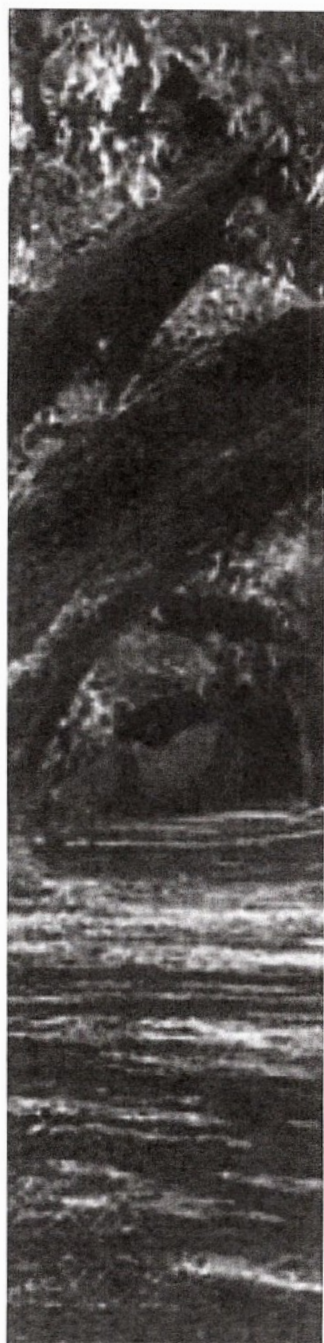
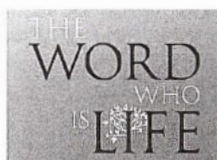


Diocese of  
Arundel and Brighton

# SCHOOL OF PRAYER



## **Act of the Presence of God**

- In your imagination, become aware of God's presence and attention to you in this very moment. It may be that you can imagine God's face looking down upon you right now and smiling; or it may be that you can feel God's breath on your skin; or it may be that you can be aware of God's touch; or it may be that you simply sense God's presence.
- Do whatever works best for you, whatever allows you to better recognise your Creator present with you, here and now with love.
- Take a moment to acknowledge God's specific and loving attention to you in the here and now.
- Feel the warmth of God's love as God looks upon you, God's purposeful creation.
- God loved you into existence. God continues to breathe life into you now and sustains you in being. God is inviting you at this moment into an ever-deeper relationship of love.
- Just bask in that experience for a few minutes – just as you bathe in the warmth of the sun on a warm summer's day, so now bathe in the warmth of God's love for you.
- And as you bask in the warmth of God's love for, listen to what God might be communicating to you.
- Take your time, keep your attention on God and listen!
- As you listen, you may feel drawn to make a response. To say a few words to God in the silence of your heart.
- In responding to God, you may want to ask God for something, or you may want to pray for someone.
- Maybe you want to thank God for your experience of God's unique loving attention to you, perhaps in words like these  
"Dear God, I acknowledge that you are looking at me in love and attending to me always and most especially in this moment. I thank you for this time we have had together. I ask you now for the grace to be able to look upon you and attend to you this day. May I also receive the grace to see myself as you see me and to see others in this world as you see them."  
Amen.

## THE FOUR ANCHOR POINTS

### 1. PREPARATION

- How am I as I prepare for prayer? What sort of mood am I in?  
Therefore .....  
What do I want to ask the Lord for? Peace? Generosity?  
Openness? Trust/ Forgiveness? Or what else.....?
- What scripture text, hymn, poem, etc, shall I use?  
If necessary, e.g. with a gospel scene, read the text slowly several times beforehand so that you are familiar enough with the narrative.
- How long I am going to pray for ? Be realistic.

### 2. ENTRY INTO PRAYER

- Choose your place of prayer and go to it.
- Make yourself comfortable and become still – perhaps using an Awareness or Stillness exercise.
- Act of the Presence of God
- Make a *very slow* sign of the Cross – either external or mental and *slowly* ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray.

### TIME OF PRAYER

### 3. EXIT FROM PRAYER

- Quietly bring your prayer together and in the light of this, speak with God as one friend to another. Have a heart to heart chat with God.
- Pray a *slow* "Our Father" or "Glory Be".
- Make a *slow* sign of the Cross – external or mental.
- *Slowly* leave the place where you have been praying, with gratitude for the time God has been with you.

#### 4. REVIEW AFTER PRAYER

Review of Prayer is helpful because:

- reviewing prayer allows reflection upon a prayer experience that is not helpful during prayer itself.
- it is an aid to discernment of where and how God is at work so that we can cooperate with God's action.
- it is also part of the preparation for further prayer, deciding whether to return to something 'unfinished', to savour longer or to move on to new material for prayer.

If possible, do this in a different place from where you have been praying. Slowly recall the prayer period – rather like a video replay of the highlights. The following questions are helps. Do not try to use them all. Find the ones that work for you.

- Was it good to be at prayer, or not? Why?
- What did you do at the beginning of prayer?
- Did any major idea or ideas occur to you?
- Did you have any strong feelings or emotions? Peaceful, creative, loving - OR disturbing, unsettling, confusing, fearful?
- Did you feel God's love, or were you resistant towards God?
- Did you learn something during your prayer? How does that change how you act?
- Did the Lord ask something of you?
- Did you find any unwillingness in yourself in face of what the Lord seemed to want of you?
- Note particularly the movements that were strong: high & low points.
- Is there something that feels unfinished, that you are drawn to return to in the next prayer time?

YOU MAY FIND IT HELPFUL TO JOT DOWN YOUR ANSWERS

## Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which was used in the monastic tradition. It invites God to speak into our life through scripture and for us to respond.

