

PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

Staying with God as we
journey towards Easter





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For Lent 2023, the Bishops of London Diocese hosted five online sessions exploring ancient ways of Christian prayer that are still relevant today and can help us spend time in the presence of God.

The evenings were opened with a short liturgy after which the prayer practices were introduced by a guest speaker.

This is a pack of the handouts that accompanied those sessions. Each handout includes an introduction to the practice, an outline of the practice and a going deeper section with more information.

Video recordings of the session can be accessed here:

london.anglican.org/lentprayer2023

These sessions are not specific to Lent and can be used outside Lent by individuals and/or small groups wanting to explore these practices.



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

THE LITURGY

OPENING

1 Candle

We light our candles as a sign of God's presence with us.

2 Breath Prayer

After a moment of silence, we pray the following breath prayer:

(BREATHE IN) *Nothing can separate us*

(BREATHE OUT) *from the love of God.*

Repeat three times.

3 Opening Prayer

FACILITATOR: In the Bible, there are many references to fire. It is a sign of God's presence. It is where God calls Moses, where Jesus gathers his friends, and appears in tongues on the head of the believers as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit...

Fire cleanses and warms, protects and illuminates. It is also beautiful, wild, untameable and mysterious.

We are invited to gather around a fire to feel its warmth and watch the flames. God is here, this is Holy Ground.

We meet in the name of God, our maker, redeemer and friend.

ALL:

In the warmth of the fire may we find peace.

In the flames of the fire may we find mercy.

In the light of the fire may we find blessing.

In the mystery of the fire may we encounter holiness.

As we gather in this place may you bind us together in love. Amen.

CLOSING

1 Breath Prayer

After a moment of silence, we pray the following breath prayer:

(BREATHE IN) *Nothing can separate us*

(BREATHE OUT) *from the love of God.*

Repeat three times.

2 Closing Prayer

FACILITATOR: We met in the name of God, our maker, redeemer and friend.

ALL:

We thank you for the warmth of your peace,

The flames of your mercy,

The light of your blessing,

The mystery of your holiness.

As we leave this place,

may you send us out together in love.

3 Blessings

FACILITATOR:

May the strength of God sustain us;

may the power of God preserve us;

may the hands of God protect us;

may the way of God direct us;

may the love of God go with us

this night and forever.

ALL: ***Amen.***

We blow out our candles.

PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

SESSION 1

The Examen

1. Introduction:
Background
Summary of the Practice
Ways to use the Practice
Time
2. Outline
The Practice in 5 Steps
3. Going Deeper
Questions for Reflection
Resources
Feedback





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

THE EXAMEN

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

The Examen is a spiritual practice created by priest and theologian St Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. It is a prayer of thankful reflection; a tool to walk through the recent past with God. We notice and name God's presence in joyful and difficult moments and ask God to help resolve how to live well in the future. Regular use of the practice can aid discernment. By attentiveness to moments of joy and thankfulness, or the opposite, God shows us where to direct our time and energy and what to be less involved or concerned with.

◆ Summary of the Practice

The Examen is based around three questions:

1. When have I been most grateful?

This question enables us to see where God is in the present.

Our response is thanksgiving.

2. When have I been least grateful?

This question enables us to name our fears, anxieties and the things we lament.

Our response is to ask for peace.

3. What am I hoping for?

This question enables us to look to the future in faith.

Our response is to seek God's blessing.

◆ Ways to use the Practice

This prayer can be done on your own, as well as in a group. It is a lovely way to end the day with children, simply asking them what made them happy, what made them sad and what they would like to pray for tomorrow.

Though traditionally used as a daily prayer, it is possible to use the Examen to review longer periods of time or specific topics, for instance to review the past year, while in your current job role or during a retreat. You could lead yourself through the prayer or use an app. A list of examples can be found in the resource list below.

We have also developed a Community Examen, which can be used in small groups or to start or close a PCC, Synod or other meetings. You can find an outline for the Community Examen on www.wayoflife.london.

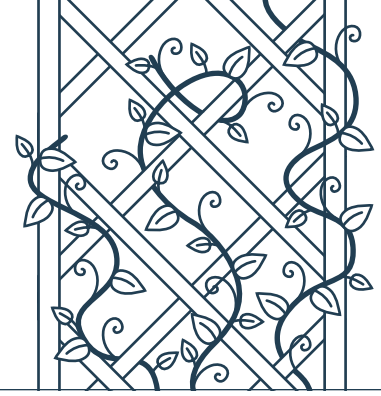
◆ Time

The Examen is a short and simple practice and all about finding God in the everyday. It is 'stretchy', as you can make it as short or as long as you like, from a few minutes up to half an hour.



