



# Cura Leader Resource Binder

**Above all, clothe yourselves with love,  
which binds everything together  
in perfect harmony.**

**~Colossians 3:14**



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## Cura Council

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### Cura Group Leader Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a Cura Group Leader for the 2014-15 academic year, agree to the following commitments:

- Be attentive to my own faith journey and commit to Cura as a way of life (ideally monthly spiritual direction meeting, retreat 2x a year, weekly small faith sharing group)
- Hold (and/or attend as a member) weekly one-hour Cura meetings. These meetings should strive to create a safe, open, loving community where members can share their experiences and help one another to see God in all things and develop their spirituality.
- Attend all mandatory Cura events, including retreats and formation days, as listed below.
- Encourage Cura members to attend socials and events sponsored by Cura Council.
- Read and respond to Cura emails, including *keeping in contact with a designated member of Cura Council*, who will be assigned to you.
- Remember that you are the face of Cura for many people on campus. Be a leader and a role model for all.
- Cultivate an environment of *Cura Personalis* within the larger BC community.

**Mandatory Cura Dates:**

- Friday, September 5th 11 AM - 4 PM: Student Involvement Day (1/2 hour time slots)
- Friday - Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>: Cura Group Leader Retreat, Craigville
- September 29th 6-8 PM: Cura Group Assignment BBQ, Stokes Lawn
- Formation afternoon at STM Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup> 2-4:30PM
- Thanksgiving dinner Sunday Nov. 16th @ 5PM
- Christmas *Cookies & Cocoa* Wednesday December 10<sup>th</sup> 7-9PM
- Second Semester: Cura Leader Formation Day (~2-5 PM)

**Strongly encouraged:**

- Monthly Taize prayer, Mondays Sept.22<sup>nd</sup>, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, Nov.10<sup>th</sup> & Dec. 8th
- Cura Beloved Retreat: February 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>
- The Manresa 5-day Silent Retreat January 6th- 11<sup>th</sup>
- Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice November 15-17<sup>th</sup>, Washington DC
- Examen at Manresa House on Wednesday evenings 9:45 PM
- Taize France Pilgrimage Spring break 2015

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Other resources: [youngadultclc.org](http://youngadultclc.org) and follow the 'Caminos' track

### **What is Cura?**

The mission of Cura is to 'love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34). *Cura Personalis* (care of the whole person) stems from the desire to see and care for a person as God sees and cares for that same person. Cura groups seek to become true Christian communities where its members listen, share, challenge and together respond ever more fully to God's voice in their life.

### ***Cura and CLC***

3 Pillars: Community, Spirituality & Mission

### **Christian Life Communities: Some Basics**

- ✦ A lay organization
- ✦ A world community lived out in a local community of 6-10 people
- ✦ A common way of life based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius
- ✦ Welcomes members of all walks of life
- ✦ Provides the space for members to respond more fully to God's loving desires for them.

### **History**

Christian Life Community traces its roots to St. Ignatius Loyola (and before that from the early Christian communities), who, as a soldier recovering from his battle wounds, was given an extraordinary grace of conversion. That mystical experience of God led to his total dedication to Christ and his mission. After his conversion, Ignatius sought to help others by speaking with them in groups about the work of God in their lives. He guided many towards God by drawing on his own spiritual experiences and gradually formulated the Spiritual Exercises to help future guides lead others to God. The Exercises thus helped the development of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the congregation of lay persons, which became the Sodalities of Our Lady, from which the Christian Life Communities developed after Vatican II.

After the Society of Jesus was suppressed in the mid-1700s, the link with the Spiritual Exercises faded until its rediscovery after Vatican II. In 1563 in Rome, a young Jesuit, John Leunis, founded the first CLC by gathering a group of young lay students at the Roman College to help them unite their lives - jobs, studies, families, relationships, etc. - with Christian values. The movement, originally called the *Sodality of Our Lady*, grew and was confirmed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584. Over the years the movement spread dramatically. In 1920 there were 80,000 sodalities worldwide. In the 1950s in the U.S., there were over two million teenage members and numerous adult members. When Vatican II urged groups like the Sodality to rediscover their original roots, some sodalities continued as before, while others became *Christian Life Communities*. The main difference is in the size (6 to 12) and the regularity of

meeting (weekly or biweekly) as well as leadership role changing to include lay. Jesuits and the Spiritual Exercises have continued in a close relationship with CLC.

Taken from: [http://www.clcyya.org/about\\_history.htm](http://www.clcyya.org/about_history.htm)

## Depth experiences of Christian Life Community

- ❖ Sense of direction in daily life
- ❖ Development of a Christian Community way of life
- ❖ Response and service to others
- ❖ Social awareness
- ❖ World consciousness
- ❖ Growth in awareness of the movements of the Spirit
- ❖ A spirituality based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

## Essentials of CLC Formation

*(taken from the web resources of CLC New York and New Jersey)*

CLC members should have a clear understanding that this is a vocation within the Church. It is a way of life to which many feel a strong calling. At the same time it is also a more general way of life open to any and all religious affiliations. The core of CLC comes from the ownership of the General Principles which give us the CLC Vision: Spirituality, Community and Mission.

**Spirituality:** Deeply grounded in the spiritual exercises, participation in faith sharing, annual retreat, regular prayer life, use of discernment and a discerning lifestyle, use of spiritual direction, and regular use of the awareness examen.

**Sense of Community:** CLC is part of the larger church. CLC is world and national community. Commitment accountability to CLC is lived out both in the local community and in the larger CLC. Communities grow through stages of development. This growth flows from individual and /or communal reality. Competent guides are essential to this growth.

**Mission:** Is the end for which community and spirituality exist. Flows from our Baptismal call to build the reign of God. This implies a fundamental option for the poor and an ability to read the signs of the times and a commitment of working toward a vision of a just world.

*A growing community must integrate three elements:*

*a life of silent prayer,*

*a life of service and above all of listening to the poor,*

*and a community life through which all its members can grow in their own gift.*

*It is by looking at these elements that a community can evaluate whether it is alive or not.*

*(Jean Vanier, Community and Growth)*

## **Cura:** Committing to CLC at Boston College

Cura is part of a wider community of friends that helps one another discover and live out our personal vocations. We strive to cultivate a way of life that integrates the values of community, spirituality, and mission.

**Community: Becoming “friends in God”**

- I will try to open my heart to my small Cura group in :
- *Trust* – I will share with member in my group honestly what is happening in my life.
- *Openness* – I will receive and accept as gifts the things that my group members share, respect different points of view, and actively listen to everyone.
- *Confidentiality* – I will keep what other share within the group and trust that what I share will also be kept in confidence.
- *Regular attendance* – I will attend all group meetings; and/or notify the coordinator(s) whenever I cannot come to a meeting.
- *Building Community* – I will consider participating in campus wide Cura monthly and special events (such as Taize, Cura Retreats, Cura Barbeques, etc.)

**Spirituality: Finding God in all things.**

I will be attentive to my relationship with God. This means taking the time:

- To pray Ignatian Awareness Examen on a regular basis.
- To attend Sunday Worship of your choice.
- To attend a spiritual retreat once a year
- To grow in knowledge of Ignatian spirituality as the heart of the Cura (CLC) charisma.

**Mission: Continuing Christ’s Mission in the World**

I will strive to give of myself, in order to deepen my spirituality of being sent. This can be done through the following:

- Regular service/outreach to others, especially those most in need.
- Raise greater awareness of justice issues locally, nationally and worldwide.
- Reach out, at least once a semester with my group, to serve and stand in solidarity with the poor, marginalized, or outcast. Consider visiting MCI women’s prison or volunteering for an afternoon.

**Be Ourselves. Be United. Be Sent.**

1. Recognize that the presence, love and care they experience through deepening relationships and friendships in Cura as ultimately being grounded in an intentional living Christian community and tradition.
2. Articulate a particular instance in which a decision he/she made was a direct result of shared prayer and/or group reflection.
3. Pray regularly and reflect on where God is working in his/her life.

## Cura Meeting Format

### **Opening Prayer**

- This can be music, a poem, a scripture passage, a Prayer, etc. (When they are comfortable, you can invite the other members to lead this)

### **Check-in**

- Highs, Lows and Seeds (or rose, thorn and bud) of the week
- As time goes on, include language of *The Examen* such as
  - 🕯 What was life-giving for me last week?
  - 🕯 What am I most grateful to God for?
  - 🕯 Where was God present?
  - 🕯 What am I least grateful for?
  - 🕯 What did I find difficult?

## **Reflection/Activity**

- Scripture Reading
- Another kind of inspired work
- Share with one another what the readings or reflection means to you
- Discuss

## **Deepening Reflection**

- What stands out to you about our time together?

## **Closing Prayer**

- Like the opening, this can be a prayer, song, poem, scripture, etc.
- Invite the group to share intentions and to pray directly to God.

# Workshop: Leading Communal Prayer

## *Getting Out of the Spirit's Way*



### **10 Golden Rules of 'Leading' Communal Prayer:**

- 1) ***Ask for the Grace Desired:*** Be attentive to the particular needs of the group. Lift up these needs and ask for the Spirit to be present.
- 2) ***Listen, Listen, Listen!!***: Many times, the Spirit is guiding us, but we are too stubborn to pay attention to it!
- 3) ***Attention to Environment:*** The environment sets the tone before you even say a word. Give it appropriate attention!  
(Some Suggestions: cloth, candle(s), dimmed lights, cross or other symbol of focus, prayerful picture, flowers/plants, meditative music, personalized objects of a group)
- 4) ***Center Yourself:*** The best way to invite others into sacred space is to place yourself there first. Your reflection will automatically carry a different tone.
- 5) ***Silence, Silence, Silence:*** Don't be afraid of it. These are the moments that God's voice may be the most present within you and to each member of your group.
- 6) ***Breathing as Sacred:*** Helping people to recognize and utilize their breath can prove to be a beautiful encounter with the Divine. Don't underestimate its prayerful power!
- 7) ***Language of Invitation:*** Always invite, never demand or force. The moment a person feels obligated, the less likely they are to open to participation.
- 8) ***Flexibility as Prayer:*** Pray for the openness to adapt to whatever direction the prayer or reflection may go. Although it may not fit your plan, it may be God's grace at play.
- 9) ***Prayer is Not an Agenda:*** Setting the tone is different than 'giving an agenda' of what is to come. Make sure you give participants clear direction without destroying the spirit.
- 10) ***You are on Holy Ground:*** Root yourself in this and you will be a wonderful instrument in helping create sacred spaces of prayer.

# Reflection: Getting to Know You

## Come and See

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

◆ *Main Idea:* The first meeting or two is all about getting to know each other. It is also a great opportunity to set a deep, reflective tone for the year, build a rapport, and become friends.

◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Invited everyone into prayer:

“Let us take some time in prayer before we begin to reflect on why we are here tonight. (pause) I invite you to be comfortable ... close your eyes ... notice your breath ... open your heart towards God’s presence. We lead busy lives, classes, papers, meetings, roommates, life at BC. Now is the time to put aside all of our responsibilities to others and to be present to God’s grace.” Lord, we thank You for gathering us here. We believe You are here with us, for You promised to be present wherever two or three are gathered in Your name. We ask You to open our hearts to Your love and blessings. Help us to grow in friendship and companionship with one another and with You. Amen. “

◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Welcome everyone to the meeting. Invite everyone to share name, address, a bit about home and family and their faith background.

#### Closing Prayer

◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Lord Jesus, from the start you invite ordinary people to come to where you live. When they come, you welcome them and call them to labor and rejoice with you. Be with us this week. Open us to Your will, Your grace and seeing you in our experiences. Draw us into deeper friendship with You and each other and lead us along the path closer to You. We ask this in Your name. Amen. -adapted from prayer by Joseph Tetlow, S.J.

◆ *Further Suggestions:* Invite your group members to share their own prayers at the end and finish with an *Our Father* if you wish.

◆ *Preparation:* Make sure you choose your ice breaker ahead of time so you can prepare any necessary materials.

◆ *Directions:*

1. Start with High’s, Low’s, and Seeds (rose, thorn, bud) of the week/summer/day
2. Icebreaker/ Boundary breaking: choose a short ice breaker (10-15 minutes) such as fun facts or two truths and a lie. (See “Ice Breaker” section for a full list of Cura ice breakers)
3. Transition into the reflection activity with a scripture reading (which can be found in the resource section) Read passage twice, the second time asking your group to reflect on being called into this time and place: Mark 2:13-19 (Jesus calling the twelve disciples), *Wild Geese* (Poem by Mary Oliver), Isaiah 43:1-2 (I have called you by name), Matthew 11: 28-31 (Come to me all you who are weary), Jeremiah 29:11-14, John 1:35-39 (Come and see where I live), Psalm 139 (You search me and you know me)
4. Hopes and Desires about Cura: ask some reflection questions. Pass out journals or some paper and have your group silently reflect (10 minutes). Ask each person to briefly share what they wrote.

◆ *Reflection Questions:*

- \* Explain your vision of Cura
- \* Discuss the “mission” of Cura. What is it all about?
- \* Where do you see faith fitting into Cura?
- \* What do you want to receive from Cura?

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# Reflection: Listening to Each Other and God

## Ignatius' Awareness Examen

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* When facing countless choices as college students, Ignatian teaching encourages us to be attentive, be reflective and be loving. This reflection focuses on the first two by following the awareness examen.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “We pause again tonight to become more aware of God’s love in our lives and our call in this world. We turn to you O’ God confident of your gaze upon us, filled with your hope, peace and love. We ask that as we continue to get to know each other, that you make yourself known always. Thank you for this precious time this evening. Amen.”
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* High’s, Low’s, Seeds

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Choose one of these, which can be found in the resource section:  
  
Luke 12:22-31 – “Do not worry ... God knows what you need”  
  
*Who am I* - poem by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (found in long reflection materials section general resources)

### Reflection/Activity

- ◆ *Preparation:* Read “Rummaging for God” as preparation for teaching your group about the examen.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* If you choose, prepare handouts with the examen format for your group members to take home.
- ◆ *Directions:*
  1. Explain the Awareness Examen used by St. Ignatius as a prayer method. It can be used to become aware of your thoughts and feelings as well as a time to reflect on the day. It also serves as an opportunity to give thanks for the day. For Ignatius, Feelings serve as a barometer of our spiritual life. The examen encourages us to refrain from censoring our feelings, and to instead invite God to help us understand where these feelings are coming from.
  2. Walk your group through the examen. (see “Examens” section in resources) Make sure you encourage your group to get comfortable in their chairs or stretching out on the floor. Take a few moments to center yourself. Focus on your breathing.
  3. If you have time left over, consider adding an intercessions section at the end in which you encourage your group to offer up prayers to the group.

NOTES

# Reflection: Recognizing God in our Life Experiences

## The Mountain Motif

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* At our Cura meetings we share highs, lows and seeds. These are basically the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> step of the examen. What do highs and lows have to do with God? For this meeting we will share the highs and lows of our life using a Mountain Motif.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Psalm 121, Romans 8: 18-27, Luke 12: 22-31

#### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* "The Mountain Song" by Vertical Horizon <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7e6CvYi6dc>
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Invite your group into prayer. Encourage everyone to thank the people that have helped them on their journeys. Point out that the times of trials may draw out of us greater strength and growth that we may not realize we have undergone. Remind your group that painful experiences can be invitations to deepen our spiritual growth

- ◆ *Preparation:* You may want to make a mountain drawing ahead of time as an example to show your group.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* Blank paper, markers, pens
- ◆ *Directions:*
  1. Use the provided materials to draw a mountain. On the face of the mountain write the names of the people who have affected your life in a positive way and that have helped you with life's obstacles, even if you are still struggling with these particular obstacles.
  2. On the uphill slope of the mountain briefly jot down the different obstacles you have had to overcome.
  3. On the top of the mountain write down the different lessons you have learned as a result of the obstacles you have had to overcome
  4. As an alternative you may also draw a mountain range or a life graph with high and low points labeled.
  5. Invite your group to share what they wrote and why if they are comfortable. Remind your group that everything said is confidential.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:* If there is time after sharing, continue your reflection as a discussion.
  - \* What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
  - \* How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comforted? Anxious? Curious?
  - \* Is there anything you would like to share after hearing another share?

NOTES

# Reflection: Written Reflections

## Letter to Yourself

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* Have you ever had a moment when you want to say something to someone, even yourself, but just can't find the right words? You may have heard this advice for such situations: write it in a letter. Take time now to write a contemplate letter to yourself, to home, or to God.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Tattoos on the Heart p. 22-24 or p. 26-28 which can be found in the "long reflections" section of your resource materials.
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* With your highs and lows, also share a moment when you wanted to say something but just couldn't think of the right words.

#### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* "Say What You Need to Say" by John Mayer
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* As your group members leave, give them a copy of "I Thirst for You" found in the "long reflections" section of your resource materials. Encourage them to wait until they are alone to read it.

- ◆ *Preparation:* As your group members leave at the end of the meeting you will give them a copy of "I Thirst For You." To stay in the theme of letters, put each copy in an envelope and seal it so that each person can receive their very own letter from God.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* Blank paper, writing utensils, envelopes
- ◆ *Directions:* Have everyone write a letter either to their future selves, a letter home, or a letter to God. Consider the reflection questions found below before you start writing. When everyone is done with their letters, have each person share some of the key points if they are comfortable. If you prefer to keep the letters private, use the reflection questions to facilitate a discussion.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  - \* If you could write a letter to your future self, what would you want to tell her/him? What would you want yourself to remember most about the you in this very moment?
  - \* If you wrote a letter to yourself in the past, what advice would you want to give yourself? What kinds of things would you want to change? To leave the same?
  - \* If you could receive a letter from your future self or your past self right now, what would you want to know?
  - \* What would you write about in a letter home? Is it easier to put into words when writing a letter than when texting, talking on the phone, or skype? What about if you were writing to God?

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# Reflection: Seeing God in All Things Facing BC Stereotypes and Expectations

## Reflection/Activity

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* Students often refer to the sheltered environment at Boston College as the “BC Bubble”. Surrounded by individuals who are at once unique and yet quite similar, BC students have a tendency to become absorbed in the bubble of college life. This micro-environment can become a breeding ground for unreasonable and largely imagined standards and expectations. How do we, as students already immersed in this culture become aware of and appropriately handle such ideals?
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Sober” by Pink speaks to the drinking culture in college.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj3ZM8FDBlg>

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “May today there be peace within. May you trust your highest power that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, and to bask in the sun. It is there for each and every one of you.”
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Hug circle ♡

- ◆ *Preparation:* Suggest that your group members bring their journals to the meeting. Or, if this is your first meeting where you have quiet reflection time, bring in journals for everyone!
- ◆ *Activity materials:* Journals or paper for reflection
- ◆ *Directions:* After opening your meeting, share your main idea about BC stereotypes and expectations. Spend a few minutes discussing some initial reactions to the topic. When it seems your group is focused, ask your group to silently reflect on the issue. Pose some reflections questions and then allow for 10 or so minutes of silence. Encourage your group to write their thoughts down or draw pictures. Consider playing some quiet music during your reflection. After wrapping up your journaling time, ask everyone to share some of their thoughts.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  - \* What are some stereotypes you’ve encountered at BC? (e.g. body image, grades, hook up culture, etc.)
  - \* Do you think BC students hold themselves to high standards or expectations? Are they unreasonable standards?
  - \* What kind of academic and social pressures do you feel at BC? How strongly? Do you hold yourself to such expectations?
  - \* How do you find God in such a narrowly focused environment?

