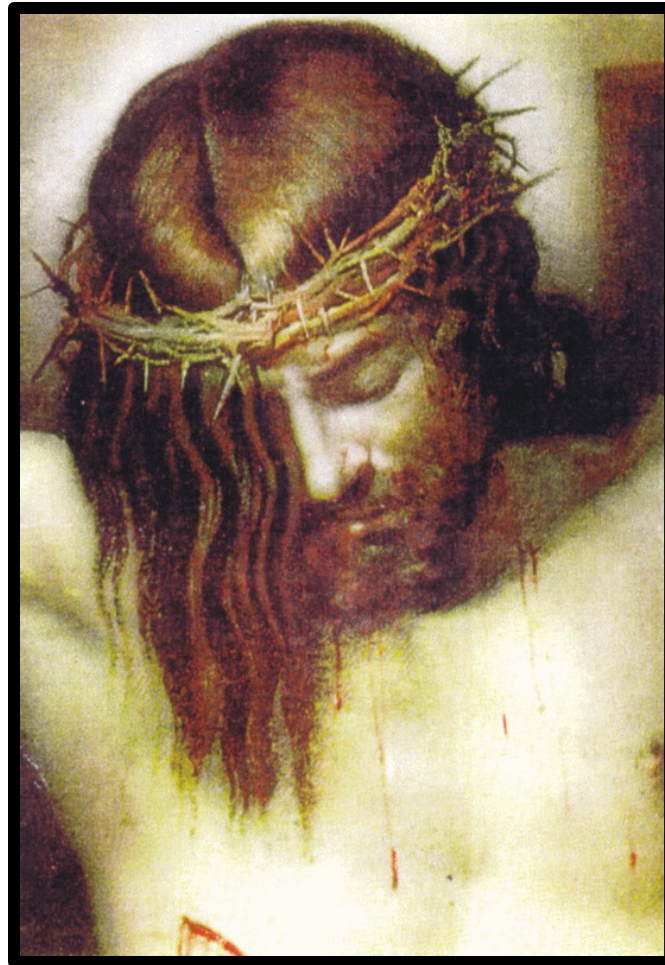




OUR LADY *of* BETHESDA
RETREAT CENTER



Online Spiritual Exercises



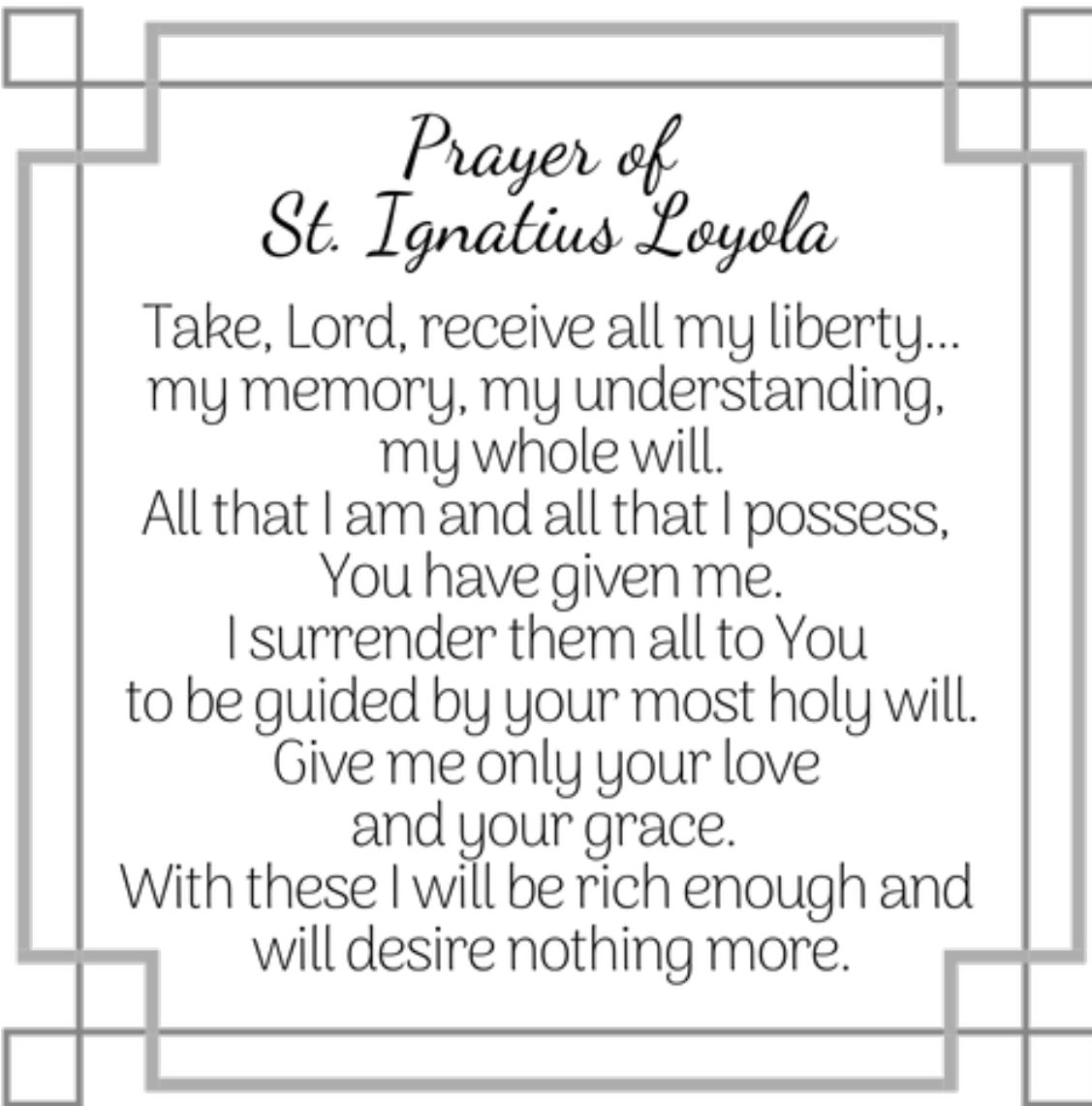
OUR LADY *of* BETHESDA
RETREAT CENTER

Virtual
A Place to Encounter Christ

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What Are Spiritual Exercises?



*Prayer of
St. Ignatius Loyola*

Take, Lord, receive all my liberty...
my memory, my understanding,
my whole will.

All that I am and all that I possess,
You have given me.

I surrender them all to You
to be guided by your most holy will.

Give me only your love
and your grace.

With these I will be rich enough and
will desire nothing more.

What are Spiritual Exercises?

The Spiritual Exercises are a collection of meditations, prayers, and contemplative practices developed by St. Ignatius Loyola to help people deepen their relationship with God. They touch on many important aspects of the spiritual life, but the central principle is the imitation of Christ our Lord.

Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Life

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by these means, to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in so far as it is left to the choice of our free will and is not forbidden. Acting accordingly, for our part, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short one, and so in all things we should desire and choose only those things which will best help us attain the end for which we are created

#23 from The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola

Practical Guidelines

AIM: Spiritual exercises have three main goals:

- To know ourselves in God's eyes.
- To know the person of Jesus Christ.
- To imitate the person of Jesus Christ.

Every element of the retreat is designed to accomplish these aims in a harmonious way. There is nothing superfluous. Not even the meal times or a good night's sleep are extraneous, since you will need to be well rested and have no excuse not to pray. In addition, the readings during meals can be the most life-changing moments of the entire retreat. And you can take advantage of the personal times to get some fresh air and contemplate the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in your soul.

The main qualities required for a good retreat are humility, sincerity and generosity. Humility, to be well disposed to approach God; sincerity, to be open to what God is asking of you; and generosity to respond as Mary did: "Let it be done to me according to your word."