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR AT LENT

THE EXAMEN



OUTLINE

1 Relax

Begin by taking some time to become aware of God's presence. Find a comfortable position. You might light a candle, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you. Sit in the silence for a while.

2 Review

Look back on the day's events in the presence of Jesus. What happened? What did the day feel like? Let the day play back through your mind, no strain at all, just letting whatever will come to mind, come to mind. Pay attention to the details. If this is helpful for you, place your hand on your heart.

3 Reflect

Based on your day's review, pay attention to your emotions. Ask Jesus to bring to your heart the moment today for which you are *most grateful*. What made you happy? If you could relive one moment, which one would it be? When were you most able to give and receive love today?

Ask yourself what was said and done in the moment that made it so special. Breathe in the gratitude you feel and receive life again from that moment.

Now ask Jesus to bring to your heart the moment today for which you are *least grateful*. When were you sad? When were you least able to give and receive love?

Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so difficult. Be with whatever you feel without trying to change or fix it in any way. You may wish to take deep breaths and let God's love fill you just as you are.

4 Respond

Have a conversation with Jesus and express your hopes for tomorrow. As you look to the future in faith, ask for help to be aware of God's loving presence and blessings on what is to come.

5 Rest

Spend a moment resting in the quiet and in gratitude; knowing Jesus has been with you in your praying and listening, hears your prayers and is with you now.

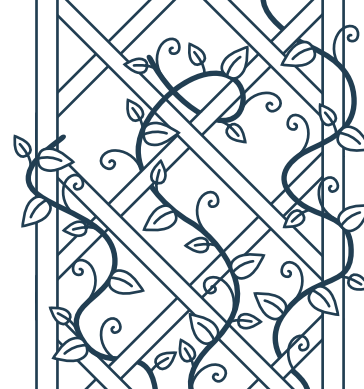
**Where it says Jesus, you can replace this with God or the Holy Spirit and vice versa.*





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

THE EXAMEN



GOING DEEPER

◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to the Examen practice? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

The focus of this exercise is not on the content of people's prayer or what they have spoken about with God. What we are inviting you to do is reflect on the practice itself, how it is or might be useful to you and your church community and how you might practically build it into your life. If someone does share something personal about their experience of the practice, we encourage you to simply say 'thank you' and hold what was shared, possibly with a short moment of silence before moving on.

◆ Resources

Books

- *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer*, Jim Manney (Loyola Press, 2011)
- *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh Ways to Pray from Your Day*, Mark E. Thibodeaux, (Loyola Press, 2015)
- *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life*, Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant, Matthew Linn, (Paulist Press, 1995)
- *The Examen Book*, Paul Mitchell, (Loyola Press, 2022) // for families and children

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Pray As You Go* (in the Retreats and Series section), Jesuit Media Initiatives
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/series/3-examen-prayer> // includes versions for children and young people
- *Re-Imagining the Examen*, Mark E. Thibodeaux
<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/reimagining-examen-app/>
- *Examen*, Fuller Seminary
<https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/prayer-of-examen/>



We would very much appreciate your feedback on this Prayer Practices for Lent Session and Handout. [Click or scan QR code to share your thoughts.](#)

PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

SESSION 2

Lectio Divina

1. Introduction:
Background
Summary of the Practice
Ways to use the Practice
Time
2. Outline
The Practice in 6 Steps
3. Going Deeper
Questions for Reflection
Resources
Feedback





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

LECTIO DIVINA

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

Lectio Divina or Sacred Reading is an ancient tradition which came from the desert monks of fourth century North Africa and was then established in European monastic communities through St Benedict. Traditionally it involved a 'slow reading' of a chosen text from the Bible and allowing the words to speak in new ways.

◆ Summary of the Practice

Once you have selected a Bible passage and have taken some time to settle, there are four parts to a Lectio Divina exercise: Read, Reflect, Respond, Rest. These four movements may not always follow a linear progression. The aim is to move into the depths of silence and stillness where we can hear the Word spoken to us in love and respond to this Word with our love and our life. This is a gentle invitation into a movement from silence into the Word and back into silence, dwelling there in the presence of God.

