

Part 2: Explore My Faith

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Part 2: Explore My Faith

1. Break Review

- ⇒ Purpose: to review how we have experienced God during the break and preview the new quarter.
- ⇒ Exercises: Break Review questions, Meeting topics
- ⇒ Action: pray, “How would you describe your experiences of God up to now?”

2. My Relationship with God (part 1)

- ⇒ Purpose: to reflect upon our experiences of God from birth up to now.
- ⇒ Exercises: My Faith journey
- ⇒ Action: pray, “What would I like to see in my relationship with God by the end of this year?”

3. My Relationship with God (part 2)

- ⇒ Purpose: to continue sharing, “My faith journey.”
- ⇒ Action: pray and share with prayer partner, “6 paths to God”

4. My Image of God

- ⇒ Purpose: to identify how I see God and how my images influence the way I relate to God, others, and myself.
- ⇒ Exercises: My images of God
- ⇒ Action: pray with my image of God

5. My hands, God’s hands

- ⇒ Purpose: God loves me through the hands of others
- ⇒ Exercises: Hand-tracing activity
- ⇒ Action: (1) get involved in community services;
(2) take pictures of the places where you usually pray and experience God.

6. How do I pray?

- ⇒ Purpose: to identify how we communicate with God
- ⇒ Exercises: my ways of praying
- ⇒ Action: pay attention to the way you pray.

7. Explore Ways of Praying

- ⇒ Purpose: to explore other ways of praying
- ⇒ Exercises: 7 ways of praying
- ⇒ Action: pray with Awareness Examen and write in journal.

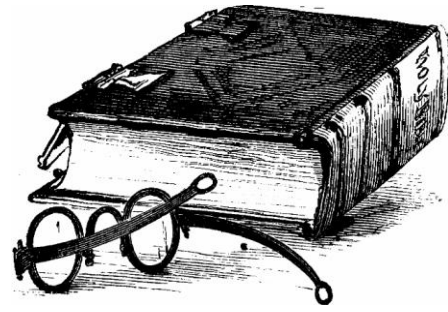
8. Time with Jesus

- ⇒ Purpose: to encounter God in the person of Jesus through imaginative prayer.
- ⇒ Exercises: “Time with Jesus” Meditation
- ⇒ Action: pray with Imaginative Meditation 3-4 times this week

9. Hidden Treasure

- ⇒ Purpose: to identify what we value and recognize that all the things in this world are God’s gifts
- ⇒ Exercises: Hidden Treasure
- ⇒ Action: share my gifts with others.

#1 Break Review



Scripture

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

Mk 6:31 "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."
Luke 5:1-6 "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."

Note: This meeting is meant to be the first meeting after Christmas break.

Introduction & Welcome (1')

Welcome members back to their second quarter as a CLC group. Thank them for coming.

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to find God in all things

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, perhaps encouraging each person to voice their own petitions out loud.

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'):

Materials Needed: CLC Journal booklet, CD player and soft instrumental music

✠ **Introduction:** this meeting will center around looking back at the past few months and the quarter break in order to help the group process all that has happened and changed. It will help deepen the group's practice of finding God in all aspects of our lives and learning to be more attentive to God's movements in our everyday experiences as well as more momentous times, particularly in change.

‡ **Exercise 1:** Break Review questions (30')

Allow everyone to spend some time in prayer and reflection for 5-7 minutes on the following questions and then have an open and honest discussion about them (remind everyone about confidentiality). The Break Review questions can be found in the next page and also in their Journal booklets. Play some instrumental music in the background.

1. What changes, if any, have you noticed in your relationships with friends, significant others, family, the Church, and/or God in the past quarter or over the break?
2. What are your feelings about coming back to school? What are your hopes for this quarter?
3. How do you feel about renewing your commitment to CLC for the rest of the year?

‡ **Exercise 2:** Meeting topics

Preview the meeting topics for the rest of the quarter (see table of contents). Check in and discuss them.

‡ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?

IV. Moving Forward (5')

‡ **Wrap-Up:** thank members for their openness and participation. Emphasize that God is with us at all times and in all aspects of our lives, such as in whatever changes or transitions might be taking place for us now as well as more commonplace moments of each day.

‡ **Action:** pray, "How would you describe your experiences of God up to now?" Share with your prayer partner

‡ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

Make sure to confirm the group is still in agreement on the meeting day and time for this quarter.

NOTE TO COORDINATOR: Look ahead to meeting #5 ("My hands, God's hands"). Perhaps start asking the group to think about what they would like to do for this meeting focused on service (i.e. would they like to go off campus or do a service project within the group meeting like letter-writing, etc.? If off-campus, when would everyone be able to go? Where would they like to go? The CLC service site or somewhere else? Would they like to team-up with another group?)



