



Praying Personally

PREPARATION

1. Create a focus: e.g. a lighted candle, crucifix, a flower, an open bible... on a small table.
2. Decide what length of time that you would like to devote to the prayer. An hour is a good period but the ability to spend such a period in prayer might need practicing with shorter periods. Begin with what you feel comfortable with but you will need at least 20 minutes to a half an hour to pray as outlined here.
3. Use a chair which will enable you to keep your back straight, your two feet flat on the floor and if possible your knees at a slightly lower level than your torso.
4. If you are going to meditate on the written word have the bible or the sheet of paper available on a table or a chair at your side with the passage that you are going to meditate on. This enables you to read the passage while at the same time having the opportunity to put it aside leaving your hands free to adopt a position suitable for prayer.

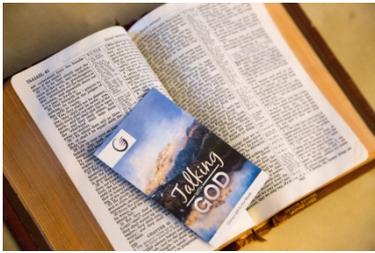
PRAYER

5. The time of Prayer:
 - Begin with the sign of the Cross, placing yourself in the presence of the Trinity.
 - Read the passage as a whole in a slow and leisurely way. Then read it again at a more leisurely pace. The passage can be read as many times as you choose.
 - During the reading the Spirit may cause you to pause on a phrase or a word or bring your mind to another passage from the Scripture or elsewhere.
 - The Spirit may cause you to make a prayer of petition, intercession, praise...
 - The Spirit may cause you to cease meditating and be silent...
 - Go with the Spirit!

TO CONCLUDE

6. Coming towards the end of the prayer period you may find yourself in a deep state of consciousness, in a meditative or contemplative state. It is good to ease yourself back into your material surroundings by becoming aware of them through a gentle exercise like listening intently to your surrounds, becoming aware of your breathing...
You might then say some of the great prayers slowly to finish: the Our Father, the Glory Be to the Father, the Hail Mary or some other prayer which you like. You might conclude as you begun with the Sign of the Cross.

On Page 2 you will find an outline of the Prayer known as “Lectio Divina”. After praying in the above manner once or twice it would be profitable to read this. Why? Because it covers the same ground and links you with a way of praying which has deep roots in the Old and New Testaments and the Tradition of the Church. It will thus shed light on the prayer that you have practice above and hopefully enable you to deepen it.



Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina literally means "divine reading". It is a way of praying which is very old and very simple. The Christian Monks gave it the name "Lectio Divina". The "Four Parts" follow the natural way in which the human being prays and can be simply practiced by every Christian.

These "parts" are named in their Latin original and followed by the English translation in brackets:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. LECTIO | (Reading) |
| 2. MEDITATIO | (Meditation) |
| 3. ORATIO | (Prayer) |
| 4. CONTEMPLATIO | (Contemplation) |

A Brief Explanation of the "four parts":

LECTIO

Here the person takes up the "Word of God" and reads it.

Traditionally the "Word of God" was taken from the Bible. It could also be a "Word of God" from the beauty of nature, from an event in our life, from a symbol, a poem etc.

MEDITATIO

Here the person reflects on the "Word" which God has given them. They meditate on it, savour it... so that they can understand it in relation to their lives and their relationship with God, with others and with the world.

The monks from the middle ages had a good image for this stage: the cow chewing the grass it had eaten. The cow chews the grass and it goes down into her stomach then it is regurgitated and she chews it again and again until all the goodness has been gained from the food. We "chew" on the "Word of God" and find its meaning; we find out what it is saying to us of God, of ourselves and of our relationships to others and to creation.

ORATIO

Here thinking and reflecting gives way to talking. Having listened to what God is saying to us we speak to God. We enter into "conversation with one whom we know loves us".

The conversation can be as wide and as varied as we would have with our best friend. However in this case, the best friend being God, we are moved to ask him for our needs or those of others, to thank him for his goodness to us and to praise and adore him.

CONTEMPLATIO

We may reach a stage in our speaking with God when words fail us and we want simply to be with him, to be simply in his presence and to enjoy his company silently. God as it were quietens us and we rest in him.

The psalmist paints this stage beautifully:

*Truly I have set my soul in silence and peace,
as a weaned child on its mother's breast,
even so my soul. Ps 130 (131), 2*

With these four steps any Christian can begin to pray. It is like a child walking, at first all the steps are studied and they are often accomplished with difficulty. Once the habit has been acquired it becomes second nature.

The four steps may need to be preceded by a time of quietening down. This can be done in various ways; for example by consciously quietening the different parts of the body or by concentrating on your breathing. Once the "busy mind" has been sufficiently quieted then the "Word" can enter in and "Lectio Divina" brings one deeper into the "quiet".

**DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO BE AN EXPERT: JUST BEGIN!
GOD IS WAITING PATIENTLY TO SPEAK WITH YOU; TO BE WITH YOU!
HE IS YOUR BEST FRIEND.**