

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER RESOURCE SHEET

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' (Phil 4: 2-8)

What are we doing in intercession?

One of the thorniest but vital aspects that a Christian will need to ponder is their whole understanding of intercessory prayer. It can degenerate very quickly into an attempt to use God, advise God, and escape our responsibilities. Ward puts it plainly: 'The Christian idea of intercession is that it is not a means we employ to persuade God to act in a situation he has presumably overlooked or into which he needs to be summoned, but a means God employs to summon *our* help through our membership in the Body of Christ.' See J. N. Ward, *The Use of Praying* (Epworth Press, 1967), p. 87.

I was asked recently to lead a day on 'Effective Prayer'. The organizers were hoping that I would be able to tell people how to get good results from their intercessions, how their prayers could 'storm heaven' and really update God's plans – in accordance with our ideas, of course. They wanted to learn the secret of 'prayers that work'. I had to break it to them that my understanding of 'effective prayer' is quite the opposite. Prayer is coming before God in a spirit of listening to him and utter availability to him, and giving God a chance to work on us!

A common approach to intercession is that it is about 'handing over to God' the worries and concerns on our hearts, an entrusting to him of situations, a making of specific requests. It is essentially about talking: pleading with God, advising God. But what if it started to be about listening – a double listening: hearing the cries of the earth and discerning the whispers of heaven? What if noisy incessant intercessory prayer gave way to reflection, and allowed a place for meditating on God's kingdom and his purposes?

Intercession and self-offering

Intercession must lead to self-offering. It does not let you off the hook or allow you to think that your duty is done by praying. Self offering is at the heart of intercession as we place ourselves at God's disposal for the outworking of his purposes. One way in which God answers prayer is through his body on earth – the body of Christ. God is seeking people who will listen to him and allow themselves to be caught up into his unfolding purposes. In praying for healing, for example, we offer ourselves to be instruments of peace, for as Teresa of Avila reminds us 'Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours.. ours are the hands with which he is to bless and heal people now.' As Evelyn Underhill put it: 'real intercession is not merely a petition but a piece of work, involving costly self-surrender to God for the work he wants done on other souls.' (E. Underhill, *Life as Prayer* 1946, p. 59).

We find ourselves caught up into the very movement, current and flow of Christ's self-offering; interceding for others, we find ourselves offering ourselves for others.

Some ABC's useful for those leading public intercessions

Approach Use either direct prayer to God ('Loving Father') or a bidding ('Let us pray for...') which is addressed to the people and is an invitation to them to pray, so should be followed by a silence in which they can do so!

Balance between seeking divine intervention/ blessing and self-offering

Content Common Worship commends 5 categories

The Church of Christ; Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority

The local community; Those who suffer; The communion of saints (the departed)

Discern a theme to pick up on from the sermon, so the celebration 'hangs together'

Engage Use vivid, evocative but concise language. Eg Inspire...energize...empower

Focus Christian prayer is normally addressed to God the Father, through Jesus Christ ('our only mediator and advocate' BCP), in the power of the Spirit. Best not to chop and change – keep every petition addressed to the Father, maybe using varied descriptions (eg 'God of mercy; Father of Compassion; Source of love, Gracious Lord')

- ***What do you think happens when you pray for others? What would you like to happen?***
- ***How do you think the practice of intercessory prayer might change your outlook on a situation?***
- ***What links, if any, do you see between intercession and vocation – what God is asking of you?***
- ***How do you think God answers prayer?***

Prayer Exercise

Write prayers suitable for use at a Sunday Eucharist or main service. What would you include/exclude?

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: FRANCISCAN PRAYER

Praying with Creation

*Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing,
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather..*

In these words, troubadour St Francis of Assisi invites us to recognize and celebrate the radical and essential interconnectedness of all things, displaying a remarkable kinship and sense of unity with creation in his *Canticle of Creation*, the first poem composed in the Italian vernacular. Hailing the sun as brother and the moon as sister, he greeted Sister Water and Brother Wind as dear friends. At the dawn of capitalism and a creeping consumerist approach to things – Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth-merchant and worked in his shop – he discovered a deep connectedness to all things which was honouring and non-exploitative. He has become patron saint of ecology.

