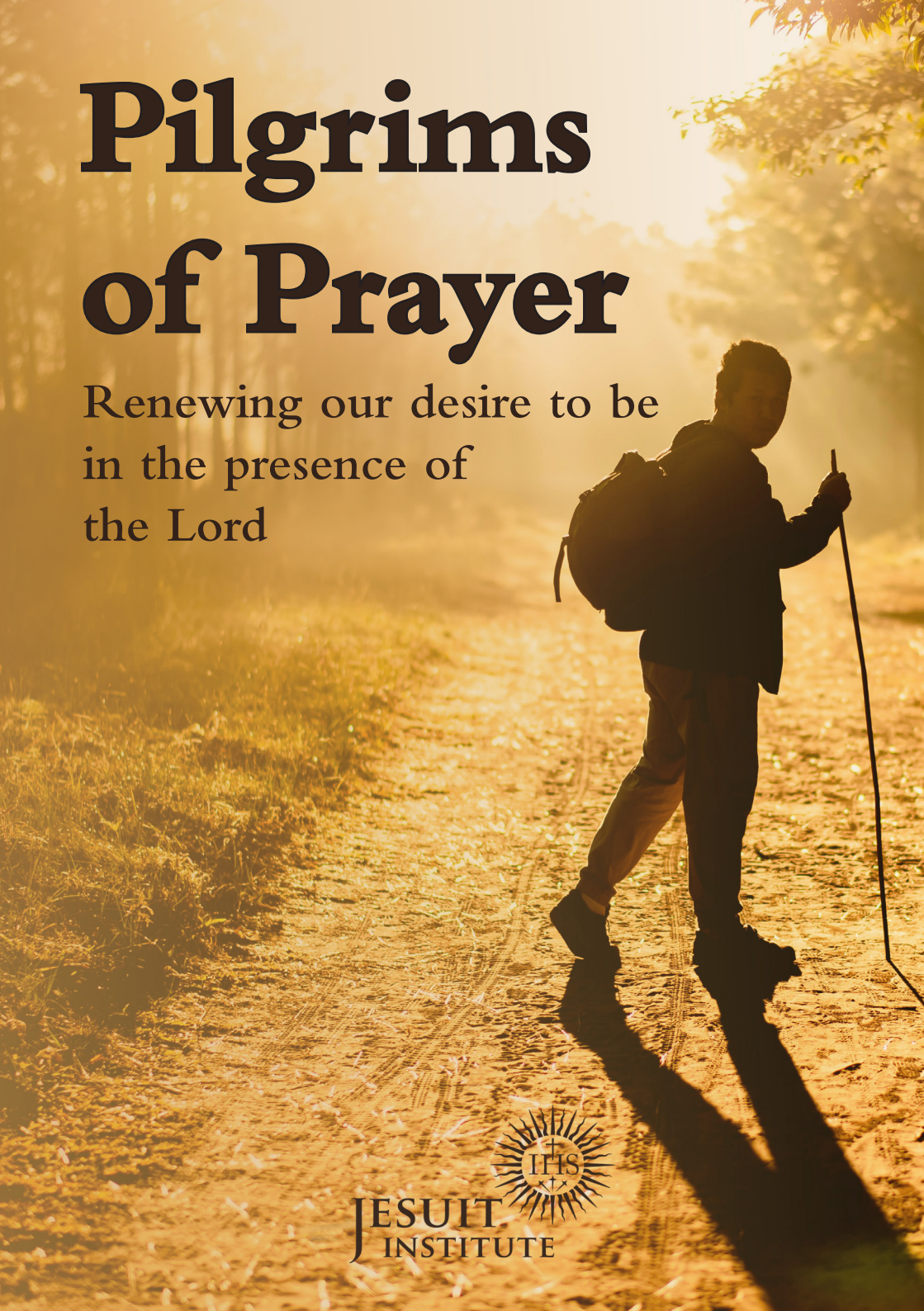
# Pilgrims of Prayer

Renewing our desire to be in the presence of the Lord



IHS

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# Introduction to Pilgrims of Prayer

There are many exercises for improving our physical health and wellbeing. Ignatius of Loyola wrote what he called the Spiritual Exercises, a variety of ways of praying to develop our spiritual health and wellbeing, our relationship with God and the world. Just like physical exercise, if we talk about it but don't actually engage in any exercise, this will not be very fruitful! So, with this booklet we introduce exercises that you may find it useful to practise – and the more you practise, the more benefits you will feel. This booklet introduces a number of these prayer exercises and guides you through them.

