

Preparing for the Adventure:

1. Commit to spending 30 to 45 minutes per day in prayer. (If there are days that you are not able to achieve this, please do not allow that to steal away the peace that God wants to give you through this exercise. Begin again the next day. I am especially thinking of our young families - sick babies or unforeseen obstacles do not prevent God from drawing near. There is no pressure in these exercises.)
2. Prayer space

The Prayer: The initial minutes of communication are important for reaching the deep point of communication. We need time to disengage from other concerns and to awaken the “inmost inwardness.”

1. We want to become aware of the Lord who is with us.
 - a. Ex. “Lord, I know you are present to me in this moment, please help me to be more aware of your presence. Draw me into your presence.”
2. Be available to God.
 - a. Prayer for availability: “Lord, I ask for the grace of all of my intentions, actions, and operations be purely ordered in the service and praise of your Divine Majesty.” Or “I offer all my will and actions to you, Lord.”
3. Be alive to the content of the Word of God.
 - a. Review the Scripture for this prayer - the setting of the Gospel story, the characters, the scene.
4. Be engaged in the Word. What follows is a structure based on what we do naturally, so it can be helpful to know in times of distraction.
 - a. **Meditation** is the reflective process by which we enter the richness of God’s word and hear that Word as spoken personally to us today. Requirement is a receptive heart.
 - i. Memory - call to mind a truth(s) from the reading that stuck out to you.
 - ii. Understanding - ponder it’s meaning as it draws you in. Think of Mary who pondered all these things in her heart.
 - iii. Will - embrace the meaning of the truth(s) with love and desire.
 - b. **Contemplation or Imaginative prayer** is the loving imaginative process by which we enter God’s Word and hear that Word as spoken personally to us today. The deep center of contemplation is the healing encounter of the human heart and the divine heart (cor ad cor loquitur / heart speaks to heart).¹
 - i. We try to imagine the persons in the scene, their expressions, and their surroundings; we might even find ourselves as one of the main characters or a bystander
 - ii. Hear the words spoken
 - iii. Observe the actions

¹ Some find contemplation more difficult, we are all different, but I can attest to the fact that the more you try to practice it the more it works. One can meditate or contemplate, whichever works better and you can even use both during the same prayer experience. There is great freedom here and this freedom is fruitful in the Lord.

5. Pray in humble dependence on God's grace.
 - a. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in meditating or contemplating the Scripture. Ask God for what you wish or desire to receive in this prayer. The grace might be a deeper knowledge and love of Jesus, or something arising from our examen prayer over the last few days, or whatever God inspires in your heart.
6. When discouraged in prayer: Pray "Lord, I'm a sinner, do not depart from me" (cf. Lk 5:1-11). It's a rewording of St. Peter.
7. Ending Prayer
 - a. "The Rhythm of the heart" - the warmth of prayer and conversation with God should end gently by speaking to Him about whatever is on our hearts. We can speak to Him as our Father, as our Friend.
 - b. This can arise anytime during prayer and it is really the deepest center of prayer.
 - c. Again cor ad cor loquitur - our heart speaking to the Divine heart and vice versa.
8. Conclude with an Our Father or similar.

Reviewing Prayer:

1. Reviewing how our prayer time went will help growth in prayer. It can be done briefly as the prayer is concluding or after the prayer. It helps deepen our awareness of the gift.
2. Questions that may assist:
 - a. As I prayed with Scripture, what was I thinking?
 - b. What drew my attention, what struck me?
 - c. What was I feeling as I prayed?
 - d. What stirred in my heart? Did I feel joy?
 - e. Did I experience peace? Was I anxious?
 - f. Did I struggle in any way?
3. Finding our personal way of praying:
 - a. Did this way of preparing help me pray?
 - b. This time of day? This place?
 - c. Was this way of proceeding during prayer helpful?