

# A Simple Guide to Ignatian Prayer

“When you call me, and come and  
pray to me, I will listen to you...”

*Jeremiah 29:12*

# *Teach Me Your Ways*

*Teach me your way of looking at people:  
as you glanced at Peter after his denial,  
as you penetrated the heart of the rich young man  
and the hearts of your disciples.*

*I would like to meet you as you really are,  
since your image changes those with whom you  
come into contact.*

*Remember John the Baptist's first meeting with you?  
And the centurion's feeling of unworthiness?  
And the amazement of all those who saw miracles  
and other wonders?*

*How you impressed your disciples,  
the rabble in the Garden of Olives,  
Pilate and his wife  
and the centurion at the foot of the cross.....*

*I would like to hear and be impressed  
by your manner of speaking,  
listening, for example, to your discourse in the  
synagogue in Capharnaum*

*or the Sermon on the Mount where your audience  
felt you "taught as one who has authority."*

*Pedro Arrupe, SJ*

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*A Message from Rev. Fr. Norris Seenivasan, SJ*

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

What is the most important thing that happens in church? It is the celebration of the Mass which has been described as the source and summit of our Christian life. At SFX, we have two Masses every day and four Masses on Sunday. At Mass, we come together as a community to worship the God of love by celebrating the sacrificial death of his Son, Jesus Christ, who gave us his very own body and blood so that we may have the fullness of life.

The Mass is a public form of prayer. Personal and private forms of prayer are also essential for the spiritual journey towards God. Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of finding God in all things. It is often said to be a spirituality for busy people which happens to be the case with many of us who live in cities.

In this little booklet we explain three forms of prayer that are especially relevant, namely the Lectio Divina, the Ignatian Contemplation and the Consciousness Examen. The Lectio Divina makes use of our reasoning capacity, the Ignatian Contemplation the imagination, and finally the Consciousness Examen is a review of the day.

I would like to recommend that you spend a minimum of 15 minutes on either the Lectio Divina or Ignatian Contemplation, and another 10 minutes on the Consciousness Examen every day!

Establishing a life of prayer, which is a holy desire that many of us have, requires discipline, commitment, and perseverance. When something is important, such as our relationship with God, we shall find the time for it no matter how busy we are.

May God bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norris', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Fr. Norris Seenivasan, SJ  
Parish Priest,  
Church of St. Francis Xavier, P.J.

## *Preparing for Prayer*

Praying is about spending time with God, not only talking but also listening to Him in silence. Decide when, how long, where, and what to pray each day to help you establish a routine prayer life in an Ignatian way.

It is good to form a habit of praying at the same time each day. Find a [regular prayer space](#) in your home where you can spend time alone with God without being distracted. You can mark this space with a candle or any sacred item to remind yourself of God's presence there.

Assume a comfortable position and, if you wish, close your eyes or focus on a religious picture or a lighted candle to help you quiet down your body and mind. If you wish, play soft background music to help establish a prayerful mood. Take a few minutes to practise rhythmic breathing to help concentration. If you become distracted, return to concentrating on your breathing and let the distractions go by so that you can focus back to God.

Become aware of God's presence and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer. You may begin by imagining God or Jesus looking at you and you looking at God loving you.

## *Preparing for Prayer*

St. Ignatius suggests that you begin each prayer period with a preparatory prayer by asking for God's grace that all you think and say and do may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty. This preparation to pray helps you to be conscious of who you have come to meet in prayer and to acknowledge that this time of prayer depends not on you, but on God.

### **Soul of Christ**

*(Anima Christi: A 14th century prayer used by St. Ignatius)*

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within thy wounds hide me.

Permit me not to be separated from thee.

From the wicked foe defend me,

At the hour of my death call me

And bid me come to thee

That with thy saints I may praise thee

For ever and ever. Amen.

## *Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina*

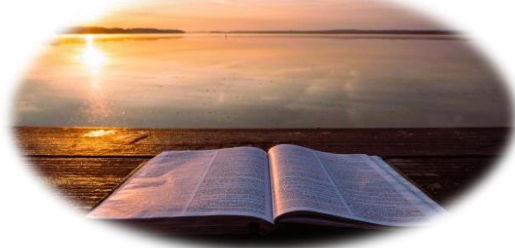
Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) is an ancient prayer practice of monks and religious in the monasteries. It was first introduced by St. Gregory of Nyssa (c.330-395) and later encouraged by St. Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547). Today Lectio Divina is also practised widely by many laypersons in the church.

