

Ignatian (SJ) Prayer

The Ignatian Method is to place oneself in the Biblical scene and try to become part of it by way of imagination. Ignatius suggests that we try to imagine what we might see, what we might hear, and what the persons in the scene might be doing. Always, at each point of the contemplation, Ignatius says, we must “try to draw some practical fruit from the reflection for our own life today.” In other words, what changes or challenges does our reflection on the event furnish us? In using the following prayer suggestions, it is suggested that one use either the four steps of *Lectio Divina* (see reverse of this page for instructions).

1. Read Mark 9:14-29

¹⁴When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. ¹⁶He asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” ¹⁷Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; ¹⁸and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.” ¹⁹He answered them, “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²²It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” ²³Jesus said to him, “If you are able! —All things can be done for the one who believes.” ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” ²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!” ²⁶After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. ²⁸When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹He said to them, “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

2. Imagine yourself as the father of the possessed boy

Apply the conversation between Jesus and the father to your own situation. Instead of an afflicted son, imagine the affliction is some fault of yours which has resisted cure. Bring this affliction to Jesus and ask him to cure it.

3. Try this method at home on other passages

- Luke 10:38-42
- Luke 24:13-35
- John 21:1-19
- Luke 10:25-37
- Luke 7:36-50
- Luke 4:1-13
- Mark 8:27-38
- Mark 14:32-42
- Mark 10:26-52
- Mark 10:17-31
- Luke 15:11-32
- Luke 16:19-31
- Luke 18:9-14

The four steps of *Lectio Divina*

1. **Lectio** (reading/listening). The art of *lectio divina* begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear “with the ear of our hearts,” as St. Benedict encourages us in the Prologue to the Rule. When we read the Scriptures we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (I Kings 19:12); the “faint murmuring sound” which is God’s word for us, God’s voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an “atunement” to the presence of God in that special part of God’s creation which is the Scriptures.

The cry of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to “Listen!” “Sh’ma Israel: Hear, O Israel!” In *lectio divina* we, too, heed that command and turn to the Scriptures, knowing that we must “hear”—listen—to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. To hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. We must learn to love silence. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of *lectio divina*, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God’s word to us. This is the first step of *lectio divina*.

The reading or listening which is the first step in *lectio divina* is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. Lectio is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally—not loudly, but intimately. In lectio we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God’s word for us this day.

2. **Meditatio** (meditation). Once we have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures that speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and “ruminate” on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to *lectio divina* in the example of the Virgin Mary “pondering in her heart” what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word - that is, memorize it - and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in *lectio divina*: *meditatio*. Through *meditatio* we allow God’s word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.
3. **Oratio** (prayer). The third step in *lectio divina* is *oratio*: prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in *lectio divina* to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our lectio and meditatio. In this *oratio*, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.
4. **Contemplatio** (contemplation). Finally, we simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition—*contemplatio*, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

Augustinian (NF) Prayer

In Augustinian prayer, one uses creative imagination to transpose the words of sacred scripture to our situation today. One tries to imagine (intuit) what meaning the words of scripture would have if Jesus Christ, or God the Father, or the Holy Spirit appeared and spoke them to us at this moment. In Augustinian prayer we try to think of the words of the Bible as though they were a personal letter from God addressed to each one of us. Only secondarily are we concerned about the original, historical, meaning of a text of scripture; our primary concern is trying to discern what meaning these revealed words have for us today.

1. Read Micah 6:6-8

⁶“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

2. Consider verse 8

Specifically, consider how verse eight sums up your relationship with God and your fellow human beings. Imagine God speaking these words to you. Close your eyes and repeat them slowly over and over again. Try to apply them to your own situation. What is God asking of you?

3. Try this method at home on other passages

- Isaiah 43:1-5
- Hosea 2:16-22
- John 17 (all of it)
- Ephesians 3:14-21
- John 14:1-6
- Matthew 5:38-48
- Isaian 54:4-14
- Philippians 3:7-6
- Isaiah 58:2-14
- Matthew 7:1-5
- Matthew 18:21-35
- John 8:1-11
- Matthew 25:31-46
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
- Philippians 4:4-13
- Colossians 3:12-17
- Hebrews 13:1-21
- 1 Peter 3:8-13
- 1 John 4:7-21

Franciscan (SP) Prayer

If there were any temperament that could honestly claim that their work is their prayer, this would be the SP. Much of their prayer is what is called virtual prayer, or the prayer of good works. Of all the temperaments they have the least need for long periods of formal prayer. Franciscan prayer is spontaneous prayer, without long periods of silence. Because SP persons do not like structured prayer, they may not find it useful to follow the four steps of *Lectio Divina*. However, when other temperaments use SP prayer techniques, they will find the four steps of *Lectio Divina* greatly helpful.

1. Go visit our Memorial Garden

Look for signs of God's love, beauty, power, wisdom, goodness, balance. Praise and thank God for revealing himself in all the events of history: in one's personal history, in the history of the world, and in the history of salvation. Think of some of the mysteries in God's creation which we cannot understand or explain—for example, the problem of sin and evil in the world. Try to make an act of blind faith and trust in God's wisdom, power, and love, even when we cannot see clear manifestations of his wisdom, power, and love.

2. Read Psalm 8.

¹O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

²Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

⁴what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

⁵Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

⁷all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

3. Try this method wherever you are

Use the prayer suggestions in the handout.

Thomistic (NT) Prayer

Thomastic prayer is logical, rational, discursive meditation where the intellect leads the person in prayer from one proposition to another until a logical conclusion is drawn in the form of some resolution or ethical demand. All four steps of *Lectio Divina* should be used in Thomistic Prayer; but the main emphasis will be on the orderly progression of thought from cause to effect during the **Meditatio** portion of the prayer. However, Thomistic prayer is not complete when it is confined solely to the rational consideration of a virtue, fault, or religious practice. One needs to respond with feeling and personal involvement to the intellectual consideration, and thus involve the heart as well as the head. Thomistic prayer uses the seven auxiliary questions: WHAT, WHY, HOW, WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WITH WHAT HELPS and applies each of them to the topic selected.

1. Read James 2:14-26

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. ²³Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? ²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

2. Ask yourself questions

What efforts am I making to serve the poor, the suffering, the needy people of my community? What am I doing for the poor and needy and suffering people of the world? Do I really believe that they are my brothers and sisters? What in the area of charity can I do to fulfill Christ’s commandment to love others as He has loved us? “Faith without works is as dead as a body without breath.”

3. Try this method at home on other passages

- Luke 1:26-28
- Luke 1:39-46
- Mark 9:33-37
- Mark 8:34-38
- Matthew 10:39
- Matthew 5:20-26 and John 2:13-17
- Matthew 6:26-34
- Matthew 6:19-25
- Matthew 5:23-24
- Matthew 13:44-46
- Mark 10:35-45
- Matthew 11:29; Luke 14:7-11
- Mark 15:10; Acts 13:48
- Philippians 2:4-8