

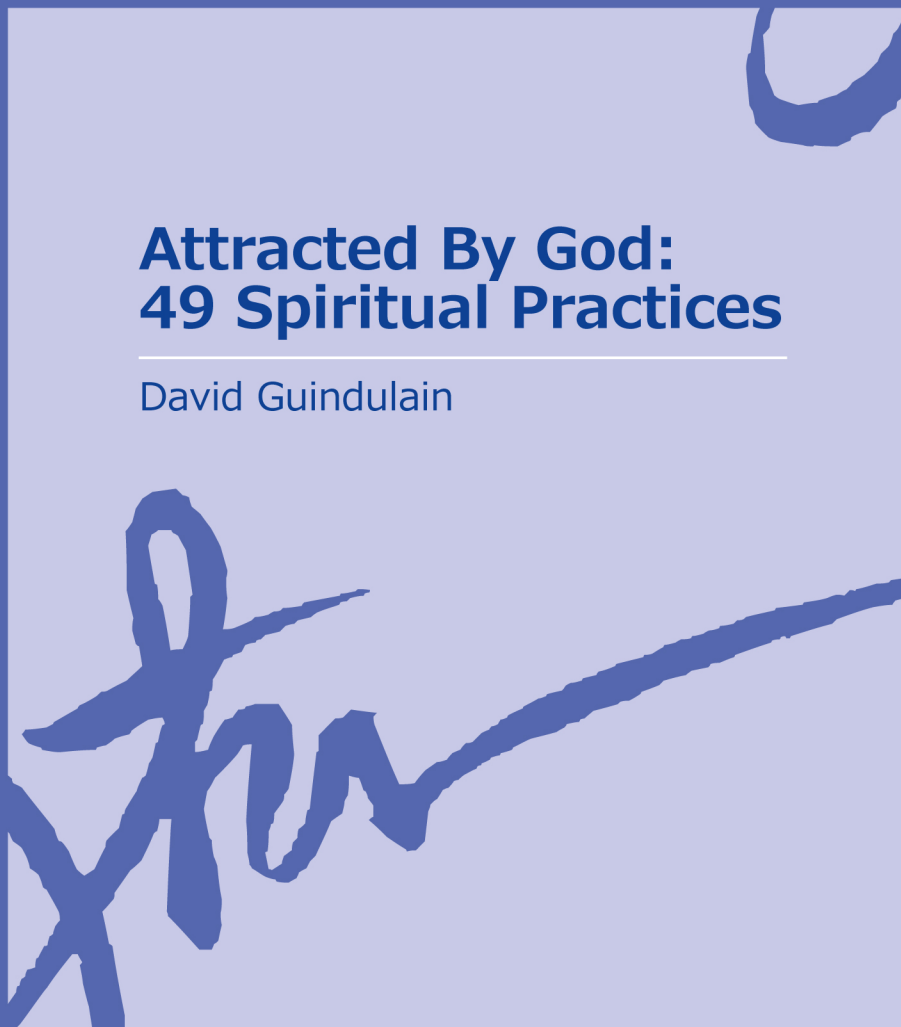
GUIDES

EIDES

12

Attracted By God: 49 Spiritual Practices

David Guindulain



ATTRACTED BY GOD: 49 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

David Guindulain

INTRODUCTION	5
BREATHING	7
Breath of Life	7
Let The Whole Body Breathe	10
THE SENSES	12
Sight	13
Hearing	15
Touch	17
Smell	20
Taste	21
MOVEMENT	25
Standing	26
Meditative Walking	27
Contemplative Dance	29
Prayer Of Blessing	31
THE IMAGINATION	34
THE WORD	37
CONCLUSION	39

David Guindulain Rifà, sj. is a Jesuit priest with licentiates in educational Psychology (Universitat de Barcelona) and Theology (Centre Sèvres and Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya). For fifteen years he has done youth and vocational ministry and has worked in the Jesuites El Clot School in Barcelona. He is professor in the graduate program of spiritual accompaniment at the Fundació Vidal y Barraquer. At the present time he lives and works at the International Center of Spirituality in Manresa, where he directs the Spiritual Exercises and does pastoral ministry at the Sanctuary of the Cave of Saint Ignatius.

Publisher: CRISTIANISME I JUSTÍCIA
Roger de Llúria 13, 08010 Barcelona (Spain)
+34 93 317 23 38
info@fespinal.com
www.cristianismeijusticia.net

ISSN: 2014-6558
November 2019
Editor: Santi Torres Rocaginé
Translated by Joseph Owens
Layout: Pilar Rubio Tugas

Privacy Policy: Personal information of the recipients of this communication has been obtained from Lluís Espinal's Foundation historical database (Cristianisme i Justícia) and has been incorporated either with the previous consent of the persons concerned or directly on the basis of legal relationships maintained with the foundation, as required by article 6.2 of the Spanish Organic Law on Protection of Personal Data and article 21 of the Law on Information Society Services. The purpose of this data storage is to keep our subscribers and other interested persons informed about our services and activities in which they can participate. This information will not be made available to third parties but may be used in external platforms in order to facilitate email sending. For more detailed information please consult the "Legal Notice" published in our website <https://www.cristianismeijusticia.net/avis-legal>. Regarding personal information, any user can, at any time, exercise the right to consult, access, modify, cancel, limit future processing, request the portability, forbid automated individual decisions and object to the processing or storage of any personal data by Lluís Espinal's Foundation via email to info@fespinal.com or by written request to c/Roger de Llúria n.13, piso 1º, Barcelona (08010).

INTRODUCTION

You have in your hands a compilation of practices that seek to be an aid for personal and community prayer. These 49 spiritual practices include a variety of approaches to God that have been inspired in me by pastoral ministry and psychology. From the most elementary function of human nature—breathing—to the highest operation—language—each person will be able to choose an appropriate manner of praying by focusing attention on one resource or another.

Devotional practices can take an infinite number of forms because God draws a countless number of people to himself in a vast multiplicity of situations, using innumerable manners of attraction. Each practice therefore allows you to personalize your prayer since what occurs between you and God is truly unique.

There are three principal sources of inspiration for this collection. First is the spirituality of Saint Ignatius, whose Spiritual Exercises and holy boldness helped many people dispose themselves to find God in all things. Far from annulling one another, the desire latent in Ignatian boldness and the respect needed before the all-holy God interact fruitfully and creatively in the Spiritual Exercises. There are two particular exercises that I want to highlight because of their psychological wisdom: the “Application of the Five Senses”¹ at the conclusion of each day and the “Three Methods of Praying,”² which is proposed at the end of the thirty days by way of preparing for the return to daily life.

The second source of inspiration is evolutionary psychology, a specialized area of the health sciences that describes the processes that a person undergoes, from birth to death, in becoming fully human. Breathing, the senses, bodily movement, speech—these are functions that awaken in childhood and continually develop as the human person interacts with the environment. These tools of interaction, when properly developed and trained, help not only in our ongoing dialogue with the world around us but also in our communication with the Lord who dwells in that world.

1. IGNATIUS LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises (SpEx)*, 121-125.

2. *SpEx*, 238-260.