V. Closing Prayer (5')

Invite members to lift up their hopes for the quarter before or after reading the poem/prayer.

Patient Trust

*“Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We would 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.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time,
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.*

*Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming in 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.”*

-Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The way Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community is to strive for continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice, this involves...discernment by means of daily review of one's life...(GP #12).

#2 My Relationship with God



Scripture

As Jesus was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. (Mk 10:17-22)

Jn 6:60-69 "...Do you also wish to go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Note: *this meeting usually lasts for two meetings.*

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to identify our past experiences of God and our church

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the prayer below. After reading the scripture above, say, "*Almighty God, we thank you for gathering us tonight. As we begin the new quarter, help us to continue to focus on you and take advantage of what CLC offers. Just as you have challenged the young man to grow deeper in relationship with you by going beyond following the Ten Commandments, please grant us the grace to grow deeper in relationship with you and one another in this quarter. Amen.*"

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): My faith journey

Materials Needed: journal booklets, papers and markers.

✝ **Introduction:** Tonight we are going to reflect upon our experiences of God since our birth up to now. Like human relationship, we must have had many experiences of God both good and challenging. Sometimes they were wonderful—full of laughter and joy. We experience God's love through our family and friends. We get along and love our families. We do well in school. We enjoy engaging in our church community: going through religious or bible studies, receiving first communion and confirmation, going on retreats, volunteering in soup kitchens, and so on.

Other times, we experience God absolutely silent or absent. God seems not to care for what was going on in our lives. Some of our families might experience divorce or separation. Some of us might have difficult times in school. Some of us might struggle with our church community. Some of us might experience depression and feeling lost and confused when we go to college. Whatever our experiences were, we want to honor all of them because they already happened and became part of us. Like human relationships, we want to learn from them and see where we want to go from here.

✠ **Exercise:** My Faith Journey (30')

Invite members to pray with “My faith journey” in their journal booklets. Provide papers and markers for them to illustrate. Give them about 10 minutes to pray. You may play some instrumental music during the prayer.

✠ **Sharing:** invite members to share. (note: don't rush them because you have 2 meetings for the sharing)

The following questions might be helpful during the conversation.

- What were some of your feelings and thoughts throughout the prayer period?
- Was there anything that surprised you?
- Do you see any patterns in how you experience God?

✠ **Listening deeper**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?

IV. Moving Forward (5')

✠ **Wrap-Up:** thank members for their openness and participation. Tell them that we are going to do a longer version of Spiritual Autobiography in our junior or senior year.

✠ **Action:**

1. Encourage members to pay attention to how they experience God and pray with the question, “What would I like to see in my relationship with God by the end of this year?” Do I have any concrete habits or actions to work on in my relationship with God? (see CLC habits)
2. Share with your prayer partner.

✠ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

NOTE TO COORDINATOR: Look ahead to meeting #5 (My hands, God's hands). Perhaps start asking the group to think about what they would like to do for this meeting focused on service (i.e. would they like to go off campus or do a service project within the group meeting like letter-writing, etc.? If off-campus, when would everyone be able to go? Where would they like to go? The CLC service site or somewhere else? Would they like to team-up with another group?)

My Faith Journey

Suggested questions to pray and share:

1. Grace: to recall my experiences of God since my birth up to now
2. Imagine you are writing a book, making a movie of your life, or writing a song.
 - What title would you give?
 - How many chapters or episodes are there? (we suggest 5 periods: before school, elementary school, junior high, high school, and college)
 - What were some of the significant “religious” experiences of God in each period?
 - What were some of the significant people and events of your life?
 - What do you think God is saying to you through those people and events?
 - If you have to describe your relationship with God in terms of journey image, what image would you use to describe. See below for ideas. Whatever motif you use, keep in mind 2 key points: (1) timeline and (2) your experiences of God.

Image or motif samples



Sample #1: My Faith Journey

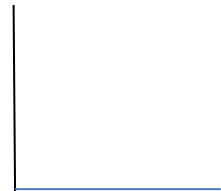
Draw your faith journey and indicate the following moments....

1. Rest Area
2. Detour
3. Wrong way
4. Accidents or choices?
5. Streets or Freeways?
6. Walking or driving?
7. People or events on your journey

Sample #2: My Faith Graph (adapted from Kairos)

Draw 2 lines of your faith graph

1. The vertical line: indicates the high and low points of your faith life. High points mean you feel very close to God and low points mean you feel far from God.
2. The horizontal line: indicates the timeline of your life. You may divide your life into different periods and then indicate one or two significant religious experiences of God within each period.



