

## Adventures in prayer week 1: Prayer and transformation

### Exercises to prayer and reflection

As Lent begins, and as days lengthen, we respond to the invitation to live a larger, more generous, more integrated life that is rooted and grounded in God.



What the Gospels teach us that it is not effort alone that brings about transformation – it's also the fruit of relationship. That's where prayer comes in. We tend to see prayer as something we are doing – and in a sense that's true – but the fuller truth is that prayer is that space where we are open to what God is doing: healing us, integrating our different experiences, drawing forth from within what is deep and true, simplifying our complexity, loving us into being.

Prayer in this sense is an adventure: allowing God to take us beyond what we know into deep waters and towards new lands – to begin to discover our own depths in journeying ever further with God, and into God.

Pilgrim, when your ship, long moored in harbour, gives you the illusion of being a house; when your ship begins to put down roots in the stagnant water by the quay: put out to sea! save your boat's journeying soul, and your own pilgrim soul, cost what it may. *Archbishop Helder Camara*

#### What do you want?

*Jesus turned to them and said, 'What are you looking for?' [John 1.38]*  
When you set out to pray, it is helpful to name to God what it is you are looking for. What is it your spirit seeks? Can you find a word or a phrase for it? Perhaps, rather than words, an image suggests itself. Share what comes to you with God.



### Springtime for the spirit

In your prayer, imagine yourself as a tightly wrapped bud on a winter tree. The sun is growing stronger. Can you begin to respond, allowing what is within you, yet hidden, to be revealed?

### Go to the land I will show you

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country...to the land that I will show you.' [Genesis 12.1]

After a year of lockdowns, many of us yearn to travel. Is the same true for you spiritually? Do you have a sense of a place you want to leave behind and somewhere you want to move towards? Bring this desire into your prayer.

### God in this place

*Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it! How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.'* [Genesis 28.16-17]

Remember a place or a moment when – like Jacob - you woke to God's presence with you. Write down a word or draw a simple picture that expresses that experience. If more times come to mind, do the same. Now talk with God about this place. Ask to be awake to the gift of God's presence just where you are and how things are.



### Some bible passages for prayer and reflection:

- Isaiah 55
- Matthew 6.5-13
- Hosea 6.1-6
- Psalm 63
- Isaiah 35



## Finding your resting place in God: the beginning of the adventure of transformation

Settle now in your chosen place of prayer. Relax into this place.  
You are with God and God is with you.

Begin to be aware of this meeting place, this 'here' and 'now' moment by moving from the busy flow of your thoughts into your senses. Listen to the sounds of this place, giving all your attention to your hearing...louder sounds and quieter...from close by and from distant places...with different tones and textures. Thoughts will come, pulling you here and there. Let them come and go without running after them. Go back to the simple activity of listening.

Or gaze at the candle flame. Let your eyes rest on the light and the shadows. Take your time. This is a place of rest between all that activity, and God is in this rest.

As you stay in this meeting place you may become aware of your physical self: the weight of your feet on the floor, the relaxation of your fingers as you let them uncurl, the slow rhythm of your breathing. Take time to be with yourself in this way, for God meets you here.

Your feeling self may also greet you: the lightness or heaviness, tiredness or energy, gratitude or sorrow. Receive your feeling self gently – as a guest in this place. A name for how you feel in this moment may come to you. Acknowledge its presence with you but also let it go; allow it to rest.

In this meeting place your thoughts will come and go. They might want to hustle you out of this moment, telling you there's somewhere more important you need to be. But there's nowhere more important for this moment than here and now – where God is. Even hurry and worry deserve to rest for a while.

In this meeting place God may speak or be silent – either way is good. Speech may flow from your heart to God, in words or in stillness. God is here. God is now.

As you breathe in and out you may find it helpful to gently repeat one of these lines from the Psalms to hold you in the stillness:

For God alone my soul waits in silence [62.1]

O God, you are my God, I seek you [63.1]

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth [86.11]



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Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name  
[103.1]