

There are as many ways of praying - as there are people - and there is no one way of praying. All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Frequently our way of praying changes as we grow in our loving relationship with God.

As we come towards the end of this year 2020, most of us have been living in this time of Pandemie for the past 9 months. It continues to be the most extraordinary - and probably the most difficult year of our lives - as we have all been 'infected' in some way by the Covid virus.

So let us pause and ask ourselves the question - where do we go from here, as we approach the year 2021?

One of the ways of praying over the past year that you may find helpful at this difficult time is called the 'Review' also known as 'the Examen'.*

So I invite you to take some time to stand back from your daily activities and with the eyes of faith/God look over the past events in your life and notice where 'bidden or not' God has been present'. Far from being an analysis, it is with the 'eyes of God' that together you will 'see' and notice the graced moments over this past year as you bring to mind your experiences of joy and sadness as well as moments of pain and healing.

Setting the scene: Introduction

Begin by looking at your day and decide when you can 'step aside' for about 15 - 20 minutes into a space where you can just 'be', preferably in the early morning, or evening. Maybe you already have a special prayer 'space' this is familiar to you. You may find it helpful to light a candle, have before you an icon or favourite picture, your Bible and a notebook at hand.

As you enter this place of stillness take time to settle and ask God that you may be fully present to this moment, and able to 'let go' of the occupations of the day. Ask for the grace that your whole being, body, mind, and spirit maybe attentive to God's presence during this time of Prayer.

From time to time a good question to ask yourself is - where has God been in all this?

The following seven 'pointers' provide a simple structure to Praying the Review...

Transition

"You are precious in my eyes and honoured, and I love you."(Isaiah 43)

You are in the presence of God, in the presence of Love. Become aware of that Love with which God looks upon you now as if for the first time.

A time to give thanks - As you reflect on God's presence in your life during the past year, see what comes to the surface. Notice the kindnesses you've experienced through His love for you, and the things that lifted your spirit – no matter how small. Do not try too hard or become analytical – simply see, notice and hold what emerges giving thanks to God, for all that has been.

A time to ask God for understanding –

Now ask for enlightenment and guidance to go deeper - so that you may understand how God's love has been working in you and through you during this year.

A time to take stock –

Together with God, recall the places, peoples and events as you visit and review the year. Look for the stirrings in your heart and the thoughts that have led to your actions. Notice when you have felt closer to God and at peace, as well as where God has seemed absent. What has hindered or been an obstacle that has disturbed your loving relationship with God?

A time to ask for forgiveness and healing –

There may have been moments when you failed to respond to God’s love at work in you. Take time for these to surface. Don’t be hard on yourself or make false judgements. Stay with that experience. Then ask for God’s forgiveness and abundant mercy, trusting in the immensity of God’s love that removes all burdens, casts out fear and binds up wounds, and sets you once again on the path of life.

A time to renew –

As this new year of 2021 approaches, become aware of any deep down concerns, anxieties, or fears that could become an obstacle on your faith journey. Tune into your innermost longings and nourish the desire to deepen your inner knowledge of Jesus at the heart of the Gospel. Ask for the gift of what you most need to live fully in God’s presence. Above all, trust in God, knowing that God is always with you, and that 'His love and his grace is enough for you'.

Transition –

Then when you are ready - gently bring your focus and attention back to where you are in the room - ending your prayer by thanking God for this time together praying in your own words or using words that are familiar, such as the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father) – whichever feels right and comfortable.

This short introduction to 'the review' as a way praying has been a 'taster' session; when practiced over a period of time, it may become a daily way of praying. If you feel drawn to looking over the past year in this way - one way is to 'pray' through the seasons, at your own rhythm

We wish you a blessed and peaceful New Year for 2021.

You can download this document from the link on the website

**'The Review of the Day' – or the 'Examen' as it is sometimes called – is the practice of taking time to prayerfully reflect on the events of the day in order to recognise the presence and guidance of God in our lives.*

To reflect on our daily experiences in prayer is an ancient practice of the Church. However, St Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) gave this reflection a particular structure as outlined.