If you would find it helpful to be guided through some of these ways of praying, turn to page 19 for more information on ways to continue your journey.



# The Morning Offering

A morning offering (or daily offering) is a brief prayer that places us and the day ahead in the heart of Christ and his mission as an offering to God. It is usually prayed at the beginning of your day.

## Daily Offering

*Loving God, here I am. I know you are always with me. I place my heart in the Heart of your Son Jesus, who gives himself to us in the Eucharist each day. May your Holy Spirit strengthen me to live the Gospel in everything I do and say. For my part I give you this day–all my prayers, works, sufferings and joys–all I am and possess. With Mary, mother of the Church, I pray for the mission of the Church, for all Apostles of Prayer, and for the intentions of the Pope this month. Amen.*

## Traditional Daily Offering

*O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer You my prayers, works, sufferings, and joys of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.*

# The Act of the Presence of God

This exercise helps us to begin prayer in 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. The following steps might help you to get in tune with God's presence:

- 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 you, listen to what God might be communicating to you.
- 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 also 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."*

**Most importantly:**

- **Take your time**
- **Keep your attention on God**
- **Listen**



# The Four Anchor-points for Prayer

Prayer is at its best when there is some shape and some flexibility. In this regard, the following four anchor points provide some structure in which the Spirit can operate freely.

## 1. Preparation

The following questions could be helpful:
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 piece of 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. Where shall I choose to pray? How might I prepare the place? How might I avoid disruptions? e.g. put my mobile phone on silent.

## 2. Entry into Prayer

- Go to your place of prayer.
- Make yourself comfortable and become still – perhaps using an awareness or stillness exercise.
- Act of the Presence of God (see previous section).
- Make a very slow sign of the Cross (or some other prayerful gesture) – either externally or mentally – and slowly ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray.

***…Time of Prayer …***

## 3. Bringing Prayer to a Close

- 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, Glory Be, or another prayer.

- You could make a slow sign of the Cross – externally or mentally – or some other prayerful gesture.

- Slowly leave the place where you have been praying, with gratitude for the time God has been with you.

## 4. Review of Prayer

Reviewing prayer allows reflection upon a prayer experience that is not helpful during prayer itself. It is also an aid to discernment of where and how God is at work, helping us to cooperate with what God is doing. The review can also be 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  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 feeling or emotion? 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 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 and 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
## *Praying with Scripture*

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

## Step-by-Step Lectio Divina

The following step–by–step guide could help you pray with a Bible passage.

- Choose a text from Scripture that you wish to pray.
- Make an act of the presence of God.
- 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.

Bear in mind that 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 when reading the passage.

**LECTIO DIVINA**

**Read…**

**Reflect…**

**Respond…**

**Rest…**



# Imaginative Contemplation
## *Praying with our imagination*

Imaginative contemplation is the process of imagining ourselves in a Gospel scene, taking up a character, being with Jesus and being aware of what's going on, and how we are feeling. When we pray with our imagination, we come into real intimacy with Jesus as we seek to place ourselves as fully as we can within a story from the Gospels.

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, or engage in day–dreaming about possible future events. 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. What is important is being involved in what is being imagined, experiencing it rather than being an observer of yourself.

St Ignatius placed great importance on imaginative contemplation because he wanted each one of us to meet Jesus and develop a unique and personal relationship with him. I watch Jesus's face. I listen to the way he speaks. I notice how people respond to him. These details bring me to know Jesus as more than a name or a historical figure in a book. He is a living person that each person encounters in prayer so that "We have come to know him ourselves…" (John 4:42)

# Step-by-Step Imaginative Contemplation

The following steps might help you to pray imaginatively:

- Read through the selected bible passage slowly twice beforehand so that you familiarise yourself with the narrative.
- Enter into prayer – with an act of the presence of God and asking for the Spirit to guide your prayer. You may also find it helpful to spend a few minutes with a breathing or stilling exercise to help you enter the 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. Then enter the scene, maybe as a disciple or one of the crowd or just finding 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 ... it may or may not exactly follow the scripture.
- If you find you get distracted and your attention has wandered, just gently bring yourself back to the scene.
- At some point, have a conversation with Jesus about whatever is uppermost on your heart in the moment, listening for his response.
- End the prayer quite deliberately, don't just fade out!
- Review your prayer.