A third source of inspiration is my personal vocation to teach people a way of experiencing God that for me has been foundational and transformative. The pastoral ministry I have done over the years has provided me the experience from which this collection is born. Concretely, I am convinced that when evangelizing people—especially children and the young—symbolic language must be given priority over conceptual language. Symbolic language, which draws on images and art, disposes people more favorably than does conceptual language to a personal encounter with the God of Jesus Christ. The experience captured and embodied in symbols will subsequently seek the Word that bestows on them meaning.

These three inspirations, shared and lived over the years, have led me to propose for each person and each group various evangelizing practices that have similar characteristics but are always different in the way they are carried out.

I hope that this collection is of assistance both to those who are seeking to advance in the spiritual life and those who are trying to help others along the way.

BREATHING

Nobody taught us to breath. This was our natural response when, for the first time, we found ourselves surrounded by air. From that instant, thousands of times a day, we remain connected to life thanks to our breathing.

Even so, we can still learn a new way of breathing, one that disposes us to silence, attentiveness, respect, and above all, prayer.

BREATH OF LIFE

As we leave our mother's womb, the first thing we do is bawl and begin to breathe. From that moment on, breathing will be a permanent dialogue, a way of interacting with the reality around us. Becoming aware of that breathing and of that dialogue brings us closer to the mystery of existence.

The Word of God is full of references to the God who "enlivens" and "inspires." The book of Genesis begins with the image of the "breath of God" hovering over the waters.³ This image, both ethereal and real, recalls the breath of life that God infused into Adam after modeling him from the dust of the earth and making him into a living being.⁴

On Mount Horeb the prophet Elijah recognizes the passing of the Lord in the "sound of a soft breeze."⁵ And in the New Testament, the breath of the Lord Jesus

3. Genesis 1:2.

4. Genesis 2:7.

5. 1Kings 19:12.

bestows the Holy Spirit on his disciples,⁶ prefiguring the day of Pentecost, when the Gospel will be proclaimed to each person in his own tongue.⁷

This focus on breathing offers us many ways to dispose ourselves for the encounter with the Lord of life. I propose a few:

1. Taking note of the evidence

Observe your breathing, but without trying to change it. Simply fix your attention on the two basic phases: inhaling and exhaling.

Take note of whether you inhale through your nose or through your mouth. In a relaxed state, breathing through the nose is normal.

Take note also of the coolness or warmth of the air that enters your nose. It may also help you to visualize in sequence the two basic poles of the respiratory functions: fullness and emptiness. After inhaling, you experience fullness; after exhaling, you experience emptiness.

Pause to consider these four moments, since you are not accustomed to doing so in your ordinary daily life:

- > inhaling
- > fullness
- > exhaling
- > emptiness
- ...and then do it again.

Observing your breathing grounds you in the here and now, which the place and the time for finding the present moment as God's gift to you.

2. The unity of breathing

As you become conscious of these phases –inhaling, fullness, exhaling, emptiness– consider each complete breath as a unit, and count them: one, two, three... Cast out any other thought that may distract you from your main purpose: center yourself, dispose yourself, open yourself to the presence of the Lord.

You will notice that, as your breathing becomes more relaxed, each unit of breathing will last more seconds. You will resist the desire to stop. To the contrary, you will evaluate the progression by its depth, pausing wherever you find

6. Cf. John 20:22.

7. Cf. Acts 2:6.

revelation and truth, without hurrying to move on. Let yourself be moved by the will to discover rather than by the desire to stop.

The first time, do five complete respirations. As you progress, you will want to do ten or fifteen or even a hundred if you notice that it is going well. If you lose count, begin again without reproaching yourself.

3. Breathing the daily combat

The attention to breathing that I propose in this exercise will make you conscious of the intricacies of the daily battle that exists between your most authentic self and the many noises –internal and external– that scatter the person or overfeed the ego. In this battle, the counting exercise of practice 2 –like the rope that keep you from falling when mountain-climbing– will help you to keep true to your purpose.

The moment may come when the rope is no longer needed; then it is good to do without it. The counting will bring you to a word that expresses, even if inadequately, some of the bond established between you and the Lord. You may choose any word that expresses who you are and before whom you find yourself: the source of your being. For example, you may breathe the word “you,” “Jesus,” “peace,” etc;

4. Inspiring life

When air is breathed in with each inhalation, it enables vital functions that oxygenate the blood and give life to the organism.

With each inhalation, you can think of the life that enters you from outside and let you be you. You may want to reflect on the One who breathed life into Adam, associating yourself in this way with the gift of every moment, like a new creation.

Living means accepting ourselves as unstable, fragile creatures. The perpetual miracle of breathing expresses this clearly, and we are conscious of it, we overflow with gratitude.

5. Exhaling the excess

Each time you exhale, you remove from yourself what you do not need, what you should not accumulate, what weighs you down and prevents you from growing.

If you prolong your exhaling more the inhaling, you express your desire to expel, gently but firmly, what does not build you up. Lengthening your exhalation a little also makes you breathe more serenely and calms you down more easily. Concentrate always on seeking what you want: becoming more disposed for the encounter that makes you be you.

LET THE WHOLE BODY BREATHE

The whole body benefits from your breathing. It will help you to consider that other organs of the body, not only the lungs, also take part in that function.

6. Breathing with your feet

Standing straight, imagine that you are breathing with the soles of your feet, and with a subtle swaying of the body, become conscious of the air in your coming and going. As you breathe in, your body inclines backward, and as you breathe out, it inclines forward, as if you were seeking the balance point between yourself and God.

7. Breathing with the hands

You can visualize how you breathe with your hands. With your hands resting on your legs and the palms upward, feel how, as you inhale, your hands open slightly to accept the gift and how, as you exhale, they close in order to make the gift yours.

8. Breathing with the abdomen

Putting your hands on your navel, one on top of the other, become conscious of how the abdomen dilates and contracts as you breathe.

After putting the left hand over the right, or vice versa, you become aware of your spontaneous choice. Try inverting the order, and feel the discomfort of the new position, which alters your lateral predominance.

Return to the original position, and observe now the unity of your body. Imagine that your breathing travels the circuit established between your mind and your abdomen through your arms, at one moment through your right arm, at another moment through your left.

As you make this observation, your breathing will gently relax and become more unified. You are One before the Other.

9. Breathing with everything

Finally, reflecting on how the air is received by different parts of the body, you can feel how all your corporal existence absorbs the life that is given you. Your whole body breathes, disposes itself, and receives.

Your body is transformed in you observe this totality, and you feel that you are receiving the dignity of the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁸

10. Breathing words

When you want to understand some words but find it difficult to grasp their deep significance, it can help to breathe each word slowly, one by one, including the nouns, the verbs, and the smallest conjunctions. Associate the speech with your breathing: as you inhale, receive the word, and as you exhale, let it resonate in you.

In this way you allow time for what your head has understood—or thinks it has understood—to reach your heart, so that you are disposed to comprehend the words in a new way, perhaps learning them by heart. The sequence of thought expressed in each phrase is thus slowed down. The meaning has time to resonate in you, without your rushing and wanting to finish what perhaps you have not fully understood.