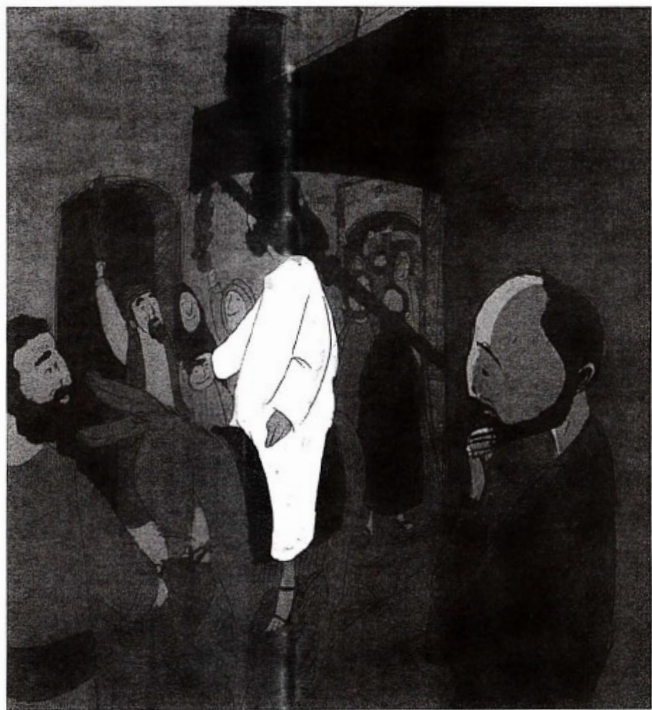
The steps are as follows:

- Choose a text from Scripture that you wish to pray.
- Settle into prayer.
- Ask for what you want from God in this time of prayer. Ask too for the help of the Spirit as you pray.
- Read the text slowly, until a word or phrase catches your attention, or somehow says, "I am for you today."
- Chew over, ponder upon the word or phrase. Let it speak into your life.
- Allow this reflection to invite you into dialogue with God, sharing what is with you.
- Rest in God. When ready return to the text and continue reading.
- At the end of your prayer time, finish with a prayer such as the Our Father.

Each person will engage with the God through the text in their own way. There is no right or wrong way.

Don't worry if nothing gets your attention after the first reading. Return to the beginning of the text and read it again even more slowly, perhaps even speaking it out quietly.

God will not waste the time given even if we cannot see the fruit in the moment.



## **IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION**

We may have been told that we have no imagination or think we don't, yet we use imagination whenever we remember experiences from the past. Most of us can do this readily in our own way, especially if we just do it rather than think about doing it.

That same imagination can be a very powerful tool for prayer. It's a gift from God to be used for encounter.

Some people imagine by seeing; others by sensing etc. The way you relive memories will likely be the way imagination will work for you in prayer. What is important is being involved in what is being imagined, experiencing it rather than being an observer of yourself.

A question that's often asked is 'How do I know its God and not just me making it up?' We never 100% know in any method of prayer that it's 100% God. But we can grow in our discerning through a

review of prayer and noticing the impact of our prayer in our living. Is there any increase in faith, hope, love? Remember that grace builds on nature – God uses the gifts given to us etc. through the Holy Spirit and builds on that.

Be aware that it may not be the way of prayer that is helpful at this moment. That's OK too.

The method of imaginative contemplation is as follows:

- Read through the passage twice beforehand so that familiar with the narrative.
- Enter into prayer.
- Imagine the place where the narrative is set. Use all your senses—what you can see, hear, touch, smell, taste - to enter into the scene. Take time to do this. Don't hurry.
- Become aware of the different people involved in the scene. Are you drawn to taking the place of one of them e.g. a disciple or one of the crowd or perhaps you find yourself there as you are.
- Allow the scene to unfold. Be involved in what happens and let yourself engage with Jesus and/or the others around you as seems natural to you in the moment. Don't be concerned if events don't happen as recounted in the scripture.
- If you find you get distracted and your attention has wandered, just gently bring yourself back to the scene.
- At some point, either as it emerges, or towards the end of the prayer, have a conversation with Jesus about whatever is uppermost on your heart in the moment, listening for his response.
- End the prayer definitely e.g. with a sign of the cross, saying a 'Glory be ...'
- Review your prayer.

## **DAILY EXAMEN (Review of the Day)**

The Examen, or Review of the Day, was a daily prayer included by St Ignatius Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises. It offers a practical help to become more attentive to God's presence and activity in our daily life, finding God in all things, noticing the patterns of our interaction with God in our experiences.

The Examen is a good prayer for busy people - 10 mins sometime in the day – bedtime, before breakfast, at lunch. It's perhaps the most important 10 minutes in the whole of the day!

It is asking God to show us moments of the day that God invites us to pay attention to.

A simple Examen has 3 steps.

**THANKS** for all that the day has been and for all God's gifts.

**SORRY** for the moments of selfishness and acting without love for others.

**PLEASE** These are some of the people and events that I want to pray for. This is what I ask for as I look towards tomorrow.

### **GUIDED SIMPLE EXAMEN**

Take a few moments to recognise that you are here with the Lord, to have a few minutes quiet time together.

Feel the warmth of God's love as God looks upon you. Bask in that experience. God is inviting you at this moment into an ever-deeper relationship of love.

With this loving God, think a bit about the day that has been.

What in this day am I thankful for? What are the moments that come to mind that have been received as gift, that lead me to say "Thank you" to God.

What in this day might I be sorry for? What are the moments of selfishness and unkindness and any other times when I did not manage to be Jesus' hands, feet, eyes, his love, his compassion for the people around me. I say "sorry" to God.

I ask God now to nudge me if there was something God was trying to tell me today when I wasn't paying attention! As I look towards tomorrow, these are some of the people and events that I want to pray for.

And finally, please help me to be more attentive to you tomorrow. Amen. Our Father...