Sample #3: My Faith Garden

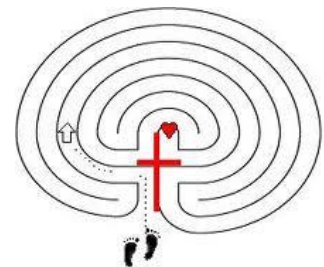
Draw your faith garden

1. Trees: each tree or plant symbolizes one period of your life. How would you describe each tree?
2. Roots: symbolize your foundation
3. Soil, fertilizer, weather condition, weeds, thorns, water, etc.: your environment and nourishment
4. Fruits: good or rotten?

Sample #4: My Inner Journey

Draw your Faith Labyrinth and indicate the following....

1. Indicate people and events: that help you move forward and closer to God
2. Indicate people and events: that influence you to move away from God



V. Closing Prayer (5')

Invite members to lift up their hopes for their relationships with God before or after reading the poem/prayer.

Footprints

One night I had a dream--
I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord
and across the sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints,
one belonged to me and the other to the Lord.
When the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that many times along the path of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest
and saddest times in my life.



This really bothered me and I questioned the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,
you would walk with me all the way,
but I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in
my life
there is only one set of footprints.
"I don't understand why in times when I needed you most,
you should leave me."
The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child,
I love you and I would never, never leave you
during your times of trial and suffering.
"When you saw only one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you."

by Mary Stevenson

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The way Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community is to strive for continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice, this involves...discernment by means of daily review of one's life...(GP #12).

God's love shines down upon me like the light rays from the sun, or God's love is poured forth lavishly like a fountain spilling forth its water into an unending stream.....inviting me to a fuller and better life, a sharing in divine life (SpEx 237).

#3 My Relationship with God (part 2)



Scripture

As Jesus was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. (Mk 10:17-22)

Jn 6:60-69 "...Do you also wish to go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Note: see the previous meeting

**If time allows, discuss 6 paths to God, which can be found in the next page.
If not, invite them to pray it over at home and share with their prayer partner.**



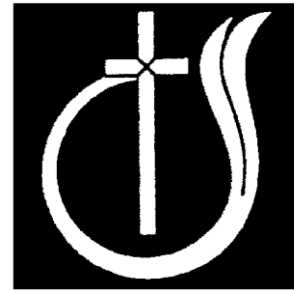
Six Paths to God

(Based on Chapter 2 of James Martin, SJ's *The Jesuit Guide to Everything*)

- 1) The path of belief: growing-up with beliefs and continuing to believe in God
 - Benefits: Faith may help you to see and explain your life and the world. It puts suffering into a framework of meaning.
 - Pitfalls: You may not understand unbelievers and may tend to judge or come across to others as judgmental. You may become complacent— content with your childhood understandings of God.
- 2) The path of independence: deciding to leave the church but still believe in God
 - Benefits: You might see things in a fresh way. You speak freely and honestly.
 - Pitfalls: Perfectionism; You may search for a perfect church, which is impossible.
- 3) The path of disbelief: choosing not to believe in God's existence (atheism)
 - Benefits: You don't tend to take explanations about God for granted. You may have thought about God and life in different ways. You may care for others for different reasons. You may have a "religious-baloney detector" (sensing hypocrisy or lazy answers).
 - Pitfalls: You may experience God but expect proof solely in an intellectual way.
- 4) The path of return: beginning life in a religious family, drifting away, and coming back
 - Benefits: You may see things differently and may be more committed. You may have more of a desire to learn and grow out of your childhood faith.
 - Pitfalls: You may need to reeducate yourself to understand your faith in a mature way.
- 5) The path of exploration: being born in a religious family, who allow children to choose
 - Benefits: You may know other religions well and be enriched in your own faith as a result. You may appreciate your our own faith more because of your exploration.
 - Pitfalls: You may have a tendency towards perfectionism (like the path of independence) in searching for a perfect religion, which is impossible. You might be putting God in your own "box." You may waver in your commitment.
- 6) The path of confusion: being hot/cold with childhood faith; finding God is a mystery or problem.
 - Benefits: You might be fine-tuning your approach to your childhood faith. You may be refining your ideas about religious commitment.
 - Pitfalls: Your confusion can lapse into laziness. You may feel it takes too much work to build community, too much time to pray, or too much money to share.



#4 My Image of God



Scripture

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22)

Mk 8:27-30 “‘Who do you say that I am?’ Peter said to Him in reply, ‘You are the Messiah.’”
Gen. 1:1-4 “Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”

Introduction & Welcome (1’)

I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: to be aware of how I personally see or imagine God or Jesus and how that image influences my way of acting and relating in the world.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below: *Lord God, help us to see Your many faces. Open our minds and hearts to the many ways that You reveal Yourself in our lives. Help us to share our relationships with You openly, without hesitation or fear. We ask this through the name that saves, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

II. Short Check-In (5’)

III. Focus Exercise (40’): My Image of God

Materials Needed: paper and pens/markers

✠ **Introduction:** we are going to do a brief exercise to help us each get in touch with how we uniquely imagine and understand God. Please try to be silent through the exercise until I ask you to begin sharing.