Praying at the foot of the Cross: St Francis' prayer before the crucifix

Most High glorious God, Enlighten the darkness of my heart
And give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,
A sense of the divine, And knowledge of your will Lord
That I may carry out Your holy and true command.

This prayer that Francis uttered, kneeling before the figure of the crucified above the altar in the ruined chapel of San Damiano in Assisi in 1207, celebrates an encounter with the Cross that proves to be a profound moment in his conversion and the radical re-orientation of his life towards God. Looking at the Cross he heard the words 'Francis, rebuild my church, which as you can see is falling down'. His prayer is about vocation, self-offering, about discovering God's will, about being empowered by love, hope and faith. It is a prayer that will change his life and lead him to rebuild the church on true gospel values. What was it about the Cross that so transfixed Francis? He glimpsed that God himself comes to share and transfigure our pain. God is not immune from suffering - he freely chooses to embrace it, and to transform it from the *inside* - not from the outside as some external power reaching down from the balcony of heaven, but *as one of us*. 'Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows' (Is.53.4).

Francis' began to recognize the Cross in daily life by a chance encounter with a leper on the road outside Assisi. Normally, he recoiled at the sight of the disfigured and disabled sufferers. In fact, he had an absolute horror of them and would avoid going near their colonies at all costs. But something stirred within his heart when he met this tortured man in the lane, with bandaged hands and dressed in rags. He felt impelled, constrained by something within, not only to approach the man, but to touch him tenderly, to embrace him. Later he wondered if he had not met Christ himself in this encounter. Francis came to see in every suffering person a glimpse of the crucified Christ. Francis believed that suffering does indeed have a revelatory character, for those with eyes to see it. For Francis God speaks most powerfully through the experience of poverty and pain, calling us to simplicity and trust. For him, though he delighted in the wonders of creation, God's love was revealed most clearly in the passion of Jesus. He came to see the Cross, an instrument of torture, as a symbol of hope: 'by his wounds, you are healed' (1Pet 2.22). From this self-same Cross flows a grace which can change our attitudes to pain profoundly.

Prayer Exercise Use the 'cross-prayers' devised by Francis of Assisi. Open your arms wide – extend them as far as you can. This is first to embody a solidarity with the cross. Think of Jesus opening wide his arms on the cross to embrace all who suffer, all who are in any form of distress. Think of Christ's all-encompassing love and acceptance. Second, think of the Risen Christ and the way he longs to enfold whole of creation, the little ones and marginalized ones of the earth. Third, offer this prayer as an act of intercession. It is a prayer that hurts – in the sense that your arms will grow weary and ache. Moses prayed like this and had to have others hold his arms up (Exodus 17:11,12). As you feel the ache, let it connect you to those who are in pain, those who are hurting: the sick, the dispossessed, those whose human rights are trampled on. Finally, use this prayer-action as an act of self-offering. Offer yourself afresh to God for the part he has in store for you in his mission of reconciliation in the world.

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: PRAYING SCRIPTURE: BENEDICTINE TRADITION

The discipline of *lectio divina*, (Latin for 'divine reading') - the slow, ponderous, meditative reading of Scripture developed by Benedict and the monastic tradition has been likened to 'feasting on the Word.' There are four stages:

- First, *lectio*, invites us to take a bite, to read a passage attentively, alert to particular words that strike us.
- Secondly, in *meditatio*, we can hold the word in our mind and heart as a piece of fruit might be held in the mouth: we take time to ask the Holy Spirit to lead us to its deepest meaning.
- Thirdly, in *oratio*, we savour its taste, bitter or sweet or surprising, and allow this to lead us into a kind of prayer that dare ask questions of God: What are you saying? How might I have to change? In this phase, we expose to God's Word our deepest needs and hopes. The Word will heal, disturb, invigorate.
- Finally in *contemplatio* we digest the Word, welcome the Word within our very selves, integrate it, interiorize it, absorb it into our very being. One may need to practise this form of prayer over time in order to discover its depths. At first, it may seem a busy way of prayer, but with practice one can learn the art of 'relishing the Word' and releasing its power and energy into our lives.