It is good to proceed in this way with all the prayers you already know since normal recital sometimes prevents you from dwelling on the meaning of each word. Saint Ignatius describes this manner of praying in detail, drawing on an ancient tradition of the Church.⁹

8. 1 Corinthians 6:19

9. “In between these two breaths one reflects especially on the meaning of that word, or on the person to whom the prayer is being recited, or on one’s own lowliness” [*SpEx* 258].

THE SENSES

After breathing, our encounter with reality begins with the senses. These mobile roots¹⁰ seek out perceptions that help us localize ourselves and fine-tune our communication with the surroundings.

Pausing and dwelling on each one of the five senses, without any pre-suppositions, carries us back to the very first time that we met up with things, when we could not yet identify them. This process of re-discovery allows us to retrace the path of knowledge, but this time with the hope of finding God in all things.

The order I propose for presenting the senses begins with vision, which allows perception at a distance, and it concludes with the sense of taste, which needs an immediate object. In between these we have hearing, touch, and smell, which describe a trajectory that moves progressively from vision to taste. In the course of this trajectory, we are opened up to desire for and communion with the other.

10. MARTY, F. (1998). *La bénédiction de Babel*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, p. 135.

We see what what is around us because light falls on it. Thanks to the light of the sun, or any other luminous source, we become aware of our location, the nature of what we see, and the hidden aspects of what is invisible.

Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,”¹¹ and we sense that everything is filled with his presence because everything is illuminated by him, either from without, like a sun, or from within, as a spark of interior life.

When vision becomes conscious, it becomes seeing, and when seeing is amazed by what it sees, it becomes contemplation. What begins with sensory perception ends with gratitude for everything and in everything.

Seeing inspires hope because it announces to us objects, persons, and events that are kilometers—or maybe even light-years—away. Despite the distance in time and space, we perceived them here and now. They are not near us, but we have seen them, and that keeps us moving forward, just like the wise men from the East who saw the rising star of the newborn King of the Jews.¹²

Seeing also inspires faith because it not only perceives what is in plain sight but also senses what lies hidden. For example, when the beloved disciple entered the empty tomb and observed the linen cloths, “he saw and believed.”¹³

Finally, seeing inspires love, since vision is transformed by grace into contemplation, and contemplation leads us to love all things in him who is the light of the world.

By means of the light that is Jesus, the sense of vision most certainly helps us to receive the Lord of life.

In what follows I will present some ways of paying attention to prayer and disposing yourself for it.

11. Eyes that breathe

To enter into an exercise with the senses, begin by focusing your attention on breathing. I recommend that you become keenly aware of your breathing, as if you had to *learn* to breathe each time you begin to pray. In a certain sense, you are preparing yourself for a new birth.

Either standing or sitting erect, with head aligned with the spine, keep looking straight ahead. Don’t fix your gaze on any object; don’t take notice of any detail.

11. John 8:12.

12. Cf. Matthew 2:2.

13. John 20:8.

Keep your gaze expansive, peaceful, and relaxed. Receive the light, and observe how it floods everything, but without getting trapped by any particular form.

Let your inhaling and exhaling mark the rhythm of your receiving and processing light by means of your sense of sight. Receive the light and let yourself be interiorly illuminated by the One who reveals the truth and gives you vision.

12. Clothed in light

Now close your eyes, and let the rest of your body absorb the light: your face, your skin, ... You will slowly become more conscious of this vivifying pressure, as subtle as it is real.

If, like the sun, the source of light also emits heat, then it will be helpful for you to focus on the heat emanating from the light.

Closing your eyes and feeling the clarity that envelops you, imagine the presence of the Lord: he looks at you, he knows you, he loves you. Pause to observe the space between you and him, and recognize how you are moved by his being so close to you.

Pedro Arrupe used to say: “Your image over me will be enough to change me.”¹⁴ Let these words express your desire to be transformed by him.

13. Focusing on what is sacred

Open your eyes, and fix your gaze on an object that is supposed to represent the Lord (the tabernacle, a cross, an icon,...).

Pause to observe its details. See how these reveal the message that the artist wanted to convey by the work and how God wants to make use of the object.

Religious art, like all religious expression, aspires to make present what it re-presents. Its appearance seeks to suggest the object to you rather than to define it. Through contemplation of the sacred object, the Holy Spirit can complete the communication that you begin.

You may be helped by the words spoken by the apostle Thomas when he saw the Risen Jesus: “My Lord, my God.”¹⁵ Contemplate, receive what is suggested to you, keep breathing these words while you wait for the Lord to reveal himself to you.

14. ARRUPÉ, P. (1981). *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*. Santander: Ed. Sal Terrae, p. 82.

15. John 20:28.

HEARING

Hearing requires greater proximity than seeing: visual contact allows for distance, but to hear someone or something, we must get close, unless perhaps the sound is loud and clear.

Just as, in order to see, we need the light that illumines everything, in order to hear well we need silence. Silence is the absence of external noises; it allows us to fix our attention on the acoustic stimulus and to understand it. In our case, we long to hear the Word that will transform us.

But hearing also requires interior silence, the silence that frees us from self-centeredness. Interior silence allows us to hear and to wait patiently until the other communicates when he wants to or when he can.

Everything begins with the inquiring attitude of one who admits that he does not have the truth and who trusts that the other will help him contemplate the truth a little more clearly. If we feel interiorly that we already know what the other is going to say, then we close ourselves off to all novelty. We defend ourselves against threats, but we also forego the opportunity to engage in a dialogue that enriches us. If we don't expect anything different from our personal preconceptions, then not only will we resent the communication, but we will also lose the opportunity for learning and for personal growth.

With the sense of hearing we hear the Word of God calling to us, attracting us, and making us leave our comfort zone. And when we hear this Word in community, a new fountain of meaning bursts forth in our midst, exceeding by far the sum of individual interpretations.

The testimonies that move us are conveyed with words and reach our heart by way of hearing. The authenticity of the message is made credible by stories that are full of non-verbal language. The vibration, the silence, the gesture, or perhaps the tone, coming from the depths, carries us beyond mere language.

The life of each one of us is the response to a unique call that each of us hears. Our vocation comes with few words, pronounced by God—so it seems to us—as an unavoidable commission that lasts forever.

Without a doubt, the sense of hearing helps us to understand that existence is a permanent dialogue with the Lord of life.

I propose here some practices that will allow you to discover that this is so.

14. Receiving the sound

Place yourself in a silent space, and take time to discover the sounds that reach you even there: distant voices, birds, wind, urban sounds ... all these stimulate your hearing. Your brain tries to identify what the sounds are and what they signify.

Your response is to receive them without letting yourself be trapped by them; that is, without letting them either bother you or entertain you excessively.

In receiving the sounds, give thanks for them and, if need be, reconcile yourself with them. And if you expect to meet up with them again, you can pronounce an “until then” in your heart.

15. Discovering sound

Now pay attention to the internal sounds of your body. Begin with your breathing.

Listen to the sound the air makes as it passes through your nose or your mouth. Observe the subtle whistle the air causes when it reaches your lungs and leaves them. In a way, you are a wind instrument.

The sound of your inhalations and exhalations, coming and going, may remind you of the waves of the sea. It can help calm you, like a walk on the beach.