✠ Exercise: My Image of God

Invite each member to center themselves with the following instructions:

Prepare: “I invite you to choose a comfortable yet focused posture. And close your eyes. Take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds, then exhale completely. Again, breathe in fully and exhale entirely. Take a few more deep breaths and continue to relax... (Give people about 30 seconds more to get centered)... I am going to say a few words, please take note of the first things that come to your mindGod.....Jesus.....Holy Spirit.....”

Draw: Please open your eyes and take a sheet of paper. Please try to draw whatever it was that first came to your mind when you heard the words “God,” “Jesus,” and “Holy Spirit.” Try not to use words. And refrain from reflecting on the significance of your image or judging whether it is right or wrong. Don’t worry about how well your draw either. Allow 3-5 minutes for drawing.

Pray: invite members to pray with what they have created on the following. (Allow 5 minutes to pray)

1. Talk to God about the image you have just created and where it might have come from (who or what shaped it, etc.).
2. How might this image influence your relationship with God, others and yourself?

Then continue...

I invite you to silently lift your drawing for others to see. Please don’t say anything. Let each member note how they think you imagine God from your drawing. (Wait a few minutes.) We will now go around and share about each image one at a time.

✠ Sharing: invite members to share

Suggested questions to generate more sharing and discussion

1. Did anything come up for you in your prayer you that would like to share?
2. How has your image of God changed over time—from your early childhood, to elementary school, to junior high/high school to today?
3. If time allows, discuss 7 common false images of God found on the following page.



✠ Deep Listening

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person?

7 Common False Images of God

1. Policeman God – He watches everything you do to make sure you don't get out of line; if you do, you will be punished or imprisoned in hell forever.
2. The Accountant God – The man with the big book. He keeps track of the good and bad thing you do. In the end he totals the two columns. If the good column is greater than the bad total, then you will go to heaven.
3. The Santa Clause God – Also known as the “gimmie-god.” With this God we make a list of things we want and give it to him. Then we expect him to cure all our ills and make everything right.
4. The Aspirin God – Whenever things go wrong, we run to him, we expect him to cure all our ills and make everything right.
5. The Party God – It doesn't matter to him what you do as long as you have a good time. His only concern is that you think you are happy.
6. The Mountain-Top God – He is all alone—just “looking down” on the world. He is totally unrelated to humanity. There is no connection besides that he created everything. He sets everything in motion and then leaves the universe alone.
7. The Catechism God – He is a simple answer. Involvement with him demands no thought or personal commitment.



IV. Moving Forward (5')

- ✠ **Wrap-Up:** thank members for their openness and participation.
- ✠ **Action:** spend 5-10 minutes 3-4 times this coming week in prayer and allow God to reveal God-self to you. Take note of the ways of how your image of God influences the way you relate to God, others and yourself throughout your day.
- ✠ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

You Have Called Me By Name

*Oh, Lord my God,
You called me from the sleep of nothingness
merely because in Your tremendous love
You want to make good and beautiful beings.
You have called me by my name in my mother's womb.
You have given me breath and light and movement
and walked with me every moment of my existence.
I am amazed, Lord God of the universe,
that You attend to me and, more, cherish me.
Create in me the faithfulness that moves You,
and I will trust You and yearn for You all my days.
Amen.*

— Father Joseph Tetlow, SJ

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

Throughout the day, I try to keep myself in a mood which is marked by happiness and spiritual joy. As a result, anything in my environment— the sun and warm weather or the white cover of snow, all the different beauties of nature and so on— is used to reinforce the atmosphere of consolation (SpEx #229).

This law of love, which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts, expresses itself anew in each situation of our daily lives,...respects the uniqueness of each personal vocationenables us to be open and free...[and] challenges us to see our responsibilities...and seek progress and peace, justice, and charity, liberty and dignity for all (GP #2).

#5 My Hands, God's Hands



Scripture

Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth, break forth into song, you mountains. For the Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted. But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name; your walls are ever before me. (Is 49:13-16)

Jn 13:12-16 "If I...have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Matt 25:37-40 "... whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me."

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to serve others humbly and generously, out of gratitude for the ways God touches our lives through the hands of others.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below:

God help us to be grateful for the way in which You have loved and cared for us through other people. Help us to be Your hands to others. Teach us to be humble servants, doing Your work in the world around us. Make us generous with our gifts and help us to use our talents for the service of others. Amen.