Prayer exercise These guidelines come from biblegateway.com

Step 1 - Reading

- Have some read the passage slowly out loud. Have a time of silence for 2 mins.
- Have a second person read the passage slowly out loud.
- Work your way through the four sections below leaving equal time for each (these questions work best for narrative passages):
- Ask God to enable you to enter into the passage with your mind to grasp the facts of the passage: the who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- Ask God to enable you to enter into the scene with your own senses: what would you have heard, what would you have tactilely felt, what would you have smelt, what would you have seen?
- Ask God to enable you to enter into the scene with your emotions. Is there one particular character or group of characters with whom God is inviting you to identify? Is God inviting you to enter into the emotions of each person in the passage? What would that person have felt emotionally—happy, sad, confused, angry, joyful, contented, surprised?
- Be silent for a brief period of time.

Step 2 - Meditation

- Have everyone read the passage to themselves for a third time.

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- Pick out a word, idea, or phrase that strikes you in a personal way; something that might jump out to you—perhaps a particular metaphor; you don't have to finish reading the whole passage.
- Once you've found a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart, slowly repeat it, linger over it, give it your attention. Ask your group members to think about, "Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?"
- Be silent for a few minutes for group members to be able to reflect on how the word or phrase connects to their lives. Meditation is the discipline we give to keeping the memory active in the act of reading.
- Invite the group members to share with the group (or with just one other person), in just a few sentences, the connection between the word/phrase and their lives.

Step 3 - Prayer

- Now take any thoughts, feelings, actions, fears, convictions, and questions you have meditated on and offer them to the Lord in thankful prayer.
- If you feel convicted about a poor relationship, simply apologize, request forgiveness, and ask for guidance on restoring the relationship.
- If you feel thankful for something that God has done for you, then pour out those feelings of thanksgiving.
- If you feel a specific anxiety about something in your life, present it to the Lord and pray for the guidance and peace to be able to submit to God's will.

Step 4 – Contemplation

- This final stage is to simply be silent in the presence of God (Ps 46:10). Relax and embrace the moment. Just "be" with God. We don't need to always be talking at God.
- Part of contemplation is to commit yourself, with the help of God, to "do" the truth that he has implanted in your heart. It is our submitting to God's Word, our living it out, that God is calling us to (James 1:22-25). Conclude by inviting each person pray for their partner or end with a general prayer of entrustment.

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: SILENCE & STILLNESS - the Desert tradition

There is something paradoxical about silence. It seems an emptiness but reveals a fullness: it seems an absence of something but affords the chance to sense and experience the palpable presence of God. Silence feels like something is missing but in fact leads to finding something precious, making a great discovery. The sounds of silence are brimming with the presence of God.

Other paradoxes surface. Spending half an hour listening to silence seems like a waste of time but could turn out to be a big investment, if we get in touch with our deepest selves and in touch with God. It sounds like achieving nothing but through it we could be gaining a fresh perspective on things. Stillness re-orientates us and brings space into our chaotic, frenetic lives. Entering silence also gives us a chance to catch up with ourselves, and get in touch with our truest longings. Like the desert, so important in Christian spirituality, it allows no hiding place. It is a time to be real, real with God and real with ourselves, too. Going into silence might look like escapism from the world but actually turns out to be a needful reality-check. There is an immediacy about silence – in it we are plunged into truth, confronted by ourselves and by God. Like the desert, silence can be inviting and threatening, affirming but maybe disturbing. Recently, clergy have been speaking to me about this. One said, 'Silence gives oxygen to my soul.' Another put it: 'Silence sorts me out, but I don't understand how that happens.'