Pay special attention to the beating of your heart and to the vital fluid that flows through your veins. Be conscious of the life that pulses in you. Be surprised, be amazed, and give thanks for it.

16. God dwells in all

Remember what Saint Ignatius proposes to the exercitant in the *Contemplation to Attain Love*: behold how God dwells in all that is created.¹⁶ Dispose yourself to consider that behind each sound there is a being created and inhabited by God. Be patient, and pause at each sound, trusting that you will discover how God is present in it.

17. Hear “thank you”

As you progressively open up, you can let the word “thank you” form part of your breathing, linking it to the moment when you exhale. As you inhale, receive what God wants to give you, and as you exhale, silently pronounce the word “thank you,” which in its own way expresses a vital attitude and response.

16. *SpEx* 235.

18. The audio library of your life

Once you have recognized the interior and exterior silence, put aside all fear of being disturbed by anything, and recall some of the sounds that form part of your most intimate being: sounds linked to landscapes of your childhood, voices of persons who are significant for you, music that never ceases to move you ... In this way your emotions are turned into prayer.

19. The first time

Try to relive, in your heart and your mind, the first time you felt that God was personally guiding you. Try to recall the time when you first felt there was an I-thou aspect, a uniquely personal encounter, in the relation with God that others were proposing to you.

20. God pronounces your name

As you rest in the present moment, imagine how God pronounces your name or how he would pronounce it.

Reflect on the scene of Moses before the burning bush¹⁷ or on Jesus' reply to his friend Martha,¹⁸ and listen how the Lord speaks your name twice.

What does that repetition produce in you? What message does this personal calling introduce into this moment of your life?

TOUCH

The sense of touch relates us with others, minimizing the space that separates us. The distance that exists with seeing and hearing is now erased in a closeness that connects us.

In encounters between persons, touch facilitates communication in many ways; a pat on the shoulder, a shaking of hands, a kiss, an embrace.

Touch is also a sense that requires delicacy because interpersonal contact reveals the reciprocal sentiments of those who come together in this way.

17. Exodus 3:4.

18. Luke 10:41.

As Jesus was on his way to the house of Jairus, the crowds milled about him to the point of crushing him, but only one person touched him: the woman who was saved by her faith in the Lord.¹⁹ Not even the kiss of Judas in the Garden of Olives could conceal his intention to betray the Master.²⁰

If the commitment involved in touching is great, so also is the opportunity of salvation. A child will not survive without contact with other human beings, and when a baby must choose between warmth and nourishment, she will prefer the warmth of others even if that means that she'll die of hunger.²¹ Adults also hope for salvation and communion through the immediate encounters provided by touch, but only love and respect will bring them home safely.

Saint Ignatius says that the objective of the Spiritual Exercises is to allow God to communicate himself directly with the person, and he compares the communication with touch: "embracing the soul in love and disposing it in ways that will enable the soul to serve him better in the future."²² The person accompanying the exercitant should attempt to assist in this process, without interfering in this communication between God and the soul.

In the course of the Second Week of the Exercises, we are invited to contemplate and identify with Jesus, who goes about doing good, in many cases by healing through the use of touch. Finally, in the post-Easter appearances, the Risen Jesus urges Thomas to recognize him by means of touch.²³

Thus, touch conveys the interpersonal encounter that redeems us. We can dispose ourselves for this redemption by learning this language and letting ourselves be transformed by the Lord.

Here I propose some exercises that will help you to be open to this sensibility and to be ready for this embrace that will lead you to love God more and to serve him in all things.

21. Sensitive to touch

Visualize in your mind the different parts of your body where tactile pressure is most evident. Imagine each one of these parts as if you were conscious of it for the first time: your feet in contact with the ground, your clothing touching your body, your hands open or closed... Match the attention you pay to each part to the rhythm of your breathing, and dedicate a good while to visualizing the part. Take your time.

19. Cf. Luke 8.

20. Cf. Luke 22:47.

21. Cf. Experiment of Harry Harlow about maternal privation (1960).

22. *SpEx* 15.

23. Cf. John 20:27.

Refine your sensibility further, this time by taking note of the subtler perceptions of touch. For example, pause to consider the brush of the air as it enters your nose, one moment through the left nostril, another moment through the right. Or consider the heat of the skin on your skull or any other sensation that does not usually attract your attention.

This perception will lead you more deeply into the present moment and all that is happening there. Cast off all your concerns about what you were doing before or what you expect to do later. Consider the present as a golden opportunity, and enjoy what it gives you and what it tells you about God.

22. Praying with your hands

Concentrate your attention now on your hands, a basic instrument for the sense of touch. Consider all that things you have made and unmade with your hands, what was good and what might have been better.

Open your hands and turn your palms upward in an attitude of expectation, petition, need.

The rhythm of your breathing will serve as a guide for you, thanks to the hand's subtle movement, moving from reception to incorporation and accepting what is new, as in exercise 7. In this way, extend the fingers of your hand with each inhalation, and relax them as you exhale, as if you are already being given what you were hoping for. Let your whole body be involved in this gesture, and become conscious also of opening your arms and your torso.

23. God draws close

In the quiet you experience while observing your breathing and your sense of touch, become aware of being before God.

Imagine what kind of reality this divine presence would become if it were to reveal itself by means of touch. Recall how Jesus drew close to those seeking wholeness and salvation, and how he draws close to you, who also await his touch. Imagine how he extends his arms, his hands, his whole body to reveal his love for you.

Let respect and generosity be the attitudes that characterize this encounter. You can imagine him, and he can, by his grace, make use of your imagination so as to live more fully in you.

Babies are born with a well-developed sense of smell so that they can detect the source of life that is found in their mothers' warmth and milk. The smells of early infancy are registered in our minds from birth. Years later, an apparently innocuous odor is able to awaken that semantic field latent in the brain, which is suddenly activated by the chance aroma.

The smells that emanate from things and persons reach us stealthily, without warning. Through smell we receive our first knowledge of where we are and of who lives in a place. Smell predisposes us to encounter others, and it creates the conditions.

Smell cannot be seen or heard or touched, but it is capable of transforming an ambience and giving it an unexpected added value. The sense of smell is therefore the most spiritual of the senses since it easily accepts impressions that, like God, are invisible and inaudible but are real and transformative.

With the sense of smell we appreciate the subtle goodness or badness of those around us, and we also discern the odors that give us life or take it from us. Smell most definitely speaks to us of God, who has come to give life and abundance of life.²⁴

Saint Paul says that Christians are the "fragrance of Christ," offered to God and destined to be diffused everywhere. It is through Christians that the aroma of the knowledge of God is spread abroad.²⁵ Paying attention to smell can help us greatly to discern where the Lord is, so that we can recognize him and make him known to others.

An important detail: we should not associate the "fragrance of Christ" only with what we call "sweet aroma," for what odors can one expect to perceive when cleaning an incapacitated relative or when changing a baby's diapers? Even when undertaking such indelicate tasks, we can recognize the fragrance of Christ.

In what follow I propose some exercises that will prepare you to experience the sense of smell as a window opening onto grace.

24. Identified by smell

Gradually you discover that, while inhaling, you breathe in not only air but also some of the aromatic molecules given off by what is around you.

