

they were only about a hundred yards[d] from shore. When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

“Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.

“Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” “Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

“I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.”

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Spring Renewal Retreat Guide 2024

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

— Colossians 3:12-17

‡ **Prayer of Examen**

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

‡ **Imaginative Prayer**

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

At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?" "No," they replied.

Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for

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:

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.

— Psalm 62:5-8

✚ 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.

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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).

of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

✠

⊕ 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.

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.

— 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

⊕ 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.

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out

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"

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:

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.
This is the Lord's doing,
and it is wonderful to see.
This is the day the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
Please, Lord, please save us.
Please, Lord, please give us success.
Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
The Lord is God, shining upon us.
Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords on the altar.
You are my God, and I will praise you!
You are my God, and I will exalt you!
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.

— Psalm 118:1, 22-29

‡ **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.

disciples so they could distribute it to the people. He also divided the fish for everyone to share. They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish. About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!" When Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself.

+

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.



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

✚ Imaginative Prayer

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

The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat.

So they left by boat for a quiet place where they could be alone. But many people recognized them and saw them leaving, and people from many towns ran ahead along the shore and got there ahead of them. Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So, he began teaching them many things.

Late in the afternoon, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat.”

But Jesus said, “That isn’t necessary—you feed them.”

“With what?” they asked. “We’d have to work for months to earn enough money to buy food for all these people!”

“How much bread do you have?” he asked. “Go and find out.”

Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. “There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?”

“Tell everyone to sit down,” Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the

‡ **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.

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

“If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.”

— Luke 6:27-36

‡ **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.

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.

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:

Come, let us sing to the Lord!

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come to him with thanksgiving.

Let us sing psalms of praise to him.

For the Lord is a great God,

a great King above all gods.

He holds in his hands the depths of the earth
and the mightiest mountains.

The sea belongs to him, for he made it.

His hands formed the dry land, too.

Come, let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the Lord our maker,
for he is our God.

We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care.

— Psalm 95:1-7

✚ 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.

At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!" This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked.

Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

Then Peter began to speak up. "We've given up everything to follow you," he said.

"Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then."

✚

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.

you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?

— Matthew 16:24-26

✚ 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.

As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.’”

“Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”

Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. “There is still one thing you haven’t done,” he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."
Do not turn your back on me.
Do not reject your servant in anger.
You have always been my helper.
Don't leave me now; don't abandon me,
O God of my salvation!
Even if my father and mother abandon me,
the Lord will hold me close.
Teach me how to live, O Lord.
Lead me along the right path,
for my enemies are waiting for me.
Do not let me fall into their hands.
For they accuse me of things I've never done;
with every breath they threaten me with violence.
Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.
Wait patiently for the Lord.
Be brave and courageous.
Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.

— Psalm 27

✚ 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 Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If

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!

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:

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
so why should I be afraid?
The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,
so why should I tremble?
When evil people come to devour me,
when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.
Though a mighty army surrounds me,
my heart will not be afraid.
Even if I am attacked,
I will remain confident.
The one thing I ask of the Lord—
the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
delighting in the Lord's perfections
and meditating in his Temple.
For he will conceal me there when troubles come;
he will hide me in his sanctuary.
He will place me out of reach on a high rock.
Then I will hold my head high
above my enemies who surround me.
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy,
singing and praising the Lord with music.
Hear me as I pray, O Lord.
Be merciful and answer me!

on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers, praising God. Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

✝

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.

'You must worship the Lord your God
and serve only him.'

Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

— Matthew 4:1-11

‡ 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.

When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."

But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting nearby thought to themselves, "Who does he think he is? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority

✦ 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 Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'"

Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'"

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say,

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:

O Lord, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.

You know when I sit down or stand up.

You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.

You see me when I travel

and when I rest at home.

You know everything I do.

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:

As the deer longs for streams of water,

so I long for you, O God.

I thirst for God, the living God.

When can I go and stand before him?