There are also some temptations that you should be aware of during the course of the reflections. The first is not to confuse emotions with real generosity and openness to the Holy Spirit. The success of the retreat does not depend on our feelings, but to the degree that we allow Jesus Christ into our soul and to move our will. We should come up with concrete and practical solutions that will help us to change our lives. Another common error is to apply the principles and truths to others whom we think need it more than we do (our spouses, friends, enemies and so on). In order to progress in your spiritual life, it is necessary to make the effort to apply all of these themes to yourself.

MEANS:

A. Directed Meditations

Each meditation is one hour long and has two parts. The first part is when the preacher speaks for about a half an hour giving the individual retreatants the material for the second part of the meditation. It is always good to write down the different points so that it will be easier to review the material. The second part of the meditation is when the priest finishes and invites each person to meditate on the points. This is the most important part of the meditation. This is where each person assimilates the truths they are meditating on. They should go to the Chapel or their room and meditate on the points that they found most striking. It is also good to write down any "lights from the Holy Spirit". Remember that the meditation is one hour long.

B. Conferences

Each day there will be one practical conference. This will be on a specific topic, for example, how to make a program of life or how to improve your prayer life. Unlike the directed meditation, when the speaker is done this activity is over.

C. Personal Questionnaires

Retreatants will be directed to spend time on a selected personal questionnaire. The goal of this is to help us better know ourselves. Self-examination, in the light of Christ, is the best way to do this. It is good to spend at least half an hour doing this. The Personal Questionnaire can be found in your binder or will be distributed by the Retreat Master. We recommend that you reflect on these questions in the Chapel or another quiet location.

D. Mass

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most important moment of each day during the retreat. Each retreatant should live the Mass with special fervor.

E. Spiritual Direction

Each retreatant will have the opportunity to meet with one of the priests or other Spiritual Directors to go over any specific problems or questions that may arise during the retreat. It is very good to have the points you want to go over clear in your mind. Writing down a list can help you make better use of your time.

