

Journaling

Journaling can, at first, seem a challenging way of praying because we are trying to put into words our encounter with God, who is Holy Mystery. But don't feel daunted by this: it is effectively a conversation between you and God, for God's and your eyes only!

There are many ways of doing it, and there is no set pattern to follow. So you need not worry about 'doing it right'. Your entries may take the form of a poem, a letter or email, but there is no requirement to add a date, although this can be useful for future reference.

Some days you may want to write lots, other times only a few lines or even just random words. You may even want to doodle or sketch, using colour to express your mood, and while it is not a scrapbook as such, you might even want to use photographs or other images you have come across that express something of your inner world, and where you are with God.

Book Suggestion:

How to keep a Spiritual Journal by Ron Klug

Front cover image: S Carlsson



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Journaling is a process that enables us to express what is going on in our innermost being. Its purpose is not to replay every moment of our day - our diaries record exterior movements, events, and appointments - but rather to discern and record significant inner stirrings: feelings, reactions, intuitions, desires, emotions, thoughts and insights.

It can be considered as another way of praying when we use it to explore our relationship with God; going deeper to sift through the gifts of life. The process of journaling can enable you to

- ✎ express your true feelings in a prayerful way
- ✎ help review your prayer times
- ✎ consider important questions and concerns
- ✎ make discoveries about yourself, your faith journey and your relationship with God
- ✎ discern how God is meeting you or leading you in your life and prayer
- ✎ recall the events that have enriched you and your relationships with others.

Your journal can so become a rich spiritual treasure to which you can return from time to time, and help you see the patterns in your life.

You do not have to be a specially gifted religious person to keep a journal, nor do you have to be 'good' at writing – or any kind of art form! All it takes is a willingness to try, to do it in an atmosphere of openness, reflection and meditation, and to be authentic.

How to approach it

It is very important to begin each journaling session in stillness, undistracted, acknowledging God's presence in the activity. Then allow any images, thoughts, feelings, prayers, colours, patterns, people, situations to come into your heart and mind.

Try not to analyse or judge, just trust the process. Remember that above all, God asks you to be your honest self, and loves you for being exactly who you are. So do your journaling in a style that is comfortable to you. Just to guide you in the process, you may consider:

- ✎ What were the significant feelings, reactions, intuitions, desires, emotions, thoughts, or insights I have received?
- ✎ What has been life-giving; what has not?
- ✎ What were my prevailing moods: peace, agitation, excitement, boredom, confusion, calm?
- ✎ What word, phrase, image, or memory meant the most to me?
- ✎ Is there some unfinished business that I think God is calling me to return to during this time of prayer?
- ✎ Is there something happening in my life that is becoming part of my prayer?
- ✎ Do I feel moved to do something concrete in my life?
- ✎ Is there anything I am doing or not doing that is getting in the way of my listening to God?

