

Praying the place

How can we pray the place as easily as we can pray the 'Our Father'? (Note that Christianity itself is an outdoors religion and that its foundational events – crucifixion, resurrection, post-resurrection appearances, and commission to the women as well as the Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20) – were all outside events.) Here are some suggestions:

1. Select a place that you can visit every day for a week, even if only for a few moments. Deliberately attend to it using all your senses. Keep a daily journal of reflections on your 'place'. It may be somewhere outdoors or your workplace, office, classroom, bus shelter, garden shed, kitchen.
2. Glance up at the clouds. Let them be biblical reminders of God's presence.
3. Imagine God is walking right beside you and therefore there is nothing to fear.
4. Use local sounds/sirens as a call to prayer like the *Angelus*.
5. Be conscious of the wind and experience it as God's spirit.
6. Thank God for something particular about the place.
7. Look at gardens and reflect on what is growing/dying/needs pruning/flowering in your life.
8. Focus on or pick up a stone as a reminder of God's steadfast love.
9. Let the rain falling on you be a reminder of God's gentle presence.
10. Pray with a mantra: for example, 'Here, in this place', 'Here, in your presence'.
11. Pause at your gate/letterbox. Be grateful for your home.
12. Remove your shoes at the door reminding yourself you are entering holy ground.
13. Look up at the sky. The sun, moon, and stars that Jesus saw are the same ones we see. *Matariki* (Pleiades) visible in the June sky features five times in the Bible: for example, Amos 5:8.
14. Select a place outdoors. Use your senses to attend to it. Read a scripture passage (aloud, if possible) slowly. Imagine that creation itself is hearing the word of its Creator.
15. Use your phone to take photos to use as 'prayer prompts' later.

Another suggestion: Take a 'place' walk in your local environment, allowing the place itself to speak to you. Below is an example of such a walk in Newtown, a very old and ethnically diverse southern suburb of Wellington.

Aspects of life and death are very distinctive and real in Newtown: hospitals, rest homes, the Hospice, language nests, schools, playgrounds, sporting complexes, funeral homes, the zoo, and the abortion clinic are places that capture some of the rhythm of life and death here – life in all its fragility, from womb to tomb.

Imagine that Riddiford St, a main street in Newtown, is a magnificent medieval Gothic cathedral with every shop window fashioned in beautiful stained glass:

- What stories of faith do these windows tell?
- What word of God is proclaimed? What challenge does it offer?
- What art and architecture is evident? Where are the baptismal font, the organ, the Stations of the Cross and the statues?
- What's missing?
- What are the distinctive sounds of this imaginary cathedral? What does the Angelus bell sound like? Is it the police, fire, and ambulance sirens, or the helicopter landing at Wellington Hospital?
- What are the distinctive smells of this cathedral? What do flowers, bread, candles, and incense smell like?
- Who are the worshipping community? From where have they come? What joys and sorrows are etched on their faces? Who is on the periphery?
- What liturgies and rituals are enacted and celebrated here?
- What needs my involvement?