F. Rosary

Unless otherwise indicated, the rosary is recited individually and in silence each day during one of the personal times.

G. Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are prayed on your own. There is a version at the end of this booklet

H. Silence

Silence is one of the key elements to the success of the retreat. God speaks to us in the silence of our hearts and so it is necessary to maintain an external and internal silence. The most important silence is the internal silence. This means that retreatants have to leave their worries and concerns (work, home, family) and focus on the retreat and only the retreat. Silence also means to concentrate on the material of the retreat and not just "good and spiritual things" that are not the focus of the retreat.

Various Prayers for Use During the Retreat

Prayers to Begin and Conclude Each Meditation

To Begin:

V./ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

V./ Come, Holy Spirit,

R./ fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V./ Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R./ and you will renew the face of the earth.

V./ Let us pray:

Lord, by the light of your Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in His consolation. We ask through Christ our Lord.

R./ Amen.

V./ Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

R./ Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V./ Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

R./ As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

To Conclude:

V./ We give you thanks for all your gifts, Almighty God, living and reigning now and forever and ever.

R./ Amen.

V./ Christ our King!

R./ Thy Kingdom come!

V./ Virgin most prudent, Mary, mother of the Church,

R./ Pray for us.

Morning Prayers

PRAYER TO THE HOLY TRINITY

My Lord, God of heaven and earth – Father and Creator, Son and Redeemer, Holy Spirit and Sanctifier – I adore you and love you with all my heart. I thank you for creating me, redeeming me, calling me to the Catholic faith, and watching over me last night. I offer you on this day my prayer, my work, and my struggles, my sufferings and my joys. Enable me to do everything out of love for you and according to your will. Make me steadfast in living my Christian vocation, patient in suffering, courageous in proclaiming my faith; fill me with wisdom on life's journey and charity in dealing with others. Free me from sin and from all evil. May your grace always remain with me and with all who are dear to me. Amen.

PRAYER TO JESUS CHRIST

Lord Jesus, faithful friend of my soul, once more I offer you my life so you can teach me to do your will, give me the strength to follow you, and help me to imitate your virtues, especially those that please you most: charity, humility, justice and honesty. Make me a faithful, zealous apostle of your Church and grant me the grace that will enable me to proclaim your saving message to the brothers and sisters I meet on my journey today. May I live my Catholic faith with such evident conviction and share it with such ardent zeal that I become a fruitful and effective fisher of souls for you. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Mother, I come before you on this new day to bless you for the great things almighty God has done for you, to thank you for the graces you have obtained for me, to consecrate to you all my thoughts, words and actions, and to ask your blessing for me and all those who are dear to me. Intercede with God for all of us as we strive to live the faith, hope and charity of which you set us such an admirable and noble example. Enable me to imitate the life of prayer, obedience, humility, fidelity, sacrifice and simplicity that you shared with your Son, our Brother and Lord. Help me to form a meek and humble heart like that of your son, Jesus Christ, and obtain for me the grace of receiving him in the sacrament of his love as fervently as you throughout the years of your solitude. Mother, tell Jesus how much I want to love him, how ardently I desire to become holy and be his apostle. Tell him how fervently and constantly I want to serve him and be his faithful instrument in fulfilling my specific mission in this world. Amen.

The Angelus

V./ The angel of the Lord appeared unto Mary,

R./ and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

V./ *Hail Mary ...*

V./ “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,

R./ be it done unto me according to thy word.”

V./ *Hail Mary ...*

V./ And the Word was made flesh

R./ and dwelt among us.

V./ *Hail Mary ...*

V./ Pray for us, most holy Mother of God,

R./ that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V./ Let us pray: Pour forth we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection. We ask this through the same Christ Our Lord.

R./ Amen.

V./ Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

R./ As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. (*three times*)

V./ We give you thanks for all your gifts, almighty God, living and reigning now and forever.

R./ Amen.

Night Prayers

My Lord and my God, I give You thanks for the countless benefits You have given me, and especially for creating me, redeeming me, calling me to the Catholic faith, choosing me to be an apostle among my neighbors and freeing me from many dangers of soul and body. Enlighten my mind so that I may recognize my faults and grant me the grace to be truly sorry and sincerely mend my ways. Amen.

For a few moments, make a revision or balance of the day, seeing if you have fulfilled your Christian commitments.

Mental Prayer: A Beginner's Guide

Guide to Mental Prayer

Prayer is essentially a dialogue with God. It is a personal, heart to heart conversation that enlightens the soul, strengthens the will, and enables us to accept – and carry out – God’s will for our lives. Prayer ought to renew us from within. When it is authentic, prayer influences the way we think, how we feel, and the decisions we make in our daily lives.