Lectio Divina leads us to immerse deeply in the Scriptures and allows God to speak to us personally. However, this is not a Bible study so we should not over-analyse the passage we read. We should just allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into the words and speak to us.

There are four simple steps to pray Lectio Divina. Before we begin, find a quiet place to settle ourselves and then begin with the *Lord's Prayer*. After that, proceed to the following four steps:

### 1. Reading

Choose a Bible passage from the day's Gospel reading or other passages of your choice. Read the passage slowly 2-4 times. Notice any verse, phrase or word that catches your attention.



# Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina

## 2. Reflection

Reflect on the passage, especially on the verse, phrase or word that has caught your attention. What feelings are emerging within you? What is God saying to you?

## 3. Prayer

Spend some time praying to God about the passage you read, offer up any intentions, give thanks and praise to God.

## 4. Contemplation

After praying, we sit quietly to be in the presence of God and allow the Holy Spirit to move and speak within us. We may conclude this prayer time by praying one *Glory Be*.

The following is a website that you can access to assist you to pray Lectio Divina: <https://ocarm.org/en/lectio-divina>

There is also an app that you can download from Google Play Store for Android phone or App Store for iPhone.



May the Lord bless you as you pray Lectio Divina.

## ***Praying with Scripture: Ignatian Contemplation***

Ignatian contemplation is an active way of praying that engages our imagination and senses in a personal encounter with Christ. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius uses imaginative contemplation to experience Jesus more intimately and in a very real way through the gospels.

Ignatius' desire to have "*an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely*" mirrors our desire to have a deep and meaningful relationship with Jesus.

### **Steps to guide your prayer**

1. **Ask** the Holy Spirit for graces:  
'Come, Holy Spirit, fill me with your wisdom and insight. As I sit at the feet of Jesus in this time of prayer, help me to make knowing Jesus my priority. Help me to think, speak and do as Jesus desires. Grant me the grace to be open and submissive to your guidance, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.'
2. **Select** a gospel passage (see page 15 for suggestions).
3. **Read** the passage several times, slowly.

## Praying with Scripture: Ignatian Contemplation

4. Close your eyes and **imagine** the scene. Use your imagination to engage all your senses – touch, smell, see, hear, and taste. It is important that you be part of the scene. What are the characters doing, saying? Who or what are you in the scene? Where is Jesus? What does Jesus say, do? What happens?
5. Conversation (*colloquy*)  
As you end your contemplation, **speak** your heart to Jesus, Father, or Spirit. Share what you just experienced, whether good or painful. Your words are dear to God.



What does Jesus say to you in return? Take time to **listen** in silence. Let Jesus fill your senses. Savour the goodness of God.

6. **Close** with the 'Our Father'. Thank the Holy Spirit for His light and guidance.
7. **Reflect** on your prayer in the coming days. Be watchful for divine graces.

## *The Daily Examen*

Ignatian Prayer Examen is a way of prayer of noticing and seeing God in all things – in ordinary events, situations, people, and all experiences together with our thoughts, emotions and sensations arising within.

It draws us to a closer relationship with God. This method of prayer calls us to pause, look back, notice, listen and to recognise God's presence in our lives.

It is a daily Examen which is conducted twice a day, possibly at noon and at the end of day.

Placing ourselves in God's presence and love, we take a deep breath as we go through these 5 steps in our Daily Examen.

1. Give thanks and be grateful for who you are.

'My Lord Jesus, I ask that I may more and more see myself, know and understand myself as your very own Spirit sees me, knows and understands me'.



## *The Daily Examen*

2. Take a deep breath, ask for the light as you pause, look back, notice and listen to your half-day – recall two or more things you are grateful for, specific people you encountered, the ordinary events as it unfolded in the day. Where did you encounter God? What did you notice?
3. Take a deep breath, pause as you look into and notice your feelings and sensations, that have been affecting you today. Has it been peaceful, hopeful, gentle, grateful or have you been sad, discouraged, judgmental, afraid, anxious? How has the body responded to all the emotions and sensations? Notice your breathing – short, tight, soft, deep, uncomfortable? Just observe them, do not deny any of these feelings. These feeling patterns within, help you to understand your very self. Has it been drawing you to or away from God?
4. Take a deep breath. Seek the Lord's forgiveness and the grace to do better. Experience God's healing touch. Let God speak to you and you to him.
5. Take a deep breath. End by looking ahead, seeing and responding to God with a humble and generous heart.