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): Hand-tracing activity

Materials Needed: CLC journal booklets, CD Player and the song "Hands," by Jewel (or a similar song), paper, pens, scissors and markers

✠ **Introduction:** explain today we will use a song to help set the tone for the meeting. Listen to the words of a song, such as Jewel's "Hands," and ask the group to reflect on the words as they listen. The lyrics can be found in their journal booklets.

✠ **Exercise 1: Hands (by Jewel)**

Invite them to mark or underline key words or phrases that touch them as they listen to it. After the song, invite them to spend a few minutes to reflect on specific people who have served and cared for them.



Hands (by Jewel)

If I could tell the world just one thing
It would be, we're all okay
And not to worry
'Cause worry is wasteful and useless
In times like these

I won't be made useless
Won't be idle with despair
I will gather myself around my faith
For light does the darkness most fear

My hands are small I know
But they're not yours, they are my own
But they're not yours, they are my own
and I am never broken

Poverty stole your golden shoes
But it didn't steal your laughter
And heartache came to visit me
But I knew it wasn't ever after

We'll fight, not out of spite
For someone must stand up for what's right
'Cause where there's a man who has no voice
There ours shall go singing

My hands are small I know
But they're not yours, they are my own
But they're not yours, they are my own
and I am never broken

In the end only kindness matters
In the end only kindness matters

I will get down on my knees, and I will pray
I will get down on my knees, and I will pray
I will get down on my knees, and I will pray

My hands are small I know
But they're not yours, they are my own
But they're not yours, they are my own
and I am never broken

My hands are small I know
But they're not yours, they are my own
But they're not yours, they are my own
and I am never broken
We are never broken

We are God's eyes
God's hands
God's heart
We are God's eyes
God's hands
God's heart
We are God's eyes
God's hands
God's eyes
We are God's hands

✝ **Exercise 2:** hand-tracing activity

1. Invite group members to trace their hands on the provided pieces of paper.
2. On the palm of the hand, have them write the names of people who have loved, cared for and served them.
3. On the fingers, have them write the names of people they have served.
4. Have them cut the hands out.



✝ **Sharing**

When every member has completed their hand, invite them to reflect and share on the following suggested questions:

1. In what ways have these people loved and cared for you?
2. How has their influence in your life shaped how you love and serve others?
3. How might your loving and serving others be an act of faith? How might you be an extension of God's hands in your service to others?

✝ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling during the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?

IV. Moving Forward (5')

✝ **Wrap Up:** Mission/service is one of the three pillars in CLC (community, spirituality, service)

- Begin to discuss possible group service projects (e.g., tutoring children, etc.)
- Goal: to do group service projects at least once per quarter.

✝ **Action:**

- (1) Invite members to imagine with God how they can best serve others around them this week, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized. Next, come up with a concrete action to do.
- (2) Switch prayer partner

✝ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

Next meeting: take pictures of the places where you usually pray and experience God. Bring them to the next meeting.

V. Closing Prayer: (‘5)

As St. Teresa of Avila says,

“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.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”



God, fill us with overflowing gratitude so we may better discern Your call and become more willing to do Your work. Teach us humility and to compassionately serve others. Amen.

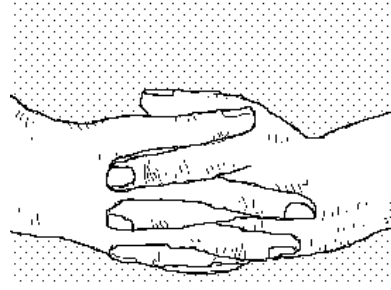
Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

We are to become identified with [Christ's] mission of bringing the good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives... (GP #8). Each of us receives from God a call to make Christ and His saving action present to our surroundings... (GP #8A).

[The] Spirit-inspired love respects the uniqueness of each personal vocation and enables us to be open and free, always at the disposal of God. It challenges us to see our responsibilities and constantly seek answers to the needs of our times... progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and dignity for all (GP #2).

The more I grow in gratitude of God's plentiful love for me and all of creation, the more will I respond fully and generously in service or and with others. Gratitude fuels my striving to love as I have been loved (CLC spirituality).

#6 How do I pray?



Scripture

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, it shall be done for him. Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions.” (Mark 11:22-26)

1 Thess. 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”

Luke 6:12 “In those days Jesus departed to the mountain to pray...”

Introduction & Welcome (1’)

I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: to become more aware of how we pray

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer.

NOTE: place the pictures everyone took of places where they have prayed or experienced God in the center as a focal point.

II. Short Check-In (5’)

III. Focus Exercise (40’):

Materials Needed: a bible, CD player and CDs, pens, pencils, markers, paper, prayer cards

✠ **Introduction:** 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.

✠ Exercise: My Ways of Praying

- 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 they usually pray, they can imagine themselves in their usual place or atmosphere.
- Reassure them that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to pray. Just encourage them to pray the way they are used to and share with the group afterward.