NOTES

# Reflection: Familiarizing God

## Who Do You Say God Is?

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### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* Everyone has different images and concepts when it comes to God, Jesus, and the Holy spirit. For centuries artists have creatively depicted the trinity in various forms of art. How do you see the trinity?
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Opening prayer: Let us pray..... Heavenly Lord, we come to you this evening asking for the grace for us to become more aware of who others say you are and to share who I say you are. Help us to listen and respond to your voice more in our life knowing you are a living God.

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### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* "I Am There" by James Dillet Freeman (found in long reflection materials section of General Resources)

### Reflection/Activity

- ◆ *Directions:* Share one of the suggested scripture passages (or one of your own choosing) and have a reflective discussion about the passage. Repeat with 2-3 passages.
- ◆ **I Kings: 19:9-13a** (found in "Scripture" section of your short reflection materials section or your bible). Reflection Questions: What words, phrases, or images speak to you? How do you discern or understand God's voice and presence in your life? What are challenges you have faced or intend to face as you listen to the voice of others this year?
- ◆ **Mark 8: 27-30.** Reflection Questions: Can you come up with a symbol or image for who God is in your life right now? Do you have a different image or understanding for God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? What are your hopes and desires for your relationship with God and Jesus?

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# Reflection: Semester Awareness

## Time & Energy

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* One of the biggest challenges all college students face is how to manage their time and energy. This meeting is about reflecting on how you spend your time and what changes you can make to bring some efficiency to your life.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Opening Prayer: Dear God, we ask for the Grace of honesty and openness to look at our lives and the way we spend our time and energies. We thank You for gathering us here. As the semester comes to an end, our hearts are full of different emotions ... excitement about Christmas break, anxiety about final exams, looking forward to going home ... Help us not to forget to be grateful for all of your blessings in the semester. Tonight, we pray for the grace of being honest and open as we look at our lives and the way we spend our time and energies. Amen.

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:*  
Happy moments, praise God  
Difficult moments, seek God  
Quiet moments, worship God  
Painful moments, trust God  
Every moment, thank God
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* In a circle, have every person pray for the person (out loud) to his or her left.

### Reflection/Activity

- ◆ *Activity materials:* Several blank copies of the "Semester Awareness Exercise Time and Energy" handout (in the "handouts" section of general resources). Writing utensils
- ◆ *Directions:* Pass out the "Semester Awareness Exercise: Time and Energy" handout. Encourage members to imagine God sitting next to them. Use this exercise as a form of prayer for about 10 minutes. Have each group member share what they wrote, as well as key things they learned from the exercise. Consider, as a group, offering constructive feedback for each person.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  - \* What feelings and thoughts emerged within you during the prayer?
  - \* Did you gain any insights about the way you spend your time and energy? Do you see any patterns?
  - \* If you continue to allow your time and energy to be shaped by these priorities, what kind of person do you think you will become?
  - \* Did you sense any invitations from God during your prayer?

NOTES

# Reflection: Written Reflections

## Gratitude Journal

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* A gratitude journal is a daily, weekly, or continuous journaling reflection activity. Emmons, a professor at the University of California, Davis, shared these research-based tips for reaping the greatest psychological rewards from your gratitude journal.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." (Thess. s: 16-18)
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* With your highs and lows, have your group members think of one thing for which they are grateful from the day.
- ◆ *Preparation:* Print out a copy of the "Gratitude Journal" handout (found in the handout section of your general resources) and review. Find out how many journals you will need for your group members. Stop by campus ministry to find journals for your group or funds to buy your own.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* A copy of "Gratitude Journal" handout, a journal for each member, pens and pencils, reflection music if you choose.
- ◆ *Directions:* Hand out journals and do the exercise for the day. Leave plenty of time so the exercise doesn't feel rushed. For the first day, try to have the Cura members think of 10 things they are grateful for.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:* As time permits, allow each member to share what they wrote. Alternatively or additionally, ask each member to choose the thing or event that they would like to savor the most. Is there an item on the list that fills them with joy as they reflect upon it?

#### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* "Thank You" by Dido  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITO48Cnl66w>
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Encourage your group members to continue with their gratitude journals.

NOTES

# Reflection: Seeing God in All Things Receiving Blessings

## Reflection/Activity

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* In the busy chaos of college life it is easy to see all the things going wrong. But we have so much to be thankful for! Take some time this meeting to think about the concept of a blessing, and to recognize the blessings in your own life.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Read “Receiving Blessings”, an excerpt from My Grandfather’s Blessings. (Found in short reflection materials in general resources)
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Begin with a few minutes of silence to center your group.

- ◆ *Preparation:* Familiarize yourself with the “Receiving Blessings” passage found in the general resources section. Be ready to read it in the meeting.
- ◆ *Directions:* Read the passage out loud, twice. Then reflect in silence for a few minutes.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  1. Try to think of three blessings that you didn’t receive this week
  2. Why didn’t you receive it at first? Were you too busy? Was there something else that prevented you from seeing the blessing?
  3. Do you feel empty in the midst of your blessings? Or do you feel fulfilled and joyful?

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Dear Lord, help us to pay attention to the many blessings you send us every day so that we may receive all that we are given. Help us recognize the joy that all these blessings can grant us. And finally, help us all to be a blessing to others in the way we give and love in your name, Lord. For this we pray.”

NOTES

# Reflection: Seeing God in All Things Pain into Pearls

## Reflection/Activity

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* Everyone goes through painful experiences. From a low grade on a test to the loss of a loved one, we all struggle from time to time. But can we learn from that pain? To become stronger, braver people? Can we turn our pain into pearls?
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Read the “Pain into Pearls” excerpt from [My Grandfather’s Blessings](#) (found in the short reflection materials section of general resources).
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Begin the meeting with a period of silence to center your group.

- ◆ *Preparation:* Find and familiarize yourself with the Pain into Pearls passage. Be prepared to read and discuss it.
- ◆ *Directions:* Read the passage, twice. Allowing for some silence in between and after to reflect on the reading. Discuss the reading.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  1. Reflect on a time when a grain of sand entered your life. Has the grain turned into a pearl? Or are you still in a sorting process?
  2. If you are still in the sorting process, what part of the pain and/or suffering are you still dealing with?
  3. What wisdom have you accumulated from the suffering in your life?
  4. Where do you see God in the process of turning pain into pearls?

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Stand” by Rascal Flatts  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-N0yB24M7VM>
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Remind your group that you are always a resource to help them through any painful struggles they face in the future.

*NOTES*

# Reflection: Seeing God in All Things

## Compassion

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* Loving others is a key pillar of CLC. We often lump all the different ways to care for another into the term “compassion.” Break down the word and the concept and think about what it means in your daily life.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Read the “Compassion” excerpt from *My Grandfather’s Blessings* (found in the short reflection materials section of general resources).
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Begin the meeting with a period of silence to center your group.

- ◆ *Preparation:* Find and familiarize yourself with the Compassion passage. Be prepared to read and discuss it. Another interesting resource on this topic can be found in the Compassion chapter in *Tattoos on the Heart* by Fr. Gregory Boyle (which can be borrowed from the Cura Library in Chris’s office). Many of Fr. Greg’s talks on Compassion can also be found on youtube. Consider showing one of these videos during your meeting. There are also several helpful passages in the general resource section.
- ◆ *Directions:* Read the passage, twice. Allowing for some silence in between and after to reflect on the reading. Discuss the reading.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  1. Talk about the concept of “human wholeness”. What does that mean to you?
  2. Is wholeness having our lives perfectly together? Or is wholeness recognizing and appreciating our cracks and imperfections?
  3. Has there ever been a time when a certain personal suffering allowed us to better serve someone else suffering in a similar way?
  4. How do you think we as a community can help break down the “ultimate barrier” to compassion?

#### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Stand” by Rascal Flatts  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-N0yB24M7VM>
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Remind your group that you are always a resource to help them through any painful struggles they face in the future.

NOTES

# Reflection: Real Talk

## Asking the “Big Questions”

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* In the rush of school life, do we ever take time to ask, or better yet answer some of the bigger questions that come with our huge transition to collegiate life? Cura gives us a place to have “real talk”, where we can take time to ask these lofty questions and do our best to maybe reach some answers.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “I would like to beg you to have patience with everyone unresolved in your heart and try to live the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers, which could not be given to you now because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.” — Rainer Maria Rilke
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Everyone write down one “big” question you want to talk about which will be put into the center.

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Talk” by Coldplay  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0uqLMluj\\_k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0uqLMluj_k)

### Reflection/Activity

- ◆ *Activity materials:* Cut up some slips of paper for group members to write one or two “big questions” you will put into a pile. Make sure you have a pen or pencil for everyone
- ◆ *Directions:* Ask each person to think of a question they would like to talk about. Encourage your group to get intense and not be afraid to address some taboo subjects like the hook up and drinking culture in college, feeling homesick, or feeling inadequate in the face of BC’s high academic standards. After everyone writes their question, fold up the slips of paper and put them in the center so they will be anonymous (or, if everyone is comfortable, you can go around in a circle and ask questions). Facilitate reflective discussion on each question.
- ◆ *Example Questions:*
  - \* Do students really enjoy getting drunk every weekend? Do you think there are social expectations that pressure students to engage in the drinking culture? What about the hook up culture?
  - \* Is it ok to feel homesick?
  - \* Do BC students have a tendency to practice unhealthy eating/exercise habits?
  - \* Do you ever feel trapped in the careerist mentality (i.e. that all you do is a means to getting a well-paying job?) What does it mean to be “successful”?
  - \* Is “religion” an “uncool topic” or is it overused?

NOTES

# Reflection: Discovering Different Forms of Prayer

## How Do You Pray?

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* This exercise will allow each person to spend time in a way they are used to praying in order to increase their awareness of how they are comfortable praying and then become aware of others' ways of praying.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:*  
1 Thess. 5:17 "Pray without ceasing"
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Introduce different types of prayer: Lection Devina, the Examen, centering prayer, meditation, journaling, rosary, Taize, etc.

#### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Have each person take turns reading from "Prayer of the Person" found in the short reflection materials of your resources section.

- ◆ *Preparation:* Encourage your group members ahead of time to think about how they usually pray and to bring any objects they often use in prayer (such as a favorite rosary or journal).
- ◆ *Activity materials:* Paper, writing utensils, rosaries, bible(s), magazines
- ◆ *Directions:* Invite everyone to spend about 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each person to pray the way they are used to praying (e.g., talking to God, saying church devotional prayers, journaling or writing, using the bible, listening to music, drawing, saying a Rosary, taking a walk, watching a sunset, lying down, kneeling, etc...). Let them know they are free to use whatever has been provided in the room. Suggest that if the room is not conducive to the way someone usually prays, they can imagine themselves in their usual place or atmosphere. Re-assure them that there is no "right" or "wrong" way. Just encourage them to pray the way they are used to and note that the group will talk about it afterward.
- ◆ *Prayer Questions:* What is the most pressing thing on your heart right now? Something joyful? Stressful? That brings you peace or worry? Emphasize that this is merely a suggestion. If they have other questions or topics they want to pray about, they are most welcome to do so.
- ◆ *Discussion Questions:*
  - How do you usually pray? In one way or in many ways?
  - How often do you pray?
  - When and where do you pray (refer to your picture or someone else's if helpful)?
  - Which way of praying do you find to be most helpful? Least helpful for you?
  - When you pray do you feel that God is present, is answering or responding to you? Please give one specific example.

NOTES

# Reflection: Growth

## The Seeds of Growth in Our Lives

### Reflection/Activity

#### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* College is an important time of growth and change. It can be helpful to take time and reflect on the people and events that have shaped us. We can also pay attention to the things in and around us we wish to nurture.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* Matthew 13: 24-32, The Weeds among the Wheat and the Mustard Seed parables

#### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Song suggestions:* “Ordinary Miracle” by Sarah McLachlan or “Pressing On” by Relient K
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Urge your group members to diligently care for their new plants. Encourage them to find time for prayer and reflection while tending to their plants.

- ◆ *Prepare:* Place newspaper or garbage bags on floor or table of meeting space for easy clean up. Have planting materials spread on your workspace.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* Potting soil, packets of seeds, small planting pots or even cups, spoons for the soil, and markers or stickers for decorating pots. For makeshift pots, try using dining hall cups or (carefully) cutting off the tops of plastic milk cartons or soda bottles. Plastic bottles or cartons are a great way to recycle used containers, save a few dollars, and get creative!
- ◆ *Directions:*
  1. After your opening prayer, invite your group into a discussion on personal growth.
  2. Either during or after discussion, explain to your group the significance of planting new seeds of growth in their lives. Discuss ways in which we can nurture seeds that have already been planted as well as be attuned to the possibility of growing further in the future.
  3. Decorate your pots and plant your seeds!
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:*
  - \* What are some seeds in you that have grown this semester? In other words, how have you grown over the semester?
  - \* What seeds have we not given a chance to grow?
  - \* Are there any seeds it seems like you’ve tried to plant so often that it ruined the soil? If so, how can you renew your soil (i.e. your life) to provide a refreshing new environment?
  - \* What are some resources in your life that can help nurture your seeds?

NOTES

# Reflection: Comparing the Inner and Outer Self Beneath the Mask

## Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* There are often times when the person or image we project to others is different from who we consider ourselves to be on the inside. When do we experience discrepancies between our outer selves that we let others see and our inner selves that we keep private. How, if at all, do they differ and why?
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Reflection” from *Mulan*
  - \* Christina Aguilera’s version (references wearing a mask): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJUG5tEftuM>
  - \* Clip from *Mulan*: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_BtlAw4trg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_BtlAw4trg)
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* In addition to your highs and lows, ask each group member to think of a time in the past few days when they may have been thinking one thing but said or acted differently.

## Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Be who you are, and be that well” ~ St. Francis de Sales
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* Because this can be a particularly sensitive reflection topic that requires a certain amount of vulnerability, be sure to validate the experiences of your group members by offering warmth, empathy and positive regard.

## Reflection/Activity

- ◆ *Preparation:* Make sure you print out enough mask templates (found in the handouts section of the general resources) for all group members, including the leaders. You may also want to cut each of them out ahead of time.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* Mask patterns for each group member, markers or crayons to decorate masks, any other decoration materials you may want to use such as glue or glitter.
- ◆ *Directions:* Give each member their own mask cutout. Have them choose one side to represent the “inner self” and the other as the “outer self”. On the “inner self” side, have them write or draw habitual thoughts, feelings, or traits they tend to hide from others. Encourage your group to really think about this, as we often unconsciously create an inner sense of self without realizing it. On the “outer self” side, have them write what they think they let others see, again both consciously and maybe unconsciously. When your group is ready, have everyone share whatever they feel comfortable sharing.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:* This activity will require some deep thought to be more than a superficial reflection. Be sure to allow for plenty of reflection time. Consider offering few reflection questions to give your group some direction.
  - \* Are there times when you feel you’re wearing a mask? When you create an image you want people to see?
  - \* Do you ever feel like you have an ideal self that you try to be or to show others? Does this ideal come from yourself or from social pressures?
  - \* Have you ever hidden your true thoughts or feelings in front of others? When and why?

NOTES

# Reflection: Final Meeting Toward New Beginnings

## Reflection/Activity

### Introduction/ Opening Prayer

- ◆ *Main Idea:* The last meeting of the year is always bittersweet. This final meeting is a way for each member to share a few last things with the group through their song selections.
- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “At the Beginning” from *Anastasia*
- ◆ *Activity Suggestions:* Center your group with a few moments of silence.

- ◆ *Preparation:* The week before your final meeting, ask your group members to bring to songs to your last meeting. The first song should capture how he or she feels about the past year, whether because the lyrics or maybe the melody are meaningful. The second song should be one that is, more generally, important to your group member.
- ◆ *Activity materials:* One computer that can access youtube
- ◆ *Directions:* Begin with your opening song, then take turns playing your songs representative of the past year. After each person plays their song, have them share why they chose it. Then take turns again and play the song important to you and share why. Finish with a closing song.
- ◆ *Reflection Questions:* Why did you choose this song?

### Closing Prayer

- ◆ *Prayer/Song suggestions:* “Never Alone” by Lady Antebellum
- ◆ *Further Suggestions:* The final meeting is bound to be an emotional meeting. You might want to bring a few tissues to this one! Remember to encourage your group to participate in CURA the following year, staying with the same group if possible.

NOTES

## Other Cura Meeting Ideas

- ✦ Being at a university, in what ways are your classes changing you as a person? What is the relationship between 'faith and reason'? spirituality and intellect?
- ✦ Discuss connection between 'Cura Personalis' and Ignatius' "Principle and Foundation" (In "Hearts on Fire")
- ✦ Take the Enneagram Personality inventory 'test' and share on different gifts but one body reading in Corinthians (see Chris for lists and follow-up books and readings)
- ✦ Discuss what is meant by each person's 'Personal Vocation' (you may read passages from The Alchemist )
- ✦ Share on all the things you are grateful for since you woke up this morning and how you can make 'gratitude' more a part of your life
- ✦ Where does authority come from? (quote from Jesus' response to Pontius Pilate after he said "Don't you realize I have the power to have you killed?" and/or Centurion who brings his servant to be cured to Jesus reading)
- ✦ What legacy do you want to leave BC? Discuss counter-cultural stances you have or will take
- ✦ Bring a favorite scripture, prayer or song and share why it is important to you
- ✦ In what way is Cura 'a way of life'? How will you maintain a faith-filled life and community after BC?
- ✦ Ignatian spirituality—pick prayer partners each week from group and meet outside of meeting for "coffee date" or practice the awareness examen together and discuss
- ✦ Is the wider CLC community important to you? Why or why not? What are the '3 pillars' and how are they part of the BC community?
- ✦ What does it mean to be Catholic? Buddhist? Christian? Muslim? Jewish? Visit a temple and attend a service of another faith
- ✦ Discuss a difficult topic and practice Cura listening!
- ✦ Discuss difference between prayer that talks about God and prayer that talks directly to God. Practice spontaneous prayer
- ✦ Discuss Cura as a 'faith sharing group' and/or an 'intentional community' and the difference

- ✦ Discuss the greatest commandment “To Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” How has/can your Cura group challenge you to live this out?
- ✦ Make a collage on what you are grateful for in your life
- ✦ Come up with an image of who God is to you now in your life
- ✦ Arts & Crafts
- ✦ Who, what, where, when and how is “Church.” When you use the word, what do you mean?
- ✦ Make and share a meal or go out for ice cream, dinner, a museum, or some other off campus adventure
- ✦ Walk and then talk about the significance of the labyrinth
- ✦ What do Highs/Lows/Seeds have to do with God?
- ✦ Build your Cura community and meet with another group for a joint reflection
- ✦ Find the conservation land that is less than a quarter of a mile from McElroy
- ✦ Discuss the Five Languages of Love found in your resource materials, how each are similar and yet unique
- ✦ Discuss how you have changed spiritually from the beginning of the year to the end (to be done at one of the last meetings of the year)
- ✦ Make a Cura time capsule at the end of the year to be opened at a later date set by the group (i.e. a freshman group can open it senior year). Include a letter to yourself, other group members, important objects, etc.
- ✦ Find an inspiring TED video at <http://www.ted.com/talks> and use it to introduce a discussion.
- ✦ Reflect on a time where you felt the most spiritual. Have them perform a meditation where they go back to that moment and recapture its energy.
- ✦ Make a CURA photo album with your group.
- ✦ Share with council your group meeting ideas so we can share with other members and include in resource binder!