Why is it that we almost anything to avoid silence? Is it its truth-telling quality? Silence can be a scary, intimidating place to be, because in it we come face-to-face, as it were with God and our own reality. It confronts us with our own aloneness and mortality. But, strangely and beautifully, silence communicates the accepting love of God. It does not judge us or utter pronouncements, it simply holds us in being, just as we are. It enfolds us, embraces us, reassures us that all will be well. And it is strangely rejuvenating too, healing, even – perhaps because we are giving God a chance to work on us! The Desert Fathers tell the story: 'Abba Macarius the Great said to the brothers at Scetis, when he dismissed the assembly, "Flee, my brothers." One of the old men asked him, "Where could we flee to beyond this desert?" He put his finger on his lips and said, "Flee that," and he went into his cell, shut the door and sat down.' (B. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 1975, p.131).

The physical desert, which was so vital to Jesus and the early Church, poses crucial questions to us today. Dare you open up a space for God in your life?

The physical desert is a place of exposure to sun and wind, where there is no hiding place. It calls us to seek a spiritual state or condition in which we become naked before God, exposing heart and mind to the wind of his Spirit and the warmth of his love. The desert is a place of persistent erosion, where wind and even water wear down the resistance of stubborn rocks and refashion their shapes. There are unremitting processes of disintegration at work in the desert landscape, as well as processes of formation and building up. So too, in prayer we must learn to become susceptible to God and open to his ever-creative remoulding. In prayer, our normal guards need to melt away so that God is allowed to reshape our life and our priorities. As there

is an immediacy in the desert, where all props are gone and only essential things matter, so in prayer masks drop off. In prayer we risk facing up in utter honesty to the realities of our lives. From his fourth-century monastery at Bethlehem, Jerome put it: 'The desert loves to strip bear.'

Dare you thirst for more of God in prayer?

The desert speaks powerfully of our spiritual poverty. It reminds us to confront the aridity of our lives, and to recognize where there might be signs of emptiness. As Macarius wrote: 'We have an insatiable longing for the Spirit, to shine out – the more spiritual gifts we enjoy, the more insatiable is the heavenly desire in our hearts, the more hungry and thirsty we are for more grace' (G.A.Maloney, *Intoxicated with God: the Fifty Spiritual Homilies of Macarius*, 1978, p.33). Thus the desert of prayer becomes a place of deep renewal and experience of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah the prophet sees the desert as a symbol of humanity's need – a natural analogy for our need of God. The desert represents spiritual poverty and human thirst for the divine: 'For I will pour water on the thirsty land, And streams on the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon your descendents' (Is.44:3)

Prayer Exercise

- 1 find a quiet space & a prayerful environment, maybe with a prayer focus eg a candle
- 2 invite the group to settle down, becoming aware of their bodies resting in God's love, noticing their own breathing, the breath of God's Spirit in them
- 3 Introduce the silence with a short reading from Scripture or a short piece of music
- 4 Observe 30 minutes of shared silence
- 5 conclude with a prayer of self-offering and the Lord's Prayer & Grace

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: PRAYING WITH ICONS

- They are a tool of prayer, not religious art to be admired. You don't have to like an icon, but receive from it!
- An icon is 'written' not painted. So it is 'read' not viewed.
- Through line and colour the iconographer seeks to convey a sense of awe and mystery and stimulate prayer. Colours are significant: blue= heaven; green= earth; red= human flesh; purple= power; white= purity, light; gold= divine energy, the glory of God.
- An icon is a work of tradition, it is not an individualistic creation. It is not signed by the 'artist' (or 'writer'). The iconographer avoids innovations. Rules and traditions are passed on. Every brush stroke is attended by a prayer – indeed there are manuals to guide this.
- We don't see emotions in the faces in an icon as much as virtues- qualities like patience, compassion, love.
- Where in western art a religious picture might become a sentimental object, in the East its purpose is to convey the mystery and majesty of Christ.