◆ Ways to use the Practice

This is a practice that can be done on your own, as well as in a group with someone leading the practice. In a group setting, you might ask everyone to share the word or phrase that has stood out to them. If there are children in the group, encourage them to share first.

Children in particular might find it helpful to use crafts to draw or write the word or phrases of the passage that speak to them.

There are different variations of the practice, including Visio Divina (using icons, images, or objects). Dwelling in the Word, another variation of this practice, can be used in small groups or to start a PCC, Synod or other meetings. You can find an outline for Dwelling in the Word on www.wayoflife.london.

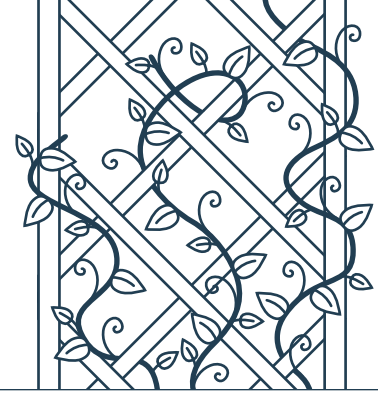
◆ Time

Lectio Divina is a listening practice, which ideally should not be rushed. If on your own, you could probably do the practice in about 10-15 minutes. For groups, we would suggest anything from 15-30 minutes.



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

LECTIO DIVINA



OUTLINE

1 Select

Choose your Bible passage. You could use the lectionary, or choose any passage that you would like to sit with for a while. *For our Prayer Practices for Lent online session, we will be using Matthew 20:29-34.*

2 Settle

Begin by taking some time to get comfortable. You might light a candle to be reminded of God's presence, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you. Sit in the silence for a while.

3 Read

Read the passage slowly, a few times, with some generous silence in between each reading. Savour each word and phrase. Read the passage until there is a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you. If you find it helpful, you might want to write it down or draw it on a piece of paper.

4 Reflect

Ponder this word or phrase for a few minutes. Savour it, brood over it, let it sink in. You might notice thoughts, ideas, feelings, memories or images that are called to mind by the word or phrase. Listen for what the word or phrase is saying to you at this moment in your life, what it may be offering to you, what it may be demanding of you.

5 Respond

Speak to God from the quiet of your heart about the passage and the word or phrase that stood out to you. Whatever is in your heart to say, ask, repeat, wonder or complain about... Alternatively, you could write down the thoughts that have come your way.

6 Rest

Spend a moment resting in the quiet; knowing God has been with you in your praying and listening, hears your prayers and is with you now.

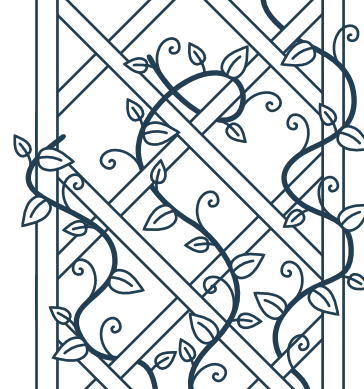
**Where it says God, you can replace this with Jesus or the Holy Spirit and vice versa.*





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

LECTIO DIVINA



GOING DEEPER

◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to that short practice of Lectio Divina? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- Are there any other helpful resources you use to read Scripture?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

The focus of this exercise is not on the content of people's prayer or what they have spoken about with God. What we are inviting you to do is reflect on the practice itself, how it is or might be useful to you and your church community and how you might practically build it into your life. If someone does share something personal about their experience of the practice, we encourage you to simply say 'thank you' and hold what was shared, possibly with a short moment of silence before moving on.

◆ Resources

Books

- *Lectio Divina: The Sacred Art, Transforming Words & Images Into Heart-Centered Prayer*, Christine Valters Painter (SPCK, 2021)
- *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, Rich Villodas (Waterbrook, 2020), page 37-41

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Lectio 365, 24/7 Prayer*
<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>
- *Pray As You Go*, Jesuit Media Initiatives
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/series/16-how-to-pray-with-lectio-divina>



We would very much appreciate your feedback on this Prayer Practices for Lent Session and Handout. [Click or scan QR code to share your thoughts.](#)

PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

SESSION 3

Centring Prayer

1. Introduction:
Background
Summary of the Practice
Ways to use the Practice
Time
2. Outline
The Practice in 6 Steps
3. Going Deeper
Questions for Reflection
Resources
Feedback





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

CENTRING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

Centring Prayer is a way of entering into silent prayer. It moves us from more active and wordy kinds of prayer into a place of resting in God. It is not intended to replace our other ways of praying, but to deepen them and underpin them.

