

Session 2 Raising our hearts and minds to God: Prayer

Introductory Activity

5mins

Invite participants to share something that has stayed with them from last week or something from their homework.

Prayer

10mins

Lectio Divina using the gospel of the day, or the Sunday gospel or the following extract from Pope Francis' *Gaudete et Exsultate* (The Gospel of Joy [2013]):

151. We need to remember that “contemplation of the face of Jesus, died and risen, restores our humanity, even when it has been broken by the troubles of this life or marred by sin. We must not domesticate the power of the face of Christ”. So let me ask you: Are there moments when you place yourself quietly in the Lord’s presence, when you calmly spend time with him, when you bask in his gaze? Do you let his fire inflame your heart? Unless you let him warm you more and more with his love and tenderness, you will not catch fire. How will you then be able to set the hearts of others on fire by your words and witness? If, gazing on the face of Christ, you feel unable to let yourself be healed and transformed, then enter into the Lord’s heart, into his wounds, for that is the abode of divine mercy.

Activity

30mins

- What is prayer?
 - How did you learn to pray?
 - What is your favourite way to pray?
 - Where is your favourite place to pray?
1. Reflect on the questions individually.
Small group sharing.
 2. Read the definitions of prayer on the list provided. Select three which appeal most. Rank them.
Share with group the reasons for your selection and ranking.

Input

20mins

- Watch Ronald Rolheiser on prayer [Lifting the mind and heart to God](#)
 - As you watch jot down his two rules for prayer.
 - No wrong way to pray.
 - Show up.
 - What did you learn from his three stories/incidents? (Man in field/alphabet, tired boy, mother in rest home.)
- [Watch Conversation with Rolheiser](#)

- (Rolheiser is asked several questions about prayer. Before you watch the video jot down a couple of questions you would like to ask him.)
- Now watch a different perspective on prayer from Robert Barron [Bishop Barron on prayer](#)
 - As you watch jot down his five recommendations:
 - Take the time.
 - Find the centre.
 - Speak to God with honesty.
 - Listen attentively.
 - Make room for silence.

Activity

20mins

Take some time now to reflect on both perspectives

- What did you learn?
- What remains with you?
- What inspired/consolated you?
- What challenged/confused you?
- What left you stirred up/uncomfortable?
- How may what you have learnt affect your prayer life?
- Is there some aspect of prayer you would like to explore further?
- Are there any new words you need to add to your Glossary?

Small group sharing.

Homework

- Considering what you have heard/learnt in this session, spend some time looking back at your homework from the first session. There may be something you wish to change/add to your chart, list and paragraph.
- Explore one further resource listed below and be prepared to share your findings at the next session.

Action

- Considering what you have heard/learnt in this session and any implications that your learning may have for your own spirituality of service, commit to a concrete action. Add it to your calendar/diary.

Further resources

Barron [Having-a-personal-relationship-with-Jesus](#)

The best summary of everything to do with prayer is found in CCC Part4
<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>

Short, helpful explanations about five aspects of prayer:

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/practical.html>

- [Finding Intimacy with God in everyday life.](#)
- [Prayer as Relationship](#)
- [To Whom Do I Pray?](#)
- [Using Ritual Every Day](#)
- [Praying in Times of Crisis](#)

[Sacred space](#)

[Pathways to God](#)

<https://www.pathwaystogod.org/resources/praying-art>

Pray as you go

<https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/>

Stations of the Cross

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/retreat/stations-of-the-cross>

Rosary

[pray as you go](#)

Praying with St Ignatius

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/go-deeper/praying-with-st-ignatius/>

Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/woi/>

Breathing and Body Exercises

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/prepare/>

Imaginative Contemplation

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/index.php?id=133>

Examen

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/index.php?id=131>

Ecological examen

<http://www.ecologicalexamen.org/>

Tom Groome and Colleen Griffith [Catholic Spiritual Practices: A Treasury of Old and New](#) Note:

1. Most of the practices explored in the book referred to in the presentation are available [here](#)
2. Towards the end of the presentation Groome notes that practices concerning the liturgical seasons are absent. You may want to reflect on the NZ context.

Elizabeth Johnson

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/stm/sites/encore/main/2013/Spirituality-and-the-Evolving-Earth.html>

James Martin 'A spirituality of real life'

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/stm/sites/encore/main/2011/Jesuit-Guide.html>

Kathy Hendricks 'Spiritual practices for family life'

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/stm/sites/encore/main/2009/garden-grace.html>

Ronald Rolheiser

[Creating Sabbath space in our lives](#)

Rolheiser also has short reflections on every spiritual topic imaginable. Look [here](#) and then go to the archive section

Richard Rohr

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0o5J0-8OA0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KHBbTGII54>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FW2ozEW0MhM>

<https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

Ways to pray with Scripture

<http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Prayer-Methods.htm>

A simple guide to writing prayers out of ordinary life

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/lord-teach-us-pray>

For devotions concerning Mary

<https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/index.php>

Joan Chittister [Contemplation in the midst of chaos](#)

[Seeking the interior life](#)

<http://www.joanchittister.org/joan-chittister-videos>

http://www.mysteryandbeyond.org/circles_intro.asp

NZCBC

<https://www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/bishops-statements/prayer-in-the-busyness-of-life/>

<https://www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/bishops-statements/pastoral-letter-on-the-rosary/>

[Finding Jesus in the Scriptures](#)

[Daily prayer](#)

[Prayer resources](#)

Praying the place (*included as an additional handout*)

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?