As you slow down your breathing, you also refine your attention, becoming conscious of the odors that emanate from the place where you are. You can distinguish them from the odor of the persons who usually occupy the space.

24. Cf. John 10:10.

25. Cf. 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

With the sense of smell you can welcome persons, show them gratitude, reconcile with them, or prepare yourself better to encounter them.

You can also pause to perceive the odor of your own person. This is like an invisible business card that you offer to others. Consider what it is you want to say about yourself, and how much there is in you of the “fragrance of Christ.”

25. “Fragrance of Christ”

Bring to mind the aroma of your everyday spaces.

Recall also the aroma of the persons with whom you collaborate closely in your endeavor to build a more just society, a society more in keeping with the desires of God.

Consider each person, one by one, and recognize that in their aromas there are traces of the essence of the aroma of Christ. Become conscious of that, recognize it, and give thanks for it.

26. The aroma of the “friends of the Lord”

Become conscious of the poor people that you know by name, of the men and women who trust in God without having any other secure recourse.

Make them affectively present to you, imagine the aroma they may give off, and consider the ways in which you are a friend of the “friends of the Lord.”²⁶

TASTE

The sense of taste is the last filter before ingesting food. The sense of taste, along with the sense of sight and smell, allows us to tell if some food is not very appetizing or if is more healthful for us than it first appears.

The flavor [*sabor*] transmitted to us by the sense of taste is related to the knowledge [*saber*] of things. That is why, in the Exercises, Saint Ignatius links these two concepts—*sabor* and *saber*—to affirm the primacy of quality over quantity. What satisfies the soul is feeling and savoring things, not eating excessively.²⁷

26. “Friendship with the poor makes us friends of the eternal King.” IGNATIUS LOYOLA. *Carta a los Padres y hermanos de Padua*, 7 August 1547.

27. *SpEx* 2.

In the Gospel we find many metaphors that speak to us of taste as an aid in recognizing the Lord: “I am the bread of Life,”²⁸ “Let whoever is thirsty come to me,”²⁹ “You have kept the best wine until last.”³⁰

But food is not just something nice, added on to enhance the encounter between God and his people, such as happens with a family celebration. Nor is it only a magnificent anticipation of the plenitude of the Kingdom of God, where nobody will ever go hungry again. The sense of taste does more than show us how food embellishes the alliance between God and his people. Much more, for God himself becomes food in Jesus, so that we incorporate him into ourselves. In the Eucharist, we receive Jesus in the bread and the wine. He becomes nutrition so that he lives in each one of us and we live in him. Knowledge of the God who lets himself be eaten is not just a complement or accessory; it is of the essence for those who want to receive him.

Paying attention to our sense of taste can predispose us well for this knowledge of God. I propose here some ways to cultivate this attention.

27. Tasting God

To savor internally the presence of God, reflect on your ability to distinguish tastes and make decisions about what tastes you want to try, what tastes you enjoy, and what foods you assimilate for your growth. Dedicate to that reflection the time you need to savor God’s presence internally.

28. Christ within you

I propose that you remember the day you celebrated your First Communion. Relive the moment when you first received Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist: what are the first images that come to you, the persons, the places, the different moments?

Ask yourself: what was your awareness of what you were experiencing? How did you imagine that Christ would be, for the first time, within you?

28. John 6:35.

29. John 7:37.

30. John 2:10.

29. He was really there

Now bring to your mind and heart a particular celebration of the Eucharist where you felt in a special way that Christ was really there, present in the consecrated bread and wine.

Think about whether there were other elements that favored that awareness: your personal situation, the place, the persons around you, the priest.... Or were you simply offered an unexpected gift?

Reflect on the way you received that gift from Christ himself.

30. I hunger and thirst for you

If you do this exercise just before eating a meal, try to be aware of your desire to nourish yourself.

Try to associate this sensation to the desire to know God. Imagine that this desire for God can be as strong as—or even stronger than—the desire to satiate your bodily desires for food and drink.

As the psalmist proposes, express your feelings of thirsting for the Lord: “My soul thirsts for God.”³¹

31. What flavor is it?

While aware of your desire, link your experience of God with your sense of taste. Ask yourself with what flavor you would associate your knowledge of God: does it have a sweet aftertaste, like the milk and honey of the Promised Land? Or maybe it has a strong taste, like wine? Or does it have the intense, acidic flavor of certain fruits? Or is it simply indeterminate but indispensable, like water?

Receive what you experience about the taste of God so that you are better disposed for the encounter.

32. Eating in silence

In silence you can appreciate a new awareness of the act of eating as a spiritual practice. To help, you can listen to some music that adds the necessary cadence to the act of eating. The aim is not to consume food just for your subsistence but as a preamble to prayer.

31. Psalm 42(41):3.

Take note of the composition of the plate of food before you, and observe the tastes you perceive. These should open you up to communication with the person who has prepared the food. They should also put you in communication with all the elements (animal, vegetable, and mineral) that have been combined for your life and your enjoyment. They ultimately dispose you for communion with the Creator of all these beings, the beginning and end of all things.

33. At table with Jesus

In the Spiritual Exercises Saint Ignatius often proposes that the retreatants imagine themselves within a gospel scene, contemplating the scene “just as if I were there.”³² Concretely, he is quite explicit about considering the way Jesus ate with his disciples and with others.³³

Accept this invitation, and let your meals also become rituals of nourishment, similar to those Jesus enjoyed. Consider how Jesus would cook for his friends,³⁴ preparing the grill on which he would place fish and bread. Reflect on how he would thank his Father for the food that was to be shared among all.³⁵ See him seated among friends and among adversaries. Hear him listening to others and then stretching out the meals with his teaching.

All this, while you keep eating in silence and meditating on how to be more like Christ, even at the table.

34. Without bodily nourishment

Fasting is a traditionally recognized form of disposing oneself for an encounter with the Lord. The sensation of going without food can be a way of expressing your belief that it is from God alone that you hope to receive everlasting life. Relying only on God, you receive creation as a gift, not as a conquest or a personal possession.

Fasting also makes you feel very close to those who have no breakfast to before leaving the house and to those who eat only once a day, or not even once.

Moreover, not eating means saving money that can become an alms.

32. *SpEx* 114.

33. “While one is eating, it is good to imagine Christ our Lord eating in company with his apostles, and to observe how he eats, how he drinks, how he looks about, and how he converses, and then to try to imitate him” [*SpEx* 214].

34. John 21:9.

35. John 6:11.

MOVEMENT

The spiritual practices that I have proposed until now can be done in a resting position that facilitates meditation. It seems that when we are in a tranquil state, our attention is less scattered and we are able to focus our attention on what most concerns us.

Even so, certain oriental techniques, such as tai chi, show us that conscious movement allows us to meditate in a different way: by seeking equilibrium between breathing, movement, and silence, we are able to open ourselves to the One who transcends us and grounds us. The link between these three elements unifies us and reminds us that we are bodily beings capable of going forth to encounter God.

When meditating in silence, we pay attention to breathing and to movement, imagining that these are two aspects of the same function, one depending on the other: we move because we breathe; we breathe because we move.