The Victorians taught us 'hand together, eyes closed.' The Orthodox would say the opposite: hands open, and eyes open! Icons encourage us to use our body in prayer. We are not disembodied spirits. Spirituality can encompass physicality. God has given us senses! Prayer is a matter of both head and heart. Actions speak louder than words: a kiss of devotion placed on an icon says everything.

Icons are used both on home and in church. In Orthodox homes, the icon corner in the main room is a constant reminder of the presence of God and the saints. As one steps into an Orthodox church one is aware of the ancient words 'this the house of God, this is the gate of heaven'.

Prayer Exercise: Engaging with Three icons

Christ of Sinai

<http://www.katapi.org.uk/Art/Icon-ChristPantocrator.html>

This is one of the earliest icons. Dating from the sixth century , it is an encaustic icon, using wax. It remains at St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai. It expresses well the mystery of icons and the way they challenge perceptions.

Rublev's Icon of the Trinity

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Trinity_Icon#mediaviewer/File:Andrej_Rubl%C3%ABv_001.jpg

It was painted – or written – in 1425 by Andrei Rublev. It depicts the story of Abraham entertaining three angels (Genesis 18). This becomes a meditation on the Holy Trinity.

Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir

<http://www.pallasweb.com/ikonsassets/p/big/vladimir.jpg>

Also known as Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. Written in the 12th century at Constantinople, later moved to Moscow and Kiev.

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: CELTIC PRAYER

Caim: Prayers of Protection

Celtic Christians developed a range of prayers and rituals to invoke God's protective power – many adapted from pagan charms/incantations. One such ritual, adapted from pre-Christian origins is the *caim*. To a Celtic Christian, a circle was a sacred space. It was a replica of the cosmos and symbolized the Celtic belief that time was circular rather than linear. God was the Creator and he inhabited the centre of the cosmos and time. In times of danger, inhabitants of Outer Hebrides would draw a circle round themselves and their loved ones. Using the index finger of their right hand, they would point and turn round sun-wise while reciting a prayer:

O Sacred Three---My fortress be---Encircling me---Surround hearth & home

David Adam writes: "This was no magic, it was no attempt to manipulate God. It was a reminder by action that we are always surrounded by God. He is our encompasser, our encircler. It is our wavering that has put us out of tune. This is a tuning in to the face that 'in Him we live and move and have our being.'"

Prayer Exercise: Take a moment to think about those you have concern, care for. What is it you would ask God for them – what they need near, within; and what needs to be kept away, and without.

To pray the *caim*, or encircling prayer, extend your right index finger, and turn clockwise drawing a circle around yourself in the air. Use your imagination to see yourself and those you are praying for surrounded by the safety of the Father's care and protection.

Circle (*name*), **Lord. Keep** (*light or name the good sought*) **near and keep** (*darkness or name the evil to remove*) **afar.**

Circle (*name*), **Lord. Keep comfort near and discouragement afar. Keep peace within and turmoil out.**

Circle (*name*), **Lord. Keep hope within and despair without.**

Prayer Exercise 2

Take a stone and hold it in the palm of your hand. Take a close look at it and admire its uniqueness. Are there rough or smooth parts to it? There is only one just like this, with its particular markings and structure. Make friends with it! Its past: wonder to yourself – where has this stone come from? What is its past, its history? What great cliff or mountain was it once part of? What is its geological story? Wonder about what happened to this rock. Was it pounded by waves in the sea? Was it polished by the movement of ice? Its future : what will become of this stone? Will it be taken by a youth and thrown through a window? Or just lie unwanted on the ground? Will this stone be used by a craftsman in a structure: in a wall, in an art installation? Will it be carefully reshaped and remoulded by an artist or mason?