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## Semester Awareness Exercise Time & Energy

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”—Luke 12:34*

### **Time:**

1. On which (kinds of) activities on my calendar have I spent much of my time?
2. To which (kinds of) activities I have devoted much time that are not on my calendar?
3. How much time do I have just for relaxing, vegging, hanging out, etc.?

### **Energy:**

What are three things I think about the most?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How often do I think about God?

## **Discovering My Treasure**

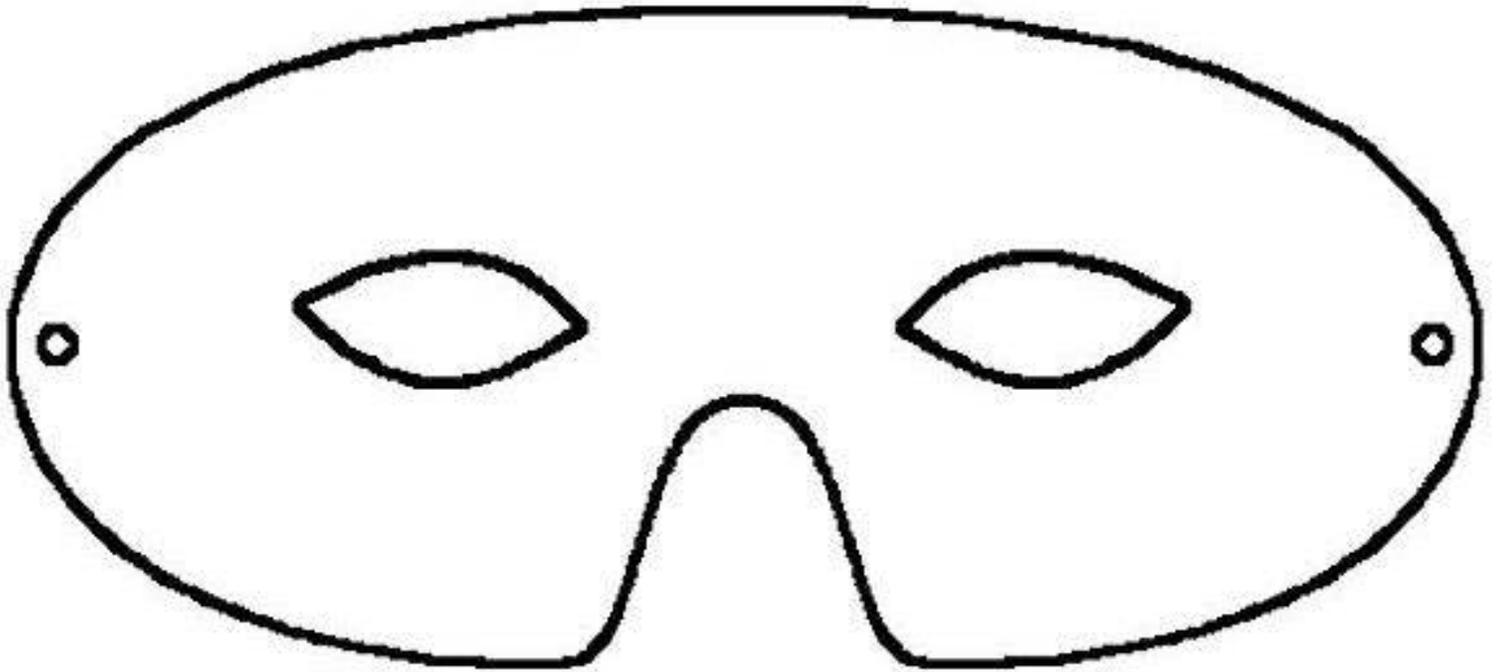
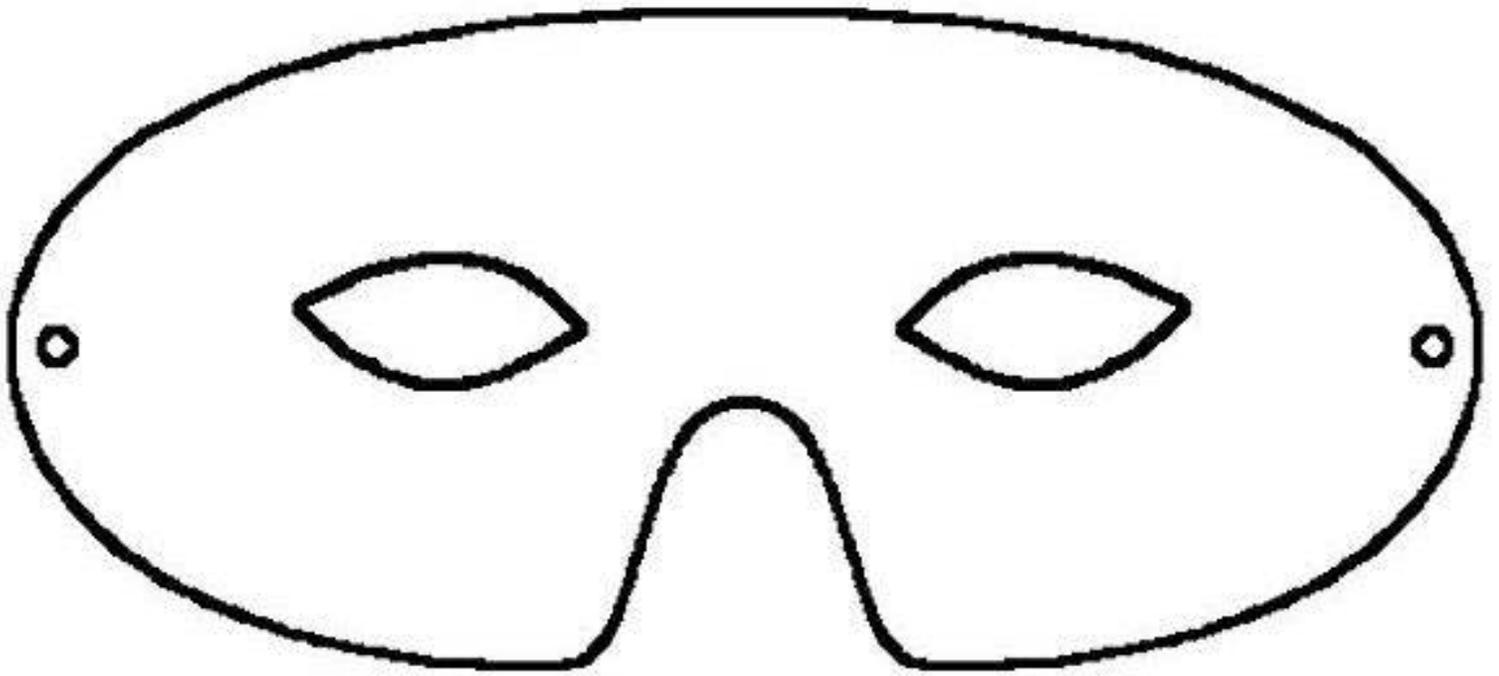
1. With whom are much of my time and energy spent? Am I developing relationships with others in Cura?

2. When I look at how I spend time, what does it show me about my priorities? Is Cura one of my priorities?

3. If I continue to allow my time and energy to be shaped by these priorities, what kind of person will I become?

4. How life-giving has Cura been for me?

5. Did Cura--CLC meet your expectations? Why or why not?



# The Five Love Languages

From the book The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman. He is a psychologist who works primarily with couples and after years of this work, he identified patterns in the way we interact. Of the countless ways we can show love to one another, five key categories, or five love languages, proved to be universal and comprehensive—everyone has a love language, and we all identify primarily with one of the five love languages: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch.

## **Words of Affirmation**

Actions don't always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, "I love you," is important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.

## **Quality Time**

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, "I love you," like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

## **Receiving Gifts**

Don't mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

## **Acts of Service**

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an "Acts of Service" person will speak volumes. The words he or she most want to hear: "Let me do that for you." Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don't matter.

## **Physical Touch**

A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.

Too often we underestimate the power of  
A touch  
A smile  
A kind word  
A listening ear  
An honest compliment  
Or the smallest act of caring  
All of which have the potential to turn a life around.  
- Leo Buscaglia

Each of us has a primary, secondary, and even tertiary love language. Each of us speaks these languages with varying degrees of success, and similarly hears them differently.

The purpose of this morning's reflection is to rejuvenate and teach us. With a life's worth of relationships, and one very special semester of relationships as Peer Ministers, this is a good time to stop and reflect on what you've done and learned. Our relationships are the most fundamental part of our ministry, and the hope is that by exploring all of the love languages each of us can receive nourishment and be pushed to learn to speak in the languages that may not be natural for you, but necessary to the people around you. And of course, I hope that we may all pay more attention to all of the ways that God's love can be experienced and known in our own lives.

Take some time to read through each of the Five Love Languages paying special attention to the descriptions and accompanying passages that resonate in you.

Reflect on the following questions:

- How is it that you know you are loved? What makes you certain in that feeling?
- What are your primary and secondary love languages?
- Do you give love and receive love differently?
- How does God let God's love for us known using these five languages?
- As Peer Ministers, are we reaching our residents and expressing love to them in ways that they can receive, understand and accept?
- Do you need to ask people in your life to love you in different ways? How can you do that?

### **Words of Affirmation**

Actions don't always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, "I love you," is important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.

Excerpts from "Be Impeccable with your Word" in The Four Agreements by don Miguel Ruiz:

"Be impeccable with your word. Why your word? Your word is the power you have to create. Your word is the gift that comes directly from God. The Gospel of John in the Bible, speaking of the creation of the universe, says, 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word is God.' Through the word you express your creative power. It is through the word that you manifest everything. Regardless of what language you speak, your intent manifests through the word. What you dream, what you feel, and what you really are, will all be manifested through the word."

"The human mind is like a fertile ground where seeds are continually being planted. The seeds are opinions, ideas, and concepts. You plant a seed, a thought, and it grows. The word is like a seed, and the human mind is so fertile! The only problem is that too often it is fertile for the seeds of fear. Every human mind is fertile, but only for those kinds of seeds it is prepared for. What is important is to see which kind of seeds our mind is fertile for, and to prepare it to receive seeds of love."

Matthew 5:13-15

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

### Quality Time

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, "I love you," like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

### **Teach Us to Listen**

Teach us to listen, O God, to those nearest to us -

Our families, our co-workers, our friends.

Help us to be aware that, no matter what words we hear

The message is, "Accept the person I am. Listen to me."

Teach us to listen, our caring God, to those far from us -

The whisper of the hopeless, the pleas of the forgotten,

The cry of the anguished.

Teach us to listen, O God our Mother, to ourselves.

Help us to be less afraid to trust the voice inside -

In that deepest part of ourselves.

Teach us to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice -

In business and in boredom, in certainty and in doubt,

In noise and in silence.  
Teach us, Lord, to listen.

- Jim Veltri, SJ

More and more the desire grows in me simply to walk around, greet people, enter their homes, sit on their doorsteps, play ball, throw water, and be known as someone who wants to live with them. It is a privilege to have the time and the freedom to practice this simple ministry of presence. Still, it is not as simple as it seems. My own desire to be useful, to do something significant, or to be part of some impressive project is so strong that soon my own time is taken up by meetings, conferences, study groups, and workshops that prevent me from walking the streets. It is difficult not to have plans . . . not to feel that you are working directly for social change. But I wonder more and more if the first thing shouldn't be to know people by name, to eat and drink with them, to listen to their stories and to tell them your own, and to let them know with words, handshakes, and hugs that you do not simply like them, but truly love them.

Henri Nouwen, Gracias

### Receiving Gifts

Don't mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

#### **Suscipe**

Take, Lord, and receive  
All my liberty, my memory,  
My understanding, and my  
Entire will, all that I  
Have and possess.  
You have given all to me.  
To you, Lord, I return it.  
All is yours.  
Dispose of it wholly  
According to your will.  
Give me your love and your  
Grace. This is sufficient for me.

- St. Ignatius of Loyola

#### **God Bless the World**

Mighty God, Father of all  
Compassionate God, Mother of all,  
Bless every person I have met,  
Every face I have seen,  
Every voice I have heard,  
Especially those most dear;  
Bless every city, town, and  
Street that I have known,  
Bless every sight I have seen,  
Every sound I have heard,  
Every object I have touched.  
In some mysterious way these have  
All fashioned my life;  
All that I am,  
I have received.  
Great God, bless the world.  
- John J. Morris, SJ

### **Pied Beauty**

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
    For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
        For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that  
            Swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
    Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and  
        Plough;  
    And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
    Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
    With swift, slow; sweet; sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
    Praise him.  
~ Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ

### **Acts of Service**

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an “Acts of Service” person will speak volumes. The words he or she most want to hear: “Let me do that for you.” Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don’t matter.

### **Prayer for Generosity**

Lord, teach me to be generous.  
Teach me to serve as you deserve;  
To give and not to count the cost;  
To fight and not to heed the wounds;  
To toil and not to seek for rest,  
To labor and not to ask for reward,  
Save that of knowing that I do your will.  
    - St. Ignatius of Loyola

Paperwork, cleaning the home, cooking the meals, dealing with innumerable visitors who come all through the day, answering the phone, keeping patience and acting intelligently, which is to find some meaning in all those encounters – these things too are the works of peace, and often seem like a very little way.      - Dorothy Day

The present form of the world passes away, and there remains only the joy of having used this world to establish God’s rule here. All pomp, all triumphs, all selfish capitalism, all the false successes of life will pass with the world’s form. All of that passes away. What does not pass away is love. When one has turned money, property, work in one’s calling into service of others, then the joy of sharing and feeling that all are one’s family does not pass away. In the evening of life you will be judged on love.      - Archbishop Romero, Sermon 1/21/79

## Physical Touch

A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.

### **I Loved What I Could Love**

I had a natural passion for fine clothes, excellent food, and  
Lively conversation about all matters that concern  
The heart still alive. And even a passion  
About my own looks.  
Vanities: they do not exist.  
All we can touch, swallow, or say  
Aids in our crossing to God  
And helps unveil the soul.  
Life smooths us, rounds, perfects, as does the river the stone  
And there is no place our Beloved is not flowing  
Though the current's force you  
May not always  
Like.  
Our passions help to lift us.  
I loved what I could love until I held Him,  
For then - all things - every world  
Disappeared.  
- Saint Teresa of Avila

### **Christ Has No Body**

Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with  
which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which He looks compassion on this world.  
- Saint Teresa of Avila

You have searched me and know me...

Even before a word is spoken, you know it completely.

Where can I run from your spirit?

Or from your presence?

No matter where I go or what

happens to me, Your hand shall lead me...

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

And lead me in the way everlasting.

*Psalm 139*



**Cura—CLC  
Intentional Communities**

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**Cura—CLC  
Intentional Communities**

### **The Ignatian Awareness Examen**

1. **Awareness**  
You are never alone. Invite God in. What do I desire?
2. **Gratitude**  
All things in this world are gifts from God. For what am I grateful?
3. **Review**  
Humbly review the day with particular attention to emotions and feelings. Where am I being challenged to grow?
4. **Forgiveness**  
I acknowledge sins and shortcomings. What choices have been inadequate responses to Your love?
5. **Hope and Renewal**  
I recognize that nothing is impossible with God. Which particular gift of the Holy Spirit do I desire now and in the future?

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## Gratitude Journal

(one day, weekly, or continuous activity)

Emmons, a professor at the University of California, Davis, shared these research-based tips for reaping the greatest psychological rewards from your gratitude journal.

- **Don't just go through the motions.** Research by psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky and others suggests that journaling is more effective if you first make the conscious decision to become happier and more grateful. "Motivation to become happier plays a role in the efficacy of journaling," says Emmons.
- **Go for depth over breadth.** Elaborating in detail about a particular thing for which you're grateful carries more benefits than a superficial list of many things.
- **Get personal.** Focusing on *people* to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on *things* for which you are grateful.
- **Try subtraction, not just addition.** One effective way of stimulating gratitude is to reflect on what your life would be like *without* certain blessings, rather than just tallying up all those good things.
- **Savor surprises.** Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to elicit stronger levels of gratitude.
- **Don't overdo it.** Writing occasionally (once or twice per week) is more beneficial than daily journaling. In fact, one study by Lyubomirsky and her colleagues found that people who wrote in their gratitude journals once a week for six weeks reported boosts in happiness afterward; people who wrote three times per week didn't. "We adapt to positive events quickly, especially if we constantly focus on them," says Emmons. "It seems counterintuitive, but it is how the mind works."

## Instructions for Cooperative Square Activity

*Divide the large group into small groups of five participants. If there are extra people, ask them to be observers. Brief them with these instructions:*

- You are to observe people interact in forming puzzles. Like them, please be silent.
- Notice how people give or not give their puzzle pieces away.
- Notice if anyone in the group seems to be directing the process.
- Please help to the facilitators monitor by making sure that no one is to indicate that they need a piece of the puzzle.
- Thank you for your valuable contribution!

*Give each member a small envelope with pieces of the puzzle. Instruct them NOT to open it yet.*

*Read the following instructions:*

- a. Each of you has a different part of a puzzle in your envelop.
- b. Your mission, should you accept it, consists of forming 5 squares of **equal** sizes, one in front of each member.
- c. There are three rules:
  - You are to work in **silence**.
  - You may not **take, ask, point or signal** that *you* need a puzzle piece.
  - But you may **give** a puzzle piece to anyone else.
- d. Any questions so far?
- e. Remember, you are to remain silent throughout the whole activity.
- f. You may open your envelopes and begin now.