*What we need most in order
to make progress is to
be silent before this great God
with our appetite
and with our tongue,
for the language he best hears is
silent love.*

St John of the Cross



Preparation for Prayer

Preparing your soul for mental prayer is not something we can accomplish by our own efforts. We need God’s help in order to pray. And thus we must always begin our prayer by invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit – the “sweet guest of the soul” who dwells within us. In fact, without the Holy Spirit, nothing lasting or solid can be attained in the work of our growth in holiness.

Then it is good to consider what we are about to do and with whom we are going to speak. In prayer we meet the One who made us and who knows us perfectly; the One who neither deceives nor can be deceived; the Father who loves us infinitely more than we love ourselves.

A good next step is to renew our faith in God, express our love for him, rekindle our confidence in his promises, and thank him for all of his gifts. We need to recognize who we really are before him – fragile creatures in need of redemption.

Now we are ready to ask God for the particular gift we hope to receive as a “fruit” or result of our prayer. Sometimes this fruit is something particular and concrete, such as the strength to overcome a particular weakness or the patience to practice a certain virtue. Other times it can be something deeper; for example, that inner change of heart which is necessary to follow Christ more closely.

It is important to remember that authentic prayer engages everything we are: our intellect and our will, our feelings and affections, our interests and desires. The Lord wishes to transform our entire being with his grace. Thus, prayer is much more than “thinking” about God and spiritual things.

Forms of Mental Prayer

Prayer normally takes two essential forms.

The first form or type is known as "discursive-affective" prayer. The goal of this type of prayer is to reflect on an idea or fundamental principle so as to understand it more deeply and make it your own. It is not simply a mental exercise, but rather a reflection from the heart on the mystery of your own life, done in the light of faith and from God's perspective. This type of prayer can lead you to a deeper understanding, which will lead you to a greater desire to become one with God. This culminates in a conversion of heart, which is the decision to live in accordance with the truth you have considered in God's light.

Another form of mental prayer is "contemplation." Contemplation involves taking a mystery or an event in the life of Christ or the Blessed Virgin, or in salvation history. You place yourself in this event by observing the people, listening to their words, and considering their actions. Then you meditate on the implications for your own life, by allowing the movement of grace to stir your heart and move your will towards giving yourself and imitating what you have contemplated.

Finally, prayer may involve all of the above elements: discursive, affective and contemplative.

Listening in Prayer

Nevertheless, it is not enough to reflect or contemplate. If prayer is a dialogue with God, then over time we need to learn to listen to God. We need to speak with Him and allow Him to mold us into the image of His Son. And to accomplish this we must approach Him full of faith and love.

Habit of Prayer

The fruitfulness of prayer depends primarily on God's action, but it also requires our cooperation. Therefore, we do well to make an honest effort in prayer and in acquiring the habit of daily prayer. This requires learning to set aside and overcome the difficulties we face in prayer: distractions, tiredness and negative feelings – which we suffer especially in times of temptation and dryness. It is greatly helped by having a set time for prayer each day.

Tools for Spiritual Progress

- ***Guide for Spiritual
Direction***
 - ***The Vocation Statement***
 - ***The Program of Life***
-

Guide for Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is not a counseling session. Its purpose is to discover God's will in your concrete daily reality in order then to fulfill it. It is a dialogue based on faith, that takes place in the context of the Church (the Church's teaching, sacramental theology, mission, etc.).

It is particularly important to bear in mind that there is a third Person present and active in spiritual direction, above and beyond you and your director – the Holy Spirit. The most important element in spiritual direction is the light that the Holy Spirit sheds on both of you, which is much more important than the direct influence of your director on you.



POINTS TO GO OVER IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Take some time to **prepare** beforehand so your points are well ordered and as clear as possible.

1. Resolutions:

- In the last Spiritual Direction, what recommendations or resolutions were made?

2. What is the general **state of your soul**?

- Have you felt dry, distracted, worried, or serene, docile, confident and trusting in God's grace?

3. Prayer.

- Have you been faithful to your prayer commitments?
- Are you giving quality time to your prayer, or are you just fitting it in when it is most convenient?
- Are you making sacrifices to get your prayer time in, or just doing it when other activities or distractions don't take your time?
- How are you doing your meditations?
- Are you making concrete resolutions, checking them periodically, and faithfully keeping them?

4. Struggles with sin and growth in virtue

- Focus first on your Program of Life--usually the most important part of Spiritual Direction.
- What progress have you made?
- What difficulties have you encountered?

- Has any part of the program become routine, or are you avoiding or ignoring some of what you had proposed to do? Why?

5. Vocation and Mission

- Are you dedicating your time with real dedication, with a spirit of faith, hope, and love? Or does it seem like an imposition on your “personal” time?
- Are you working with purity of intention for the glory of God and the advance of his Kingdom, or for personal satisfaction, human respect, desire for the esteem of others?

Guide to Develop a Vocation Statement

What is a Vocation Statement?