Incorporating movement into meditation builds bridges between everyday life and prayer because praying is not just a matter of silencing the spirit, remaining quiet, and passively accepting what God wants to give us. Praying is also entering into a dynamic of dialogue between ourselves and God. Contemplation seeks interaction, and it tries out different responses, using all the dimensions we possess, including the bodily ones. Thus, with all that we are and in every place where we find ourselves, we can praise, reverence, and serve God.

We are body before we are word. Forgetting that fact when we meditate can lead us—as in other aspects of life—to constricted prayer and to fragmentation of our being. It may lead us to prayer that regenerates but is limited, to prayer that seeks to be fruitful but does not embody all that we are or all the spheres in which we exist.

It is important to find the posture that most helps us to meditate, but we should also try out responses that involve conscious movement. Through posture we become the faithful at prayer; by conscious movement, we become bold pilgrims. In what follows I propose ways of meditating that incorporate the body's dynamism.

STANDING

Paying attention to something as simple (and as evolutionarily complicated) as standing on two feet will help us travel across the bridge between the visible and the invisible, the coming and the going.

35. Standing straight

Stand with your feet parallel and separated by the width of your shoulders. Bend your knees slightly so they are not rigid. Straighten your spinal column to make it as vertical as possible. Align your head with your spine, as if an invisible thread were pulling you upward.

Rest your hands on your navel, one on top of the other. Feel your breathing in the abdomen, fully aware that it is your whole body that is breathing. Allow your breathing and the recurring movement of your abdomen help you to quieten the thoughts that separate you from the point where you are most you.

36. Worthy and humble

Adopting the same position as in the previous practice, associate your inhaling and exhaling with the phrase, "I am here, before you." Accept your worthiness, your humility ... and whatever these words awaken in you.

37. Spokesperson for others

Bring to mind a moment when you had to stand before others as a spokesperson announcing a message: you were speaking, but not in your own name. Recall to what extent you wanted to transmit a *shared* message. Consider how what you want to express reaches others better when the self is diluted. Consider how you reveal a shared presence that transcends you.

38. Standing up for the Lord

Recall also a time when you had to stand up to make manifest your faith in Jesus. Perhaps you had to do it alone, in the middle of the assembly, or perhaps you had to do it with others.

MEDITATIVE WALKING

Walking involves a process that risks instability in order to regain balance. This process, along with that of breathing, disposes us to understand the dynamic of death and resurrection, which we want to experience in all that we are and in all that we do, in order to be like Christ.

The meditative walking I propose to you is highly recommended when your prayer is plagued by sleepiness or distraction. The tranquil pace I propose is sufficiently active so that you don't go to sleep; its constant movement is sufficiently slow so that you don't get distracted.

39. I can walk

On this occasion, begin the meditation by standing with your feet together. Pay attention to your abdominal breathing and to the slight swaying of the body.

Your aim is to move as you usually do when walking, but without walking to anyplace in particular, just keeping your balance as you advance.

When you're ready, take advantage of an inhalation, and lift the foot with which you usually begin walking: first, the heel leaves the ground, and then the toes do, until you are standing upright on just one leg. Your foot swings in an arc while you continue inhaling, and the trunk of your body is displaced forward.

When you feel full of air, begin to exhale. This is the moment for the uplifted foot to make contact again with the ground. Begin with the heel, and continue with the sole. Let the air out of your lungs little by little, until most of your weight rests on the forward leg. Keep your spinal column and head vertical.

Don't lift the heel of the other foot until you feel the need to begin the next inhalation. Notice that the stationary leg bends obliquely, as the torso moves forward. Finally, allow that heel to free itself from the ground to begin the next step.

When you first begin to practice this style of walking, you can easily lose your balance since it is not what you're used to. You will have to persevere until the body learns how to maintain stability.

Once you notice that you are entering into meditation as you practice this slow walking, you can easily incorporate words into your breathing, either repeating them in order to deepen their significance or letting yourself be transformed by the reading of a narrative.

40. Walking through the day

This practice links the exercise of walking with the daily examen, taking inspiration from the General Examen described by Saint Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*.³⁶ This is no longer the meditative walking we described above. It is practicing a habit that is beneficial to the soul (the examen).

In the Exercises, Saint Ignatius asks us to pay attention to our own lives and to ask where God has been present in our experience; he also shows us how we are to dispose ourselves toward the future. To do this, he suggests five points, which we may associate with the five fingers of our hand:

- > Thumb: Give thanks to God, from whom we have received so much.
- > Index finger: Request the grace of clarity and courage.
- > Middle finger: Review the previous 24 hours.
- > Ring finger: Ask pardon for whatever has separated us from God.
- > Little finger: Consider the next 24 hours as a new opportunity to walk in God's presence.

I propose that you make this daily examen while you are walking: while you stroll along, go through the five parts of the examen of conscience mentally. Using your five fingers to run through each part of the examen is a good way to keep your attention focused.

Putting time aside for this examen can be extremely helpful because if it becomes a daily habit, it will result in an increase of the lucidity and freedom to which we are called.³⁷

41. Be inspired by the rosary

If you wish to examine yourself while walking at a good rhythm, care must be taken to walk in an appropriate place and not be impeded by obstacles. There are so many different things that call out for our attention as we walk along! It may seem impossible to concentrate on the examen, going from point to point, without

36. *SpEx* 43.

37. Cf. Romans 8:21.

losing the thread. To persevere in the daily examen, I propose a second type of support, borrowing an old tradition of the Church: the rosary.

In praying the rosary we recite an Our Father and ten Hail Marys for each of the five mysteries being contemplated. What I suggest now is that you rely on this vocal recitation while considering each of the five points of the Ignatian examen.

It is important to have the five points of the examen well interiorized and to use your hands for counting: an Our Father and ten Hail Marys for each point of the examen.

It seems complicated, but it is as simple as beginning to walk: paying attention to the thumb of the left hand, consider the invitation to thank God from whom you have received so much: the first point of the Ignatian method.

With your attention fixed on your left thumb, recite the first Our Father. Then with the right hand, count the ten Hail Marys. In this way, the time spent praying the Our Father and the ten Hail Marys will be the time you dedicate to thanking God, the first point of the examen.

This practice, which combines walking, the daily examen, and the rosary, can make you more open and can help you not only to recognize the passage of God through your present history but also to dispose yourself for the history you want to experience with God.

CONTEMPLATIVE DANCE

Another example of a spiritual practice involving movement is contemplative dance. Broadly speaking, we call contemplative dance all bodily movements that associate our meditation with some rhythm or musical tune.

We Westerners generally feel somewhat inhibited when it comes to expressing ourselves in dance. There is always the need to respect personal temperaments, appropriate moments, and the ways in which individuals experience their bodily reality. For that reason, our definition of “contemplative dance” seeks to be holistic. Even persons who have difficulty expressing themselves in movement may find some pleasure in incorporating dance into their meditations. A subtle, intentional movement of the body while praying may result in a dance that is more sublime than the most gorgeous choreography. The excellence of this practice is related more to the fruit it produces than to the agility it demonstrates.

