prayer with the question: What happened here?
2. It might be helpful to purchase a spiritual journal where you can jot down what you noticed in prayer. Perhaps you might write the word or phrase from scripture that caught your heart. Maybe you jot down a memory or image that God stirred in prayer. You might note the feelings that rose within you as you prayed. Did you feel hopeful? Sad? Frightened? Afraid?

Prepare for the next day's prayer

1. As you close out your prayer time, take a brief look at the scripture or meditation you will pray with for the next day. St. Ignatius calls this preparing for the next day's prayer.
2. Skimming the reading or meditation for the next day allows it to begin to marinate in you and ready you for your next prayer time.

Weekly Review of Prayer

1. At the end of each week of prayer it will help to do a weekly review of prayer. This is similar to the daily review of prayer; the only difference is looking back over your daily notes of prayer to jot down what has happened in this week's prayer time. The practice of reviewing your prayer is a beautiful tool to help us discern the movement of God within our hearts and also within our lives.
2. The art of looking backwards and reviewing our prayer actually helps us continue our forward movement and growth in God.

Lectio Divina

As you begin your retreat, we will use the prayer method Lectio Divina to pray with Scriptures and also various meditations. Later on during the retreat, I will introduce you to another way of praying with prayer called Ignatian Contemplation.

Lectio Divina is a slow, rhythmic reading and praying of a Scripture passage or a meditation.

Here are the steps of *Lectio Divina*:

Before beginning prayer, select a Scripture passage to pray with and have it open in your lap. Begin prayer by settling in and getting quiet. Close your eyes and enter your inner chapel. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer time.

Read: Pick any passage in Scripture. Slowly, thoughtfully, savor the living word. Linger whenever a word or phrase touches your heart. As you hold the word or phrase that caught your attention, ask yourself, *what might God be offering me?*

Reflect: Read the passage in Scripture a second time. This time, notice what feelings are stirring in response to the reading. Ask yourself, *what is God saying to me in this passage? What is God offering me? Asking me?*

Respond: Read the passage a third time. As the words enter your heart, note which word, image, or idea God is inviting you to savor. Respond to God from your heart. Speak to God of your feelings and insights. Offer these to God.

Rest: You might read the passage a fourth time. As you savor the gift of God's words, simply close your eyes and listen. Sit quietly in God's presence. Rest in God's love. Listen to God in your inner chapel.

Ignatian Contemplation

Ignatian Contemplation is a prayer method St. Ignatius recommends when praying with the life of Jesus. It not only allows us to hear and read the words of Jesus but also moves what is going on in the Scripture into our imaginations. This helps us not only hear Jesus but also watch the way he moves and acts.

Here are the steps of Ignatian Contemplation, or Imaginative Prayer:

1. Select a Scripture. Pick a passage from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.
2. Read. Read the passage several times slowly so that you almost know the story well enough to share with another person.
3. Imagine the scene. Close your eyes and imagine the scene. Imagine what the scene looks like. Who is in the scene? What are they doing? Where are they located? What do you notice about the environment? What smells are there? What sounds? Let the Holy Spirit guide this unfolding in your mind for you.
4. Put yourself in the scene. As the scene begins to take shape in your mind, put yourself in the scene. Notice where you are.
5. Notice what happens. Let the story unfold in your mind. Stay with it until you feel nudged to move to reflection.
6. Respond and rest. Share with God what you noticed and experienced. Then rest in God and let God speak to you.
7. Reflect. Reflect on what you experienced in prayer. What did you learn about Jesus? About God? About another character in the Scripture? About yourself?