Day and night I have only tears for food,

while my enemies continually taunt me, saying,

"Where is this God of yours?"

My heart is breaking

as I remember how it used to be:

I walked among the crowds of worshipers,

leading a great procession to the house of God,

singing for joy and giving thanks

amid the sound of a great celebration!

Why am I discouraged?

Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again—

my Savior and my God!

— Psalm 42:1-6

✚ 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.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"

Then Jesus answered his thoughts. "Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you."

"Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied.

Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and pieces to the other. But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?"

Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt."

"That's right," Jesus said. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

"I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?"

And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

‡

You know what I am going to say
even before I say it, Lord.

You go before me and follow me.

You place your hand of blessing on my head.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,

too great for me to understand!

I can never escape from your Spirit!

I can never get away from your presence!

If I go up to heaven, you are there;

if I go down to the grave,[a] you are there.

If I ride the wings of the morning,

if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

even there your hand will guide me,

and your strength will support me.

I could ask the darkness to hide me

and the light around me to become night—

but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.

To you the night shines as bright as day.

Darkness and light are the same to you.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body

and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!

Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.

You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,

as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book.

Every moment was laid out

before a single day had passed.

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.

They cannot be numbered!

I can't even count them;

they outnumber the grains of sand!

And when I wake up,

you are still with me!

‡ 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, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. Look at the ravens. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can’t accomplish a little thing like that, what’s the use of worrying over bigger things?

“Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

“And don’t be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don’t worry about such things. These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

“So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.

— Luke 12:22-34

“Oh, how can I give you up, Israel?

How can I let you go?

How can I destroy you like Admah
or demolish you like Zeboiim?

My heart is torn within me,
and my compassion overflows.

No, I will not unleash my fierce anger.

I will not completely destroy Israel,
for I am God and not a mere mortal.

I am the Holy One living among you,
and I will not come to destroy.

— Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9

‡ 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.

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

“Don’t be ornery like a horse or mule
that needs bit and bridle
to stay on track.”
God-defiers are always in trouble;
God-affirmers find themselves loved
every time they turn around.
Celebrate God.
Sing together—everyone!
All you honest hearts, raise the roof!

— Psalm 32 (The Message)

‡ 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.

“When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and I called my son out of Egypt.
But the more I called to him,
the farther he moved from me,
offering sacrifices to the images of Baal
and burning incense to idols.
I myself taught Israel how to walk,
leading him along by the hand.
But he doesn’t know or even care
that it was I who took care of him.
I led Israel along
with my ropes of kindness and love.
I lifted the yoke from his neck,
and I myself stooped to feed him.

‡ Prayer of Examen

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

‡ Imaginative Prayer

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

When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people, he returned to Capernaum. At that time, the highly valued slave of a Roman officer was sick and near death. When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his slave. So they earnestly begged Jesus to help the man. “If anyone deserves your help, he does,” they said, “for he loves the Jewish people and even built a synagogue for us.”

Jesus said, “I will come and heal him,” and went with them. But just before they arrived at the house, the officer sent some friends to say, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home, for I am not worthy of such an honor. I am not even worthy to come and meet you. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.”

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel! And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, "Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened." And when the officer's friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed.

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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:

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be—
you get a fresh start,
your slate's wiped clean.

Count yourself lucky—
God holds nothing against you
and you're holding nothing back from him.

When I kept it all inside,
my bones turned to powder,
my words became daylong groans.

The pressure never let up;
all the juices of my life dried up.

Then I let it all out;
I said, "I'll come clean about my failures to God."

Suddenly the pressure was gone—
my guilt dissolved,
my sin disappeared.

These things add up. Every one of us needs to pray;
when all hell breaks loose and the dam bursts
we'll be on high ground, untouched.

God's my island hideaway,
keeps danger far from the shore,
throws garlands of hosannas around my neck.

Let me give you some good advice;
I'm looking you in the eye
and giving it to you straight: