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Personal Renewal Retreat Guide 2025

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

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How to Use This Guide

Welcome to your 24-hour personal prayer retreat! I'm thrilled that you have courageously chosen to take this important step in your spiritual formation. Solitude and silence allow us to find communion with the Spirit of Christ, opening the door for deep transformation. But the hardest part is dedicating the time to do it, which you've already done, so congratulations!

This guide is designed to be as easy or as challenging as you wish. You are certainly not required to complete everything within the pages of this booklet, but I hope there is enough here to keep you engaged. Here are some tips and information.

Read the Directions
The first part of this guide includes an explanation of contemplative prayer and instructions for all the types of prayers and activities you will find in the guided prayers that follow. I encourage you to read the directions for all of them and try each one at least once.

Pick and Choose
This guide contains seven prayer times scheduled every three hours in the monastic tradition of the "Daily Office." Each prayer time contains contemplative activities that guide you through a specific topic for reflection and contemplation. You don't have to do all seven prayer times or all the activities in each prayer time. And you don't have to wake up in the middle of the night if you'd rather not. Feel free to pick and choose how much or how little you wish to do and when you would like to do it during your time on the retreat.

What do I do for 24 hours?
This retreat should be a time of rest and renewal for you. Don't get overwhelmed by trying to accomplish too much in your prayer times. On the other hand, you might find yourself wondering what to do with all the time you would otherwise be busy with activities at home or work. I encourage you to read, journal, daydream, think, nap, draw, or do anything else you want to do. But do your best to remain in the silence and solitude of retreat (i.e., stay off your phone or computer).

☩ Imaginative Prayer

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

☩ **Centering Prayer**

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

☩ **Lectio Divina**

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

— Ephesians 1:9-14

☩ **Prayer of Examen**

Follow the instructions for the Prayer of Examen at the beginning of this booklet.

About Contemplative Prayer

Prayer is integral to the life of a follower of Jesus and is essential for spiritual growth. But what is prayer, really? Is it just talking to God? Is it simply aiming requests at the sky and waiting (hoping) for answers? Contemplative prayer is an ancient way to pray that deeply connects your spirit with God and forms you in the image of Christ.

Prayer — Spiritual or Intellectual?
For the first 1500 years of Christianity, followers of Jesus understood prayer very differently than we do now. Before the Enlightenment, humans valued the spiritual and mystical realms as much as the physical. But around the time of the Scientific Revolution in the 16th Century, man's intellect began to be elevated high above spirituality in the Western world.

This had a significant impact on the Christian faith, as intellectual approaches to theology, doctrine, apologetics, biblical study, ecclesiology, and more gradually overshadowed mystical and spiritual practices — like contemplative prayer — that had been practiced for centuries.

But the New Testament speaks of the *presence* of Jesus, the *guidance* of the Holy Spirit, a Church that is *united* with Christ and with one another *in spirit*, and of believers *growing up* into Christ. These images are spiritual in nature, not intellectual, and living in this reality requires something beyond intellectual activity. It requires learning to engage with Christ in the spiritual realm.

What is Contemplative Prayer?
Thanks to the monastic traditions that have kept it alive, contemplative prayer is once again becoming commonplace in the life of the Church. Contemplative prayer is about *being*, not *doing*. The goal of contemplative prayer is **union with Christ**, which is a spiritual endeavor, not an intellectual one. In our activity-driven, task-oriented world, the challenge of contemplative prayer is slowing down, being quiet, and letting go of tangible outcomes and measurable results.

This is quite a contrast with the intellectual kind of prayer most of us learned — prayer filled with words and requests. When we engage in contemplative prayer, we are not seeking answers. We are seeking the presence of Christ. We are not talking to God. We are enjoying him. We are not accomplishing a task. We are delighting in a relationship.

In contemplative prayer, we yield our agenda to God's agenda and allow Him to take the lead in forming us in His image. We quiet our minds and invite the Spirit to shape us in the ways we need to be shaped. At the heart of contemplative prayer is **consent** — we consent to allow God to work in and through us.