***Allow no more than 10 minutes.***

Reflection & discussion:

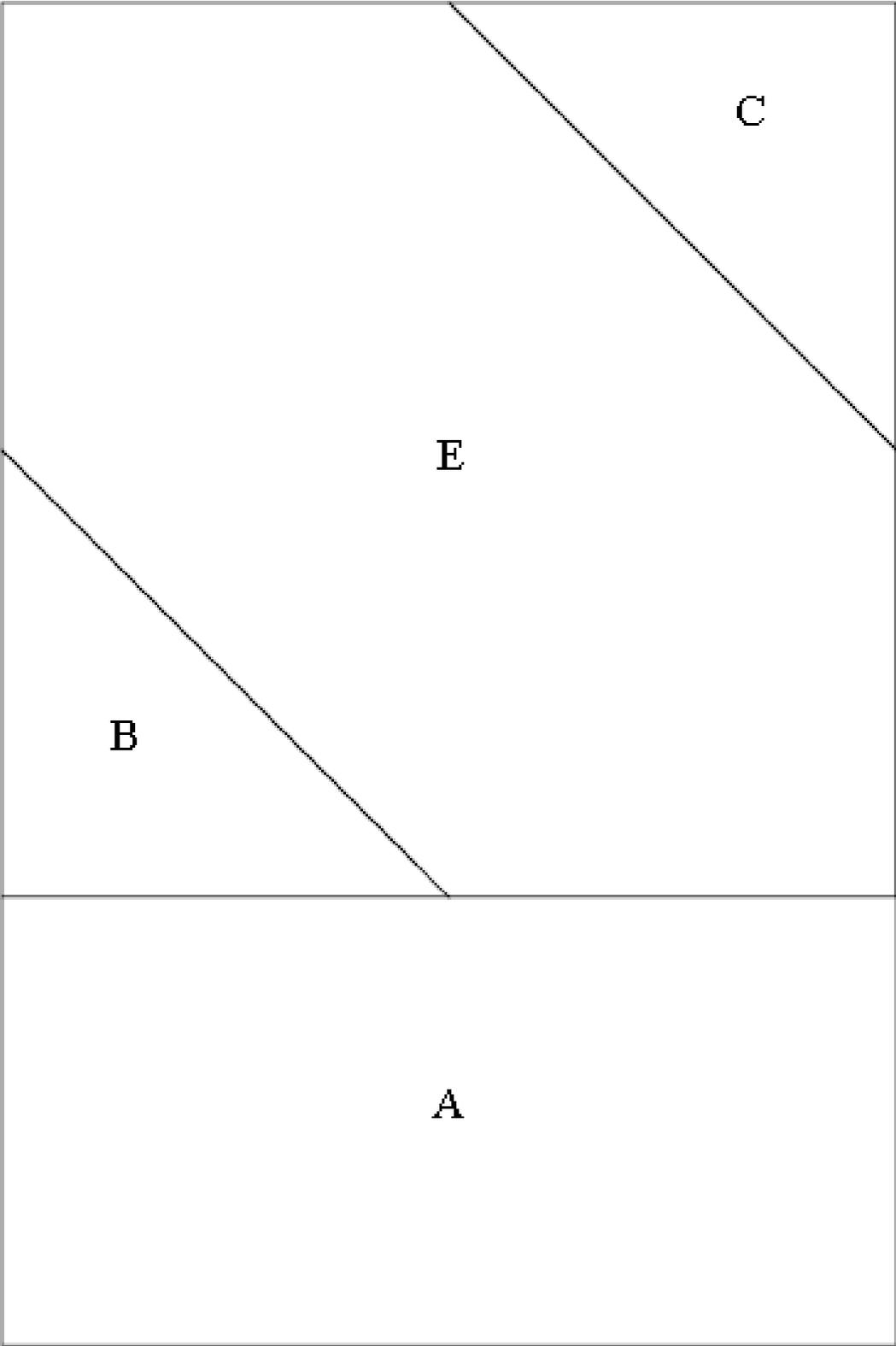
*First, ask the observers to give comments. Then ask participants using the following guided questions:*

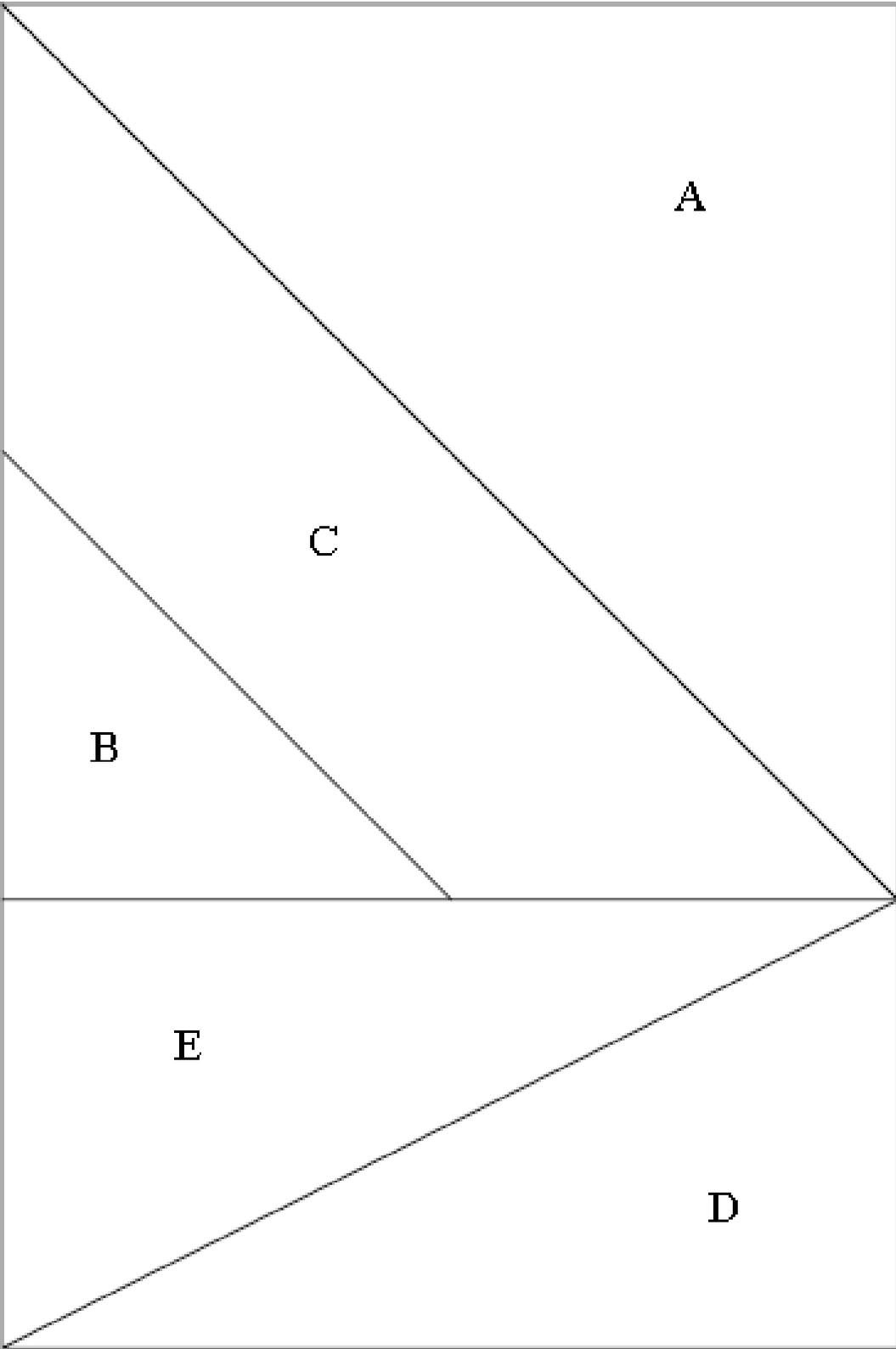
1. Did you break up your square to give a piece to another person? How did you feel?
2. If you had an incomplete square, how did you feel when others did not seem to recognize your need?
3. Was it hard to keep from talking or communicating in some way? If so, why?
4. Did anyone in the group take charge ensuring it that people got what they needed? If so, how did you feel about it?

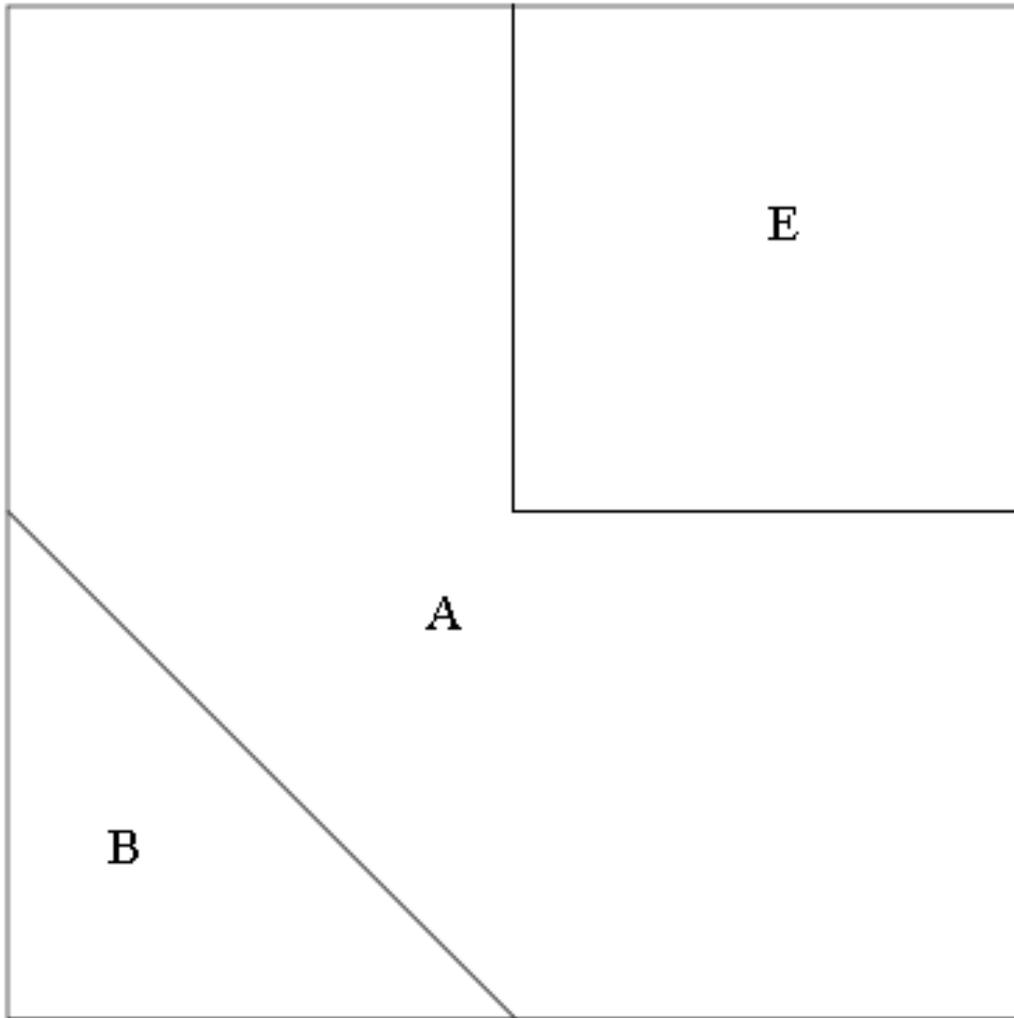
5. How does this game relate to you or to your life? To your group?

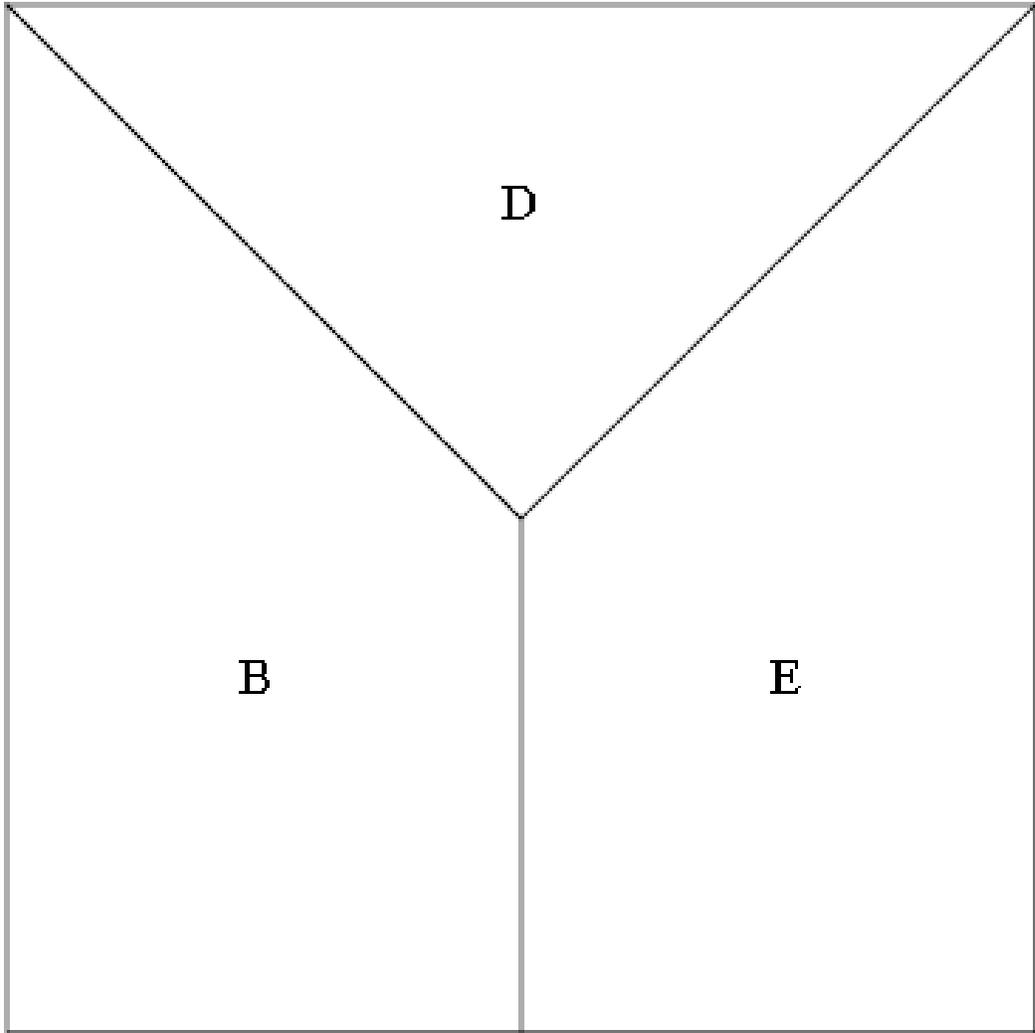
Point out: Two things are key to the success of this game. Each person needs to:

- 1. Ask, "What do my team members need that I can share"?**
- 2. Give them the piece(s): help meet their needs.**









## Guide to *Lectio Divina*

Choose a word or phrase of the Scriptures you wish to pray. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as you have no set goal of “covering” a certain amount of text. The amount of text covered is in God’s hands, not yours.

*Read.* Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina*, God is teaching us to listen, to seek him in silence. God does not reach out and grab us but gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

*Ponder.* Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

*Pray.* Whether you use words, ideas, or images—or all three—is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Give to God what you have discovered during your experience of mediation. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

It is not necessary to assess the quality of your *lectio divina* as if you were “performing” or seeking some goal. *Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

—Fr. Luke Dysinger

*Luke Dysinger, OSB, is a Benedictine monk of Saint Andrew's Abbey,  
Valyermo, California.*

# CURA ICE BREAKERS

## Short Ice Breakers (10-15 Minutes)

- ✧ What are three things you would like the group to know about you?
- ✧ What is one goal you have for yourself this year?
- ✧ What is the most interesting/ridiculous/unique thing about you?
- ✧ Two Truths and a Lie: each person shares three things about him or herself. Two of the things should be true while one of them is a lie. The group has to guess which of the three things is a lie.
- ✧ The M&M Game: Have each member choose a few M&M's. Come up with an interesting question for each color of the M&M's. For each M&M they have, they must answer the corresponding question. Some ideas for questions are as follows: Share your favorite food, a fun fact about you, a unique talent, a place you like to go when you want to be alone, why you joined Cura, a time in your life you felt close to God, or the coolest thing you did this summer.

## Long Ice Breakers (30-60 Minutes)

### Ice Breaker: Personal Baseball

The game is called Personal Baseball. You split the group into two teams. Each person gets four cards with single, double, triple, and home run written on the back. On the opposite side, they write a fact about themselves. The single facts

are easier, and they get progressively harder, until you get to home run (and the home run fact should be something few people know about you.) Each team puts all of their singles, doubles, triples, and home runs together into separate bags (there's 8 bags- a single bag for each team, a double bag for each team, etc.) You decide which team goes first, and they pick what kind of hit they want to try (single, double, etc.) The OTHER team picks a card out of its own bags and reads it to the batter. The batter has to guess who on the other team the fact is about. If the batter is correct, he/she goes to the correct base and the card gets removed from the bag. If the batter is incorrect, he/she is out, and the card gets replaced in the bag for future use.

Just like regular baseball, there are nine innings (time dependent, of course). Each team has three outs, and both teams get up to bat in an inning. You use a whiteboard or notepad to keep track of who is on what base, and to keep track of how many runs each team gets.

It's a fun way to get to know other people. I've been volunteering with my group since the beginning of the year, and I discovered a lot of interesting facts that I probably would've never learned otherwise.

- Jen Stewart



## CURA KINGS

This fun and easy ice breaker is a card game that can last for an entire meeting. It is a family friendly version of a popular game in college designed to interest students while providing a way to get to know each other through personal fun facts and stories. All stories shared can range from silly moments to deeper personal experiences. By the end of the game you should all know quite a bit more about each other and hopefully leave the meeting laughing!

## Instructions:

- ☞ Spread out one deck of cards, face down, in the center of the players.
- ☞ Each player takes a turn drawing one card. Follow the rule for each card, and progress to the next player
- ☞ The “winner” of the game is the player to draw the 4<sup>th</sup> King (\*hint\* cookies and cupcakes make excellent prizes!)

## Rules:

Ace: Ask a question that each player has to answer (e.g. “what is your favorite color?” or “what is a fun memory from high school”)

2: Pick someone to tell a personal story

3: Share a fun fact about yourself

4: Each player must immediately touch the floor\*

5: All the guys in the group share a personal story or fun fact

6: All the girls (“chicks”) in the group share a personal story or fun fact

7: Each player must immediately point up (to “heaven”)\*

8: Share a funny date story (from your own experience or from someone you know)

9: Choose a word. Going in a circle, each player must quickly say a word that rhymes with the original word. The first person to stumble or repeat a word loses\*

10: Choose a category (e.g. animals or movies). Going in a circle, each player must quickly provide an example within the chosen category. The first person to fail to think of an example or repeat loses\*

Jack: You may make one rule that each player (including yourself) must follow until the next Jack is drawn and a new rule is made (e.g. each player must tap his or her head before drawing a new card)\*

Queen: Play the game “never have I ever.” This is played by each player putting up a set number of fingers (3 is suggested in this context to keep the game short). Each player takes turns saying one thing they have never done (e.g. I have never ridden an airplane). If any of the other players *have* done the activity, they must put one finger down. The first player to put all his or fingers down loses\*

King (for the first three drawn): Share something personal about your faith life (e.g. a moment you were close to god or a time you felt, or felt a distinctive lack of, intense spirituality)

\* The loser of the round must tell an embarrassing story about themselves

## **20 Questions**

1. What's your favorite vacation you've ever taken?
2. What's one thing you regret doing? If you could do it again, would you do it differently?
3. Who is one friend who changed your life?
4. Who taught you to work hard?
5. What fruit best captures your personality?
6. If you described your time in Ecuador as a turning point in your life, what would you be turning away from? What would you be turning towards?
7. What would you do if you won \$1,000,000 tomorrow?
8. Who is your celebrity crush?
9. Who do you owe an apology?
10. If you wrote a book, what would you write about?
11. What are three things you have to do every day? What are three things you choose to do every day?
12. When did you fail to stand up for something you believe in?
13. When is the last time you said "yes" when you really meant "no"?
14. What is something you're doing well right now?
15. What is something you need to improve?
16. Would you rather be completely bald or have hair covering your entire body?
17. If you were giving a speech to a full auditorium, would you rather forget everything you planned to say or have your pants fall to your ankles?
18. At this point in your life, who are your teachers?
19. In what ways are you a teacher?
20. Who needs you to spend quality time with them?

## EXAMENS

### **Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day**

Dennis Hamm, S.J. (May 14, 1994). [Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day](#) America, Copyright © 1994 by [America Press](#)

About 20 years ago, at breakfast and during the few hours that followed, I had a small revelation. This happened while I was living in a small community of five Jesuits, all graduate students in New Haven, Conn. I was alone in the kitchen, with my cereal and *The New York Times*, when another Jesuit came in and said: “I had the weirdest dream just before I woke up. It was a liturgical dream. The lector had just read the first reading and proceeded to announce, 'The responsorial refrain today is, If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' Whereupon the entire congregation soberly repeated, 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.’” We both thought this enormously funny. At first, I wasn't sure why this was so humorous. After all, almost everyone could assent to the courageous truth of the maxim, “If at first...” It has to be a cross-cultural truism (“Keep on truckin'!”). Why, then, would these words sound so incongruous in a liturgy?