Finally, let this stone speak to you of your own life, past and future. You have a unique history and your own special gifting. Give thanks to God for his providence and provision. Thank God for your own 'markings' – those things about yourself, your appearance and personality, that make you different. As you hold the stone in your hands, realise that God holds you lovingly in his hands. And he has plans for you. He desires to shape and reshape your life – to mould you into his image, to accomplish his work of formation in you, to use you in the great building work of his Kingdom. Peter put it: 'like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.' Rejoice that your life is raw material in the hands of the creator and redeemer God. Give thanks that he has an unfolding design and purpose for your unique life. Entrust yourself afresh to God, remembering: 'We are God's work of art' (Ephesians 2:9, Jerusalem Bible).

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: THE DAILY OFFICE

The Daily Office is the corporate prayer of the Church: it takes you out of yourself and plunges you into a threefold experience of solidarity:

- It unites you with Christians everywhere: when you use it you are 'plugging in' to the praises and petitions of the Church worldwide.
- It unites us with the heavenly prayer of the communion of saints and with the unceasing intercession of Jesus Christ our great high priest.
- It unites you to our Benedictine heritage: in the Anglican tradition, Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* condensed into the 2 offices of morning and evening prayer the sevenfold monastic offices.

Common Worship now makes additional provision for Midday Prayer and Night Prayer (Compline). Each office can be prayed with own character: morning prayer praises God for the new day and entrusts it to God, while evening prayer gives opportunity for a focus in intercession in the light of the day's events.

The offering of the Daily Office enables a sanctification of time, daily, weekly and throughout the entire year.

The key ingredients of the Office

1 Psalms

2 Scripture, according to the lectionary, embracing both old and new testaments

3 Canticle, enabling a response to the readings

4 Intercessions, ending with the Lord's Prayer

Praying the Psalms

This perspective is offered by *The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*: 'Whoever prays the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours does not say them in one's own name so much as in the name of the whole body of Christ, in fact in the person of Christ himself. If one keeps this in mind, difficulties disappear, even if while saying the psalms one's own feelings differ from those expressed by the psalmist: for example, if we find ourselves saying a psalm of jubilation, while we are worried or sad, or saying a psalm of lament, when in fact we feel in good spirits. This may

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easily be avoided in merely private prayer, when a psalm can be chosen to suit our mood. In the Divine Office, however, even someone saying the Hour alone is not praying the psalms privately but recites them in the name of the Church and according to the sequence given in her public prayer. Whoever says them in the name of the Church can always find a reason for joy or sorrow, finding applicable to himself the words of the apostle: 'Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow' (Rom 12:15); human weakness and selfishness is thus healed by charity so that the mind and heart may harmonize with the voice.' *In this way, the Daily Office creates a further solidarity in prayer: it links us powerfully with those who suffer or rejoice across the face of the earth.*

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: PRAYING THE LABYRINTH



The labyrinth has been rediscovered in recent years as a way of prayer. It brims with paradoxes: ancient yet contemporary; for mature or for seeker alike; at once a spiritual & physical experience. It entails both movement & stillness: it is a journey both inwards & outwards. It is both a threshold & a launching pad. It invites both a letting go & embracing. It enables encounter with God & a certain self-discovery. It can be both a solitary & community experience. It is at once a safe space & a potentially transformative space.

Some of you may have been to a church or a retreat centre that had a labyrinth on the grounds. Walking the labyrinth is a way of praying with the body that invites the divine presence into an active conversation with the heart and soul. The labyrinth is a sacred pattern that leads you on a prescribed path to its centre and back out again. As we walk along, we are invited to take note of our journey, the twists and turns, as they mirror our personal spiritual walks. We invite you to embark upon this journey of prayerful wandering, but you certainly don't have to wait until you're standing at the opening of an actual life-sized labyrinth. Follow these steps and trace the labyrinth with your finger in order to focus your thoughts and open yourself up to the presence of God.

First Movement: Releasing (Confession)

Place your finger at the opening of the labyrinth. Pray silently or aloud a prayer of confession. When finished, slowly move your finger forward along the labyrinth. Move at your own pace

toward the center. Let the words of the prayer stay with you. Quiet your mind as you move through the labyrinth. Make room for emotions and stirrings that arise. What needs to be changed, forgiven, cleared, confronted, or healed in your life? Offer these situations to God as you move forward.