This prayer practice has been part of the Church's tradition since the earliest days, but most recently it has been developed and taught as a method by Thomas Keating – an American Benedictine Abbot who challenged his monks at St. Joseph's Abbey to encapsulate their practice in a method that could be effective beyond the cloister walls for the 20th century.

**Note: 'Centring Prayer' is the UK spelling, though many might be more familiar with the US spelling 'Centering Prayer'.*

◆ Summary of the Practice

Centring Prayer is simply about sitting in silence in the presence of God. We use a single word or short phrase as an anchor to tether our wandering mind. The 'wandering mind' is really part of it all; it is to be expected and we should try not to fight it. Can we instead embrace ourselves with all our distractive thoughts and try to gently bring ourselves back to our sacred word?

◆ Ways to use the Practice

You can do this practice on your own, as well as in a group. The app 'Centering Prayer' gives you some tools to mark the beginning and end of your time.

If children are involved, start off with short moments of silence, like 30 seconds or a minute. They might like to hold something in their hand, like a holding cross, stone or fidget toy, or look at a candle to help them focus.

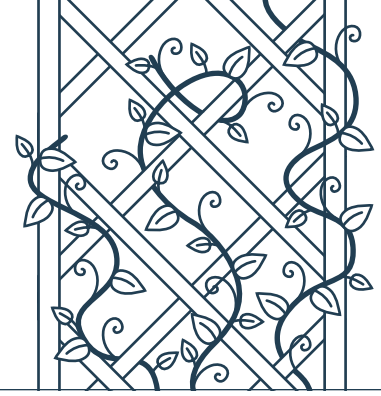
◆ Time

You might want to start off with short periods of 3-5 minutes. See if you can gradually work your way to 20-25 minutes.



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

CENTRING PRAYER



OUTLINE

1 Set Time

Decide how much time you want to spend praying and set an alarm or use the 'Centering Prayer' app. This will help you to stay focused in your prayer and not have to keep checking your watch.

2 Settle

Begin by taking some time to get comfortable. You might light a candle to be reminded of God's presence, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you.

3 Sacred Word

As you enter this time of silence, see if a word comes to mind, mull it over and see if it seems good to you. This could be any word that you are drawn to, for instance Presence, Grace, Silence, God, Love, etc. Choose this sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. Having chosen a word, don't change it during this period of prayer. Children might find it easier to use an object like a holding cross, candle or stone rather than a word.

4 Consent

Sitting comfortably and with your eyes closed, introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

5 Stay

Thoughts, feelings, outside distractions will emerge. This is normal! Notice them but don't engage them in conversation. Take a few deep breaths and gently return to your sacred word (or object).

6 Emerge

When your alarm or the app rings, remain in silence with your eyes closed for another moment. In your own time, set your sacred word down. Spend a few moments noticing what was going on within.

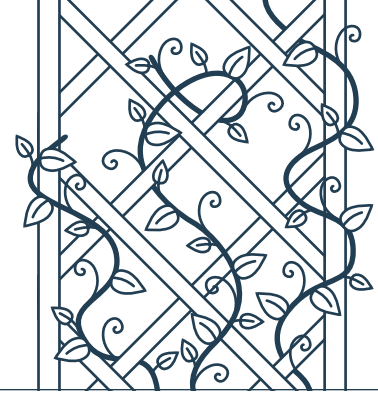
**Where it says God, you can replace this with Jesus or the Holy Spirit and vice versa.*





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

CENTRING PRAYER



GOING DEEPER

◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to the practice of Centring Prayer? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

The focus of this exercise is not on the content of people's prayer or what they have spoken about with God. What we are inviting you to do is reflect on the practice itself, how it is or might be useful to you and your church community and how you might practically build it into your life. If someone does share something personal about their experience of the practice, we encourage you to simply say 'thank you' and hold what was shared, possibly with a short moment of silence before moving on.