What is the most important focus in my life? Do I really set my priorities or do I have them set for me? Here you need to write out your vocation statement. This has to reflect what God has created you for, that path that will lead to your greatest fulfillment, and therefore also imply your greatest challenges, and on which he will judge you. The Vocation Statement reflects those things that are key to the fulfillment of one's life. It should become a compass that affects everything in your life, the goals you set, the decisions you make, the paradigms you hold, and the way you spend your time.

How would God write out your "job description" as a baptized person, as a spouse, as a parent, as an apostle? What is your IDEAL for all these jobs? What are the essential elements involved in completing these roles? This should be a description of an ideal and not just a list of things you need to do. Who are you? Who is God calling you to be in these areas?

In the last 30 years, there has been wide spread confusion about what it means to be a spouse and a parent with disastrous results. We need to redefine these roles and recapture their importance. The same can be said about our relationship with God. Until we realize what God is calling us to, we can never fully appreciate our faith and the gifts that God has given us.

It is also imperative that we have real balance in our life. If we ignore any one of our responsibilities to the detriment of the others, we are not living a holy life. A spouse that ignores his/her spouse for the sake of their children will ultimately harm the children. We need to constantly review our ideals, goals and responsibilities to make sure that we are not neglecting anything that is truly essential.

The elements to include in a Vocation Statement

1. First start with God and that which defines me first: Baptized child of God, His masterpiece.
2. Second, identify my principle vocation: Spouse OR discerning my principle vocation (Single)
3. Third, identify my principle responsibility: Parent/Apostle

After you have written a Vocation Statement be sure to establish two or three concrete means to help you accomplish it. They should be things you can do on a regular basis. Make sure that they are concrete and practical.

SAMPLE VOCATION STATEMENT

Baptized Catholic

I have been created to enter into a personal, passionate and intimate relationship with God. All that I do and say has to reflect the dignity to which I am called. I am totally dependent on God for my own happiness and the happiness of those around me.

Without God I can do nothing of any significance.

- 1. I will make daily prayer commitments and do them at the best time of the day.*
- 2. I will attend regular spiritual direction, and I will come prepared.*

Spouse

As a spouse I am called to make my spouse the center of my heart. Understanding just how much we need each other, I will strive to build him/her up, to make him/her feel loved and to recognize his/her needs and do all that I can do to fulfill them. I will complete myself in my spouse and see our relationship as the generator of our love for our children.

- 1. I will give my spouse the first 15 minutes when I get home from work.*
- 2. I will make Thursday evening "date night".*
- 3. I will think about the needs of my spouse on my way home from work.*

Parent

As a parent I will recognize that God has placed me here on earth to form and mold the hearts, minds and souls of our children. I will make them feel loved and cherished and always be conscious of my calling to be a faithful reflection of God the Father's love for them.

- 1. Try to spend at least ten minutes alone with each child each day.*
- 2. See my vocation as much more than doing things for my children. It has to be loving them and making them feel love by spending quality time with them.*
- 3. I will help Gertrude with her Math homework every night.*

Apostle

As a Baptized Catholic I will understand my calling to be an apostle. I will recognize the needs of the mystical body of Christ and never be indifferent. I will see my faith as the greatest gift that I can give to anyone. I will not see people superficially but try to penetrate into their soul and guide them little by little to Christ.

- 1. I will try to help my brother Bob come back to the faith. I will remember him every day in my prayers and sacrifices and really show him extra love.*
- 2. I will volunteer at Birthright three hours every week.*
- 3. I will get involved in the "Sharing the Faith" series at Church.*

Outline for a Vocation Statement

Baptized Catholic-

Spouse / Single-Person-

Parent-

Apostle-

Making Time for Prayer

When we leave this retreat we need to get into a regular routine of prayer. The vine that is not connected to the branch will soon wither. Select some prayer activities and specific times to do them during the week. Here is a list of possible commitments.

- Gospel reflection
- Daily Mass
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament
- Rosary (at least one mystery)
- Meditation (mental prayer)
- Conscience Examination
- Morning Offering
- Stations of the Cross
- Novenas
- Spiritual Reading
- Liturgy of the Hours

Prayer Commitment	When	Where
--------------------------	-------------	--------------

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Biblical Stations of the Cross

Based on St. John Paul II Good Friday Stations of the Cross 1991 and homilies and discourses given during his Pontificate.

Opening Prayer:

Priest: God of power and mercy, in love you sent your Son so that we might be cleansed of sin and live with you forever. Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death that we may learn from his example the way we should go. We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." When he returned to his disciples, he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
(*Matthew 25:36-41*)

Reader 2: Especially those who are oppressed by apparently senseless moral suffering find in Jesus' moral suffering the meaning of their own trials and they go with Him into Gethsemane. In Him they find the strength to accept pain with holy abandon and trusting obedience to the Father's will. They feel rising from within their hearts the prayer of Gethsemane: "But let it be as you would have it, Father, not as I." (*JPII April 27, 1994 General Audience LOR*)

Priest: Lord, grant us your strength and wisdom, that we may seek to follow your will in all things.