Methods for Contemplative Prayer
There is no one way to practice contemplative prayer. Many approaches and methods can lead you into contemplative prayer, and there is no "right" way or "wrong" way. Whether meditating on scripture, entering into the silence of Centering Prayer, or engaging with songs of worship, we consent to the work of Jesus in our spirit and our lives. This is the essence of contemplative prayer.

Throughout this guide, you will explore several approaches to contemplative prayer. You will experience Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, the Prayer of Examen, imaginative prayer, and more. Some of these may work well for you, while others may not. I encourage you to **try them all** but feel free to focus on the ones that connect with your spirit.

These methods in and of themselves are not contemplative prayer — rather, they are merely ways to lead you into contemplative prayer. The practices suggested in this guide are designed to bring you to a place of union with Christ. Therefore, lean into the ones that help you do that easily. Set aside the ones that don't.

I pray that you will find Jesus in the coming moments and that you will be transformed by the experience.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam
"For the Greater Glory of God"

9:00 AM — Morning Prayer (Terce)

Looking Ahead With Hope

☩ **Opening Prayer**

Pray for wisdom and courage as you end your retreat and return to the world. Pray for gratitude for the abundant gifts of God. And pray that you will embrace the mission Christ offers you.

☩ **Psalm/Song**

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken.
So many enemies against one man—
all of them trying to kill me.
To them I'm just a broken-down wall
or a tottering fence.
They plan to topple me from my high position.
They delight in telling lies about me.
They praise me to my face
but curse me in their hearts.
Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honor come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge. Interlude.

— Psalm 62:1-8

place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

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Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.
— Ephesians 5:18-19

Singing is an important part of worship in the Bible, and songs appear from Exodus through Revelation. The Psalms are a magnificent songbook, and Christian worship has always included singing or reciting the Psalms. Today, we have a wide variety of worship music that helps us connect with God, from Psalms to hymns to popular worship choruses. As you enter into a time of devotion and prayer, worship through song can put your heart and mind in the right place.

Scan one of these QR codes with your mobile device, and you will be directed to LifePath's curated playlist for personal retreats.

YouTube

Spotify®

Music

Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is a method designed to lead us into contemplative prayer. Based on practices described in the 14th-century text "The Cloud of Unknowing," its widely accepted modern form is simple to understand and put into practice.

Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer; it enhances and sometimes illuminates them. During Centering Prayer, we consent to God's presence and action within us.

The ideal length of Centering Prayer is 20 minutes. This length has been found to be most helpful, and praying for longer or shorter periods diminishes the effects. But if you don't have 20 minutes, or if you cannot remain in silence for that long, begin with shorter periods and work up to 20 minutes as you are able.

STEP 1 — Choose a Sacred Word

Before you begin your time of Centering Prayer, choose a sacred word to represent your consent to be in God's presence and yield to God's action within you.

Your sacred word should be chosen during a brief period of prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to inspire you with one that is especially suitable for you. Some examples are "Lord, Jesus," "Abba, Father," "Love," "Peace," or "Shalom." Once you have chosen a sacred word, don't change it during the prayer period. That would require you to start thinking, which should be minimized during Centering Prayer.

STEP 2 — Consent to God's Presence

Once you have chosen a sacred word, sit comfortably with your eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce your sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

You should sit relatively comfortably, with your back straight and feet on the floor—not so comfortable that you fall asleep, but comfortable

authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

— Ephesians 1:15-23

☩ **Prayer**

Son of God, thank you for not being shy in showing yourself. So many people saw you, a long list of witnesses with names and addresses testify to your resurrected life. And the fact that I'm praying to you now is one more testimony. What's proclaimed in Scripture has happened to me— your resurrection power has made me alive, a new creation, raised from the dead. I praise you, risen Savior. Amen.

☩ **Imaginative Prayer**

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took

Now then, you kings, act wisely!
Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
Serve the Lord with reverent fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
Submit to God's royal son, or he will become angry,
and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities—
for his anger flares up in an instant.
But what joy for all who take refuge in him!

— Psalm 2

☩ **Centering Prayer**

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

☩ **Lectio Divina**

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the

enough to avoid thinking about your body's discomfort. (If you happen to fall asleep, accept that as a gift from God and acknowledge your body's need for rest. You can always continue the prayer for a few minutes when you wake up.)