A little later in the day, I stumbled onto a clue. Another, similar phrase popped into my mind: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Ps. 95). It struck me that the sentence has exactly the same rhythm and the same syntax as: “If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.” Both begin with an “if” clause and end in an imperative. Both have seven beats. Maybe that was one of the unconscious sources of the humor.

The try-try-again statement sounds like the harden-not-your-hearts refrain, yet what a contrast. The latter is clearly biblical, a paraphrase of a verse from a psalm, one frequently used as a responsorial refrain at the Eucharist. The former, you know instinctively, is probably not in the Bible, not even in Proverbs. It is true enough, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. There is nothing of faith in it, no sense of God. The sentiment of the line from Psalm 95, however, expresses a conviction central to Hebrew and Christian faith, that we live a life in dialogue with God. The contrast between those two seven-beat lines has, ever since, been for me a paradigm illustrating that truth.

Yet how do we hear the voice of God? Our Christian tradition has at least four answers to that question. First, along with the faithful of most religions, we perceive the divine in what God has made, creation itself (that insight sits at the heart of Christian moral thinking). Second, we hear God's voice in the Scriptures, which we even call “the word of God.” Third, we hear God in the authoritative teaching of the church, the living tradition of our believing community. Finally, we hear God by attending to our experience, and interpreting it in the light of all those other ways of hearing the divine voice—the structures of creation, the Bible, the living tradition of the community.

The phrase “If today you hear his voice,” implies that the divine voice must somehow be accessible in our daily experience, for we are creatures who live one day at a time. If God wants to communicate with us, it has to happen in the course of a 24-hour day, for we live in no other

time. And how long do we go about this kind of listening? Long tradition has provided a helpful tool, which we call the examination of consciousness today. “Rummaging for God” is an expression that suggests going through a drawer full of stuff, feeling around, looking for something that you're sure must be in there somewhere. I think that image catches some of the feel of what is classically known in church language as the prayer of “examen.”

The examen, or examination, of conscience is an ancient practice in the church. In fact, even before Christianity, the Pythagoreans and the Stoics promoted a version of the practice. It is what most of us Catholics were taught to do to prepare for confession. In that form, the examen was a matter of examining one's life in terms of the Ten Commandments to see how daily behavior stacked up against those divine criteria. St. Ignatius includes it as one of the exercises in his manual, *The Spiritual Exercises*.

It is still a salutary thing to do but wears thin as a lifelong, daily practice. It is hard to motivate yourself to keep searching your experience for how you sinned. In recent decades, spiritual writers have worked with the implication that conscience in Romance languages like French (*conscience*) and Spanish (*consciencia*) means more than our English word “conscience,” in the sense of moral awareness and judgment: it also means “consciousness.”

Now prayer that deals with the full contents of your consciousness lets you cast your net much more broadly than prayer that limits itself to the contents of conscience, or moral awareness. A number of people—most famously, George Aschenbrenner, S.J., in an article in *Review for Religious* (1971)—have developed this idea in profoundly practical ways. Recently, the Institute of Jesuit Sources in St. Louis, Mo., published a fascinating reflection by Joseph Tetlow, S.J., called *The Most Postmodern Prayer: American Jesuit Identity and the Examen of Conscience, 1920-1990*.

What I am proposing here is a way of doing the examen that works for me. It puts a special emphasis on feelings, for reasons that I hope will become apparent. First, I describe the format. Second, I invite you to spend a few minutes actually doing it. Third, I describe some of the consequences that I have discovered to flow from this kind of prayer.

### **A Method: Five Steps**

1. Pray for light. Since we are not simply daydreaming or reminiscing but rather looking for some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading us, it only makes sense to pray for some illumination. The goal is not simply memory but graced understanding. That's a gift from God devoutly to be begged. “Lord, help me understand this blooming, buzzing confusion.”

2. Review the day in thanksgiving. Note how different this is from looking immediately for your sins. Nobody likes to poke around in the memory bank to uncover smallness, weakness, lack of generosity. But everybody likes to fondle beautiful gifts, and that is precisely what the past 24 hours contain—gifts of existence, work-relationships, food, challenges. Gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with God. So use whatever cues help you to walk through the day from the moment of awakening—even the dreams you recall upon awakening. Walk

through the past 24 hours, from hour to hour, from place to place, task to task, person to person, thanking the Lord for every gift you encounter.

3. Review the feelings that surface in the replay of the day. Our feelings, positive and negative, the painful and the pleasing, are clear signals of where the action was during the day. Simply pay attention to any and all of those feelings as they surface, the whole range: delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, peace, contentment, impatience, desire, hope, regret, shame, uncertainty, compassion, disgust, gratitude, pride, rage, doubt, confidence, admiration, shyness—whatever was there. Some of us may be hesitant to focus on feelings in this over-psychologized age, but I believe that these feelings are the liveliest index to what is happening in our lives. This leads us to the fourth moment:

4. Choose one of those feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it. That is, choose the remembered feeling that most caught your attention. The feeling is a sign that something important was going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to the source of the feeling—praise, petition, contrition, cry for help or healing, whatever.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Using your appointment calendar if that helps, face your immediate future. What feelings surface as you look at the tasks, meetings and appointments that face you? Fear? Delighted anticipation? Self-doubt? Temptation to procrastination? Zestful planning? Regret? Weakness? Whatever it is, turn it into prayer—for help, for healing, whatever comes spontaneously. To round off the examen, say the Lord's Prayer.

**A mnemonic for recalling the five points: LTJF (light, thanks, feelings, focus, future).**

Do it.

Take a few minutes each day to pray through the past 24 hours, and toward the next 24 hours, with that five-point format.

Consequences.

Here are some of the consequences flowing from this kind of prayer.

1. There is always something to pray about. For a person who does this kind of prayer at least once a day, there is never the question: What should I talk to God about? Until you die, you always have a past 24 hours, and you always have some feelings about what's next.

2. The gratitude moment is worthwhile in itself. “Dedicate yourselves to gratitude,” Paul tells the Colossians. Even if we drift off into slumber after reviewing the gifts of the day, we have praised the Lord.

3. We learn to face the Lord where we are, as we are. There is no other way to be present to God, of course, but we often fool ourselves into thinking that we have to “put on our best face” before we address our God.

4. We learn to respect our feelings. Feelings count. They are morally neutral until we make some choice about acting upon or dealing with them. But if we don't attend to them, we miss what they have to tell us about the quality of our lives.

5. Praying from feelings, we are liberated from them. An unattended emotion can dominate and manipulate us. Attending to and praying from and about the persons and situations that give rise to the emotions help us to cease being unwitting slaves of our emotions.

6. We actually find something to bring to confession. That is, we stumble across our sins without making them the primary focus.

7. We can experience an inner healing. People have found that praying about (as opposed to fretting about or denying) feelings leads to a healing of mental life. We probably get a head start on our dreamwork when we do this.

8. This kind of prayer helps us get over our Deism. Deism is belief in a sort of “clock-maker” God, a God who does indeed exist but does not have much, if anything, to do with his people's ongoing life. The God we have come to know through our Jewish and Christian experience is more present than we actually think.

9. Praying this way is an antidote to the spiritual disease of Pelagianism. Pelagianism was the heresy that approached life with God as a do-it-yourself project (“If at first you don't succeed...”), whereas a true theology of grace and freedom sees life as response to God's love (“If today you hear God's voice...”).

A final thought. How can anyone dare to say that paying attention to felt experience is a listening to the voice of God? On the face of it, it does not sound like a dangerous presumption. But, notice, I am not equating memory with the voice of God. I am saying that, if we are to listen for the God who creates and sustains us, we need to take seriously and prayerfully the meeting between the creatures we are and all else that God holds lovingly in existence. That “interface” is the felt experience of my day. It deserves prayerful attention. It is a big part of how we know and respond to God.

## THE EXAMEN GUIDED MEDITATION

Close your eyes . . . take a deep breath . . . *feel* the presence of everyone around you.

Focus on your breathing . . . Feel your chest rise and fall . . . Focus on your heart beat . . . Pay attention to your heart . . . Pay attention to how God is talking to you . . .

I'm going to go through each step, taking time for some reflection points at each step. *[Take special care to read the following slowly and pause well for each instruction/question]*

### First, be aware of God's presence

- Take a moment to recognize that God is with you, in this room, next to you, *within* you, here and now. *[pause]*

### Now, ask for honesty

- Briefly ask God to help you be open to *whatever* God might have to show you as you reflect. *[pause]*

### Now, be thankful

- Ask yourself, "When did I *love* today? When did I act in complete *freedom* and *without hidden motives*?" *[long pause]*

God's love will show you that you are the hands, heart, and voice of Christ in the world, revealing your great love for yourself and for others. *[brief pause]*

- Now ask yourself, when did I *feel loved* today? When did you experience genuine acceptance and caring? *[pause – longer than before]* If you feel compelled to thank God for these times, do so.

### Now, see where you could grow from your day

- What did you struggle with today? Recognize the times when you would say you "failed" during the day. Consider that these failures can be opportunities to hear God's voice in your life and ask, how did these moments feel? How do they feel *now*? *[pause]*
- If you feel compelled to express regret to God for these times today, do so, confident that God is lovingly ready to help with whatever you ask. *[pause]*

### Finally, think of tomorrow

- Briefly consider what your day may hold tomorrow. Ask God for help as you face the day tomorrow, and ask in particular to recognize God's presence as you go through your day.
- To end the Examen, thank God for being with you in your day, for God's efforts in your life. *[brief pause]* When you're ready, open your eyes and be back in the room.

## Awareness Examen Star Meditation

sit comfortably

close your eyes

Relax your back, head and shoulders...

let's take a deep breath in...and breath out...

another deep breath in...and slowly breath out....

notice the tension and restlessness in the mind and body if there is any....

take another deep breath and let the tension in the body increase...

and slowly relax and let go of the breath and notice the tension getting released...

observe any contraction or stress in any part of your body... you may go one by one to each part of your body. (starting with your right hand, arm, shoulder, left hand arm and shoulder, back and hips, upper back, chest throat, head, and lastly to the top of the head)

If there is any pain or stress or tension, just let the tension be there.. just accept it...

once again take a deep breath in..

the breath and the tension automatically releases the stress in the muscles... ..

do not be in any hurry to get rid of any stress, tension, or thoughts .. just let them be..

notice your thoughts but gently return to the awareness of your breath going in and out of your body and the corresponding sensations in your body...do not judge, just notice and return to your breath...

For what are you thankful this day? God's love and breath pours abundantly into the world.

All the things in this created universe are gifts of God.

Think of all that you are grateful for...

Refocus your attention to the top of your head

relax more and more....

become aware of a point twelve inches above your head....

become aware of a space 2 feet above your head...breath in once again. And breath out..

as you take your attention to the empty space above your head notice the tensions in the body are continuing to get relieved...

now become aware of a distance 10 feet above your head...

go a little higher up 50 feet above your head...

take your attention farther about 100 feet above your head .another deep breath in..and breath out...30,000 feet above your head. almost the height where the planes move. let go all your efforts and just relax.

Finally become aware of a tiny little star—this star is the star that the wise men observed rise in the east...

this star that we can see in the night sky is the same exact star that the wise men followed

A ray of light from that distance star is falling right at the top of your head and passing through your body to the ground...

It is almost 2000 years since Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection yet his life aligned the stars in such a way that all ages can experience His love...

His word coordinates all times past, present and future...

We are so small in relation to that distant star... our lives so short in relation to all of time...

Yet, we are never alone and are precious to God...we each participate in God's light and it guides us...

Invite the light in...to dissolve all discontent or stress...

Where does the spirit take you?

the light may invite you to sit with a particular experience or feeling that is difficult...

Humbly explore, with the non-judgmental light of the Holy Spirit, your inadequate responses to the gift of God's love for you. What other light were you following?

Let the true light of the Holy Spirit guide you. Follow it. Let it chisel you over time to reveal a brilliant, precious rare diamond...

relax and let go of all concerns this very night..

this light shining on you, in you, and through you dissolves any stress or discontinuity you may feel..

Let the Holy Spirit do Its job. Let it take its time...

Just relax...breath in once again. And breath out...

Compassion and peace are your nature..

Return to the light from which you came and through which you were born...

relax into your breath.. breathe in and breathe out...

Notice your outgoing breath as it has gotten longer and longer...

Notice the sacred pause before you breath in

Trusting in God's mercy and love resolve to act in ways which do not inhibit the spirit of truth and light to be born in the world. What do you desire from God as you face the future? What do you hope?

How will I let God lead me in commitment and relationship with the light?...

Another breath in.. and breath out...

music...

## Anthony de Mello - A Testament

*I imagine that today I am to die.*

*I ask for time to be alone and write down for my friends  
a sort of testament for which the points that follow  
could serve as chapter titles.*

1. These things I have loved in life: things I have tasted, looked at, smelled, heard, touched.
2. These experiences I have cherished:
3. These ideas have brought me liberation:
4. These beliefs I have outgrown:
5. These convictions I have lived by:
6. These are the things I have lived for:
7. These insights I have gained in the school of life: insights into God, the world, human nature, Jesus Christ, love, religion, prayer.
8. These risks I took, these dangers I have courted:
9. These sufferings have seasoned me:
10. These lessons life has taught me:
11. These influences have shaped my life: persons, occupations, books, events.
12. These Scripture texts have lit my path:
13. These things I regret about my life:
14. These are my life's achievements:
15. These persons are enshrined within my heart:
16. These are my unfulfilled desires:

*I choose an ending for this document:*

*A poem—my own or someone else's;*

*or a prayer;*

*a sketch or a picture from a magazine;*

*a Scripture text;*

*or anything that I judge would be an apt conclusion to my testament.*

—Anthony De Mello, S.J.

**The Ignatian Awareness Examen (2 minutes silence after each)**

1. **Awareness** I am never alone. Invite God in. What do I desire?
2. **Gratitude** All things in this world are gifts from God. For what am I grateful?
3. **Review** Humbly review the day with particular attention to emotions and feelings. Where am I being challenged to grow?
4. **Forgiveness** I acknowledge sins and shortcomings. What choices have been inadequate responses to Your love?
5. **Hope and Renewal** I recognize that nothing is impossible with You. Which particular gift of the Holy Spirit do I desire now and in the future?

# SHORT REFLECTION MATERIALS

## SCRIPTURE

I raise my eyes toward the mountains. From where will my help come?? My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth. God will not allow your foot to slip; your guardian does not sleep. Truly, the right hand. By day the sun cannot harm you, nor the moon by night. The LORD will guard you from all evil, will always guard your life. The LORD will guard you from all evil will always guard your life. The LORD will guard your coming and going both now and forever. (Psalm 121)

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Jesus said to them in reply, “Have faith in God. Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Creator may in turn forgive you your transgressions.” (Mark 11:22-26)

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“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.” (Luke 1:46-55).

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Acknowledging we are sinners and need God’s mercy David asked God for forgiveness after committing adultery and murder: “A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit. Do not drive me from your presence, nor take from me your holy spirit. Restore my joy in your salvation; sustain in me a willing spirit.” (Ps 51:12-14).

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Acknowledging that all things in this world are gifts from God. In the Psalms, we find many great expressions of thanks... “shout joyfully to the LORD, all you lands; worship the LORD with cries of gladness; come before him with joyful song. Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom we belong, whose people we are, God’s well-tended flock. Enter the temple gates with praise, its courts with thanksgiving. Give thanks to God, bless his name; good indeed is the LORD, Whose love endures forever, whose faithfulness last through ever age.” (Ps100).

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Acknowledging the need for God’s help at the Last Super, Jesus prayed to His Father for his disciples... “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and

you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.”(Jn17: 20-24).

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There Elijah came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” God said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 Kings 19:9-13a)

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Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. The word of the Lord. (Mark 8:27-30)

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"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life and what you will eat, or about your body and what you will wear ... All the nations of the world seek for these things, and your Creator knows that you need them ... Instead, seek God’s kingdom, and these other things will be given you besides. Do not be afraid any longer, little flock for your Creator is pleased to give you the kingdom ... For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." (Luke 12:22.34)

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"I give thanks to my God at every remembrance Of you ... " (Phil 1:3-6)

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"In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." (Thess. s: 16-18)

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**13** “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. **14** “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-15)

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“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 NIV)

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And he spoke to them in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once but because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear.” This is why I speak to them in parables, because ‘they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.’ Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: ‘You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted, and I heal them.’<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.<sup>17</sup> For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.<sup>18</sup> “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:<sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.<sup>20</sup> The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.<sup>21</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.<sup>22</sup> The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.<sup>23</sup> But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (Matthew 13:1-23)

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**The LORD Calls Samuel** The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.<sup>2</sup> One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place.<sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was.<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.”<sup>5</sup> And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.<sup>6</sup> Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.<sup>8</sup> A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy.<sup>9</sup> So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.<sup>10</sup> The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”<sup>11</sup> And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. (1 Samuel 3:1-11 (NIV))

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Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-20)

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“At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’” (Matthew 11:25-30)

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<sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, <sup>18</sup>because we look not at what can be seen by at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 3:16-18)

## PRAYER

*Happy moments, praise God*  
*Difficult moments, seek God*  
*Quiet moments, worship God*  
*Painful moments, trust God*  
*Every moment, thank God*

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### **Teach Us to Listen**

Teach us to listen, O God, to those nearest to us –  
Our families, our co-workers, our friends.  
Help us to be aware that, no matter what words we hear  
The message is, “Accept the person I am. Listen to me.”

Teach us to listen, our caring God, to those far from us –  
The whisper of the hopeless, the pleas of the forgotten,  
The cry of the anguished.

Teach us to listen, O God our Mother, to ourselves.  
Help us to be less afraid to trust the voice inside –  
In that deepest part of ourselves.

Teach us to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice –  
In business and in boredom, in certainty and in doubt,  
In noise and in silence.

Teach us, Lord, to listen.

- Jim Veltri, SJ

### **Suscipe**

Take, Lord, and receive  
All my liberty, my memory,  
My understanding, and my  
Entire will, all that I  
Have and possess.  
You have given all to me.  
To you, Lord, I return it.  
All is yours.  
Dispose of it wholly  
According to your will.  
Give me your love and your  
Grace. This is sufficient for me.

- St. Ignatius of Loyola  
God Bless the World

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**Mighty God**, Father of all  
Compassionate God, Mother of all,  
Bless every person I have met,  
Every face I have seen,  
Every voice I have heard,  
Especially those most dear;  
Bless every city, town, and  
Street that I have known,  
Bless every sight I have seen,  
Every sound I have heard,  
Every object I have touched.  
In some mysterious way these have  
All fashioned my life;  
All that I am,  
I have received.  
Great God, bless the world.

- John J. Morris, SJ

### **Pied Beauty**

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
    For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
        For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that  
            Swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
    Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and  
        Plough;  
    And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
    Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
    With swift, slow; sweet; sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
    Praise him.-- Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ

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### **Prayer for Generosity**

Lord, teach me to be generous.  
Teach me to serve as you deserve;  
To give and not to count the cost;  
To fight and not to heed the wounds;  
To toil and not to seek for rest,  
To labor and not to ask for reward,  
Save that of knowing that I do your will.

