

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 for help to listen to the persons of the Trinity.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 55: 2-3 (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



LISTENING TO THE TRINITY

PLEASE READ THE
INTRODUCTORY
LEAFLET FIRST

TOWARDS
MEETING EIGHT

PERSONAL PRAYER BEFORE THE MEETING

A reminder of the suggested stages of prayer . . .

PREPARATORY PRAYER Begin in the usual way.

ASKING FOR WHAT I WANT I ask for help to listen to the persons of the Trinity.

MATERIAL FOR PRAYER Read the article below and let your heart be lifted into prayer. Try to pray using its suggestions. The scripture passages are to fill our hearts while we pray in the manner the article suggests.

* 1 Kings 19: 11-12 * Isaiah 55: 2-3 * John 14: 23 & 15: 4

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

REVIEW OF PRAYER Afterwards, look back over your prayer and make some notes.

AN APPROACH TO LISTENING TO THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

How can we define prayer in such a way as to cover all the possible ways we pray? Perhaps as follows:

Prayer is being present to the persons of the Trinity:

- ❖ within us
- ❖ within others
- ❖ in nature
- ❖ in Scripture
- ❖ in the Sacraments

How are we present to others?

Not by doing all the talking. Yet that is often how we treat our friends, the Trinity. It is much more important to listen when we are 'in God's presence' than to talk. Best of all is dialogue in which we talk to the Trinity as to friends who want to be intimate with us and want to invite us into their home for ever.

How do we try to listen?

Whenever we try to listen, we can find it hard to concentrate. Listening needs quiet in both mind and body, moving into prayer deliberately and slowly helps with this. "Before entering into prayer, let the spirit rest a little, considering where you are going and for what" (Sp. Exx. §239). St Ignatius also advises us to pause as we approach prayer, to realise that God is "looking at me" (§75), Teresa of Avila adds "looking at me lovingly and humbly": key additions, which affect our image of God. Our posture matters. It needs to be restful and relaxed, so that our body can be still. The spine is best erect, giving support. Perhaps, too, our feet need to be firmly planted on the ground, in every sense.

However I want to pray, first it helps to surrender myself to the Trinity through the preparatory prayer, asking that

everything that follows may be directed to God's service and praise. After that whatever happens is prayer. Then I ask for what I want (the grace); a petition to return to often.

It also helps to use what are called stillness exercises. These can involve focussing on our breathing, or our sensations or on the sounds around and within us. You may use them just to quiet yourself at the beginning of prayer. For many experienced people who pray such exercises will occupy most of the rest of the prayer; there may indeed come a time in your prayer development when all you can do is to try just to be there. It is then that these stillness exercises can be a great resource. Other people may use repeatedly a mantra, such as 'I believe in your love for me'. Yet others need to stay with God without even these supports.

Many won't be able to find a really quiet prayer place. Then a SOUNDS EXERCISE can help. Instead of the sounds around us becoming a distraction, we make them part of our prayer. We listen to them, not as this sound or that, but as an orchestra of sounds. We begin by focussing on those outside, like the car noises, trying to listen to them as sounds amongst other unnamed sounds. Then we add on the inside sounds, such as those the children are making, and then perhaps those within ourselves. We are content just to concentrate on this medley around us.



You may want to ask: where is God in this exercise? Well, God provides and sustains it all. Creation is entertaining us. Above all, we are letting God into the resulting quiet of mind and heart.

Similarly there is the SENSATIONS EXERCISE, where we pay attention simply to the many feelings on the surface of our body. If your eyes are closed, you can start with your hands, just noticing all you can about them: how one hand is in relation to the other, how the fingers are in relation to the thumb, how cold or warm they feel, or anything else about them. Then go on to do the same with the other parts of your body; quietly and without rush, touring the whole of its surface again and again noticing what you can.

However you have prayed, it is always good near the end to talk to the Trinity in an intimate, friendly, and open way about all that is in your heart. Ignatius calls this a *colloquy*. Perhaps your attention has been wholly concerned with your body sensations, but now you discover that something has changed within you: it may be an attitude, or the way you see something. Then talk to the persons of the Trinity about it. It is good to close with a vocal prayer, such as an Our Father, like a farewell until your next prayer time.

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The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius is a handbook for those leading others in prayer. See the enclosed leaflet