Close your eyes to let go of what is going on around and within you, and minimize distraction. If you can be in an area free from noise or interruption, that is even better.

STEP 3 — Let Go of Thoughts

When you become aware of thoughts during your time of silence, return your mind to the sacred word.

Thoughts can include sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, or commentaries. Thoughts are a normal part of Centering Prayer, and when they arise, imagine them floating away like a cloud in the sky or a leaf on a small stream and return gently to the sacred word.

If you are new to Centering Prayer, your mind will be noisy and full of thoughts. Don't worry about this. Just let them go and return to your sacred word. With practice over time, you will become more skilled at releasing your thoughts.

In addition to thoughts, you may notice physical sensations such as slight pains, itches, twitches, generalized restlessness, or heaviness or lightness in the extremities. This can be due to the untying of emotional knots in the body or a deep level of spiritual attentiveness. In either case, acknowledge it and allow the mind to rest briefly in the sensation and then return to the sacred word.

During this time of prayer, it is important to avoid analyzing your experience, harboring expectations, or aiming at a specific goal. Release your expectations and avoid subconscious goals such as having no thoughts, making your mind blank, feeling peaceful or consoled, or achieving a spiritual experience. Just consent to the presence and work of Christ and let everything else go.

STEP 4 — Emerge From Silence

At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with your eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

(It's okay to use a timer for your prayer period as long as it doesn't have an audible tick or a loud sound that will startle you when it goes off.)

If you wish, you can recite the Lord's Prayer or another prayer once your period of Centering Prayer ends. This gives your mind and spirit time to readjust to the external senses. It also enables us to bring the practice of silence into daily life.

Final Thoughts
It's important to note that the effects of Centering Prayer will be experienced in daily life, not in the period of Centering Prayer itself. You will likely feel no different after a period of Centering Prayer. But over time, you may begin to notice a greater presence of Christ in your daily life, an easier time engaging in silence, a stronger sense of gratitude, or increased patience and kindness. These are the fruit of the Spirit and the result of Centering Prayer.

Remember that Centering Prayer is not contemplative prayer in and of itself but instead **leads us to contemplative prayer** and union with Christ. It is an exercise in faith, hope, and love that opens us to a relationship with God. It is not a conversation with Christ, but it moves us into communion with Christ. Most of all, it acquaints us with the language of God, which is silence.

6:00 AM — Sunrise Prayer (Prime)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

☩ **Opening Prayer**

Pray to grow in faith, hope, and love, and in so doing, you would share in the joy and peace of the risen Christ.

☩ **Psalm/Song**

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

Why are the nations so angry?
  Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
  the rulers plot together
against the Lord
  and against his anointed one.
"Let us break their chains," they cry,
  "and free ourselves from slavery to God."

But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
  The Lord scoffs at them.
Then in anger he rebukes them,
  terrifying them with his fierce fury.
For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne
  in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain."

The king proclaims the Lord's decree:
"The Lord said to me, 'You are my son.
  Today I have become your Father.
Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
  the whole earth as your possession.
You will break them with an iron rod
  and smash them like clay pots.'"

When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then, the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. They brought the boat to shore and climbed out. The people recognized Jesus at once, and they ran throughout the whole area, carrying sick people on mats to wherever they heard he was. Wherever he went—in villages, cities, or the countryside—they brought the sick out to the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

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Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient form of slowly and deliberately praying the scriptures that all Christians once practiced. It has been kept alive in many monastic traditions and is once again becoming a common way to engage with God in a contemplative way. On the surface, it is a fairly simple practice. But in our busy and noisy world, silence and listening to the voice of God can be challenging. Here's how to practice Lectio Divina.

STEP 1 — Preparation

Choose a text from the Scriptures. Many use a reading from the daily liturgy or a devotional guide; others prefer to work through a particular book of the Bible. It doesn't matter which text you choose as long as you have no set goal of "covering" a certain amount of text: the amount of text "covered" is in God's hands, not yours.

Find a comfortable position and try to become quiet. Many focus on their breathing, while others use a favorite prayer word or phrase to help them become still. Some may find Centering Prayer to be a good starting point for practicing Lectio Divina. Choose whatever technique works best for you, and allow yourself to enjoy a few moments of silence.