◆ Resources

Books

- *Centering Prayer: Sitting Quietly in God's Presence Can Change Your Life*, Brian D. Russell (Paraclete Press, 2021)

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Centering Prayer: the very basics*: www.contemplative.org/contemplative-practice/centering-prayer/
- *Centering Prayer App*, Contemplative Outreach
<https://contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-mobile-app/>



We would very much appreciate your feedback on this Prayer Practices for Lent Session and Handout. [Click or scan QR code to share your thoughts.](#)

PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

SESSION 4

Imaginative Contemplation

1. Introduction:
Background
Summary of the Practice
Ways to use the Practice
Time
2. Outline
The Practice in 6 Steps
3. Going Deeper
Questions for Reflection
Resources
Feedback
4. Artwork for Online Session





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

Imaginative Contemplation is a form of meditation developed by priest and theologian St Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. It involves allowing the Spirit of God to help you imaginatively enter a Bible passage, centring around an event in the life of Christ as presented in the Gospels.

◆ Summary of the Practice

Imagine yourself being part of the story in the passage – ‘as if you are there’. To ask yourself: What can I hear? What can I see? What can I smell? What can I touch? What can I taste? Using your imagination, allow the story to speak to you in a fresh way and into your daily life.

◆ Ways to use the Practice

You can do this practice on your own, as well as in a group. The app Pray As You Go has some recorded versions of this type of contemplation, which is a helpful way of becoming familiar with the practice. The practice can be very appealing to children as they tend to have a great ability to be imaginative. They might like to reimagine the story using crafts, wooden figures, Playmobil or Lego figures.

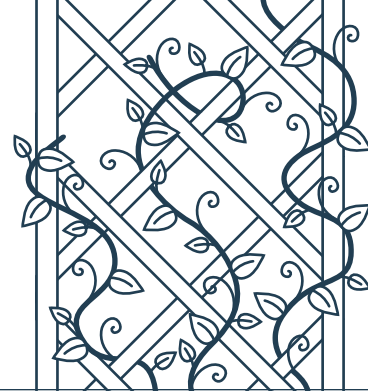
◆ Time

Imaginative Contemplation is a listening practice, which ideally should not be rushed. The practice takes at least 10 minutes, but could go on as long as you like.



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION



OUTLINE

1 Select

Select a Gospel account of one event in the life of Christ. *For our Prayer Practices for Lent online session, we will be using Mark 5:21-34: Jesus and the woman with a haemorrhage.*

2 Settle

Begin by taking some time to get comfortable. You might light a candle to be reminded of God's presence, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you. Sit in the silence for a while.

3 Read

Slowly read your chosen passage several times – preferably out loud. Invite God to allow you to imaginatively enter the story and encounter Jesus.

4 Imagine

Spend some time daydreaming on the passage. Picture the characters in the story. Then, as if you were a spectator, observe the events as they unfold. Watch, listen and stay attentive to Christ. What can you hear? What can you see? What can you smell?

What can you touch? What can you taste? Now try and imagine yourself as a character inside the story. Where do you locate yourself? Who are you? How are you engaging with Jesus in the story? Let the story unfold and let yourself be drawn in. Be present to Jesus and open to your own reactions.

If this is helpful to you, you might draw or write down what comes to mind, or use creative tools, e.g. wooden, Lego or Playmobil figures to make the scene come to life.

5 Respond

Have a conversation with Jesus about your experience, as if talking to a friend. Talk to Him about what is in your heart and listen to His response.

6 Reflect

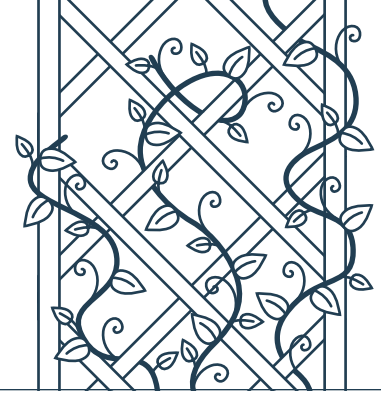
Reflect on what you noticed. What were you thinking and feeling? What struck you or moved you? Has this time of prayer changed the way you see God, yourself or others? How did you relate to Jesus?





