

PRAY

Compassionate God, may zeal for justice and the common good consume us. May zeal to know you bring us often to pray. Amen.



SPiRIT

Students from St. Joseph Church in Bakersfield, California, answer the question:

When do I Pray?



I pray when I feel lonely or sad. I pray every night.

Gabriella

I pray when I'm feeling down and out, when I feel like I have no one to go to.

Gage



I pray when I go to church and the whole time I am in church. Before I eat I thank God for everything.

Austin

I pray when I am in trouble, when I need help, whenever I feel like talking to God.

Alexis



I pray in pain, I pray in sorrow, I pray when I need a better tomorrow.

George

Soul Walk

I joined a jogging club as a teenager and logged hundreds of miles along the country roads surrounding my parents' home in Washington State. Still today I walk alone or with a friend around the lakes in our city in the late afternoon. Something about moving physically outside has restorative power.

This small sanctuary in the day when I walk is more about restoring my soul than exercise. It is a lifeline. I recognize a pattern in what happens inside me.

First, the act of walking engages my body and frees my mind to pour out its contents. Thoughts and feelings come spilling forth like a geyser, swimming up to the surface of consciousness, sometimes surprising me. I find I feel sad. Or I bump into anger and wonder, what is this about? There are other emotions, too: joy, grief, gratitude, bewilderment, and thoughts to match.

I see how fixated I am on a problem—an assignment, a grade. Why did I get a B+? I watch my mind and am shocked by how busy it is, dashing here and there, making judgments, solving problems, reacting as if everything were an emergency. The first mile or more of walking is, for me, about clearing out.

By the second mile, after my mind and emotions have enough air time, the natural world begins to work its wonders. There is room in me for seeing, hearing, smelling, savoring, appreciating. I notice what I have flown by for days—a canopy of elms and tall cottonwoods that stand like benevolent sentinels, watching over our neighborhood; the enduring willow trees that hug the lakeshore banks with their large, underground roots. Things shift inside me. Surrounded by the wide-open sky, my small self is taken up by something larger. Things shake out. All the energy that has been spent on achieving gives way to beholding.

ZEAL FOR PRAYER

Consumes Ignatius

By Jill Underdahl, CSJ

One traditional way to practice prayer is meditation. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), learned to use his imagination to pray and reflect on the scriptures. His method of praying brings the scriptures to life as vividly as the stories Ignatius read as a child that made him want to be a great soldier.

Ignatius, who lived from 1491 to 1556, preferred a worldly life to becoming a priest as his family intended. He became a royal page, received an education, and lived the life of a gallant and elegant courtier in Spain. His ambitions to be a soldier often involved him in duels and fights.

At 30, a cannon ball shattered Ignatius's right leg below the knee in a battle to save a Spanish city from the French. To recover, he returned to his home in Loyola. When a doctor discovered that his leg had been set wrong on the battlefield, Ignatius ordered him to break his leg again and set it properly.

During his long, painful recovery, Ignatius asked for adventure stories to



read. He wanted to imagine the soldier's life he longed to live but no such books were available. He had only the *Life of Christ* and the *Lives of the Saints* to read. He read them in the way he loved to read other books—with his full imagination, pretending that he was a part of the stories.

His reading awakened in Ignatius a desire to begin a new life.

Once recovered, he made a pilgrimage to the mountain monastery of Montserrat. He became a pilgrim and went to Jerusalem. On his travels, Ignatius lived like a beggar, experienced depression and despair. Yet, he also had deep spiritual experiences in which he discovered the mysteries of faith and the humanity of Christ. Ignatius realized his vocation—to become a worker with and for Christ.

After years of pilgrimage and formal studies in theology and philosophy, Ignatius established the religious order, the Society of Jesus (SJ). Through his writings, the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius taught his method of prayer.



I pray when I feel I need God to give me strength. I pray before I eat, before I go to bed and at church.

Naima

I pray when I'm scared. I pray before I get the results to a test.

Gabriel

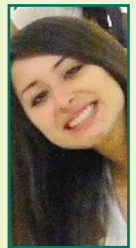


Every morning when I get up I thank God for my day. I pray for Aiden, my angel in heaven every chance I get.

Ella

I pray at night when I've had a bad day, or when a friend is in trouble. I also pray when I've had an incredibly great day.

Gabrielle



I pray when I'm thinking. I pray when I need hope. I pray when I need God's direction and when my loved ones suffer. I pray whenever I can, and I pray for guidance when I feel I'm in need of it.

Esteban

SUNDAY GOSPEL

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Who is wise? Who is foolish?

NARRATOR: Jesus told this parable to his disciples.

JESUS 1: The reign of God can be likened to ten young girls who took their lamps and went out to welcome a bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

JESUS 2: The foolish girls took their lamps but brought no extra oil along. The wise girls brought flasks of oil along with their lamps.