STEP 2 — Reading and Listening

Read the text slowly and gently. Allow yourself to savor each portion of the reading, and keep listening for a word or phrase that might gently speak to you. Once you have found a word or passage in the Scriptures that speaks to you in a personal way, take it in and "ruminate" on it. There is no need to continue reading once you have found the word or phrase.

Memorize the word or phrase and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner concerns, memories, and ideas. Ask yourself, "How does this make me feel?" or "What might God be asking me to **do** or to **be** through this scripture?" As you repeat the word or

phrase, do not be afraid of "distractions." Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during Lectio Divina, ask to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Step 3 — Prayer

Finally, speak to God in prayer. Prayer can be understood as a dialogue with God, like a loving conversation. It can also be seen as a consecration, or the offering of parts of yourselves that you don't believe God wants. In this time of prayer, God invites you to hold up your most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him and gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given you. In this prayer, you allow the word of God to touch and change your real self.

It doesn't matter whether you use words, ideas, or images when you pray. The important thing is to communicate with God as if He is someone who loves and accepts you unconditionally. Share with Him what you have discovered about yourself during your meditation. Use the word or phrase that God has given you to bless and transform the memories and ideas that you have been reflecting on. Finally, offer to God what you have found inside your heart.

Conclusion

When practicing Lectio Divina, it is important to let go of our usual goal-oriented approach. Lectio Divina is simply about spending time with God through His word. We learn to rest in the presence of our loving Father and to **be** rather than to **do**.

In normal everyday conversations, we alternate between speaking and listening, as well as questioning and reflecting. In the same way, our prayer lives should include alternation between speaking and listening, and questioning and reflecting. We must learn to take time to enjoy being in God's presence. Lectio Divina teaches us to savor all the different ways of experiencing God's presence, whether through active (speaking) or receptive (listening) ways.

☩ **Imaginative Prayer**

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and head across the lake to Bethsaida while he sent the people home. After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn't come back, the disciples got into the boat and headed across the lake toward Capernaum. Soon, a gale swept down upon them, and the sea grew very rough. Jesus saw that they were in serious trouble, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves.

About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. He intended to go past them, but when they saw him walking on the water, they cried out in terror, thinking he was a ghost. They were all terrified when they saw him.

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

"Yes, come," Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

☩ **Lectio Divina**

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

— 2 Corinthians 5:15-21

☩ **Prayer**

God of every square inch, thank you for the promise of your coming kingdom, the hope that everything wrecked will be completely renovated. Renew in me the vision that faith in you has everything to do with construction safety and agricultural practices, labor laws and justice seeking, flourishing cities and thriving people. Let your kingdom come. Amen.

The Prayer of Examen

As we follow Jesus, it is beneficial to pay attention to the ordinary daily moments. God is always at work in our lives, and the **Prayer of Examen** can bring to our conscious awareness some of the less perceptible movements of the Spirit.

The Examen is a prayer that helps us look back over a specific period of time in the past and allow God to reveal spiritual insights that call us to action in the future. Although the Examen can lead us to contemplative prayer, it is decidedly more action-oriented, as it specifically deals with our experiences, behaviors, and thoughts in our daily lives.

The Examen can be described in various ways, but I have organized it into five easy, memorable steps that form the acronym **GRACE**. This prayer is rooted in and dependent on God's Grace, so the acronym helps us remember this.

G — Begin with **GRATITUDE**
R — **REVIEW** your day
A — Pay **ATTENTION** to moments God calls to mind
C — **CONFESS** Your faults and failures
E — **EMBRACE** God's grace for a new tomorrow

Begin with Gratitude
The Examen always begins with gratitude. God's blessings are numerous, so begin by fixing your mind on some gift, grace, or blessing that you are grateful for, regardless of how simple or grand it might be.

Review Your Day
The central part of the Examen is a review of your day. (It's fine if you choose to review a shorter or longer period of time.) Beginning in the morning, review what you did, where you went, who you spoke with, what you said, and how you felt. Don't worry if you miss something or leave something out. In the Examen, we trust the Spirit to guide our minds in recalling what may be significant.

