

Ways to Pray

FIRST: OPEN YOURSELF TO GOD:

As you begin your time of prayer, find a quiet space, turn off your phone, the television and any other distractions that may keep you from fully entering this time of prayer. Take several deep breaths to quiet your mind and heart and spend some moments in quiet awareness in the presence of Jesus. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you reflect on God's Word.

Posture during Prayer: We all know how powerful body language can be. When we are in the presence of another person his/her body language can communicate a great deal to us. The same is true in our prayer lives. Sitting with feet on ground and hands open, wrapping oneself in a prayer shawl, curling into a comfortable corner, kneeling, standing grounded, walking, lifting one's hands in prayer. Take time to pay attention to how your posture influences your prayer and find a posture that best suits your prayer for a particular moment.

LECTIO DIVINA

“Lectio Divina is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures. Very often our concerns, our relationships, our hopes and aspirations, naturally intertwine with our meditations on the Scriptures. We can attend ‘with the ear of our hearts’ to our own memories, listening for God's presence in the events of our lives...Our own personal story becomes salvation history.”

(<http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx>)

Lectio Divina is comprised of four steps: *Lectio* (A slow reflective reading of a scripture passage), *Meditatio* (Meditation on the Word), *Contemplatio* (Contemplation – just being in God's presence) and *Oratio* (prayer – one's personal response to God.)

The following steps are one way to approach Lectio Divina:

1. Read the scripture passage slowly and notice what one word attracts your attention and sit quietly with that for a bit.
2. Read the scripture passage slowly again and notice what phrase speaks to you. It may or may not be connected to the initial word that you noticed. Again, sit quietly with this for a brief time.
3. Read the scripture passage slowly for a third time and spend time in contemplation. Listen for what God is saying to you in this passage.
4. Read the scripture passage slowly one last time and consider your personal response to God in light of this time of prayer.

Another link with more information about Lectio Divina is <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/word-of-god/upload/lectio-divina.pdf>

MANDALAS

Don't ignore this possibility for prayer! Many of us easily overlook the richness of this form of prayer because we are very clear that we are not artists and in fact believe we do not have a modicum of artistic ability in us! But art as a form of prayer is about process, not about the product. Often, when freed from our fears about what something should look like, prayer and meaning can emerge.

Mandala means “circle” in Sanskrit and using mandalas as part of prayer can be a way of making a sacred space. Circles symbolize wholeness, inclusion, embrace, universe, eternity. Used in many religious traditions, mandalas in Christianity can be seen in our stained glass rose windows and the labyrinths in medieval cathedrals in Europe. Hildegard of Bingen used them to record visions she received and to express spiritual insights.



Mandalas can be simple

or more complex

as the spirit moves

Generally, creating a mandala begins by making a circle. While there may be times when a clear image of what you want to express wells up from within, more often the picture emerges in the process. Take time to choose the colors that attract you in the moment. Allow your hands to make designs whose form and purpose may not be clear at first. Consider using your non-dominant hand to free yourself from fears related to being a “good-enough” artist. Chalk or watercolor with a sponge or fingers work well for this. Mandalas can be as simple or complicated as the spirit moves.

The following website offers some reflections on using mandalas in prayer:

<https://junemearsdriedger.com/2011/08/24/praying-with-mandalas-an-interview-with-shelley-szoza/>

IGNATIAN IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

This style of prayer involves imagining oneself as one of the characters in the scripture passage with which you are praying. According to Kevin O’Brien, SJ, “Ignatius was convinced that God can speak to us as surely through our imagination as through our thoughts and memories.” This method of prayer involves placing ourselves fully within a story, most often from the Gospels. We begin by imagining the sights, smells, sounds and movement, the details that would be part of the scene. As we imagine, we will be drawn to a particular character in the story and invited to “become” that character in our prayer. We become “onlooker-participants,” giving full rein to our imagination. “He [Ignatius]

doesn't want us to *think* about Jesus. He wants us to *experience* him. He wants Jesus to fill our senses. He wants us to meet him" (Fleming, SJ).

More information can be found in the following websites:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/pray-with-your-imagination>

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/ignatian-contemplation-imaginative-prayer>

IGNATION EXAMEN – Examination of Consciousness at the end of the day

1. Place yourself in God's presence. Give thanks for God's great love for you.
2. Pray for the grace to understand how God is acting in your life.
3. Review your day — recall specific moments and your feelings at the time.
4. Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in those instances. Were you drawing closer to God, or further away? Give thanks for that which drew you closer and ask for forgiveness in areas in which you fell short.
5. Look toward tomorrow — think of how you might collaborate more effectively with God's plan. Be specific. Conclude with a prayer.

There are several variations on this form of prayer. For a more detailed explanation go to:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray>

Prayer Resources compiled by Sr. Stephanie Spandl, SSND