Second Movement: Receiving (Centering)

When you reach the center, rest your finger there for a moment before you read a scripture reading for the day. When you are ready, read the passage slowly, as if you have never read it before. Center on God's Word and be open to what God reveals to you through the reading. Return your finger to the center of the labyrinth and reflect on the passage and what it holds for you.

Third Movement: Returning (Intercession)

As you prepare to leave the labyrinth, place your finger at the same opening in the center where you entered. Now lift up your intercessory prayers for the day and when finished, begin to move your finger back along the same path on which you entered. Let the intercessory prayers stay with you, and add to them as you make the turns and move along the pattern back out of the labyrinth. Be mindful of people and circumstances in the world that are in need of your prayers. Hold each one in your heart for a part of the journey outward.

When you have finished...

As you lift your finger from the labyrinth's end, offer thanks to God.

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PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: PRAYING SCRIPTURE - IGNATIAN TRADITION

Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century, invites us to use our five senses and our imaginations vividly as we engage with the text, especially when we read the episodes from the life of Christ in the Bible. Ignatius says:

- Use your eyes to *look* at the scene, visualize it, imagine it in your mind's eye, place yourself into the picture and become one of the characters. Re-locate yourself.
- Reach out in your imagination and *touch* with your fingertips the characters, the soil, the water, the physical aspects.
- Even *smell* the scents of the scene and *taste* the air, the food, the atmosphere.
- But above all, Ignatius says, open your ears and *listen* to what the characters are saying to each other, what they are saying to you and what God is saying to you through all this. Talk with the other characters: What do you hear them saying to you? How do you find yourself replying?
- Notice what is happening to you – how you find yourself reacting or responding as the story unfolds. What feelings are you experiencing? Peace, confusion, love, joy, anger? What can you make of this?
- Conclude your prayer time with a short personal conversation with Jesus (or God the Father, or the Holy Spirit); speak heart-to-heart, as if conversing with a close friend.
- Afterwards, briefly review what you experienced during this time of prayer. What are you taking away from it. Has God spoken to you in anyway?
- This approach to Scripture once again slows us down and demands time and attention. It leads to clearer discernment of God's will for us in the practice of ministry. That is the point: engagement with Word leads us to echo St Ignatius's own prayer: 'Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough.'

Ignatian Prayer Example: Revisit the story of the disciples on the Lake at night, Matthew 14: 22-33. There are 8 stages of this prayer exercise as we follow through the gospel account.

1 embarking You and the disciples set sail. Jesus tells them to. *He made the disciples get into the boat and go on head to the other side...(v 22)* Climb into the boat. What do you notice as you look around? It is evening: is it dark already? Are the waters inviting or threatening? Visualize the scene, as vividly as you can. What are the other disciples thinking? Listen to their chatter. Are they excited or nervous? What are you feeling as the journey begins? Use your five senses. What can you see? Describe the landscape. What can you smell? Can you taste the breeze? What sounds can you hear? What are you touching?

2 storm *when evening came... the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them (v 24)* Can you feel the wind blowing through your hair and clothes? Is the sea inky black yet, or still darkening from sunset pink to marine blue? Do you feel safe as the waters turn choppy, thrashing the side of the boat, and as the wind gets up? How are you feeling right now?

3 fear You see a vague outline on the surface of the deep: it looks like a man, but it can't be. *But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' (v 26).* Do you feel a spine-chillingly sensation, the hairs of your head as it were standing on end? Can you hear your heart thumping? What does it feel like to be afraid? Is there sweat in the palms of your hand? What fears are crippling you right now. Name your fears. Then, when you are ready, hear his voice: *'Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid!'* How does that make you feel?

4 desire *Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water" (v.28)* What do you want most, right now? What is your heart's desire, your deepest longing, your greatest need, at this point in your life? As Jesus said to the blind man, so he says to you: 'what do you want me to do for you?' What is your honest response to this question, from the depths of your heart? No one else will hear you! Say it!