Pay Attention to Moments God Calls to Mind
As you are reviewing the events of your day (or hour, or week, or fortnight!), there will likely be moments that stand out. Trust that the Spirit is bringing these moments to your mind. Take note of each one and consider why it stands out to you. Was there a missed opportunity for kindness? Did you have a particularly inspiring exchange with someone? Did you act in a way that hurt others? Did you experience God's presence in a tangible way? Think and pray over each moment and ask God to reveal some insight to you.

Confess Your Faults and Failures
We often avoid confronting negative events in our lives and have been trained to only focus on the positive. However, not only is confession "good for the soul," as the saying goes, but modern brain science tells us that we learn more through failure than success. If we ground our confession in the grace of God, with the full confidence that we have already been forgiven, confession becomes less of a "guilt trip" and more of an exploration of how we can grow more fully into the likeness of Christ.

As you consider the various moments in your day that God has called to mind, examine the failures and faults carefully. Present them to God and ask him to show you his grace to be better next time, even if they are uncomfortable to think about. This is the heart of confession.

Embrace God's Grace for a New Tomorrow
Finish the Examen by receiving and embracing God's grace. Not only are you forgiven for your faults and failures, but God's grace sustains and empowers you to grow and change, becoming more like Christ each moment. Deeply embrace the gift of God and his patient, loving guidance throughout your life. Trust that tomorrow will bring new and better things!

I have told all your people about your justice.
I have not been afraid to speak out,
as you, O Lord, well know.
I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart;
I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.
I have told everyone in the great assembly
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.
Lord, don't hold back your tender mercies from me.
Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me.
For troubles surround me—
too many to count!
My sins pile up so high
I can't see my way out.
They outnumber the hairs on my head.
I have lost all courage.
Please, Lord, rescue me!
Come quickly, Lord, and help me.
May those who try to destroy me
be humiliated and put to shame.
May those who take delight in my trouble
be turned back in disgrace.
Let them be horrified by their shame,
for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!"
But may all who search for you
be filled with joy and gladness in you.
May those who love your salvation
repeatedly shout, "The Lord is great!"
As for me, since I am poor and needy,
let the Lord keep me in his thoughts.
You are my helper and my savior.
O my God, do not delay.

— Psalm 40

☩ **Centering Prayer**

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

3:00 AM — Late Night Prayer (Lauds)

The Kingdom of God

☩ **Opening Prayer**

Pray to grow in interior freedom so that you are able to respond wholeheartedly to Christ's invitation in your life.

☩ **Psalm/Song**

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.
He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the Lord.
Oh, the joys of those who trust the Lord,
who have no confidence in the proud
or in those who worship idols.
O Lord my God, you have performed many wonders for us.
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.
You have no equal.
If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,
I would never come to the end of them.
You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings.
Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand—
you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.
Then I said, "Look, I have come.
As is written about me in the Scriptures:
I take joy in doing your will, my God,
for your instructions are written on my heart.

Imaginative Prayer

Ignatius Loyola was a 16th-century Spanish priest who founded the order known as the "Society of Jesus," also called the Jesuits. Over the course of his life, Ignatius wrote down and revised his spiritual insights into a manual for prayer and devotion he called "Spiritual Exercises." He was convinced the Spiritual Exercises could help everyone draw closer to Jesus, and he guided many people through them over the years.

One of the central practices in the Spiritual Exercises is what we now call "Ignatian Contemplation," or imaginative prayer. In essence, imaginative prayer is placing yourself in the scene of a Bible story or some other location or situation and using your imagination to interact with the scene in a contemplative way. In this prayer guide, you will use stories from the Gospels for imaginative prayer.

You may feel strange using your imagination for prayer. But if you offer this time of prayer to God, you can trust that He will use your imagination to speak to you. God created our imagination along with the rest of us, and He can sanctify it and use it to reveal truth to us.

Here is a step-by-step guide to the process:

Preparation

1. Ask God for what you think you want or need in this contemplation. It could be a feeling of peace, a sense of clarity, an awareness of grace, or anything else.
2. Read through the story from the Gospels given in this guide.

Contemplation

1. Imagine yourself in the story. Visualize the scene as if it were a movie. Who are you? Where are you standing or sitting? What do you see? Who else is there?
2. Pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event. Lose yourself in the story.
3. Now, imagine the conversation happening in the story. What are people saying? As you listen, consider what insights you can draw from these conversations.

Prayer Dialogue (Colloquy)

1. Choose a person in the scene and imagine yourself having a conversation with them. (This could be Jesus, but it could also be someone else in the story.) Speak in an honest and heartfelt way about everything you have seen, heard, and experienced in your imagination during your contemplation.
2. Imagine them speaking back to you, and answer them in a two-way conversation. Allow this conversation to flow freely as you share your thoughts, feelings, desires, or concerns.
3. Continue this conversation until you reach some thought, idea, or insight you wish to take with you. Close your imaginative prayer time with a brief prayer of thanks to God.
4. If you wish, spend a few moments journaling about your experience.

"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. Jesus called out to Simon and his brother Andrew, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" And they left their nets at once and followed him.

A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men.

Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?"
I said, "Here I am. Send me."

— Isaiah 6:1-8

☩ **Prayer**

Lord God, given the chance, I choose to be my own master, following my own way. Thank you for calling me to Jesus, drawing me into fellowship with him where I know your approval and experience the grace that changes and keeps me. Inspire me to be a bearer of good news wherever there is distress, a light in dark places, and a comforter in times of mourning. Flow through me to be an agent of your kingdom. Amen.

☩ **Imaginative Prayer**

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."

Praying The Hours

Many monastic orders have a tradition of praying the "liturgy of the hours" (*Liturgia Horarum* in Latin), also called the "divine office" (*Officium Divinum*) or *Opus Dei* (the "work of God"). It was called by names like "office" and "work" because the monks saw it as their occupation to pray continually. Their periods of prayer were spread throughout the day, roughly every three hours. The liturgy itself contained scripture readings, prayers, and Psalms.

I've designed this personal 24-hour retreat to loosely follow the pattern of the liturgy of the hours, and I've chosen prayers and readings that align with some of the major themes in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola.

You'll begin with an afternoon prayer as soon as you arrive (or around 3:00 PM). After that, you can choose to follow the timed schedule, or if you prefer to sleep uninterrupted, pray the next three anytime before bed and the last three anytime after you wake up. Here is the basic schedule:

Afternoon/Arrival Prayer (3:00 PM) — *God's Unconditional Love for Me*

Vespers (6:00 PM) — *My Own History of Sin and Grace*

Compline (9:00 PM) — *The Public Ministry of Jesus*

Matins (12:00 AM) — *The Call of Discipleship*

Lauds (3:00 AM) — *The Kingdom of God*

Sunrise Prayer (6:00 AM) — *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

Morning Prayer (9:00 AM) — *Looking Ahead With Hope*

3:00 PM — Afternoon Prayer

God's Unconditional Love for Me

☩ Opening Prayer

Pray to be aware of how God is near. Pray to trust in God's personal care and love for you. Pray this prayer by Thomas Merton:

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

☩ Psalm/Song

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

Let all that I am praise the Lord;
  with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Let all that I am praise the Lord;
  may I never forget the good things he does for me.
He forgives all my sins
  and heals all my diseases.
He redeems me from death

They will hold you up with their hands
  so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.
You will trample upon lions and cobras;
  you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!
The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.
  I will protect those who trust in my name.
When they call on me, I will answer;
  I will be with them in trouble.
  I will rescue and honor them.
I will reward them with a long life
  and give them my salvation."

— Psalm 91

☩ Centering Prayer

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

☩ Lectio Divina

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. They were calling out to each other,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies!
  The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke.

12:00 AM — Midnight Prayer (Matins)

The Call of Discipleship

☩ **Opening Prayer**

Pray to listen more attentively to Christ's call in your life; to become more ready and eager to do what Christ wants.

☩ **Psalm/Song**

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
This I declare about the Lord:
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.
For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.
He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.
Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.
Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.
Though a thousand fall at your side,
though ten thousand are dying around you,
these evils will not touch you.
Just open your eyes,
and see how the wicked are punished.
If you make the Lord your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,
no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.
For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.

and crowns me with love and tender mercies.
He fills my life with good things.
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!
The Lord gives righteousness
and justice to all who are treated unfairly.
He revealed his character to Moses
and his deeds to the people of Israel.
The Lord is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.
He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west.
The Lord is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.
For he knows how weak we are;
he remembers we are only dust.
Our days on earth are like grass;
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.
The wind blows, and we are gone—
as though we had never been here.
But the love of the Lord remains forever
with those who fear him.
His salvation extends to the children's children
of those who are faithful to his covenant,
of those who obey his commandments!