- St. Ignatius of Loyola

**O God** of all beginnings and endings,  
We praise and thank you for the gift of this school year.  
It has been a time filled with grace and blessings,  
With challenges and opportunities, joys and sorrows.

The days have passed quickly, O Lord.  
The weeks, the months, the seasons, the holidays and holy days,  
The exams, vacations, breaks, and traveling  
All have come forth from your hand.

While we trust that your purposes have always been at work each day,  
Sometimes it has seemed difficult to understand and appreciate  
Just what you have been up to in our school.

Give us the rest and refreshment we need this summer.  
Let our efforts of this past year bear fruit.  
Bring all of our plans to a joyful conclusion,  
And bless us, according to your will,

With the fulfillment of our summer hopes and dreams.  
Watch over us in the weeks of rest ahead,  
And guide each day as you have done this past year.  
Help us return to school with a new spirit and a new energy.

May we continue to grow  
In age, wisdom, knowledge and grace  
All the days of our lives.

Amen.

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**"Requiem" by Eliza Gilkyson (Play youtube recording of this!)**

Mother Mary, full of grace, awaken.  
All our homes are gone, our loved ones taken,  
taken by the sea.  
Mother Mary, calm our fears, have mercy.  
Drowning in a sea of tears, have mercy.  
Hear our mournful plea.  
Our world has been shaken.  
We wander our homelands forsaken.  
In the dark night of the soul  
bring some comfort to us all.  
Oh Mother Mary, come and carry us in your embrace,  
that our sorrows may be faced.  
Mary, fill the glass to overflowing,  
illuminate the path where we are going.

Have mercy on us all,  
in funeral fires burning,  
each flame to your mystery returning.  
In the dark night of the soul  
your shattered dreamers, make them whole  
oh Mother Mary find us where we've fallen out of grace.  
Lead us to a higher place  
In the dark night of the soul  
our broken hearts you can make whole.  
oh Mother Mary, come and carry us in your embrace.  
Let us see your gentle face, Mary

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### **Valentine's Day Prayer (to be read with I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 NIV)**

Lord, Because love is patient...Help me to be slow to judge, but quick to listen. Hesitant to criticize, but eager to encourage, remembering your endless patience with me.

Because love is kind...Help my words to be gentle and my actions to be thoughtful. Remind me to smile and to say "Please" and "Thank You" because those little things still mean so much.

Because love does not envy or boast, and it is not proud...Help me have a heart that is humble and sees the good in others. May I celebrate and appreciate all that I have and all that I am, as well as doing the same for those around me.

Because love is not rude or self-seeking...Help me to speak words that are easy on the ear and on the heart. When I'm tempted to get wrapped up in my own little world, remind me there's a great big world out there full of needs and hurts.

Because love is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs...Help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. When I want to hold onto a grudge, gently help me release it so I can reach out with a hand of love instead.

Because love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth...Help me stand up for what is right and good. May I defend the defenseless, and help the helpless. Show me how I can make a difference.

Because love always protects and always trusts...Help me to be a refuge for those around me. When the world outside is harsh and cold, may my heart be a place of acceptance and warmth.

Finally, because love always perseveres...Help my heart continually beat with love for You and others. Thank you for this day when we celebrate love, and for showing us what that word really means. Amen.

## **Prayer of the Person**

The person across from you is the greatest miracle and the greatest mystery in this moment—a Testament of God's continuing creation and presence in the world.

The person across from you is an inexhaustible reservoir of possibility, with potentialities only partially realized.

The person across from you is a unique universe of experience— of possibility and necessity. laughter and tears, love and indifference, hopes and fears- all struggling for expression.

The person across from you believes in something— something precious; stands for something. lives for something. labors for something, waits for something, runs for something, runs towards something.

The person across from you is not perfect— often feels disappointed, is often undecided and disorganized and woefully close to chaos; but is endowed with a tremendous inner strength, and is capable of surviving great difficulties and persecutions.

The person across from you is a community of persons— persons met during a lifetime. Each carries with them a mother and father, student and teacher, brother and sister, enemy and friend.

The person across from you does some things like no one else in the world. There is something this one life on earth means and cares for— will that person dare speak of it to you?

The person across from you is more description than explanation. The person across from you is MYSTERY made in God's image, never to be fully understood. Look before you, and within you— look around— for God is indeed among us!

---

## **Enough**

Lord God,

Is it enough to hear, to listen?  
To become no longer a “deaf hearer of the Gospel”?

Is it enough to act, to serve?  
To become the hands and feet of a God made flesh among us?

Is it enough to announce, to denounce?  
To become prophets – like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Dorothy, Ellacuria?

Is it enough to become like Jesus, to find Jesus?  
To become a saint?

What is enough is not, nor ever has been, ours to measure or decide,

But lies hidden, tucked into the folds of Your Inexhaustible Mystery.  
So help us to focus,  
Not on what is enough,  
But on discovering You anew,  
the God from whom and toward whom  
We listen, act, speak and are.  
For it is in our simple attempts that Christ will work,  
Creating the world anew.

Amen.

---

### **Daily Acceptance Prayer**

I accept myself completely.  
I accept my strengths and my weaknesses,  
my gifts and my shortcomings,  
my good points and my faults.

I accept myself completely as a human being.  
I accept that I am here to learn and grow,  
and I accept that I am learning and growing.  
I accept the personality I've developed, and  
I accept my power to heal and change.

I accept myself without condition or reservation.  
I accept that the core of my being is goodness  
and that my essence is love,  
and I accept that I sometimes forget that.

I accept myself completely, and in this acceptance  
I find an ever-deepening inner strength.  
From this place of strength, I accept my life fully and  
I open to the lessons it offers me today.  
I accept that within my mind are both fear and love,  
and I accept my power to choose which I will experience as real.  
I recognize that I experience only the results of my own choices.  
I accept the times that I choose fear  
as part of my learning and healing process,  
and I accept that I have the potential and power  
in any moment to choose love instead.  
accept mistakes as a part of growth,  
so I am always willing to forgive myself  
and give myself another chance.  
I accept that my life is the expression of my thought,  
and I commit myself to aligning my thoughts

more and more each day with the Thought of Love.  
I accept that I am an expression of this Love.  
Love's hands and voice and heart on earth.  
I accept my own life as a blessing and a gift.  
My heart is open to receive, and I am deeply grateful.  
May I always share the gifts that I receive  
fully, freely, and with joy.

---

Loving God,  
Let us cherish your mysterious presence in others.  
And delight in them as you do.  
Let us look with your eyes, to see as you see.  
Let us feel with your heart, to love as you love.  
Grant us patient listening,  
With tenderness and compassion,  
With deep affirmation and gentle challenge.  
We thank you for the opportunity to listen to your Word  
Spoken through our voices as we shared,  
Through our partner as we listened  
Please help us to take the risk to give of ourselves  
In honest conversations with one another. Amen.

---

LORD, grant me a holy heart  
That sees always what is fine and pure  
And is not frightened at the sight of sin,  
But creates order wherever it goes.  
Grant me a heart that knows nothing of boredom,  
Weeping and sighing.  
Let me not be too concerned  
With the bothersome thing  
I call "myself."  
Lord, give me a sense of humor  
And I will find happiness in life  
And profit for others.  
-St. Thomas More

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**God Bless the World, John J. Morris SJ**

Mighty God, Father of all,  
Compassionate God, Mother of all,  
Bless every person I have met,  
Every face I have seen,  
Every voice I have heard,  
Especially those most dear;

Bless every city, town and street that I have known,  
Bless every sight I have seen,  
Every sound I have heard,  
Every object I have touched.  
In some mysterious way these have all fashioned my life;  
Great God, bless the world.

---

May today there be peace within.  
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.  
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.  
May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.  
May you be confident knowing you are a child of God.  
Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love.  
It is there for each and every one of us.

-Saint Teresa

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### **God of New Beginnings:**

We come before you with open hearts and outstretched arms seeking guidance as we reach beyond ourselves to find your love in those we meet. We ask that our arms might embrace your Spirit and that our eyes continue to see You in others as we celebrate your love. We ask for the strength and patience to be people of peace and instruments of justice. By simplifying our lives, may we come to discover the simplicity of your message. Through your strength we open ourselves in a new way, committing ourselves to walk your path and share in your work. We thank you for the gift of one another that we experience oneness with you. Keep us close and never let us stray from you. As we begin our journey into the depths of your love, we are fearful yet certain of your powerful and gentle presence.  
Amen.

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### **A Prayer for My Friends**

I ask you, dear God, to bless my friends;  
Where there is pain, heal them with your mercy,  
Where there is sorrow, give them cause to rejoice.  
Let them know that you are forever near,  
Always ready to be our friend, especially in our hour of greatest need.  
Bless them with patience, strength, wisdom, confidence and faith in you.  
And guide us in your love, the true source of all friendship here on earth and in Heaven.  
Amen

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### **Prayer of St. Francis**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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### **A CLC Leader's Prayer**

Triune God, Communion of Love,  
Grant me reverence for Your presence in those I serve.  
Let me look with Your eyes, to see as You see.  
That I may regard those I serve as your Beloved.

Grant me patient listening,  
To respect Your work in people,  
To await Your timing,  
To trust Your wisdom,  
To follow Your lead.

Help me to listen deeply,  
Speak sparingly, affirm genuinely,  
Challenge tenderly.

Just as you are a mystery,  
This person before me is a mystery.  
Let my relationship with him or her  
Be a mystery to be lived out,  
Rather than a puzzle to be worked out;  
A hand to be held,  
Rather than a mind to be fathomed;  
As an adventure to be undertaken,  
Rather than a problem to be solved.

Let me cherish Your mysterious presence in others.  
And delight in them as You do.  
Before them, before You, I am on holy ground.

Amen

From Donald Neary SJ's *Calm Beneath the Storm*

## GROWTH, LIFE, LOVE, AND RELATIONSHIPS

### With That Moon Language

Admit something: Everyone you see, you say to them, "Love me."  
Of course you do not do this out loud; Otherwise, someone would call the cops.  
Still though, think about this, this great pull in us to connect.  
Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye that is always saying with that sweet moon language what every other eye in this world is dying to hear.

--Hafez

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Too often we underestimate the power of  
A touch  
A smile  
A kind word  
A listening ear  
An honest compliment  
Or the smallest act of caring  
All of which have the potential to turn a life around.

- Leo Buscaglia

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More and more the desire grows in me simply to walk around, greet people, enter their homes, sit on their doorsteps, play ball, throw water, and be known as someone who wants to live with them. It is a privilege to have the time and the freedom to practice this simple ministry of presence. Still, it is not as simple as it seems. My own desire to be useful, to do something significant, or to be part of some impressive project is so strong that soon my own time is taken up by meetings, conferences, study groups, and workshops that prevent me from walking the streets. It is difficult not to have plans . . . not to feel that you are working directly for social change. But I wonder more and more if the first thing shouldn't be to know people by name, to eat and drink with them, to listen to their stories and to tell them your own, and to let them know with words, handshakes, and hugs that you do not simply like them, but truly love them.

Henri Nouwen, Gracias

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Paperwork, cleaning the home, cooking the meals, dealing with innumerable visitors who come all through the day, answering the phone, keeping patience and acting intelligently, which is to find some meaning in all those encounters – these things too are the works of peace, and often seem like a very little way.

- Dorothy Day

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The present form of the world passes away, and there remains only the joy of having used this world to establish God's rule here. All pomp, all triumphs, all selfish capitalism, all the false successes of life will pass with the world's form. All of that passes away. What does not pass away is love. When one has turned money, property, work in one's calling into service of others, then the joy of sharing and feeling that all are

one's family does not pass away. In the evening of life you will be judged on love.  
- Archbishop Romero, Sermon 1/21/79

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### **I Loved What I Could Love**

I had a natural passion for fine clothes, excellent food, and  
Lively conversation about all matters that concern  
The heart still alive. And even a passion  
About my own looks.

Vanities: they do not exist.

All we can touch, swallow, or say  
Aids in our crossing to God  
And helps unveil the soul.

Life smooths us, rounds, perfects, as does the river the stone  
And there is no place our Beloved is not flowing  
Though the current's force you  
May not always  
Like.

Our passions help to lift us.

I loved what I could love until I held Him,  
For then – all things – every world  
Disappeared.  
- Saint Teresa of Avila

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### **Christ Has No Body**

Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which he  
walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which He looks compassion on this world.  
- Saint Teresa of Avila

Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day. —**Rainer Maria Rilke**

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### **The Avowal**

As swimmers dare  
To lie face to the sky  
And water bears them,  
As hawks rest upon air  
And air sustains them,  
So would I learn to attain  
Free-fall, and float  
Into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,  
Knowing no effort earns  
That all-surrounding grace.

**Denise Levertov**

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### **Receiving Blessings**

Excerpt from My Grandfather's Blessings

“Martin Buber reminds us that just to live is holy. Just to be is a blessing. If Buber is right, what keeps us from receiving life's blessings? It is not always so simple a thing as a lack of time. Often we may not recognize a blessing when it is given, or we may have ideas about life that keep us from experiencing what we already have. Sometimes we become frozen in the past or unaware of the potential in the present. We may even become so caught up in what is missing in the world that we allow our hearts to break. There are many ways to feel empty in the midst of our blessings.

We can bless others only when we feel blessed ourselves. Blessing life may be more about learning how to celebrate life than learning how to fix life. It may require an appreciation of life as it is and an acceptance of much in life that we cannot understand. It may mean developing an eye for joy. It is not necessary to sit in judgment in order to move things forward, and our anger may not be the most potent tool for change. Most important, it requires the humility to know that we are not in this task of restoring the world alone.”

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### **Pain into Pearls**

Excerpt from My Grandfather's Blessings

“An oyster is soft, tender, and vulnerable. Without the sanctuary of its shell it could not survive. But oysters must open their shells in order to “breathe” water. Sometimes while an oyster is breathing, a grain of sand will enter its shell and become a part of its life from then on.

Such grains of sand cause pain, but an oyster does not alter its soft nature because of this. It does not become hard and leathery in order not to feel. It continues to entrust itself to the ocean, to open and breathe in order to live. But it does respond. Slowly and patiently, the oyster wraps the grain of sand in thin translucent layers until, over time, it has created something of great value in the place where it was most

vulnerable to its pain. A pearl might be thought of as any oyster's response to its suffering. Not every oyster can do this. Oysters that do are far more valuable to people than oysters that do not.

Sand is a way of life for an oyster. If you are soft and tender and must live on the sandy floor of the ocean, making pearls becomes a necessity if you are to live well.

Disappointment and loss are a part of every life. Many times we can put such things behind us and get on with the rest of our lives. But not everything is amendable to this approach. Some things are too big or too deep to do this, and we will have to leave important parts of ourselves behind if we treat them in this way. These are the places where wisdom begins to grow in us. It starts with the realization that our loss, whatever it is, has become a part of us and has altered our lives so profoundly that we cannot go back to the way it was before.

Something in us can transform such suffering into wisdom. The process of turning pain into wisdom often looks like a sorting process. First we experience everything. Then one by one we let things go, the anger, the blame, the sense of injustice, and finally even the pain itself, until all we have left is a deeper sense of the value of life and a greater capacity to live it.”

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### **The Guest House**

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

~ Rumi ~

## I Know the Way You Can Get

I know the way you can get  
When you have not had a drink of Love:  
Your face hardens,  
Your sweet muscles cramp.  
Children become concerned  
About a strange look that appears in your eyes  
Which even begins to worry your own mirror  
And nose.  
Squirrels and birds sense your sadness  
And call an important conference in a tall tree.  
They decide which secret code to chant  
To help your mind and soul.  
Even angels fear that brand of madness  
That arrays itself against the world  
And throws sharp stones and spears into  
The innocent  
And into one's self.  
O I know the way you can get  
If you have not been drinking Love:  
You might rip apart  
Every sentence your friends and teachers say,  
Looking for hidden clauses.  
You might weigh every word on a scale  
Like a dead fish.  
You might pull out a ruler to measure  
From every angle in your darkness  
The beautiful dimensions of a heart you once  
Trusted.  
I know the way you can get  
If you have not had a drink from Love's  
Hands.  
That is why all the Great Ones speak of  
The vital need  
To keep remembering God,  
So you will come to know and see Him  
As being so Playful  
And Wanting,  
Just Wanting to help.  
That is why Hafiz says:  
Bring your cup near me.  
For all I care about  
Is quenching your thirst for freedom!  
All a Sane man can ever care about is giving Love!  
From: "I Heard God Laughing: Renderings of Hafiz:  
by Daniel Ladinsky

## Cast All Your Votes for Dancing

I know the voice of depression  
Still calls to you.  
I know those habits that can ruin your life  
Still send their invitations.  
But you are with the Friend now  
And look so much stronger.  
You can stay that way  
And even bloom!  
Keep squeezing drops of the Sun  
From your prayers and work and music  
And from your companions' beautiful laughter.  
Keep squeezing drops of the Sun  
From the sacred hands and glance of your  
Beloved  
And, my dear,  
From the most insignificant movements  
Of your own holy body.  
Learn to recognize the counterfeit coins  
That may buy you just a moment of pleasure,  
But then drag you for days  
Like a broken man  
Behind a farting camel.  
You are with the Friend now.  
Learn what actions of yours delight Him,  
What actions of yours bring freedom  
And Love.

Whenever you say God's name, dear pilgrim,  
My ears wish my head was missing  
So they could finally kiss each other  
And applaud all your nourishing wisdom!

O keep squeezing drops of the Sun  
From your prayers and work and music  
And from your companions' beautiful laughter

And from the most insignificant movements  
Of your own holy body.

Now, sweet one,  
Be wise.  
Cast all your votes for Dancing!

~ Hafiz ~

## A poem by Mark Nepo

Having loved enough and lost enough,  
I'm no longer searching  
just opening,

no longer trying to make sense of pain  
but trying to be a soft and sturdy home  
in which real things can land.

These are the irritations  
that rub into a pearl.

So we can talk for a while  
but then we must listen,  
the way rocks listen to the sea.

And we can churn at all that goes wrong  
but then we must lay all distractions  
down and water every living seed.

And yes, on nights like tonight  
I too feel alone. But seldom do I  
face it squarely enough  
to see that it's a door  
into the endless breath  
that has no breather,  
into the surf that human  
shells call God.

---

I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for – maybe even worth dying for, something that energizes you, enthuses you, enables you to keep moving ahead. I can't tell you what it might be – that's for you to find, to choose, to love. I can just encourage you to start looking and support you in the search.

—Ita Ford, MM

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“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” —Marianne Williamson

## **Wring Out My Clothes**

**By St. Francis of Assisi**

Such love does the sky now pour,  
That whenever I stand in a field,  
I have to wring out the light when I get home.

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## **Compassion**

Excerpt from My Grandfather's Blessings

“Compassion begins with the acceptance of what is most human in ourselves, what is most capable of suffering. In attending to our own capacity to suffer, we can uncover a simple and profound connection between our own vulnerability and the vulnerability in all others. Experiencing this allows us to find an instinctive kindness toward life which is the foundation of all compassion and genuine service.

Ours is not a culture that respects the sick or the old or the vulnerable. We strive for independence, competence, and mastery. In embracing such frontier values we may become intolerant of human wholeness, contemptuous of anything in ourselves and in others that has needs or is capable of suffering. The denial of a common vulnerability is the ultimate barrier to compassion.”