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION



GOING DEEPER

◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to that short practice of Imaginative Contemplation? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

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◆ Resources

Books

- *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, David G. Benner (InterVarsity Press, 2015), page 33-44

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Pray As You Go*, Jesuit Media Initiatives
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/series/5-imaginative-contemplation-exercises>
- *Jesuit Prayer App*, The Jesuits (USA)
<https://jesuitprayer.org/>
- *Jesuit Imaginative Contemplation Outline*, The Jesuits (UK),
<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/spirituality/imaginative-contemplation>

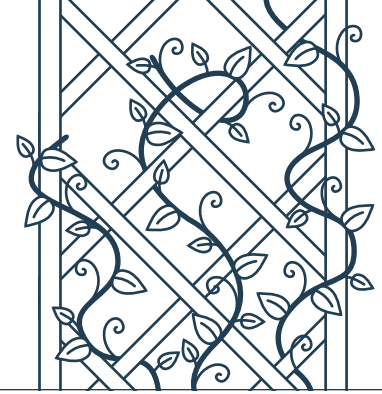


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PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION



ARTWORK FOR ONLINE SESSION

◆ The Hem of His Garment *Iain Campbell*



'This painting recreates the moment when a woman, desperate for healing physically and socially, seizes the moment at hand and reaches out to Jesus. Iain chose to paint this woman, not just meekly touching, but hanging on to Jesus. The models for this painting all work in The Wild Olive Tree café, situated inside St George's Tron Church of Scotland. The model portraying the woman who was healed was chosen because of her story of restoration and her testimony of what Jesus has done for her.'

Image used with permission.

Description from paintinglukesgospel.org.uk/the-hem-of-his-garment/



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

SESSION 5

Visio Divina

1. Introduction:
Background
Summary of the Practice
Ways to use the Practice
Time
2. Outline
The Practice in 6 Steps
3. Going Deeper
Questions for Reflection
Resources
Feedback
4. Artworks for Online Session





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

VISIO DIVINA

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

Visio Divina or Sacred Seeing, is a practice based on Lectio Divina, but rather than sitting with a Bible passage, it uses visual elements to help set your mind on prayer. It allows God to speak to you through the image or object. Praying through art is a multi-sensory way to connect to God. Visio Divina is one form of prayer using images – works of art, stained glass windows, icons, or images / objects in nature. It is a form of prayer that has been used throughout the centuries, mainly in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches where icons are often used in prayer. It is growing in use across Protestant communities.

◆ Summary of the Practice

Once you have chosen an Icon, image, painting or other object to sit with, there are four parts to a Visio Divina exercise: Observe, Reflect, Respond, Rest.

◆ Ways to use the Practice

This is a practice that can be done on your own, as well as in a group with someone leading the practice. In a group setting, you might ask everyone to share what they have noticed or observed. If there are children in the group, encourage them to share first.

You might want to explore and extend your experience of this practice by making art in response, whatever form this may take.

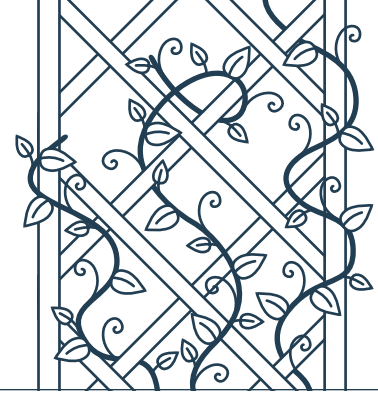
◆ Time

Visio Divina is a listening practice, which ideally should not be rushed. You could probably do the practice in about 10-15 minutes, though you could extend it as much as you want.



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

VISIO DIVINA



OUTLINE

1 Select

Choose an Icon, stained glass window, image, artwork or other object (for instance something from nature, like a flower or pinecone) to use for your time of prayer.

2 Settle

Begin by taking some time to get comfortable. You might light a candle to be reminded of God's presence, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you. Sit in the silence for a while.

3 Observe

Spend some time to consider the Icon, image, artwork or object. Look at the different shapes. Are there any tiny marks or variation in colour? What is the texture like? Does it have a smell? Is there anything that touches you, resonated, attracts or even disturbs you?

4 Reflect

What thoughts or questions is this image raising? What emotions do you feel? Notice any thoughts or feelings that have arisen as you observed. You may be reminded of something: an event in the past, an experience or a place. Make notes or drawings if this is helpful. Ponder in a moment of quietness. Stay with what you are already noticing or something that has stood out. Or go with other thoughts and feelings as they arise.

5 Respond

Speak to God from the quiet of your heart about what has stood out to you. Whatever is in your heart to say, ask, repeat, wonder or complain about. Alternatively, you could write down the thoughts that have come your way.

6 Rest

Rest in the quiet knowing God has been with you in your praying and listening, hears your prayers and is with you now.