JESUS 1: The bridegroom delayed his coming. The young women all began to

nod and then fell asleep. At midnight someone shouted:

GUEST: The groom is here! Come out and greet him!

JESUS 2: At the shout, all the young women woke and got their torches ready.

FOOLISH GIRLS: Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out.

WISE GIRLS: No, there may not be enough for you and for us. You had better go to the dealers and buy yourselves some.

JESUS 1: While the five foolish girls went off to buy more oil, the bridegroom arrived, and the girls who were ready went into the wedding with him. Then the door was barred. Later the foolish girls came back.

FOOLISH GIRL: Open the door for us.

GROOM: I don't know who you are.

JESUS 2: The moral is: Keep your eyes open, for you know not the day nor the hour.

Matthew 25.1-13

QUESTIONS 1 How often do you take time to pray? 2 What is prayerful about jogging? 3 Why did his injury and long recovery change Ignatius? 4 How does God speak through our feelings? 5 What have you missed out on because you weren't ready? 6 What do the lamps symbolize for you? The oil? 7 What is wise about reflecting on daily happenings as a way to pray?

Examen of Consciousness

Ignatius believed that God speaks to us through our deepest feelings and desires. He called these feelings consolation and desolation. Experiences of consolation are those that connect us to God, others and ourselves. Experiences of desolation are those that disconnect us. Looking at daily events helps us see where God is present and working in our lives.



The Examen can be practiced in many ways. Here is one:

At the end of the day, take a few deep breaths and center yourself. Take some time to think back on your day and ask yourself these questions:

What are you most grateful for today?

- Relive that event and receive life again from that moment.
- Give thanks for God's presence in your day.

What are you least grateful for?

- Experience again that event or moment without trying to change it or fix it in any way. Acknowledge sad or painful feelings and hear how God is speaking to you through them.
- Invite God to be more a part of this area of your life.
- Give thanks for whatever you have experienced.

You may want to substitute other questions in place of the most/least grateful:

- When did I give and receive the most love? Least love?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? Least sense of belonging?
- When was I most free? Least free?
- When was I most creative? Least creative?
- When did I feel fully myself? Least fully myself?
- When did I have a special encounter with a friend? Family member?
- When did I experience forgiveness, compassion, justice, courage, joy, gratitude?
- How have I felt God present for me? Felt God absent?

Catholic social teaching

Catholic social teachings challenge us to transform the injustices in our global society, especially those that exclude the poor from their basic survival needs: food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, work, fair wages. The young people of today are the ones who will carry this work in the third millennium.

Technology and air travel make us all citizens of the earth, more aware than earlier generations that we live interdependently in a delicate ecosphere on this planet. We wear cotton T-shirts made in Peru, jackets made in China, shoes from Malaysia. We eat fruit from Israel or Mexico.

We are not lone, isolated beings, each functioning in our own bubble. The social teaching of our Church challenges us to practice solidarity, which means loving our neighbors throughout the world, being our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

Practicing solidarity means crossing all kinds of borders, visible and invisible. These include national boundaries as well as racial, ethnic, and economic differences. All people are equal in dignity. The human race is a single species with the potential for unity.

Catholic social teaching rests on two important beliefs. First, the human person is sacred, made in the image of God. Second, the human person is social, made for relationships. God has reached out to humans not just as individuals but by making us into a people, by making a covenant with us (*Lumen Gentium*, #9).

We thrive only in relationships with others. It takes a family and a community to raise children. It takes friends to find one's identity. It takes

participating with others to build a human community. In fact, the Church teaches us that Catholics have an obligation to participate in society and to work for the common good of all.

Because the human person is sacred, every human being has both rights and responsibilities. Each of us has the very basic rights to life and to food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, work. At the same time each of us has a duty to protect others' rights.

Human beings have a right to work and fair wages, to own property, and organize unions. They have an obligation to work productively. Catholics understand work as participation in God's creation.

Like the scriptures, Catholic social teaching tells us that how we treat the poorest and weakest among us



is the test of how good our society is (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2419-2449). It tells us to put the needs of the least among us first. Sometimes this is called a preferential option for the poor. This teaching measures all policies and programs by how they affect the least and most vulnerable among us.

Catholic Social Teaching

1. The human person is sacred.
2. The human person is social.
3. Every person has a right to the basic needs of life. Every person has a corresponding duty to protect the rights of others.
4. We put the needs of the least among us first.
5. Work has dignity. Workers have rights to fair wages, property, and unions.
6. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, called to solidarity as a human family.
7. We care for God's creation and protect the Earth.
8. We work for peace, which is based in justice.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Visit Fairtradeusa.org. Learn how you can help your family, community or school to participate in this system of exchange that honors producers, communities, consumers and the environment.
- 2 Ask your school about the company supplying athletic clothing for your teams. Research whether the company uses overseas child labor. If they do, find another supplier.
- 3 Ask whether your diocese sponsors an overseas mission. If they do, take up a Christmas collection to help families the missions serve enjoy a better Christmas.