Second Station: Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is Arrested

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1 : Then, while [Jesus] was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, "the man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely." He came and immediately went over to him and said, "Rabbi." And he kissed him. At this they laid hands on him and arrested him. (*Mark 14: 43-46*)

Reader 2: In referring to the acts of his passion, the expression "Heart of Jesus" also recalls Christ's sorrow over his betrayal by Judas: his distress due to loneliness; his anguish in the face of death, and his filial and obedient abandonment into the hands of the Father. Most of all it speaks of the love which flows unceasingly from his inmost being: infinite love for the Father and limitless love for mankind. (JPII Angelus July 9, 1989)

Priest: Lord, grant us the courage of our convictions that our lives may faithfully reflect the good news you bring.

Third Station: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us," but he replied to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth." (*Luke 22: 66-71*)

Reader 2: The cross is the mystery of expiation: Jesus let himself be cruelly condemned and put to death to make expiation for the "original sin" committed by our first parents, as well as for the terrible tide of sin which flows throughout all of human history. The events on Golgotha are thus revealed as an act of supreme love, for which everyone must say with the apostle: "The Son of God has loved me and has given himself up for me." (*Gal 2:20*). (JPII General Audience March 27, 1991)

Priest: Lord, grant us your sense of righteousness that we may never cease to work to bring about the justice of the kingdom that you promised.

Fourth Station: Jesus is Denied by Peter

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." Again, he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!" A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." At that he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the words that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly. (*Matthew 26: 69-75*)

Reader 2: Peter describes himself as "a witness of Christ's sufferings and a sharer in the glory that is to be revealed" (1 Pt 4:1). There is no doubt in Peter's mind about the witness he is called to bear. He is a witness of the suffering Christ. Perhaps he was mindful, however, of an earlier time in his life, precisely during the Passion itself, when out of fear for his own safety, he had denied that he ever knew his Master. How far Peter has come from that day of sorrow and despair! For love is more powerful than fear, and the Lord is merciful and forgiving. The same Peter who denied his Master is now in word and in deed, bearing witness with courage to the Crucified and Risen Christ. (JP II Homily Sept 16, 1987)

Priest: Lord, grant us the gift of honesty that we may not fear to speak the truth even when it is difficult.

Fifth Station: Jesus is Judged by Pilate

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: The chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." The chief priests accused him of many things. Again, Pilate questioned him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of." Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.... Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas... [and] handed [Jesus] over to be crucified. (*Mark 15: 1-5, 15*)

Reader 2: In this connection, we think of those brothers of ours, who are tried, and perhaps condemned to death - if not to physical death, at least to civil death - because they profess their faith, because they are faithful to truth, because they defend real justice. It must be recognized that; unfortunately, similar situations are not lacking also in the world of today. On this day of Christ the King, it is necessary, therefore, to stress the resemblance of those who are undergoing them, with Christ himself, tried and condemned before the court of Pilate. Let us pray every day: Thy Kingdom come. (JP II Angelus March 24, 1996)

Priest: Lord, grant us discernment that we may see as you see, not as the world sees.

Sixth Station: Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly. (John 19: 1-3)

Reader 2: The inscription placed on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Jews," is a proof that for the authority this was his crime. The very Jews who, paradoxically, aspired to the reestablishment of the "kingdom of David" in the earthly sense, at the sight of Jesus scourged and crowned with thorns presented to them by Pilate with the words, "Behold your King!" cried out, "Crucify him . . . we have no king but Caesar." (Jn 19:15). (General Audience February 11, 1987)

Priest: Lord, grant us patience in times of suffering that we may offer our lives as a sacrifice of praise.

Seventh Station: Jesus Bears the Cross

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: When the chief priests and the guards saw [Jesus] they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him." ... They cried out, "Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. (John 19: 6, 15-17)

Reader 2: This cross will remain through all the generations of mankind, inseparable from Christ. It will become his memorial and his sign. It will become an answer to the question that man asked God, and will remain a mystery. The Church will surround it with the body of her living community, she will surround it with men's faith with their hope and with their love. The Church will carry the cross with Christ through the generations. She will bear witness to it. She will draw life from it. From the cross she will grow with that mysterious growth of the Spirit, which has its beginning in the cross. The Apostle will write: In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body." (Col 1:24). The Church will grow from the cross as the mysterious mystical Body of Christ, completing the cross. (*JPII Angelus; March 30, 1980*)

Priest: Lord, grant us strength of purpose that we may faithfully bear our crosses each day.