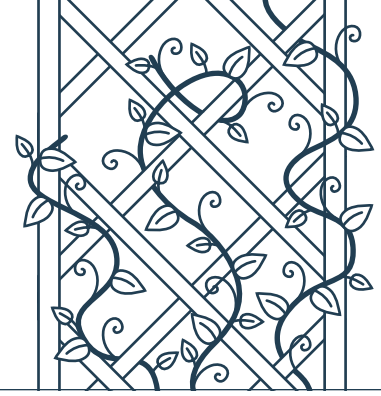
**Where it says God, you can replace this with Jesus or the Holy Spirit and vice versa.*





PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

VISIO DIVINA



GOING DEEPER

◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to the practice of Visio Divina? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

The focus of this exercise is not on the content of people's prayer or what they have spoken about with God. What we are inviting you to do is reflect on the practice itself, how it is or might be useful to you and your church community and how you might practically build it into your life. If someone does share something personal about their experience of the practice, we encourage you to simply say 'thank you' and hold what was shared, possibly with a short moment of silence before moving on.

◆ Resources

Books

- *Art and Religion in the 21st Century*, Aaron Rosen (Thames and Hudson, 2017)
- *Agents of Faith: Votive Objects in Time and Place*, Ittai Weinryb (BGC and Yale University Press, 2018)
- *Imaging Pilgrimage: Art as Embodied Experience*, Kathryn Barush (Bloomsbury, 2021)
- *Praying With Icons*, Linette Martin (Paraclete Press, 2011)
- *Seeing Salvation*, Neil MacGregor (National Gallery, 2000)
- *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, Sally M. Promey, ed. (Yale University Press, 2014)
- *Soul Care: African American Practice*, Barbara L Peacock (InterVarsity Press, 2020)

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Icon Gazing*, Christine Valters Paintner
<https://abbeyofthearts.com/blog/2006/09/28/lectio-divina-unleashed-part-three-icons>
- *Praying with Icons*,
<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/praying-with-icons/id548952187>

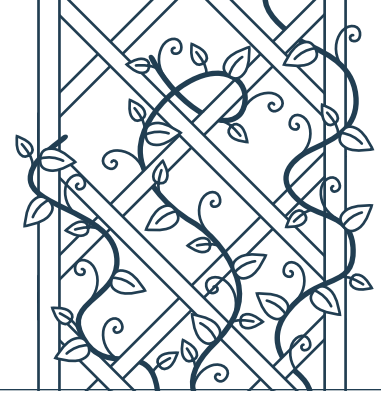


We would very much appreciate your feedback on this Prayer Practices for Lent Session and Handout. [Click or scan QR code to share your thoughts.](#)



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

VISIO DIVINA



ARTWORKS FOR ONLINE SESSION



◆ **Sunflowers** *Vincent van Gogh*

'The sunflower is mine', Van Gogh once declared, and it is clear that the flower had various meanings for him. The different stages in the sunflower's life cycle shown here, from young bud through to maturity and eventual decay, follow in the vanitas tradition of Dutch seventeenth-century flower paintings, which emphasise the transient nature of human actions. The sunflowers were perhaps also intended to be a symbol of friendship and a celebration of the beauty and vitality of nature.

The sunflower pictures were among the first paintings Van Gogh produced in Arles that show his signature expressive style. No other artist has been so closely associated with a specific flower, and these pictures are among Van Gogh's most iconic and best-loved works.'

Image and description from www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/vincent-van-gogh-sunflowers



◆ **Man in A Shirt Drawer 2017-18** *Lubaina Himid CBE RA*

This 'is a portrait of a person painted on the inside lower panel of an antique wooden shirt drawer with gold handles. The unidentified subject is of African descent and wears short cropped black hair, a pale blue blazer and an orange undershirt. Although the title refers to the figure as a 'Man', the depiction appears to present an androgynous figure: one can detect pale pink lipstick as well as a bright yellow eyeshadow whose hue matches the background colour. Set against this bright yellow background, the subject's colourful outfit appears aligned with contemporary fashion and situates the scene in recent history. However, this characterisation contrasts visually with the time-period suggested by the aged, scuffed and paint-splattered drawer.'

Image and description from www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/himid-man-in-a-shirt-drawer-t15155

'Prayer Practices for Lent' is part of the London Diocese resource 'A Way of Life for Every Church Community', encouraging churches on a journey of deepening discipleship through the discernment of a shared Way of Life.

www.WayofLife.London

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