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## **To Even Dress**

**By St. Catherine of Siena**

A great helplessness I felt at times  
To even dress myself some days,  
So I prayed with all my heart,  
“Dear God, help me.”  
It is not possible for love not to hear us,  
And whatever happens the perfect teacher staged.  
What would a wise, powerful king  
All a beloved child to see?

---

“I do not know how long I will live, but while I live, Lord, let me give some comfort to someone in need by my smile, a nice deed, or kind word, and let me do whatever I can to ease things for my neighbor. I want nothing but to do my part to life a tired or weary heart to change people, frowns to smiles, then I will not have lived in vain. And I will not care, how long I will live if only I can give and give, and give.”

—Sister Oresoa

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## **The Sky Gave Me Its Heart**

**By Rabia**

The sky gave me its heart  
Because it knew mine was not  
Large enough to care for the earth  
The way it did.  
Why is it we think of God so much?  
Why is there so much talk about love?

When an animal is wounded  
No one has to tell it  
“You need to heal”  
So naturally it will nurse itself the best it can.  
My eye kept telling me,  
“Something is missing from all I see.”  
So I went in search of the cure.  
The cure for me was His beauty.  
The remedy for me was to love.

---

SPIRITUALITY is a conscious contact with the Spirit that is God,  
Who is above us, who transcends and inspires us.  
It is conscious contact with the spirit that is “self,”  
With the inner-self where memory, imagination, intellect, feelings,  
And the body are caught up in the search for humanity.  
Spirituality is conscious contact with the spirit  
That is community, with the chemistry, the dynamic that bonds us together when we gathered in peak  
moments of joy or grief,  
Struggle or aspiration.  
In a word, spirituality is at once God—awareness, self-awareness, and other-awareness.  
It is the level of consciousness and of choosing that makes us different  
From the pelican that dies on the beach and simply is no more.  
Spirituality is faith lived.  
As such, it encompasses the totality of personal and collective responses  
To religious belief—relationships, morality, worship, and daily living.  
As Christians we strive to understand and to act in a way  
That makes us part of the reality that is the will and purpose of God.  
We strive to let ourselves feel, remember...that which we believe.  
Spirituality, then, is operative on cognitive affective, and volitional levels:  
It encompasses the whole person—their mind, heart, and will.  
-Thea Bowman

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WE MUST LOVE them both, those whose  
Opinions we share and those whose opinions  
We reject, for both have labored in  
The search for truth, and both have helped us in finding it.  
-Saint Thomas Aquinas

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“We can never know how much good a simple smile can do.”  
-Mother Teresa

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“The place where God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”  
-Frederick Buechner

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“Love your enemies.”

-Jesus

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“In the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you.”

-Leo Tolstoy

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People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.  
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.  
If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.  
Succeed anyway.  
If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.  
What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.  
If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.  
The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.  
Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.  
-Mother Teresa

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We cannot be ourselves unless we know ourselves. But self-knowledge is impossible when thoughtless and automatic activity keeps our souls in confusion. But we have to cut down our activity to the point where we can think calmly and reasonably about our actions. We cannot begin to know ourselves until we can see the real reasons why we do the things we do, and we cannot be ourselves until our actions correspond to our intentions, and our intentions are appropriate to our own situation. But that is enough. It is not necessary that we succeed in everything. A man can be perfect and still reap no fruit from his work, and it may happen that a man who is able to accomplish very little is much more of a person than another who seems to accomplish very much.

-Thomas Merton

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### **Footprints in the Sand**

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only. This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, “You promised me, Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?” The Lord replied, “the years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.”

-Mary Stevenson

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### **The New Footprints in the Sand**

Imagine you and the Lord Jesus walking down the road together. For much of the way, the Lord's footprints go along steadily, consistently, rarely varying the pace. But your prints are a disorganized stream of zigzags, starts, stops, turnarounds, circles, departures and returns. For much of the way it seems to go like this. But gradually, your footprints come more in line with the Lord's, soon paralleling His consistently. You and Jesus are walking as true friends.

This seems perfect, but then an interesting thing happens: your footprints that once etched the sand next to the Master's are now walking precisely in His steps. Inside His larger footprints is the small 'sand print', safely enclosed. You and Jesus are becoming one.

This goes on for many miles. But gradually you notice another change. The footprint inside the larger footprint seems to grow larger. Eventually it disappears altogether. There is only one set of footprints. They have become one.

Again, this goes on for a long time. But then something awful happens. The second set of footprints is back. And this time it seems even worse. Zigzags all over the place. Stops. Starts. Deep gashes in the sand. A veritable mess of prints. You're amazed and shocked. But this is the end of your dream.

Now you speak. "Lord, I understand the first scene with the zigzags and fits and starts and so on. I was a new Christian, just learning. But You walked on through the storm and helped me learn to walk with you."

"That is correct."

"Yes, and when the smaller footprints were inside of Yours, I was actually learning to walk in Your steps. I followed You very closely."

"Very good. You have understood everything so far."

"Then the smaller footprints grew and eventually filled in with Yours. I suppose that I was actually growing so much that I was becoming like you in every way."

"Precisely."

"But this is my question. Lord.. Was there a regression or something? The footprints went back to two, and this time it was worse than the first."

The Lord smiles, then laughs. "You didn't know?" He says, "That was when we danced."

By Mark Littleton

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We are what we love. If we love God, whose image we were created, we discover ourselves in God and we cannot help being happy: we have already achieved something of the fullness of being for which we were destined in our creation. If we love everything else but God, we contradict the image born in our very essence, and we cannot help being unhappy, because we are living a caricature of what we are meant to be.

-Thomas Merton

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**Wild Geese, by Mary Oliver**

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

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**Above all**, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything, to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually – let them grow. Let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Do not try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own goodwill) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give our lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

-Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

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**Fall in Love**

Attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ (1907–1991)

Nothing is more practical than

finding God, than

falling in Love

in a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with,

what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.

It will decide

what will get you out of bed in the morning,

what you do with your evenings,

how you spend your weekends,

what you read, whom you know,

what breaks your heart,

and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in Love, stay in love,

and it will decide everything.

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I will not die an unlived life.  
I will not love in fear of falling or catching fire.  
I choose to inhabit my days  
To allow my living to open me  
To make me less afraid  
More accessible  
To loosen my heart  
Until it becomes a wing  
A torch  
A promise.  
I choose to risk my significance  
To live so that which came to me as a seed  
Goes to the next as a blossom.  
And that which came to me as a blossom  
Goes on as fruit.

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The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and to not twist them to be our own image. Otherwise we love only the reflection of ourselves that we find in them.  
-Thomas Merton

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Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.  
-Leo Buscaglia

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Behold God beholding you...and smiling.  
-St. Francis de Sales

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Keep walking, though there's no place to get to.  
Don't try to see through the distances. That's not for human beings.  
Move within, but don't move the way fear makes you move.  
Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened.  
Don't open the door to the study and being read.  
Take down a musical instrument.  
*Let the beauty we love be what we do.*  
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.  
-Rumi

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"You can't know where you're going until you know where you've been." -- Hitch

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"Lord, I don't know where all this is going or how it all turns out. Lead me to peace that is past

understanding, a peace beyond all doubt.” --Newsboys

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“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a covenant between equals.”  
(Tattoos on the Heart p. 77)

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“No daylight to separate us.

Only Kinship. Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognize it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that margins themselves will be erased. We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. We locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless. At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away. The prophet Habakuk writes, ‘The vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and it will not disappoint...and if it delays wait for it.’

Kinship is what God presses us on to, always hopeful that its time has come.” (Tattoos on the Heart p. 190)

# LONG REFLECTION MATERIALS

## **It Helps, Now And Then, To Step Back And Take A Long View**

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying  
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.  
No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.  
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation  
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,  
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.

from Archbishop Oscar Romero. The Archbishop served the people of El Salvador and was assassinated in 1980 while he was saying mass in San Salvador.

## PASCHALTIDE

Pack nothing.

Bring only your determination to serve and your willingness to be free.

Don't wait for the bread to rise.

Take nourishment for the journey, but eat standing, be ready to move at a moment's notice.

Do not hesitate to leave your old ways behind—fear, silence, submission.

Only surrender to the need of the time—to love tenderly, act justly, and walk humbly with your God.

Do not take time to explain to the neighbors.

Tell only a few trusted friends and family members.

Then begin quickly, before you have time to sink back into old slavery.

Set out in the dark.

I will send fire to warm and encourage you.

I will be with you in the fire and I will be with you in the cloud.

You will learn to eat new food and find refuge in new places.

I will give you dreams in the desert to guide you safely home to that place you have not yet seen.

The stories you tell one another around the fires in the dark will make you strong and wise.

Outsiders will attack you, and some will follow you, and at times you will get weary and turn on each other with fear and fatigue and blind forgetfulness.

You have been preparing for this for hundreds of years.

I am sending you into the wilderness to make a new way and to learn my ways more deeply.

Some of you will be so changed by weathers and wanderings that even your closest friends will have to learn your features as though for the first time.

Some of you will not change at all.

Some will be abandoned by your dearest loves and misunderstood by those who have known you since birth and feel abandoned by you.

Some will find new friendships in unlikely faces, and old friends as faithful and true as the pillar of God's flame.

Sing songs as you go, and hold close together. You may at times grow confused and lose your way.

Continue to call each other by the names I have given you, to help remember who you are.

Touch each other and keep telling the stories.

Make maps as you go, remembering the way back from before you were born.

So you will be only the first of many waves of deliverance on these desert seas.

It is the first of many beginnings..

Remain true to this mystery.

Pass on the whole story. Do not go back.

I am with you now and I am waiting for you.

- Alla Renee Bozarth, in "Passover Remembered"

**Gracias a La Vida**  
**Violeta Parra**

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.  
Me dió dos luceros, que cuando los abro.  
    Perfecto distingo lo negro del blanco  
    Y en el alto cielo su fondo estrellado,  
        Y en las multitudes  
        el hombre que yo amo.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.  
Me ha dado el oído que en todo su ancho  
    Graba noche y día grillos y canarios  
    Martillos, turbinas, ladrillos, chubascos  
    Y la voz tan tierna de mi bien amado.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.  
Me ha dado el sonido y el abecedario.  
Con él las palabras que pienso y declaro,  
“Madre,” “amigo,” “hermano,” y luz alumbrando  
La ruta del alma del que estoy amando.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.  
Me ha dado la marcha de mis pies cansados.  
    Con ellos anduve ciudades y charcos,  
    Valles y desiertos, montañas y llanos,  
    Y la casa tuya, tu calle y tu patio.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.  
Me dió el corazón, que agita su marco.  
Cuando miro el fruto del cerebro humano,  
Cuando miro al bueno tan lejos del malo.  
Cuando miro el fondo de tus ojos claros.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.  
Me ha dado la risa, me ha dado el llanto.  
    Así yo distingo dicha de quebranto,  
    Los dos materiales que forman mi canto,  
Y el canto de ustedes que es el mismo canto.  
Y el canto de todos que es mi propio canto

**Thank you to Life (Play youtube video of song)**  
**Translation by William Morin**

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me two beams of light, that when opened,  
Can perfectly distinguish black from white  
And in the sky above, her starry backdrop,  
And from within the multitude  
The one that I love.

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me an ear that, in all of its width  
Records— night and day—crickets and canaries,  
Hammers and turbines and bricks and storms,  
And the tender voice of my beloved.

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me sound and the alphabet.  
With them the words that I think and declare:  
“Mother,” “Friend,” “Brother” and the light shining.  
The route of the soul from which comes love.

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me the ability to walk with my tired feet.  
With them I have traversed cities and puddles  
Valleys and deserts, mountains and plains.  
And your house, your street and your patio.

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me a heart, that causes my frame to shudder,  
When I see the fruit of the human brain,  
When I see good so far from bad,  
When I see within the clarity of your eyes...

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me laughter and it gave me longing.  
With them I distinguish happiness and pain—  
The two materials from which my songs are formed,  
And your song, as well, which is the same song.  
And everyone’s song, which is my very song.

## THE INVITATION

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dreams, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain! I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own, if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul; if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it's not pretty, every day, and if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up, after a night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you, from the inside, when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

## Excerpt from Tattoos on the Heart by Fr. Gregory Boyle

Willy crept up on me from the driver's side. I had just locked the office and was ready to head home at 8:00 p.m.

"Shit, Willy," I say. "Don't be doin' that."

"*Spensa, G,*" he says, "My bad. It's just...well, my stomach's on *échale*, Kick me down with twenty bones, yeah?"

"Dog, my wallets on *échale*," I tell him. A "dog" is the one upon whom you can rely—the role-dog, the person who has your back. "But get in. Let's see if I can trick any funds outta the ATM."

Willy hops on board. He is a life force of braggadocio and posturing—a thoroughly good soul—but his confidence is outsize, that of a lion wanting you to know he just swallowed a man whole. A gang member, but a peripheral one at best—he wants more to regale you with his exploits than to actually be in the midst of any. In his midtwenties, Willy is a charmer, a quintessential homie con man who's apt to coax money out of your ATM if you let him. This night, I'm tired and I want to go home.

It's easier not to resist. The Food 4 Less on Fourth and Soto has the closest ATM. I tell Willy to stay in the car, in case we run into one of Willy's rivals inside.

"Stay here, dog," I tell him, "I'll be right back."

I'm not ten feet away when I hear a muffled "Hey."

It's Willy, and he's miming, "the keys," from the passenger seat of my car. He's making over-the-top, key-in-the-ignition *señales*.

"The radio," he mouths, as he holds a hand, cupping his ear.

I wag a finger, "No, *chale*." Then it's my turn to mime. I hold both my hands together and enunciate exaggeratedly, "Pray."

Willy sighs and levitates his eyeballs. But he's putty. He assumes the praying hands pose and looks heavenward—*cara santucha*. I proceed on my quest to the ATM but feel the need to check in on Willy only ten yards later.

I turn and find him still in the prayer position, seeming to be only half-aware that I'm looking in on him.

I return to the car, twenty dollars in hand, and get in. Something has happened here. Willy is quiet, reflective, and there is a palpable sense of peace in the vehicle. I look at Willy and say, "You prayed, didn't you?"

He doesn't look at me. He's still and quiet. "Yeah, I did."

I start the car.

"Well, what did God say to you?" I ask him.

"Well, first He said, '*Shut up and listen.*'"

"So what d'ya do?"

"Come on, G," he says, "What am I sposed ta do? I shut up and listened."

I begin to drive him home to the barrio. I've never seen Willy like this. He's quiet and humble—no need to convince me of anything or talk me out of something else.

"So, son, tell me something," I ask. "How do you see God?"

"God?" he says, "That's my dog right there."

"And God?" I ask, "How does God see you?"

Willy doesn't answer at first. So I turn and watch as he rests his head on the recliner, staring at the ceiling of my car. A tear falls down his cheek. Heart full, eyes overflowing. "God...thinks...I'm...*firme*."

To the homies, *firme* means, "could not be one bit better."

Not only does God think we're *firme*, it is God's joy to have us marinate in that.

## **I am there**

James Dillet Freeman

You cannot see Me, yet I am the light you see by.  
You cannot hear Me, yet I speak through your voice.  
You cannot feel Me, yet I am the power at work in your hands.

I am at work, though you do not understand My ways.  
I am at work, though you do not understand My works.  
I am not strange visions. I am not mysteries.

Only in absolute stillness, beyond self, can you know Me as I AM, and then but as a feeling and a faith.

Yet I am here. Yet I hear. Yet I answer.  
When you need ME, I am there.  
Even if you deny Me, I am there.  
Even when you feel most alone, I am there.  
Even in your fears, I am there.  
Even in your pain, I am there.

I am there when you pray and when you do not pray.  
I am in you, and you are in Me.  
Only in your mind can you feel separate from Me, for  
only in your mind are the mists of "yours" and "mine".  
Yet only with your mind can you know Me and experience Me.

Empty your heart of empty fears.  
When you get yourself out of the way, I am there.  
You can of yourself do nothing, but I can do all.  
And I AM in all.  
Though you may not see the good, good is there, for  
I am there. I am there because I have to be, because I AM.

Only in Me does the world have meaning; only out of Me does the world take form; only because of ME  
does the world go forward.  
I am the law on which the movement of the stars and the growth of living cells are founded.

I am the love that is the law's fulfilling. I am assurance.  
I am peace. I am oneness. I am the law that you can live by.  
I am the love that you can cling to. I am your assurance.  
I am your peace. I am ONE with you. I am.

Though you fail to find ME, I do not fail you.  
Though your faith in Me is unsure, My faith in you never  
wavers, because I know you, because I love you.

Beloved, I AM there.

**Who Am I?**  
**by Deitrich Bonhoeffer**

Who am I? They often tell me  
I stepped from my cell's confinement  
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,  
Like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me  
I used to speak to my warders  
Freely and friendly and clearly,  
As though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me  
I bore the days of misfortune  
Equably, smilingly, proudly,  
like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?  
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?  
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,  
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,  
Yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,  
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,  
Tossing in expectations of great events,  
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,  
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,  
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the Other?  
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?  
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,  
And before myself a contemptible woebegone weakling?  
Or is something within me still like a beaten army  
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

**In the Evening We Shall Be Examined on Love**  
**St. John of the Cross**

And it won't be multiple choice,  
Though some of us would prefer it that way.  
Neither will it be essay, which tempts us to run on  
When we should be sticking to the point, if not together.  
In the evening, there shall be implications  
Our fear will change to complications. "No cheating,"  
We'll be told, and we'll try to figure the cost of being true  
To ourselves. In the evening, when the sky has turned  
That certain blue, the blue of exam books, books of no more  
Daily evasion, we shall climb the hill as the light empties  
And park our tired bodies on a bench above the city  
And try to fill in the blanks. And we won't be tested  
Like defendants on trial, cross-examined  
Till one of us breaks down, guilty as charged. No,  
In the evening, after the day has refused to testify,  
We shall be examined on love like students  
Who don't even recall signing up for the course  
And now must take their orals, forced to speak for once  
From the heart and not off the top of their heads.  
And when the evening is over and it's late  
The student body asleep, even the great teachers  
Retired for the night, we shall stay up  
And run back over the questions, each in our own way:  
What's true and what's false, what unknown quantity  
Will balance the equation, what it would mean years from now  
To look back and know  
We did not fail.

~Thomas Centolella

My Dear Child,

It is true. I stand at the door of your heart, day and night.  
Even when you are not listening,  
even when you doubt it could be Me, I am there.  
I await even the smallest sign of your response,  
even the slightest hint of invitation  
that will allow Me to enter.

I want you to know that whenever you invite Me, I come always, without fail. Silent and unseen I come, but with infinite power and love, bringing the many gifts of My Father. I come with My mercy, with My desire to forgive and heal you, and with a love for you beyond your comprehension, a love every bit as great as the love I myself have received from the Father.

"Even as the Father has loved Me, have I loved you..." (Jn. 15:10). I come, longing to console you and give you strength, to lift you up and bind your wounds. I bring you My light, to dispel your darkness and all your doubts. I come with My power, that I might carry you and all of your burdens; with My grace, to touch your heart and transform your life; and My peace I give to still your soul.

I know you through and through, I know everything about you. The very hairs of your head I have numbered. Nothing in your life is unimportant to Me. I have followed you through the years, and I have always loved you, even in your wanderings. I know every one of your problems. I know your needs, your fears, your worries. I hear your every whispered prayer always, unfailingly. Even when it seems I am silent, I am ever at work in the background of your life to bless you and protect you. Every movement of your heart I follow, and your every thought. I know all your pain, your struggles and trials, your failures and heartaches.