5 invitation You feel strangely and inexplicably impelled to go to Jesus. But you know this is suicidal, to climb out of a boat in a dark storm. Jesus says to you 'Come'. You love the boat. It is yours, you own it. It is where you are in charge, where you like to be, normally. It is where you give orders to the other fishermen. This is your place of safety. But you find yourself moving to the edge of the boat. You are putting one leg over the side!

6 solitude *Peter got out of the boat (v. 29).* As Peter does this action entirely on his own bat, so you feel now very alone. It is just you and Jesus. The others fade from view, and their views hardly count now. You see the blackness. You feel the howling wind. Your foot feels the uncertain, heaving surface. As the waters rise and fall, rise and fall, what is the paradox you are wrestling with? What dragons lurk under the waters? What is the sign of contradiction in your life? What is coming up to the surface in your feelings? Name your questions. Name your emotions right now. As the paradox moves you backwards and forwards, to and fro, expose these to the wind, the gale of the Spirit upon the face of the waters. Feel the Spirit- breath whistling in your ears and the divine waves pounding upon your soul. Feel the energy. Let the place of paradox be a vibrant, creative place. Realise you don't have to solve a paradox. You live

it. It may be feel a risky place. But you are learning to walk on water! The God of the impossible (Lk.1:37) is upholding you. For as long as you can, stay with Jesus in the darkness. He is not faraway. He is within reach. But you are standing alone before him and the raging elements.

7 handclasp As you feel you are sinking, Jesus reaches out his hand to you. He holds you. You will be OK. As he had a question for Peter (*'why did you doubt?'*, v 31), what is he asking of you? What question do you hear from Jesus?

8 response *Those in the boat worshipped him (v. 33).* Getting back in the boat, you feel relief that you are, in a sense at least, 'back home', out of danger. What do you want to say to Jesus? Conclude by giving thanks. Then let the boat take you safely back to shore. You will never be the same again! *When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret (v. 34)*

What do you want to take away from this, and maybe discuss with a spiritual director or soul friend?

PATHWAYS IN PRAYER: DAILY REVIEW (EXAMEN) –JOURNALLING

The Daily Review in this form derives from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola. It is a wonderful tool for noticing and celebrating the movements of God in your life, and best done towards the close of the day or after Evening Prayer. It can be combined with journalling, as you note down in a special notebook or dedicated diary perceptions of the Divine, and a sense of where you are opening up to God, or not, in your life. As you review the journal over weeks you can celebrate – hopefully! – a sense of progress in your spiritual journey. Of course, in your journal you can use images, sketches or whatever helps you express yourself. It would be good to share it occasionally with a spiritual director or soul friend.

A TRADITIONAL 5-POINT REVIEW

1 Make a simple prayer for enlightenment. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to see yourself as God sees you (in love.) This is essential as you need to rest securely in God's love at the start of this prayer.

2 Let your heart rest quietly in gratitude, for all the gifts in your life.

3 Live your life backwards & remember & reflect on your day. Where was God ? Be specific. Recall the places, times, people, situations where you felt grateful & the places where you felt struggle, difficulty, hardship etc. Be present in memory to all of your day's events, not just the "pleasant" parts. God's presence was here.

4 Ask for a sense of sorrow for the times when you failed to live & be gospel/good news to yourself, others & our world. Make a simple prayer for forgiveness.

5 Conclude with a prayer of hope for tomorrow & ask that you may live the next day with an open, loving heart, responsive to the unique call of God in your life.

As you practise the Examen daily, you will be able to sift and sort your inner feelings, desires, movements of spirit more easily, so that you live your life with a discerning heart at ALL times. You learn to understand that ALL IS GIFT.

The Examen helps you to grow in a faith sensitivity to the special ways that God has of approaching YOU through your humanity. It is a daily prayer of renewal and growth.