Eighth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. (*Mark 15: 21*)

Reader 2: God continues to trust in man; hence, sin and its consequences do not make void the Creator's command: "Subdue the earth and have dominion over it" (Gen 1:28). Through his life, Christ announces and accomplishes an authentic "gospel of work." Besides being a direct, although not the only way of participating in the creative task of God the Father, physical work is called to be a form of collaboration with God the Son in the redemption of mankind. Indeed, your hardships ... your sweat, your anxieties, are by no means useless. They are the cross which you must take up daily: Christ wants you to help him carry the cross; you are to be another Simon of Cyrene as it were, "who was coming in from the country" (Mk 15:21), and took on his shoulders the cross Christ was carrying. (*JP II, Homily May 17, 1988*)

Priest: Lord, grant us willing spirits that we may be your instruments on earth.

Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do

not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' At that time, people will say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?" (*Luke 23: 27-31*)

Reader 2: There are the "many" women who accompanied Jesus and his Apostles, affording them their maternal support (cf. Lk 8:2-3); there are the "daughters of Jerusalem" who mark the cruel journey of the way of the cross with a note of mercy..." (JP II Angelus; August 16, 1987)

Priest: Lord, grant us gentle spirits that we may comfort those who mourn.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." (*Luke 23: 33-34*)

Reader 2: The Catholic Church's specific ministry is to build human life on the stone which is Jesus. St. Paul says that Jesus crucified is our wisdom and our strength. It is a paradox, but this Crucified One is the source of all our strength, the strength of the suffering and of all those who do not want to err in life, who want to keep on the straight path, who want to build and not to destroy. (JPII Homily March 6, 1994)

Priest: Lord, grant us merciful hearts that we may bring your reconciliation and forgiveness to all.

Eleventh Station: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (*Luke 23: 39-43*)

Reader 2: We are on Calvary at the moment of the Crucifixion. Together with Jesus, two criminals are also being crucified. One of these insults him, saying: "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well" (Lk 23:39). But the second instead says: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). This second man believed in the Kingdom of the Crucified One. He believed in the Kingdom that draws near to each human person through Christ Crucified. Truly, it was not flesh and blood that had revealed this truth to him, but the Father-this Father who frees us from "the power of darkness and creates a place for us in the Kingdom of the Son that he loves" (Col 1:13). The Son, Jesus, in agony on the Cross, says to his crucified companion: "Indeed, I promise you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). (JP II Homily Oct 23, 1986)

Priest: Lord, grant us perseverance that we may never stop seeking you.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (John 19: 25-27)

Reader 2: Today, the Sorrowful Virgin, standing beside the cross, speaks to us with the silent eloquence of her example about the meaning of suffering in the divine plan of redemption. She desired and knew how to share in the saving mystery, "associating herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her" (Lumen Gentium, n. 58). Enriched interiorly by this unspeakable experience, she is near to all who are suffering, she takes them by the hand and invites them to go up with her to Calvary and stand before the Crucified... Let us ask Our Lady of Sorrows to nourish in us a firm faith and an ardent charity so that we can carry our daily cross with courage (cf. Lk 9:23) and thus participate effectively in the work of redemption. (JP II Angelus; September 15, 1991)

Priest: Lord, grant us constancy that we may be willing to stand by those in need.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn

down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"; and when he had said this, he breathed his last. (*Luke 23: 44-46*)

Reader 2: The scene of Jesus in agony on the Cross, hanging between two criminals, is a striking symbol of the mystery of reconciliation. In the first place, it shows us vividly the horrifying effects of sin, the stark and terrible reality of evil, the awful consequences of disobedience and alienation from God. Who could gaze on the Cross of Christ and not acknowledge the reality of sin? And not only the reality of sin but also its destructive consequences? (*JPII General Audience April 11, 1990*)

Priest: Lord, grant us trust in you that when our time on earth is ended our spirits may come to you without delay.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Priest: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reader 1: When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. (*Matthew 27: 57-60*)

Reader 2: Yet He Who Is, will pass precisely through this mockery, this disgrace. He will pass through much more, and more definitively, than on the night of the first pasch in Egypt. He will pass through the tomb in which they will place the Crucified, and he will be revealed in a greater sign, the sign of death conquered by Life. (*JPII March 19, 1989*)

Closing Prayer:

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ, your passion and death is the sacrifice that unites earth and heaven and reconciles all people to you. May we who have faithfully reflected on these mysteries follow in your steps and so come to share your glory in heaven where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Based on John Paul II Good Friday Stations of the Cross 1991 and his reflections from homilies and discourses throughout his Pontificate

