



YEAR OF PRAYER 2018

The
Resource Book
of Documents
for
A Week of
Guided Prayer
For the
Participants

Please note that the contents of all of these documents have been collected from different sources and edited liberally. Their sources are now unknown but most originate from Ignatian Retreats.

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On seeing the *whole of each day* as an essential part of the Week of Accompanied Prayer

- It may seem obvious but I want to make a few comments about seeing the WHOLE of each day as being part of the week of accompanied prayer.
- This is not an exercise in escaping, but in enriching our whole life – in being more fully alive. We tend to drift into a pattern of how we spend our time and tend to have a fairly fixed view about the different elements of our life. While we may sometimes feel dissatisfied with things, in general it's safer and more comfortable to stick with the status quo! This week of accompanied prayer, though, is an opportunity to pause, stand back and reflect with God on how things are, how they might change, and how we might view them differently.
- But we need to create space for this to happen. It's not just a question of committing to the time and finding a physical space, but also to an attitude – of living in the present moment. It is being willing to listen in every telephone call/email, every task, every activity, every conversation, every moment's quiet, every shade of feeling or fleeting thought.....waiting to see/hear/feel God speaking with us. Asking – 'what is happening between me and God right NOW?'
- *We need especially to focus on the elements in our life which we feel are restrictive or which we resent as chores – maybe relationships in home or neighbourhood or work; or particular jobs or tasks. For example, Mums busy with young children and home chores such as the kitchen sink, might find the Benedictine rule of stability helpful:*
 - *A willing acceptance of the circumstances*
 - *A commitment to working with the Holy Spirit in improving loving relationships with the people in our families and communities, however difficult it may be.*
 - This is true for any situation where we feel constrained or confined.
- We tend to have a dominant mode of praying in the way we think about God, and expressing our thoughts and feelings. We each have different personality types so there is no single way of using the time or seeing the week. But for this week we want to suggest that you be aware of your dominant side and try to stay open to the shadow side – be willing to experiment with perhaps music, clay, drawing, pictures, dreams, imagination.....go with the flow. If you get an impulse, go with it...risk being silly! This is especially important for those of us who tend to be rational and cerebral – we can easily block God out when he tries to get around that!

- We need to become acutely aware of the ‘oughts / shoulds’ that we each carry around with us...which keep nagging us that we *should* be doing this or *should* be doing that (our ‘inner parrot’!). There is no right or wrong way of praying this week, so we need to kick into touch the voices that rubbish new ideas or tell us that we will be like the village idiot if we try this or that. There needs to be no success/failure tape running, e.g. ‘I will have failed if God hasn’t spoken to me in a new way, or if I don’t feel more spiritual’ or whatever. ‘Success’ is being real, being ruthlessly honest with myself and God – sticking with whatever is going on, even if that seems to be nothing.
- We need to be fully self aware: listen to what is being said and, just as important, what is not being said, in our mind, in our emotions, in our intuition, in our body, in our spirit as a whole person.
- We suggest that you set to one side your ordinary prayer discipline for this week – your daily quiet time, Bible reading notes, daily office, rota of intercessions or whatever. Leave that with God just for one week. See this week as a gift from God as an opportunity to have the freedom and space to be different.
- The one practical thing we do suggest though is some sort of brief review at the end of each day, where you register your reflections about the day as a whole while these are fresh in your awareness. Keeping this very simple...perhaps asking some questions and noting:
 - On the positive side – what has encouraged me today? What am I most thankful for? When have I felt closest to God?
 - On the less positive side – what has discouraged me today? What have I resented most? When have I felt furthest from God?

This is not to add any additional stress to your day. It is simply a way to capture the gist of what it has been like, and keep in touch with how it is going. If you wish, share your reflections with your prayer guide at the next session. This is not a question of hunting around for things but asking God’s Spirit to bring them to your notice as you wait on him.

The First Day in the Week of Accompanied Prayer

For this first day, simply aim to become a little more still and a little more aware.

- ❖ Try to slow down and be peaceful (when it's possible!), perhaps when you're walking to the bus, waiting in a queue or having a solitary meal. Take time to be a little more aware of the things around you, of your breathing, of the taste of your food. You may be short of time, but try to be aware of and appreciate the present, rather than thinking ahead to what happens next. (Worrying about the check-out queue doesn't get you out of the supermarket any faster. Try to see the waiting time as a gift and use it to be a little more still and a little more aware.)
- ❖ As you enter the week, prepare for it by working out when and where you think you might be able to pray without interruptions. St Ignatius recommends a special prayer place. Do you have one already? If not, have you a sense of where it might be this week? (It might take a few experiments before you get it right, but stick with one place for each prayer time before you decide on your special place.)
- ❖ In your prayer time before you first meet with your guide, try to 'take stock' of where you are at this time. Begin your prayer by asking God to be with you and asking for the grace to become aware of what God wants you to hear. Then just sit with the following questions or some like them:
 - How are you feeling? (About the retreat, about things in general.)
 - Is there anything in particular concerning you at the moment?
 - How is your relationship with God?
 - What gift are you asking for from the Lord during this week of prayer?

Allow yourself to be surprised by your reflections, which may lead you to think of a picture, poem or scripture which sums it up. However, don't be disappointed if you don't come up with clear or wonderful replies to these questions!

End your prayer by talking to God about it all.

- ❖ After your prayer, you may like to make notes for yourself which will help you when you see your prayer companion for the first time. Notice how easy or hard it was to stick with the prayer for the time you had decided. Notice how you felt during the prayer time and whether your feelings changed as you reflected on different questions.
- ❖ When you come to see your companion, bring any notes you had made, and in particular do what gift or grace you are asking for. This can be very important during a week like this.

Happy Praying!

The First Day in the Week of Accompanied Prayer (short version)

For this first day, simply aim to become a little more still and a little more aware.

- ❖ Try to slow down and be peaceful (when it's possible!). Take time to be a little more aware – of the things around you, of your breathing, of the taste of your food. You may be short of time, but try to be aware of and appreciate the present, rather than thinking ahead to what happens next.
- ❖ Prepare for the week by working out where you think you might be able to pray without interruptions.
- ❖ In your prayer time before you first meet with your guide, with God try to think about where you are at this time. The following questions may be helpful:
 - ❖
 - How are you feeling? (About the retreat, about things in general.)
 - Is there anything in particular concerning you at the moment? How is your relationship with God?
 - What gift are you asking for from the Lord during this week of prayer?

End your prayer by talking to God about it all.

- ❖ If you want to, make notes for yourself which will help you when you see your prayer companion for the first time. Please don't make this difficult or wary about it, just do what you can or what you want to do.
- ❖ When you come to see your companion, bring any notes you had made, and in particular what you would like from this week.

Happy Praying!