— Psalm 103:1-18

☩ **Centering Prayer**

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

☩ Lectio Divina

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

— Romans 8:31-39

☩ Prayer of Examen

Follow the instructions for the Prayer of Examen at the beginning of this booklet.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

"Truly I tell you," he continued, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

☩

— Acts 10:34-43

☩ **Prayer**

Unique Savior and Lord: there is no one like you, Jesus — true God and truly human. You alone are the one who sets me completely free, making me right with God, healing body and soul. With amazed wonder, I praise you. Amen.

☩ **Imaginative Prayer**

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

☩ **Imaginative Prayer**

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving Jericho, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." He began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

Jesus had compassion on him and touched his eyes. "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

☩

6:00 PM — Evening Prayer (Vespers)

My Own History of Sin and Grace

☩ Opening Prayer

Pray for deepening awareness and sorrow for your sins and a heartfelt experience of God's merciful love for you.

☩ Psalm/Song

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion,
blot out the stain of my sins.
Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.
For I recognize my rebellion;
it haunts me day and night.
Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your sight.
You will be proved right in what you say,
and your judgment against me is just.
For I was born a sinner—
yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.
But you desire honesty from the womb,
teaching me wisdom even there.
Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Oh, give me back my joy again;
you have broken me—
now let me rejoice.
Don't keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.
Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.

But the king will rejoice in God.
All who swear to tell the truth will praise him,
while liars will be silenced.

— Psalm 63

☩ Centering Prayer

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

☩ Lectio Divina

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

"And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."

9:00 PM — Bedtime Prayer (Compline)

The Public Ministry of Jesus

☩ **Opening Prayer**

Pray to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more intensely, and to follow him more closely.

☩ **Psalm/Song**

Prayerfully listen to a song from the playlist at the beginning of this booklet, or pray this Psalm:

O God, you are my God;
I earnestly search for you.
My soul thirsts for you;
my whole body longs for you
in this parched and weary land
where there is no water.
I have seen you in your sanctuary
and gazed upon your power and glory.
Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
how I praise you!
I will praise you as long as I live,
lifting up my hands to you in prayer.
You satisfy me more than the richest feast.
I will praise you with songs of joy.
I lie awake thinking of you,
meditating on you through the night.
Because you are my helper,
I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings.
I cling to you;
your strong right hand holds me securely.
But those plotting to destroy me will come to ruin.
They will go down into the depths of the earth.
They will die by the sword
and become the food of jackals.

Do not banish me from your presence,
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.

Unseal my lips, O Lord,
that my mouth may praise you.
You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.
You do not want a burnt offering.
The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

— Psalm 51:1-12, 15-17

☩ **Centering Prayer**

Spend 3-5 minutes in silence or Centering Prayer. (If you feel up to it, you can aim for 20 minutes.) Follow the guidelines for Centering Prayer from the beginning of this booklet.

☩ **Lectio Divina**

Following the guidelines for Lectio Divina at the beginning of this booklet, read this passage of scripture and notice any word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or passage and what God might be saying to you.

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim

we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

— 1 John 1:5-10

☩ **Prayer**

Coming Jesus, how can I face your refining fire? I know I am broken and confess that I have sinned. Thank you for the rich comfort and confidence that you, my judge, have already stood trial in my place; you have removed from me the whole curse and court is adjourned.

Holy God, lead me to repentance that brings life. Not the groveling show that's more about convincing you I'm worthy of your forgiveness, but the cut-to-the-heart kind of repentance that is grieved at my sin because of your holiness and glory. Move me by your mercy and lead me to a life of joyful obedience. Amen.

☩ **Imaginative Prayer**

Following the guidelines for Imaginative Prayer at the beginning of this booklet, imagine yourself in the following story from the Gospels.

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

"A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned

against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

"His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

☩