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Questionnaires

PRAYER

1. Do I realize that prayer is the absolute best use of my time? That when I fill in my schedule for the day, the first thing I should fill in is my prayer time? Do I live as if I believe this truth?
2. Do I realize that praying is loving? That it is one way I direct my love to God and that if my prayer is not rooted in love, there will be something lacking in my ability to love, something essential?
3. Do I sense the presence of God when I pray? Do I realize that prayer requires my awareness of God's presence? That when I forget God is present, I have probably stopped praying and I am most likely just talking to myself?
2. Do I attempt to multitask when I pray? Do I try to fulfill a prayer commitment while I am driving or while I am doing other tasks? Do I realize that while I should 'pray always', my prayer commitments need my undivided attention - that prayer is difficult and attempting to do anything else when my mind should be on prayer usually means I will not pray well?
3. Have I fallen into the fallacy of reading spiritual books as a way to fulfill my meditation? Do I realize that prayer is an activity of the heart, while reading is an activity of the mind - that it isn't really prayer?
4. Do I struggle with prayer because I don't really understand how to use my heart to pray? Do I realize this is because I come from a culture that is so focused on the mind and so ignorant of the heart that it practically doesn't realize that the heart exists as a part of every human being? That when it does think of the heart, it sees it as the location of our emotions (false!) instead of the location of our attitudes and convictions? Do I realize that the heart is more important than the mind although both are parts of our soul, because to be a good person, a holy person, I must have a good heart, while having a good mind or not is not important for my salvation? That a poor, uneducated person can have a heart of gold and a great scientist can have a deeply flawed heart? That what is important is not having a degree, but filling my life with love?
5. Isn't my ignorance of the importance of the heart one big reason why I don't see the importance of prayer? That I judge my day more on how

many practical things I accomplished (criterion of the mind) rather than on my fulfillment of God's law to love the least of my brothers (criterion of the heart)?

6. Have I fallen into the fallacy of thinking that the fulfillment of the practical things I need to get done is somehow equivalent to fulfilling God's will for me? Don't I realize that making this substitution is only possible for people who don't pray enough?
7. Do I realize that perhaps the reason why Pope Francis makes me uneasy at times is because he calls me to fulfill God's command to love the least of my brothers (criterion of the heart), while I would like to simply judge my brothers according to how well they follow God's will (criterion of the mind)? Isn't this because living with love for everyone is difficult and in fact impossible for people who don't have a good prayer life? Don't I realize that in order to live from the heart rather than from the mind, I have to exercise my heart in prayer every day? That the only way I can grow in the love my Christian calling demands, is through prayer? That probably the reason the Church seems to be in full retreat before the attacks of secular society is that for most of its members, it has become a Church of rules (criterion of the mind) rather than a Church of God's love (criterion of the heart)?
8. Do I realize that atheism is this religion of the mind followed to its logical conclusion? That modern atheism is in part a reaction to a Christianity that limits itself to the mind - a Church without a heart? Do I realize that without a deep life of prayer, I am in danger myself of living a practical atheism (how many Catholics don't put Christ first in their lives, but other more 'practical' values - "I will follow Christ as long as it doesn't get in the way of doing what I want."), let alone not having answers for those I know who are atheists? Do I realize how many people are atheists simply because they neglected prayer in their lives?

GROWTH IN DISCIPLESHIP

1. Jesus calls every baptized Christian to a life of holiness. Therefore, I have a vocation (a “calling”) to be a saint, that is, to be the “best version” of myself with the help of God’s grace. Do I “hear” myself being called to this in a personal, singular way? Or, only in a vague, generic, way as a consequence of being affiliated with a group?
2. Jesus calls his disciples, first and foremost, *to be with Him*. Do I consider my quiet time in daily prayer as a response to this invitation of Christ to spend time with him? How is my prayer? ... Do I see it as a response to a personal invitation or as a routine activity or duty to check off?
3. The first prerequisite of becoming a disciple in earnest is the willingness to abandon the old, and to begin to be created again by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. One spiritual author considers contemplative/meditative prayer as “the boldest and most adventuresome of undertakings,” for what could be more radical, more earth-shattering, than “the willingness to be dismantled and created anew not once or twice, but day after day”! Am I willing to be created anew each day in my quiet prayer?
4. The maturation of a disciple entails passing through storms with Jesus. Regardless of how harassed and perturbed I might be by life’s crises, can I, like Jesus, have my soul at rest, anchored in God the Father? Do I know how to take Christ into the boat with me so that even the most tormented moments at the surface of emotions can coexist with a deep calm, the deep sleep that rests, like Jesus, in the bosom of the eternal Father?
5. Healthy things grow. Is my apostolic zeal – my desire to share my faith with others – something that flows naturally from a healthy friendship with Christ, or do I see it as something contrived, at times awkward or insignificant? What is my habitual disposition and attitude towards others: do I view every person as a soul in need of Christ? Or do I see others as a nuisance or a problem to resolve or avoid rather than being a gift from God for me to love in that very moment?
6. Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* states that “The task of evangelizing all people is the essential mission of the Church”. Do I consider myself a part of this mission or am I waiting for someone else to fulfill a task that I have been commissioned and equipped for from my baptism? Do I see my life itself as a mission?