## *Discernment*

Discernment, in the context of Ignatian spirituality, refers to trying to listen attentively or figure out what God is telling me. In other words, discernment is discernment of God's will. God does have particular things that he wants of us.

God is constantly speaking to us but the noise within makes it difficult to listen to his voice.

Discernment entails having a personal relationship with God. Otherwise, why would one even bother to find out what God wants of one? In order to enter into a personal relationship with God we need to establish a life of prayer and be committed to it, which can be challenging when we live busy lives.

We feel miserable when we do things that are not to our father's or mother's liking. In a similar way we are not at peace until we do what God wants of us. God wants what is best for us even though we may not be able to immediately see it. God is actively working in our lives in order to save us and give us the fullness of life.

In the Contemplation to Attain Love of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius we have a description of how God is present in everything and actively working. However, do we listen to his voice? If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.... (Psalm 95:8).

When you made the decision to become a doctor or a lawyer, or when you made the decision to get married to the particular individual that you did, did you ask yourself what God wanted of you in that particular instance? If you did then you are a person of discernment.

## *Selected Gospel References*

### **Matthew**

- 3:13-17      The Baptism of Jesus  
4:18-22      The Call of the First Disciples  
8:23-27      Jesus Calms the Storm  
14:22-33     Why did you doubt?  
20:1-16      Workers in the Vineyard

### **Mark**

- 10:46-52     The Blind Bartimaeus  
14:32-42     The Agony in the Garden

### **Luke**

- 2:1-14        The Birth of Jesus  
10:38-42     Martha and Mary  
15:1-7        The Parable of the Lost Sheep  
19:1-10      Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

### **John**

- 1:35-39      What are you looking for?  
13:3-17      Do you realise what I have done for you?  
20:11-18     Appearance to Mary of Magdala  
21:15-19     Jesus and Peter

## *Selected Prayers by Jesuits*



### ***St. Ignatius of Loyola***

Take, O Lord, into Thy hands, my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my will. All that I am and have, Thou hast given me, and I surrender them to Thee, to be so disposed in accordance with Thy holy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, with these I am rich enough and desire nothing more. Amen,

### ***St. Francis Xavier***

My God, I love Thee; not because I hope for heaven thereby, nor yet because who love Thee not are lost eternally... but as Thyself has loved me, O ever loving Lord. Amen.

### ***St. Peter Favre***

May Christ grant that I may give what I have offered and that I may belong to all, not only belong but live and work for all, on behalf of all, in the name and place of all for the praise of God and salvation of all, both living and dead. Amen.



### ***Pedro Arrupe***

Grant me, O Lord, to see everything now with new eyes; to discern and test the spirits that help me read the signs of the times; to relish the things that are yours, and to communicate them to others. Give me the clarity of understanding that you gave Ignatius. Amen.

# Useful Websites and Apps

## **Sacred Space App**

Apple/iOS <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/sacred-space-daily-prayer/id1050192048?ls=1>

Android/Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.gmail.techadmin.SSapp>

## **Reimagining the Examen**

Apple/iOS <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/reimagining-the-examen/id1065042173>

Android/Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.gmail.dtaylor.loyola.DailyExamen&hl=en>

## **Lectio 365**

Apple/iOS <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/lectio-365/id1483974820>

Android/Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.prayer247.lectio365&gl=GB>

## **Hallow: Catholic Meditation**

Apple/iOS <https://apps.apple.com/app/id1405323394>

Android/Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=app.hallow.android>

## **Pray As You Go – Daily Prayer**

Apple/iOS <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/pray-as-you-go/id865934048>

Android/Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=pl.foxcode.prayasougo&hl=en&gl=US>

## **Journey with Ignatius**

Apple/iOS <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/journey-with-ignatius/id1534779822>

Android/Google Play

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.journeywithignatius>

## *God's Grandeur*

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.*

*It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;*

*It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil*

*Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?*

*Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;*

*And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;*

*And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil*

*Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

*And for all this, nature is never spent;*

*There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;*

*And though the last lights off the black West went*

*Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -*

*Because the Holy Ghost over the bent*

*World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

*Gerard Manley Hopkins, S J*



# *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*



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