When it is not a spontaneous prolongation of the spirit in bodily movement, dance requires a certain amount of learning by repetition. Reaching a meditative space is therefore more laborious with dance. Nevertheless, discovering the inte-

rior world and the interpersonal communion that ordinarily accompany contemplative dance allows us to enter into a learning process.

Contemplative dance, then, is a magnificent resource for introducing, deepening, and concluding personal or community prayer in a context of formation in faith or celebration of faith. Here I propose some specific practices.

42. Dancing before God

I refer you particularly to a shared experience of all human beings, who intuitively find themselves dancing because they breathe, because they walk, because they are alive.

Our instinct tendency to let ourselves be bodily carried by a rhythm or a melody can introduce us to communication with the Lord of life, who also dances with creation.³⁸

43. Joining in the dance

You can join a dancing group that is directed by a leader. There are some very simple dances that use music and bodily expression to lead us to meditation and prayer.³⁹

44. Dancing the Our Father

It can help children a lot if we express through bodily movement the prayers we want them to memorize. Focusing their attention on their bodies allows children to pray with more meaning and feeling.

In a session with children, divide the prayer into short phrases, and then ask them to take turns expressing with their hands what they understand by each phrase. For example, how should we say “Our Father” with our arms? And then, “who art in heaven,” etc.

To the extent that nonverbal forms of praying make their appearance, the group can use them, repeat them, link them together, learn them, and improvise on them while praying the Our Father. In this way the group can create a rhythmic dance for the words of Jesus himself, and the dance finds its natural place in a liturgical celebration where vocal prayer becomes doubly comprehensible for grown-ups and kids.

38. MOLTSMANN, J. (1972). *Le Seigneur de la danse: essai sur la joie d'être libre*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.

39. HERNÁNDEZ, Victoria (2005). *Danza contemplativa*. Madrid: Editorial San Pablo. Includes CD.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

“Blessing” [*bendecir*] means “speaking well” [*decir bien*] of others. “Blessing” makes us think of the words and gestures of affection that parents offer their children when they leave home.

We bless God, telling about all that we have received from him, because he has blessed us already.

We also bless others by reminding them of their dignity: “You are children of God, in his Son, Jesus Christ!” By reminding one another of that amazing reality, we are creating a new fraternity.

In any encounter where the Lord has been at the center, such as at the Eucharist, the blessing returns us to our everyday mission with new energy.

I therefore propose here some ways to deepen this gesture so that it opens you up to meditation.

45. Praying over names

Begin this meditation by making other persons mentally present so that you can bless them. Let the memory of them and their lives inspire your prayer for them. It will help you to write their names on a piece of paper, along with all the other names you want to bless today.

Don’t just write the names, but carefully draw each of the letters, dedicating sufficient time to each person for whom you want to pray.

Finally, light a candle, and place the paper under it. By the light of the candle pray over these names as if you were concerned with an urgent need or a child’s dream. They are persons for whom you wish good things. You bless them so that they never forget that they are sons and daughters of God, your brothers and sisters.

46. Blessing yourselves

Another manner of blessing is that which takes place in a group. It involves invoking the protection of God on another person with the imposition of hands.

This gesture, which comes from Jesus himself,⁴⁰ has been customary in Christian communities⁴¹ since the beginning. It is a way of expressing something that is ardently desired but is beyond the reach of words.

40. Cf. Luke 24:50.

41. Cf. Acts 6:6.

In this dynamic of blessing, someone should guide the prayer and keep track of time.

The participants place themselves in two concentric circles: the inner circle looking outward, and the outer circle looking inward. Each person is paired with one other person, who is directly opposite. The person leading the prayer may join one of the circles in order to complete a pair or may remain outside the two circles. The leader invites the participants to pray in silence and then to intercede for one another. It may help to have appropriate music in the background.

If you are in the outer circle, pray in silence for the person before you. It is not necessary that you know the person's name, though it can help if you know it. In any case, you place the person in the hands and the loving protection of God.

Now, bless the person with an appropriate gesture, which can vary according to each person: imposition of hands on the head, with or without contact; placing one or both hands on the shoulders; opening the palm of the hand toward the other; looking at the other in a gaze of recognition...

It is important that the desire to bless find a distinctly personal way of expressing itself.

When the person guiding the blessing considers it opportune, this part of the blessing exercise may conclude.

To continue, the person in the inner circle, who has received your blessing, now takes the initiative, praying for you and blessing you in an appropriate way. When the person has finished, the leader makes a sign for the outer circle to rotate. You take leave of your partner.

After the rotation, you find yourself before another person, and both of you pray in silence for one another, offer your blessings, and conclude as before.

During this exercise, it is important to concentrate on the hands when imparting the blessing. The aim is to use very few words so that it is the gesture itself that speaks. It is also good to refrain from looking directly at one another; seeking visual contact easily distracts from the aim of the exercise. It is therefore best to focus your attention on your hands and not on your speech or an exchange of looks.

When the outer circle has rotated completely around, the dynamic can end with a song or with some words of blessing for all.

47. In a small circle

This same prayer of blessing can be done in groups of four or five persons, whether standing or seated, or even seated on the ground. The dynamic should be explained to all, and the group itself should keep track of time. After a moment of silence and shared prayer, any participant can take the initiative, placing himself before the person at his right. He blesses the other person as suggested above. The

person receiving the blessing expresses with a bodily gesture his reception of the prayer over him.

The person giving blessing keeps passing before each and every member of the group until he arrives at the point where he started. Then another participant who feels moved to do so takes the initiative and begins to bless the others, always in the manner he wishes and taking the time that he considers appropriate.

There can be different groups in the same space. If so, there should be an agreement among them that, when one group concludes, it should remain in silence or leave the place out of respect for any group that has not yet finished.

THE IMAGINATION

Mental images often come to us unexpectedly, like odors. Our visual memory produces a combination of images that conveys to us not only what we have experienced in the past, but also what we hope to experience or what we fear might happen in the future.

Like the respiratory function, the imagination is a faculty that can be educated so that it provides rich nourishment for our spirit without dragging us to places where we do not want to go.

We might feel a certain envy of the persons who accompanied Jesus and who could hear him, touch him, see him with their own eyes.⁴² We might even think that having such an experience would strengthen our faith. But Jesus seems have had us in mind when he said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”⁴³ He wants us to know that the joy of the Gospel is also for us.

We read the Word of God mindful of this promise of joy, and we imagine what happened in each story. But not only do we imagine it; we feel personally present in the middle of the scene, interacting with the Lord. For, on the one hand, we form part of the Humanity that the Lord has come to save and, on the other, the Lord can make use of our imagination to speak to us of himself if he so wishes.

When Jesus called people and asked for their cooperation in the Kingdom of God, he was not addressing only his contemporaries on that beach by Lake

42. Cf. 1 John 1:1.

43. John 20:29.

Galilee. We know by faith that this call of Jesus continues today, right here, for each one of us, if only we dispose ourselves to receive it and let ourselves be transformed by the Lord.

Our imagination helps us to experience the personal call and the salvation of Jesus. Through our imagination, by God's grace, the distances of space and time disappear. God has made us a gift of the present time, and of the Jesus who lives now within us.

Our imagination disposes us to believe in the resurrection of Christ. It is not only imaginable, but our vital experience makes it credible: he is alive.

