

More than anything else, prayer is about *being in active relationship with a Person*. If one understands this, then he or she will quickly recognise how being in active relationship with a person includes the practice of all kinds of habits of communication by which the relationship is experienced, grown, deepened, and challenged.

Sometimes this means talking; sometimes it means not saying a word, but sharing times of easy silence together; sometimes one shares a special landscape (a forest or a river etc.) with the friend, walking with him or her in it; sometimes one shares music; sometimes it means acting for the other – being of help; sometimes it means listening to the friend, letting the other give or show or teach or guide as the friend wishes.

In short, prayer is not as much about “saying prayers” or as much about learning new “techniques” of prayer, as it is about *doing whatever is necessary to deepen our friendship with God and making sure to set aside time daily to do that*.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

- Before you begin, remove any distractions, mobile phones, for example. It can be very challenging to be fully present *only here, only now*, and for the sake of this prayerful practice you all will do together.
- Then offer a prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help guide you. Something like this: “Holy Spirit, we seek to make ourselves completely available to you .

Step One: Replay the day in your mind

- Notice where God has been active in the last few days of your life.
 - Find some moment, however simple it was or brief, when you felt *grace* in your life. Where did God “show up” for you?
 - Write it down or share with the group what happened and how you felt the grace when it happened. Be brief in the saying: “I noticed God yesterday, when I walked outside and smelled the fragrant Spring air. What I felt was a sense of well-being, of feeling gratitude to God for so lovely a day, and of wishing that I could go for a walk right now with a best friend.” Simple.

Step Two: Name the strongest feelings you have experienced in the last few days.

- This next step is aimed not at “what happened” but it is about recognising when in the past few days you have felt *most strongly moved* in your affections. *Which affection* in particular was activated strongly? Give a name to that particular feeling: joy, depression, anger, delight, contentment, hope, shame, regret, confusion, disgust, compassion, doubt, gratitude, etc.
- Write down or share with the group one example of a strong affection you experienced.
- The main goal of Step Two is noticing your strongest reactions to particular things, and wondering with God about those reactions. “Why did I feel that so strongly?” “Does this strong reaction reveal my faith in God, or a lack of it?”

Step Three: Share just one of those strong affections with Jesus.

- Be honest with Jesus about what “caused” this strong affective response in you, and try to name accurately which particular feeling it was that you felt.
- Ask Jesus whether He ever felt this same thing, and the way that you felt it, when he lived and moved and had His earthly life among us. You may turn to a Gospel text, to a scene in Jesus’ life in which you think that He reacted as you did. Read that text to yourself and explore Jesus’ affective response. Like yours, or different?
- Explore the *value* that corresponds with that feeling.

Step Four: Thank God for being present to you in this practice and for helping you grow in your friendship.