Suggested question to pray with:

- What is the most pressing thing on your heart right now? Something joyful? Stressful? Something that brings you peace or worry?

Note: 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.



✠ Sharing:

1. How do you usually pray? In one way or in many ways?
2. How often do you pray?
3. When and where do you pray (refer to your picture or someone else’s if helpful)?
4. Which way of praying do you find to be the most helpful? Least helpful?
5. When you pray, do you feel that God is present, God answering or responding to you? Please give one specific example.

✠ Listening deeper:

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?

IV. Moving Forward (5’)

✠ **Wrap-Up:** thank members for their openness and participation.

✠ Action:

- (1) Pay attention to the way you pray. Perhaps, pray for the awareness that service can become a prayer, a way of encountering our living God as Ignatius calls “Contemplatives in Action.”
- (2) switch prayer partners.

✠ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Invite members to pray for one another... End with the prayer that Jesus taught us to call God "Abba."

Our Father,
Who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

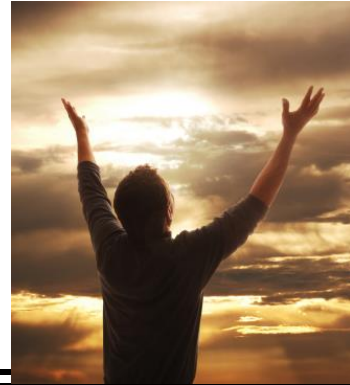


Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The way CLC commits its members...is to strive for a continuing personal and social growth....this involvesdaily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture.(GP #12a).

When we find prayer dry and even a burden, we must be sure to spend the full hour as part of our attempt to respond by waiting for the Lord (SpEx #13).

#7 Explore Ways of Praying



Scripture

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, it shall be done for him. Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions.” (Mark 11:22-26)

1 Thess. 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”

Luke 6:12 “In those days Jesus departed to the mountain to pray...”

Introduction & Welcome (1’)

I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: to become more aware of other ways of praying and how God communicates to us.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer.

NOTE: place the pictures everyone took of places they have prayed or experienced God in the center as a focal point.

II. Short Check-In (5’)

III. Focus Exercise (40’):

Materials Needed: a bible, CD player and CDs, pens, pencils, markers, paper, prayer cards

- ✠ **Introduction:** connect with last week’s meeting. Last week we talked about our ways of praying. Tonight we are going to explore different ways of praying and discuss some of the common questions about prayer.

✠ Exercise: 7 Ways of Praying

Introduction: there is no “right” way of praying. We just need to pay attention to which way of praying has been helpful and has worked for you. Keep in mind: the following are merely the means or tools to pray, not the end, which is to grow in our relationship with God. Use them if helpful and ignore them if not. (Note: try to connect members’ answers earlier with the following thoughts). Go over and discuss “3 secret steps to pray.”

Three Secret Steps to Pray: before, during, and after prayer

Step 1: Before Prayer

Keep in mind the following....

- **Purpose:** the purpose of prayer is to grow in our relationship with God by spending time with God. As in human relationship, we can’t grow and love someone without spending time to know and grow in relationship with the person. As in human relationship, we spend time with the person in different ways: sometimes alone and sometimes with others; sometimes just hanging out and other times doing activities; sometimes are formal and others informal.

- **Location:** Wherever you pray better. In general, it’s better to have a quiet place.

- **Time:** Whenever you pray better. In general, it’s better to have a fixed schedule or “appointment.” Besides the fixed time, we should pray throughout the day. As in human relationship, when we desire to know someone, we often think about the person throughout the day.

- **Body posture:** However you pray better: sitting, kneeling, standing, walking slowly.

- **What to talk about?** Whatever is going on in your life. Don’t forget to surprise God by asking and caring for God, “How are you? What is going on?”

- **Which method?** Whatever helps you. See “7 ways of praying” in your journal booklet.

- **Distraction during prayer:** see “Some common questions regarding prayer” in your booklet.



Note: the “7 ways of praying” and “Some Common Questions” can be found toward the end of this meeting.

Step 2: During Prayer period

It can be divided into three movements: beginning, middle, and ending.

1. Beginning:

- Place ourselves in God’s presence
- Center/Quiet ourselves: breathing, candle, music might help
- Ask for the grace desired

2. Middle: pray

- Use one of the methods below if it’s helpful for you. (see “7 ways of praying” below)

3. Ending:

- Close the prayer with a time of conversation with God, the Father, Jesus, and/or the Holy Spirit. As in human relationship, ask ourselves, “How do we conclude?” Be creative.