# The Examen
## *The Ignatian Review of the Day*

The Examen, or Review of the Day, was a daily prayer included by St Ignatius 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 – it takes only ten minutes at some point in the day – bedtime, before breakfast, at lunch. It is perhaps the most important ten 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 Step-by-Step 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, bring your day to mind.
- What in this day am I thankful for? What are the moments that come to mind that have been received as a 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…

## A Shorter Examen

For those with very hectic schedules, there is short version of the Examen that could fit in your busy day. This Examen consist of three steps:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Thank you** | for all that the day has been and for all God's gifts. |
| **Sorry** | call to mind one or two 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. |



# Praying with Art

Art can speak to our deepest feelings, calling forth our own creative response to the creativity of the artist. Just as we can be moved by a beautiful sunset, or seeing the smile of a child, or hearing a wonderful musical symphony, often without knowing why, so a painting or sculpture can move us beyond words to some deep feeling, some movement of the heart towards God – a feeling of 'I know not what' as CS Lewis put it or, in another of his phrases, 'being surprised by joy.' Or, as Ignatius would say, allowing us to experience 'inner feeling and relish'.

We do not need to like or admire the art… as we notice our 'inner feelings' even responses of unease or discomfort are telling us something… and we can bring this movement to God in prayer.

## Step-by-Step Praying with an Image

- Settle yourself into quiet. Take a moment to enjoy God's long loving look. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in your prayer and ask for what you desire in this time.

- Now look at the image before you. Look long, linger, sit with it in a quiet space. Allow your eyes to roam around the picture … to notice the colours ... the shapes ... the moods… the texture …

- Refrain from immediate interpretation of the image. Hold back from judgement. Allow thoughts and feelings to emerge gently – perhaps like water seeping into dry ground. Wait, let it be. Be still. Let the image speak.

- You might then wish to use one or more of the following questions to help your ongoing reflection:–

- Where do you find your attention most resting?
- Which thought/s do you find yourself thinking?
- Which feeling/s or desire/s in you does the image evoke?
- Which memories are stirred?
- Is there something in the picture you wish to change? Do you know why?
- Does the image invite anything of you?

- Take some time with God to talk about the picture or what is has stirred within you and allow God to respond.

- Finish your prayer with an 'Our Father' or 'Glory be …' etc.

- Afterwards, review your prayer and, if you find it helpful, make some notes.



The Red Vineyard at Arles (1888) by Vincent Van Gogh

# Continuing your journey

*The lamp of faith will always be lit on earth*
*as long as there is the oil of prayer.*
Pope Francis

**Further Reading**

- Gerard W Hughes SJ, God of Surprises, Darton Longman and Todd

- William A Barry SJ, A Friendship Like No Other: Experiencing God's Amazing Embrace, Loyola University Press

- David Fleming SJ, What is Ignatian Spirituality?, Loyola Press

- Timothy M Gallagher, The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for our lives today, Cross Road Publishing

- Jim Manney, The Prayer that Changes Everything: Discovering the Power of St Ignatius Loyola's Examen, Loyola Press

- Mark E Thibodeaux SJ, Reimagining the Ignatian Examen, Loyola Press – app available on iTunes and Google Play

**Imagine - Online**

First Wednesday of Every Month at 20.00–21.00 on Zoom
Join us for a guided meditation with the imagination: a chance to meet, pray and share with others, and a space of nourishment once a month, live on Zoom.

**Go to jesuit.org.uk/events for more details of all our events.**

**Pray As You Go - App, Website and Podcasts**

A daily prayer session, designed to go with you on the move. Lasting between ten and thirteen minutes, it combines music, scripture of the day and some questions for reflection. Pray As You Go also offer a range of other audio resources and retreats.
https://pray-as-you-go.org/

**I say one word of the Our Father aloud or in the silence of my heart.**
**I let it echo in my mind, delighting in it so long as meanings, comparisons, and consolations are found.**
**No matter how long it takes I remain with that one word without hurrying on.**
**When I am ready I move on to the next word and once again let it echo in my mind.**
**When I have finished my time of prayer, I briefly pray the remainder of the Our Father.**

Based on Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola (249–257)



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