I propose here an exercise that, thanks to the imagination, will help you prepare for the encounter.

48. Visualization

While in a state of repose, whether seated or walking slowly, become fully aware of all your being, thanks to the air you inhale and exhale.

Imagine that a great screen opens before you, on which you can visualize the story I will tell you now.

You can imagine this story as you read along in the text, or else someone else can read it to you, leaving time and space so that you can make the story your own. This latter option is usually the best one when working in a group.

Imagine that you are following a path that is very pleasant to walk along. Consider the panorama before you, the trees, the birds, the forest sounds... Take note of the connection between your state of soul and your surroundings.

Suddenly, three words come into your consciousness. Your awareness of the words is so strong that you forget every other verbal expression except those three words. You become aware that they are most important for you and for your fulfillment. In a relaxed way, think of the three most significant words in your vocabulary.

You continue walking, enjoying your three words and relating your state of soul to the surroundings.

Now imagine that at the other end of the path, in the distance, you see someone approaching you. As the person comes closer, you make out who it is. Perhaps it's the person's manner of moving, perhaps it's his face or your own intuition, but you realize that it is Jesus, the Lord.

When you are sufficiently close to hear one another, imagine how he greets you and how you respond.

After the greeting, when you are very close, you can do no more than speak to Jesus your three essential words.

Imagine how he hears them and how he looks at you.

After a moment of silence, he offers you a fourth word as a gift.

Consider what this fourth word should be, and listen as he pronounces it for you. Make it yours and try to understand what it means. It is not just another word: it changes everything.

Finally, say goodbye to one another. Consider how you do this, how you both do it. Imagine that Jesus continues walking and how you continue on your way.

Now move ahead, following the path with your four words.

THE WORD

Words place reality at a sufficient remove from us so that we are better able to work with reality, understand it, foresee it, and share it. Consequently, words make us more free. At the same time, words limit us because they are unable to express all the complexity of the world or all the poetry that we ourselves are.

The Word of God has the virtue of becoming incarnate at every instant; its vocation is to offer itself lovingly so as to rise up ever new. The Word arrives at every moment, desire to be our light; it illumines with faith those who read it and hear it, and it bursts into a panoply of nuances when it is shared.

Carlos M. Martini, archbishop of Milan, was a great lover of the Word. Every Thursday he invited hundreds of young people to the Duomo so that they could let themselves be illumined by the Word of God, following a methodology that I was able to learn. Since that time I have always been amazed at the wide array of meanings that result from reading the Word of God in this way, being respectful of the text but also daring in interpreting it. I present the methodology here as I have developed it.

49. Contemplative dialogue

Those taking part in the dialogue sit in a circle. In the center, on a table covered with a tablecloth, are a Bible and a candle, which is a symbol of the light we hope to receive. When there are 20 to 25 participants, the dialogue lasts about an hour.

This should be the maximum amount of time and the maximum number of participants for this spiritual practice.

The leader chooses a gospel passage that has internal unity (introduction, development, and conclusion) and then explains the dynamics of the practice. After first introducing the context of the chosen passage, he explains aspects that help the participants understand it: what happened before, what happens after, what we know of the persons from other passages, the meanings of key words, and the main characteristics of the evangelist's style.

Second, the leader reads the text clearly, letting each word of phrase resonate, respecting the punctuation of the text, and leaving a few seconds of silence after each point. The leader can use the version of the Bible that he thinks best.

Third, the participants begin their first round, following an order previously agreed upon. Each participant shares one single element (a word, phrase, or idea) that resonated interiorly as especially meaningful to them, and they explain why that is so. Just one element is shared, no more. Some participants will have difficulty observing this norm but the leader will make sure that the interventions are not very long. To establish an atmosphere of meditation, it can help to pass a lighted candle from person to person as they make their interventions.

The first round should be concluded by the leader, who shares his/her reflections as just one more participant. Then a short space of silence is left, while the participants are reminded that there will be a second round.

During the second round each participant mentions one—and only one—of the comments made by others and tells why that comment brought out something new for the participant.

At the end of the second round, the leader returns the candle to the table, where it is placed next to the Bible with the text that has been proclaimed.

In the third moment of the practice the participation is more random and free: we ask the Lord to guide us in making petitions or in expressing gratitude, and we draw on the inspiration arising from what we have heard in the two previous rounds. After each intervention the group prays together in silence or uses a ritual formula such as “Lord, hear our prayer” or “Lord, we thank you,” etc.

A short hymn can help at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end.

CONCLUSION

“After finishing the exercise, for the space of a quarter of a hour, either seated or walking about, I will examine how well I did in the contemplation or meditation. If poorly, I will seek the reasons, and if I find them I will express sorrow in order to do better in the future. If I did well, I will thank God our Lord and use the same procedure next time.”⁴⁴

This is the secret: knowing how to look back so as to see how God was present in the path we have traveled, and so that we are better prepared for what lies ahead. This is, I believe, the secret of the pedagogy of the Spiritual Exercises for learning about the spiritual life.

The *49 Practices* proposed in this booklet would come to nothing or would end up being just random activities if we did not take a moment to evaluate them, either to correct what has gone poorly or to confirm what has in fact been helpful. It is important to ask yourself whether you have chosen a good time of day for doing this spiritual practice. Was the place satisfactory? How did you prepare your body for the meditation? Did you pay attention to your breathing when entering into prayer? Were the sounds of your surroundings helpful? When before God, did you know what you wanted to ask of him concretely? Did you find space for his Word? Did the exercise bring you closer to other people and to Creation? And most importantly, where was God?

If prayer is paying attention to the passage of God through our lives, then the attention we pay to this attention disposes us doubly to hear, understand, and follow God’s Word in all things.

44. *SpEx* 77.

“**Guides**”, with this verb Ignatius Loyola modestly expresses his great desire to help others. It is under this motto connoting service and simplicity that the Ignatian School of Spirituality (*Escuela Ignaciana de Espiritualidad - EIDES*) offers these series of materials.

Guides Collection

All booklets can be downloaded from internet:
www.cristianismeijusticia.net/en/guides

1. **Horizons of Life.** Darío Mollá
2. **The Exercises in Ordinary Life.** Francesc Riera
3. **Promotion of Justice and Education for Justice.** Pedro Arrupe
4. **Eight Days with Jesus.** Oriol Tuñí
5. **On Not Anticipating the Spirit.** Josep M. Rambla
6. **A Silent Presence.** Víctor Codina
7. **Re-Reading Our Own Lives.** Carles Marcet
8. **Peter Claver, Slave of the Slaves.** Pedro Trigo
9. **Immersion in the Manresa of Ignatius.** Francesc Riera
10. **The Art of Friendship in Saint Ignatius of Loyola.** Josep M. Rambla
11. **Ignatius Loyola: A Life Journey.** Carles Marcet
12. **Attracted By God: 49 Spiritual Practices.** David Guindulain

Cristianisme i Justícia

Roger de Llúria, 13 - 08010 Barcelona
 (+34) 93 317 23 38 - info@fespinal.com
www.cristianismeijusticia.net



cristianismeijusticia



cijusticia



fespinal89