Step 3: After prayer

Review it. Have you ever looked back on a positive, deep-felt, or even difficult experience with a good friend and drawn valuable insight from it? You reviewed what your friend said, how you felt, how you responded. As a result of the reflection, you cherish, savor, and learn more from the time spent with her or him.

The review after a prayer experience is similar. It allows us to examine what happened in our prayer and notice our interior experiences. It enables us to reflect, notice, and interpret how God is present and communicates with us at this time. Ignatius recommends us to keep a journal: to record and keep track of how God works during our prayers and to better prepare for the next time we pray. In time, this discipline will cultivate within us a more discerning heart.

✠ **Listening deeper:**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?

IV. Moving Forward (5')

✠ **Wrap-Up:** thank members for their openness and participation.

✠ **Action:** Pray with Awareness Examen and keep journal. Talk with prayer partner about the meeting tonight.

✠ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Invite members to pray for one another... End with the prayer that Jesus taught us to call God "Abba."

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The way CLC commits its members...is to strive for a continuing personal and social growth....this involvesdaily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture.(GP #12a).

When we find prayer dry and even a burden, we must be sure to spend the full hour as part of our attempt to respond by waiting for the Lord (SpEx #13).

Seven Ways to Pray

Below are seven ways and a short description of each one. We will learn more about each one throughout the years. Most of them are from Ignatius, which he found to be very helpful.

1. Awareness Examen: reflect on your day with God by looking at all of your life experiences of the day and ask yourself, “Where is God in those life experiences?”

2. Praying with Scripture: Meditation (*a.k.a. Lectio Divina*). In meditation, we read the scriptural passage like a “love letter” from God. Read it slowly, aloud or in a whisper.

Ponder and reflect on the letter. Notice if any words, images, or phrases touch you and stay with them.



3. Praying with Scripture: Contemplation. In contemplation, we use our imaginations and all of our senses to enter into a scripture passage as if we were there: see the people, hear the dialogue, and engage in the actions.

4. Centering Prayer: in this prayer, we journey from head to heart. We spiral down into the deepest center of ourselves and be still. “Be still and know that I am God!” (Ps 46:10)

5. Mantra: one means of centering is the use of the mantra or prayer word. The mantra can be a single word or phrase. It may be a word from scripture or one that arises spontaneously from within your heart. The word or phrase is repeated slowly within oneself in harmony with one’s breathing.



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6. Journaling: is a meditative free writing. We allow the Spirit of God to guide our hands and spirits. Journaling is different than keeping a journal. The former is praying and the latter is reviewing and recording the experience.

7. Art: like journaling, you allow the Spirit of God to guide your hands to draw, paint, or create an art. Or you can use other people’s art to pray with. Allow the art to stir your thoughts and feelings. Besides the paintings or sculptures, you can use other forms of art such as music, movies, dance, etc....to pray with.

Some common questions regarding prayer

A. What is the best way to handle distractions during prayer?

- Try your best to put the distracting thoughts and images aside.
- A good way is to place them in an imaginary bag and entrusting the bag with the concerns and preoccupations to God.
- If you keep pushing them aside and they keep coming back, then ask: “Dear God, what are you trying to tell me through these distractions?”

B. How do I know it is God I am hearing?

1. Follow inner movements as you “hear”.
2. Ask: to where am I being lead?
 - toward God: toward greater peace, love, honesty, hope, solidarity...
 - away from God: a lessening of peace, faith, hope, love, toward unwillingness to sacrifice, to face the truth, or to grow closer to others.



3. Reflect after sometimes to confirm where I am actually lead (toward or away from God).

In short, we have to follow our unique sense of God (inner or affective movements) and where we are being lead. We can learn from past experiences to hone in our sense of God and where we are being lead.

C. How do I know I am not just talking to myself?

- Prayer is essentially about listening and “letting God be God.” Prayer takes some effort, but if we are “talking” too much or doing most of the work, then we can simply pause, listen, and just be. Be with God. Let God love you.
- Directing one’s thoughts to God or addressing God directly are good ways to ensure that we are not merely thinking to ourselves.

D. How many kinds of prayer are there?

- Four kinds: adoration, forgiveness, thanksgiving, and petition.
 1. Adoration: acknowledging God as God. After hearing she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, Mary praised God, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord...” (Luke 1:46-55).
 2. Forgiveness: 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...” (Ps 51:12-14).
 3. Thanksgiving: acknowledging 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...” (Ps 100)
 4. Petition: acknowledging the need for God’s help. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples...“I praythat they may all be one....” (Jn 17:20-24)

#8 Time with Jesus



Scripture

This is My commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from My Father. (Jn 15:12-15)

Psalm 139 "O Lord, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand."

Luke 8: 22-25 "Who then is this, who commands even the winds and the sea?"