And yes, I know all your sins. But I tell you again that I love you--not for what you have or haven't done--I love you for you, I love you because you are, I love you for the beauty and dignity My Father gave you, creating you in His own image. It is a dignity you have often forgotten, a beauty you have tarnished by ego and sin. But I love you as you are, infinitely, completely, without reserve; and I have shed My Blood to win you back. If you only ask Me with faith, My grace will touch all that needs changing in your life, and I will give you the strength to free yourself from sin and from all that binds you and takes you away from Me.

I know what is in your heart--I know your loneliness and all your hurts: the rejections, the judgments, the humiliations. I carried it all before you. And I carried it all for you, so you might share My strength and victory. I know especially your need for love--how you are thirsting to be accepted and appreciated, loved and cherished. But how often have you tarnished in vain, seeking that love outside of Me, who am its Source, striving to fill the emptiness inside you with passing pleasures--often with the even greater emptiness of sin. Do you thirst for love? "Come to Me all you who thirst..." (Jn. 7:37). I will satisfy your desire for love beyond your dreams. Do you long to be appreciated and cherished? I cherish you more than you can imagine--to the point of leaving heaven for you, and of dying on a cross to make you Mine.

I hold the answer to all your desires, to all your longing, I will be your peace, your comfort, your rest. "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest..." (Mt. 11:28). There is no one who loves you more than I--nor can there ever be. My dream for you is greater than you can imagine--and I will never stop until you reach it. And though your indifference, your wandering and your sin pain Me deeply, I want you to know that My love for you never waivers, never changes. I love you infinitely, and always. There is no amount of good you could do to make Me love you any more than I already do at this very moment. And there is no evil you could do that could make Me love you any less. At every moment of your existence, I have loved you with the entirety of My love--and I always will.

If only you knew how precious you are to Me, you would die of joy. Of the millions of others I could have created in your place--I chose you. I have thought of you, and waited for your birth, from all eternity. Whenever you turn to Me in prayer, or return to Me in repentance, you move Me to the depths of My being. My Sacred Heart rejoices over you. "There is more rejoicing in heaven for one repentant sinner than for ninety-nine just" (Lk. 15:7); and "As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you..." (Is. 62:5). It is true. You are My joy, you are My delight. "You are My beloved son/daughter, in whom I delight..." (Mk. 1:11).

I wait for your love, day and night. No one else in My creation can love Me with your love, with your heart. No one else can console Me as you can. You are unique in My plan, and unique to My Sacred Heart--no one can ever take your place. Because I love you infinitely, I am infinitely sensitive to every movement of your heart--you can wound Me, or console Me, more easily than you can imagine.

Do not think that you don't know how to love Me, or that you are not able or worthy. Just begin--begin to love Me, exactly as you are at this moment. That is all I desire. Only begin. Love is learned by loving. You need not wait to be better to love Me. I long and yearn for you--exactly as you are right now. Nothing about you, no weakness or sin, can ever turn My love, or my longing away from you. So come, begin to love Me even as I love you. Begin to long for Me, even as I long for you.

Only in heaven will you finally know how important your love is to Me, how important you are to My Sacred Heart, how I long for you. I thirst for you... Yes, that is the only way to describe My love for you: I thirst for you. I thirst to love you, and to be loved by you. As the burning desert waits for water, so I wait for your love. As a thirsty man yearns for water, so I yearn for you. As a thirsting man seeks out the water, so do I seek for you. As a thirsty man thinks only of water, so My entire being is focused on you night and day ("the very hairs of your head are numbered..."). And as a thirsty man will give anything in exchange for water, so I have gladly given all I have and all I am, for you.

I thirst for you... Come to Me, and I will fill your heart and heal your wounds. I will make you a new creation, and give you peace, even in your trials.

I thirst for you... You must never doubt My mercy, My acceptance of you, My desire to forgive, My longing to bless you and live My life in you.

I thirst for you... If you are unimportant in the eyes of the world, that matters not at all. For Me, there is no one any more important in the entire world than you.

I thirst for you... Open to Me, come to Me, thirst for Me, give Me your life--and I will prove to you how important you are to My Sacred Heart. I have made you for Me, you exist to love Me and be loved by Me, and your soul cannot rest until you rest in Me. Nothing else will satisfy you or give you peace, no one else can fill the emptiness inside you. When you turn your scattered desires towards Me, when you begin to thirst for Me as I thirst for you, whenever your thirst and mine meet--you will begin to experience miracles, miracles of resurrection and new life!

Don't you realize that My Father already has a perfect plan to transform your life, beginning from this moment? TRUST IN ME. ASK ME EVERYDAY TO ENTER AND TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE--AND I WILL. I promise you before My Father in heaven that I will work abundant miracles in your life. Why would I do this? Because I thirst for you. All I ask is that you entrust yourself to Me completely, I will do all the rest.

Even now I behold the place My Father has prepared for you in My Kingdom. Remember that you a pilgrim in this life, on a journey home. I tell you again, the things of this world can never satisfy you, or bring the peace you seek. All that you sought outside of Me has only left you more empty, so do not cling to material things. Above all do not run from Me when you fall. Come to Me without delay. When you give Me your sins, you give Me the joy of being your Savior. There is nothing I cannot forgive and heal: so come now, and unburden your soul.

No matter how far you may wonder, no matter how often you forget Me, no matter how many crosses you may bear in this life; there is one thing I want you to always remember, one thing that will never change: I thirst for you as you are. You don't need to change to believe in My love, for it will be your belief in My Love that will change you. You forget Me, and yet I am seeking you every moment of the day--standing at the door of your heart, and knocking.

Do you find this hard to believe? Then look at the Cross, look at My Sacred Heart that was pierced for you. Have you not understood My Cross? Then listen again to the words I spoke there--for they tell you clearly why I endured all this for you. "I thirst..." (Jn. 19:28).

As the rest of the Psalm Verse I was reciting says of Me: "I looked for love, and I found none..." (Ps. 69:20). All your life I have been looking for your love--I have never stopped seeking to love you and be loved by you. You have tried many other things in your search for happiness, why not try opening your heart to Me, right now, more than you ever have before.

Whenever you open the door of your heart, whenever you come close enough, you will hear Me say to you again and again, not in mere human words but in spirit: "No matter what you have done, I love you for your own sake. Come to Me with your misery and your sins, with your troubles and needs, and with all your longing to be loved. I stand at the door of your heart and knock... Open to Me, for I thirst for you..."

## The Most Beautiful Heart

One day a young man was standing in the middle of the town proclaiming that he had the most beautiful heart in the whole valley. A large crowd gathered and they all admired his heart for it was perfect. There was not a mark or a flaw in it. Yes, they all agreed it truly was the most beautiful heart they had ever seen. The young man was very proud and boasted more loudly about his beautiful heart... Suddenly, an old man appeared at the front of the crowd and said, "Why your heart is not nearly as beautiful as mine."

The crowd and the young man looked at the old man's heart. It was beating strongly, but full of scars, it had places where pieces had been removed and other pieces put in, but they didn't fit quite right and there were several jagged edges. In fact, in some places there were deep gouges where whole pieces were missing. The people stared "How can he say his heart is more beautiful?" they thought.

The young man looked at the old man's heart and saw its state and laughed. "You must be joking," he said. "Compare your heart with mine, mine is perfect and yours is a mess of scars and tears."

"Yes," said the old man, "Yours is perfect looking but I would never trade with you. You see, every scar represents a person to whom I have given my love – I tear out a piece of my heart and give it to them, and often they give me a piece of their heart which fits into the empty place in my heart, but because the pieces aren't exact, I have some rough edges, which I cherish, because they remind me of the love we shared."

"Sometimes I have given pieces of my heart away, and the other person hasn't returned a piece of his heart to me. These are the empty gouges – giving love is taking a chance. Although these gouges are painful, they stay open, reminding me of the love I have for these people too, and I hope someday they may return and fill the space I have waiting. So now do you see what true beauty is?"

The young man stood silently with tears running down his cheeks. He walked up to the old man, reached into his perfect young and beautiful heart, and ripped a piece out. He offered it to the old man with trembling hands. The old man took his offering, placed it in his heart and then took a piece from his old scarred heart and placed it in the wound in the young man's heart. It fit, but not perfectly, as there were some jagged edges. The young man looked at his heart, not perfect anymore but more beautiful than ever, since love from the old man's heart flowed into his. They embraced and walked away side by side.

~ Author Unknown ~

## ARTS AND CRAFTS IDEAS

### *Friendship bracelets*

What you need: Embroidery thread, a pair of scissors, and some tape

Instructions: If you aren't already a bracelet making pro, here's a link with some neat patterns

<http://www.simplecrafter.com/friendship-bracelet-tutorials/>

Give it Meaning: Build a reflection around friendship and how we are all tied together as a CLLC



### *Collage*

What you need: A bunch of old magazines, scissors, glue or tape

Instructions: Make a collage to hang in your room or decorate journals to use weekly

Give it Meaning: Making a life collage. Recognize how colorful and unique we are individually



### *Painting*

What you need: Some paint and a canvas (printer paper works fine!)

Instructions: Paint landscapes, your interpretation of God, a self-portrait, or anything else you can think of!

Give it Meaning: Seeing life, seeing God in your own unique way, with your own creative style



### *Paper Mache*

What you need: Newspaper, scissors, something to be a base (like an empty bottle or blown up balloon), flour/cornstarch/glue, water

Instructions: If you are new to paper mache, you basically need a base, some strips of newspaper, and a paste. Here's some

instructions: <http://www.wikihow.com/Create-Papier-M%C3%A2ch%C3%A9>

Give it Meaning: Choose a theme to go with what you're making, be that a cross, a head, a decoration, a bowl etc.



# OFF CAMPUS ADVENTURES

## **KAYAKING ON THE CHARLES**

WHERE TO GO: <http://www.paddleboston.com/main.php>

PRICE: DOUBLE KAYAKS ARE \$19 AN HOUR. SO DOUBLE UP, TAKE A COUPLE HOURS, ASK FOR \$10-15 A PERSON, AND CM CAN HELP WITH THE REST!

GIVE IT MEANING: KAYAKING IS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL AND PEACEFUL NATURE RETREAT. WHERE DO YOU SEE GOD ALONG THE CHARLES?

## **HIKING AROUND BOSTON**

WHERE TO GO: <http://www.everytrail.com/best/hiking-boston-massachusetts>

PRICE: TRANSPORTATION COSTS (GAS \$\$ OR T FARE). YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO BUY SOME SNACKS FOR YOUR HIKERS.

GIVE IT MEANING: SEEING GOD IN NATURE. EMMAUS WALK.

## **APPLE PICKING**

Where to Go: Car necessary for travel.

[http://www.boston.com/travel/explorene/specials/foilage/specials/apple\\_picking/](http://www.boston.com/travel/explorene/specials/foilage/specials/apple_picking/)

Price: Just the cost of your delicious apples! Somewhere between \$10 and \$20

Give it Meaning Being thankful for the plentiful gifts around us. You could get really metaphorical and go with the knowledge theme.

## **BOSTON DAY TRIP**

WHERE TO GO: TAKE THE T INTO THE CITY AND WALK THE FREEDOM TRAIL, CHECK OUT THE BAY, HAVE A NICE DINNER, WALK THROUGH THE GARDENS, SEE A MOVIE, GO TO THE AQUARIUM, OR ANY NUMBER OF OTHER COOL THINGS BOSTON HAS TO OFFER!

PRICE: ROUND TRIP T FAIR IS \$4 WITH A CHARLIECARD.

GIVE IT MEANING: GROUP BONDING. RETREAT FROM THE BC BUBBLE.

## **GO TO A MUSEUM**

WHERE TO GO: BC OFFERS ITS STUDENTS FREE TICKETS TO SEVERAL MUSEUMS IN THE BOSTON AREA SUCH AS THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE, THE AQUARIUM AND THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS. ALL THESE MUSEUMS CAN BE ACCESSED VIA THE T

PRICE: PICK UP YOUR FREE TICKETS IN ROBHAM AND THE ONLY THING YOU NEED TO PAY FOR IS T FARE!

GIVE IT MEANING: A CULTURAL ACTIVITY. LEARNING ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND YOU IN A FUN WAY, TAKING CARE OF OUR INTELLECTUAL WELL-BEING AS PART OF CURA PERSONALIS

## **ICE SKATING**

**WHERE TO GO: THE BOSTON COMMON FROG POND IN THE WINTER.  
JUST TAKE THE GREEN LINE TO PARK STREET.**

**PRICE: COLLEGE NIGHTS ARE EVERY TUESDAY FROM 6-9. SHOW YOUR  
ID AND GET \$2 ADMISSION! BRING YOUR OWN SKATES OR RENT FOR  
\$9.**

**GIVE IT MEANING: SKATING THROUGH LIFE, NEGOTIATING THE  
DELICATE BALANCES IN OUR LIVES. JUST HAVING FUN!**

***FOR ANY QUESTIONS, FURTHER SUGGESTIONS, OR HELP WITH LOGISTICS,  
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ANY COUNCIL MEMBER AND WE WILL  
HELP TURN YOUR NEXT CURA MEETING INTO AN ADVENTURE!***

## CURA COOKBOOK

Recipe: *Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies (makes 42)*

Ingredients:

- *1 ½ cups packed brown sugar*
- *1 cup butter or margarine, softened*
- *1 teaspoon vanilla*
- *1 egg*
- *2 cups quick-cooking oats*
- *1 ½ cups flour*
- *1 teaspoon baking soda*
- *¼ teaspoon salt*
- *1 cup semisweet chocolate chips (6 oz)*



Directions:

1. Heat oven to 350° F. in a large bowl, stir brown sugar and butter until blended. Stir in vanilla and egg until light and fluffy. Stir in oats, flour, baking soda and salt. Stir in chocolate chips.
2. Drop dough by rounded tablespoonfuls about 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet.
3. Bake 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly for two minutes before removing from cookie sheet.



Recipe: *Banana-Cinnamon Muffins (makes 12)*

Ingredients:

- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup mashed very



- ripe bananas (2 small)*
- *1 tsp vanilla*
  - *1 2/3 cup flour*
  - *1 tsp baking soda*
  - *1/2 tsp salt*
  - *1/2 tsp ground cinnamon*

Directions:

- 1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Grease bottoms only of 12 regular-size muffin cups with spray or line with paper baking cups.*
- 2. In a medium bowl, beat 2/3 cup sugar, the oil and eggs with wire whisk. Stir in bananas and vanilla. Stir in remaining muffin ingredients just until moistened. Divide batter evenly among muffin cups.*

3. Bake 17-21 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Immediately remove from pan to cooling rack.



Recipe: *Nutella Brownies*

Ingredients:

- 1 cup Nutella
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup + 2 tablespoons flour



Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients together until combined. Pour into 8x8 square pan or into lined muffin cups.
2. Bake at 350° F for 30 minutes (if using a pan) or 20 minutes (if using the muffin pan) or until set.
3. Cool completely before cutting



Recipe: *Rice Krispies Treats*

Ingredients:

- *3 tablespoons butter or margarine*
- *1 package (10 oz.) regular marshmallows*
- *6 cups Rice Krispies cereal*

Directions:

- 1. In large saucepan melt butter over low heat. Add marshmallows and stir until completely melted. Remove from heat.*
- 2. Add rice krispies. Stir until well coated.*
- 3. Using a buttered spatula or wax paper, evenly press mixture into 13 x 9 inch pan coated with cooking spray. Cool completely before cutting. Best if served the same day.*
- 4. Microwave directions: in a microwave safe bowl heat butter and marshmallows on HIGH for 3 minutes, stirring*

*after 2 minutes. Stir until smooth. Follow steps 2 and 3 above.*

Recipe: *Muddy Buddy | Puppy Chow | Monkey Munch*

Ingredients:

- *9 cups Chex cereal (any kind)*
- *1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips (6 ounces) melted*
- *½ cup smooth peanut butter*  
*(for a peanut alternative try sunbutter or almond butter),*  
*melted*
- *¼ cup butter, melted*
- *1 ½ teaspoons vanilla*
- *1 ½ cups powdered sugar*



Directions:

1. Measure cereal in large bowl. Set aside.
2. Microwave chocolate chips, peanut butter (or alternative) and butter for 1 minute on high. Stir.
3. Cook for 30 seconds longer or until smooth.
4. Add vanilla, stir until smooth.
5. Pour mixture over cereal, stirring until coated.
6. Pour mixture into large Ziploc bag and add powdered sugar.
7. Shake until well coated.
8. Spread on waxed paper or leave bag open until cool. (seal bag once cooled)

## FURTHER RESOURCES

Creighton University Online Ministries

Daily scripture meditations liturgical readings

<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily.html>

Orientations

Great Prayer Helps <http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/>

Other 6 by Loyola Communications

The Awareness Examen presented visually

<http://www.other6.com/>

Pray As You Go

Downloadable MP3 recordings of daily scriptural prayer

<http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/>

Quiet Space

An offering of Quiet Space, daily reflection, and prayer in the classroom

<http://churchresources.info/pray/>

Sacred Space

Daily prayer presented visually step-by-step in 10 minutes <http://www.sacredspace.ie/>

Sacred Gateway

Similar to Sacred Space above, tailored for young people

<http://www.sacredgateway.org/>

Ted Talks

Find an inspiring video to show your group <http://www.ted.com/talks>

Young Adult CLC

This cite features more structured and theological resources

<http://www.youngadultclc.org/caminos/>

A person isn't who they are during the last conversation you had with them - they're who they've been throughout your whole relationship.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Relationship, Whole, Last

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue, a wonderful living side by side can grow, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against the sky.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Love, Living, Succeed



The only journey is the one within.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Inspirational, Journey, Within

Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Love, Touch, Protect

Perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Beautiful, Waiting, Brave

For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Love, Work, Difficult

Live your questions now, and perhaps even without knowing it, you will live along some distant day into your answers.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Knowing, Questions, Along

If your daily life seems poor, do not blame it; blame yourself that you are not poet enough to call forth its riches; for the Creator, there is no poverty.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

I hold this to be the highest task for a bond between two people: that each protects the solitude of the other.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Love is like the measles. The older you get it, the worse the attack.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

This is the miracle that happens every time to those who really love: the more they give, the more they possess.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Everything is blooming most recklessly; if it were voices instead of colors, there would be an unbelievable shrieking into the heart of the night.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

All emotions are pure which gather you and lift you up; that emotion is impure which seizes only one side of your being and so distorts you.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Let life happen to you. Believe me: life is in the right, always.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Life, Happen

I want to be with those who know secret things or else alone.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Alone, Secret, Else

Surely all art is the result of one's having been in danger, of having gone through an experience all the way to the end, where no one can go any further.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Experience, Art, End

Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Help, Wants, Terrible

The purpose of life is to be defeated by greater and greater things.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

No great art has ever been made without the artist having known danger.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Art, Great, Artist

Spring has returned. The Earth is like a child that knows poems.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Child, Spring, Earth

It is good to be solitary, for solitude is difficult; that something is difficult must be a reason the more for us to do it.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Good, Reason, Difficult

Believe that with your feelings and your work you are taking part in the greatest; the more strongly you cultivate this belief, the more will reality and the world go forth from it.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

The future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

The deepest experience of the creator is feminine, for it is experience of receiving and bearing.

Who has not sat before his own heart's curtain? It lifts: and the scenery is falling apart.

Rainer Maria Rilke