



Praying Together

PREPARATION

1. Create a focus: e.g. a lighted candle, crucifix, a flower, an open bible... or a combination of these on a small low table or on the floor. Place the necessary number of chairs around this.
2. Decide what length of time you would like to devote to the prayer. An hour is a good period. If circumstances demand it can be shorter but in this format at least a half an hour would be necessary.
3. If possible use chairs that will enable the participants to keep their backs straight and to have their feet flat on the floor. The knees should ideally be slightly lower than the torso. Attention to this is important as the praying position will have to be maintained for an hour.
4. Each participant will have a typed copy (A4 or better A5) of the material that the group are going to meditate on. This enables them to read the passage at their leisure while at the same time being free to put it aside and to leave their hands free to adopt a position suitable for prayer.
5. People take their places in the prayer space as quietly as possible about 5 minutes before beginning. Having some quiet meditative music playing in the background can help to create a prayerful atmosphere.
6. Before the beginning the Leader explains clearly and briefly how the prayer is to take place. They will already have explained their roles to the participants who are to do the reading. Everything is now ready...

PRAYER

7. The time of Prayer:
 - After the sign of the cross the Leader makes a short prayer invoking God's presence.
 - Then they invite a designated person to read the passage slowly, clearly and at a volume that enables every person present to hear it comfortably. People should listen quietly to the reading and not try to read it themselves at this point.

- After the first reading there is a period of silence for people to meditate on what they have heard (roughly 15 minutes if the prayer runs for an hour). They may like to look at the typed copy during this time if it helps.
- After this period of quiet the Leader asks another designated person to read the passage in a similar way.
- Following this reading people are invited to share a word or a sentence that has struck them from the passage. It is important to note that:
 - There is no compulsion to share vocally; by your attentive presence you share.
 - If you do share vocally do so in a way that everyone in the group can hear what you say. You are praying as part of a body.
 - If someone does share vocally then allow a little time for everyone to savour their “word” before you share.
- After a period of time (roughly 15 minutes if the prayer runs for an hour) the Leader asks another designated person to read the passage a third time in a similar way.
- Following this reading people are invited to share a short prayer or comment on what they have heard. The same points on sharing made above are again to be remembered. The prayer or comment should be short; ideally about one or two sentences.
- After a period of time (roughly 15 minutes if the period runs for an hour) the Leader begins to draw the prayer to a close:
 - They gently lead the group “back to the room” as some may have become quiet recollected by this point.
 - They ask the group to join them in a common prayer (The Our Father, The Hail Mary...)
 - Then making the sign of the cross they bring the prayer to an end.
- Depending on the judgment of the Leader or a desire expressed by a member of the group there could be a short period allowed for anyone to share, if they wish, their experience of the prayer.

READING “A WAY TO PRAY – PERSONALLY” IN PREPARATION FOR PRAYING AS OUTLINED ABOVE:

In order to better appreciate the way of praying together outlined here it would be helpful to have prayed in the way described in the article: *A Way to Pray – Personally* (carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer/). If one is to be a Leader in praying in the group setting this would be even more necessary.