

AT THE MEETING

OPENING PRAYER

We begin, as usual, with a short time of stillness, putting ourselves in the presence of God and asking for grace that everything that happens in our mind, heart and imagination may be directed purely to the praise and service of God. *Some communities use the CLC opening prayer, or some other formal prayer, to conclude this brief time of stillness. Others use a minute or two of suitable music.*

GRACE We ask to be able to let God lead us in our prayers.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 3: 14-21. (Ask someone to read this aloud.)

SILENCE

Ten minutes silent prayer remembering my life and prayer since the last meeting. How have I found the prayer this last fortnight? What events in my life and prayer do I wish to share with my community?

SHARING AND LISTENING

- Remember that this is a listening, not a discussion, group.
- Include a second round if there is time.
- It's good to conclude this time of reflection with a short time of silence, praying for each other, and with a formal prayer, such as the *Glory Be* or the *Lord's Prayer*.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER, if wanted.

PRACTICALITIES: This is an opportunity for any reports, eg from members who have attended a CLC event, for questions, for discussion about any concerns, for news about any work or mission in which members might be involved, or for any business the group might need to sort out.

REVIEW OF THE MEETING

What was good for me in this meeting?
What was not so good? What would I have liked to be different?
What do I want to take away with me?

CLOSING PRAYER (Many communities use the CLC closing prayer.)



MEETING PLANS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

LETTING GOD LEAD ME



The Lord went in front of them

**TOWARDS
MEETING TEN**

PERSONAL PRAYER BEFORE THE MEETING

A reminder of the suggested stages of prayer...

PREPARATORY PRAYER Begin as the previous leaflets suggested.

ASKING FOR WHAT I WANT To be able to let God lead me in my prayer.

MATERIAL FOR PRAYER This time, start with the article, as it will help you pray the scriptures better. Then choose one of the passages, staying with it until you are ready to move on to one of the others. Don't worry if you don't pray all of them.

• Read and pray with the article below. The questions may help your review.

- * 1 John 4: 7- 19 * Mark 4: 35-41 * Ephesians 3: 14-21
- * John 15: 9-15 * Psalm 139(8): 1-18 * Mark 10: 46-52

TALKING WITH THE LORD Ensure that, at the end of your prayer, you spend time talking directly with the Lord. You may like to end your prayer with a *Glory Be*.

Remember your review of prayer! (The article gives plenty of hints.)

LETTING GOD LEAD ME IN PRAYER

IGNATIAN REPETITION

God is always present in my prayer, but there are times when that is more obvious than others, for example when I am made to be aware of the Father's love or forgiveness. These times we call **consolation**, as we do those painful occasions when God allows us to realise our sinfulness or how much Christ suffered for us. *Consolation is always a felt movement towards God or my neighbour.*

God's presence in my prayer is less obvious when I seem to be in darkness, confusion, and feel little trust in God, who may seem to have deserted me. This **desolation** is caused by a lack of harmony between what God wants for me and what I consider my better interests.

Desolation is a felt movement towards myself, perhaps self-pity or fear combined with a reluctance to bring what's troubling me to God. God's grace is trying to reach me and unconsciously I am resisting.

Since God is at work in us during both these experiences, it is good to stay with the topic in which they arise until we have been given all God wants to give us. Perhaps we are reluctant to stay with the theme which has brought us consolation, believing 'we've done that' and it is time to move on, but experience shows that in these circumstances to move on is to leave God behind. As Ignatius says, *I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire,*

without any eagerness to go on until I have been satisfied. He means stay there, if necessary for days! This allows our prayer to deepen and the message to be really taken to heart. Our prayer becomes simpler and still, so that eventually we are there just being grateful, or sorry, or loving.

It is much more common not to want to stay with what has brought **desolation**. **Desolation** brings so much pain or dryness that we may not want to pray at all, never mind try to pray with the very theme which seemed to bring it on. But that is what we need to do. **Desolation** is like a door, which if we keep pushing, will eventually yield, letting us through to some gift, which God wants to give us. So we need to stay there, asking God's help, expressing our helplessness and neediness.

There is one kind of desolation, which Ignatius does not explicitly mention. It happens when I am using my imagination to pray an incident in Jesus' life, but I may find it difficult to get close to him, or I am there with Jesus, but he has his back to me or I am engaged in the scene but peripherally, so as not to be involved with Jesus. The basic grace we are asking for, in all such scenes, is to know him more nearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly. In the examples above that is not happening. I need to return to the scene and ask to meet Jesus in it.

Experience shows repetition to be one of St Ignatius' important insights. It suggests that it is not always good to be using a different piece of scripture every day: often it is much better to stay longer with the one passage until it speaks to you deeply. Repetition also requires us to review our prayer.

REVIEW

If I am to be sensitive to the way God is dealing with me in prayer, then I cannot just walk away from it when my time of prayer comes to an end. I need to spend a little time reflecting on the experience, asking myself such questions as these:

What feelings did I have during the prayer?

Were there movements of consolation or desolation (ie did I feel drawn towards God or did I begin to focus on my negative feelings and not use them as a way to God?)

What held my attention?

How and when were God and I present or absent to each other?

Did I receive the grace?

Was there anything in the prayer that I couldn't face?

Is there anything to which it would be good for me to return?

Usually it is enough just to spend a couple of minutes asking myself these or similar questions, after my prayer is over, and making a few brief notes for when I next come to prayer. The review acts as a connecting link between my periods of prayer.

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