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to come in contact with God in the person of Jesus through imaginative prayer and an open mind.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below:

In the Christian tradition, a lighted candle symbolizes Christ's presence. So as we begin our prayer, let us remind ourselves that Christ is in our midst. God is with us (light candle in center of the room). In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...

Let us Pray. Loving God, please be with us in our meditation, inspire our imagination, permeate our thoughts, enliven our feelings, direct our wills as we experience this prayer together. We ask especially for the grace to encounter You in the person of Jesus. May we be open to whatever surprises You choose to gift us with. We hope that we not merely seek pleasure from our prayer, but that we seek to be closer to our true selves and more attentive to Your mysterious presence within. Amen.

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): "Time with Jesus" Meditation

Materials Needed: an instrumental CD, CD player and a candle

‡ **Introduction:**

Prayer can be understood as simply paying attention to God and our deepest selves. When the two meet, something mysterious and special happens.

In this meditation, we'll use our imagination to pay attention to God and our deepest selves. Don't be afraid if it is a bit awkward, even strange. Let yourself go. Let God's Spirit lead your own spirit, mind and imagination. Don't judge your experience; it's not right or wrong, good or bad; just be open; be aware. Use whatever speaks to you and disregard what does not appeal to you. Your imagination might even seize you and you will no longer hear me, that's fine too. Work with whatever image of Jesus feels right to you and that comes up in prayer. Let your imagination free you up and take your heart wherever it may.

‡ **Exercise:** "Time With Jesus" Meditation

Read the meditation slowly, with soft instrumental music playing in the background. Make sure to pause long enough for members to really enter into the meditation. (the meditation can be found on the following page).

‡ **Sharing:**

1. What were some of the thoughts and feelings that emerged for you as you stood by the sea before Jesus arrived?
2. How did you imagine Jesus in this meditation? What was it like for you to imagine Jesus in this way?
3. How did the meditation affect you?

‡ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?

IV. Moving Forward (5')

‡ **Wrap-Up:** thank members for their openness and participation, particularly if this was a new experience for them.

‡ **Action:** spend 5-10 minutes in imaginative meditation (with God).

‡ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

next meeting: bring an item that is really meaningful and important to you (e.g., photo, heirloom, gift, etc.)



“Time with Jesus” Meditation

Script: (to be read slowly and prayerfully, you yourself should pray, pausing at the ellipses...longer at places with more ellipses.....)

Sit in an upright position and close your eyes; relax but stay focused; do not fall asleep. Take a deep breath and relax. Breathe deeply in...and breathe out. Relax. Again, Breathe in slowly...and breath out. Be aware of your breathing...With each breath, slowly fill your lungs completely and then slowly exhale. Notice your breathing becoming slower, more gentle...feel any part of your body that is tense...Relax it...Let go of the tension... (pause)

Now I invite you to take a journey with me...Imagine yourself standing on a sandy beach at sunrise...wet sand...the glowing sun rises slowly over the horizon...the dark blue sky punctuated by morning rays dancing upon the clouds. The sea looks vast before you...Its surface stirs gently with ripples of waves...some become surf, spraying you with cool mist. You stand next to the water, as its gentle coolness caresses your feet and sinks your feet into the wet sand...feel the wonderful texture of the white sand massaging your feet...The cool morning breeze brushes your face, combing your hair...feel the warm sunrays as they bathe you in their warmth. Take time to appreciate this boundless beauty...the dawning of a new day.....(pause for a minute)

As you stand there in awe at this incredible scene, what feelings flow through you?...peace?...gratitude?...wonder? What do you feel deep down? What is in your heart now? Search deeply into yourself and notice if there is anything that troubles you...any anxieties and worries...with family...with school...or with an important relationship in your life...(pause for 60 seconds)

Now imagine that Jesus is present with you, standing with you, sharing in this immense beauty. Imagine that He's One of your very best friends: One with whom you can relate. One with whom you can freely be yourself; One who knows you in and out and enjoys you; One with whom you can share your joys, reveal your dreams, explore your doubts, voice your inner fears...without fear of being judged...(pause)

What does this Jesus look like as he stands with you? What does He wear? What about Him captures your attention? Notice any captivating features...He seems to have a gentle smile on His face and eyes that draw you in....Imagine Him looking directly into your eyes...uncovering your deepest emotions and feelings...He sees your anxieties and fears....He understands.....What does this feel like for you? Are you comfortable with Him seeing you so vulnerable and open?.....

Spend time expressing to Jesus what arises within you...Try to communicate with Him as you would a dear friend...Listen to Him...(pause for 60 seconds)

How do you want to spend time with Jesus? What does He invite you to do?...take a long walk?...play volleyball?...run?...build a sandcastle?...just to be?...spend this time with Jesus...maybe just sit and talk.....(pause for a minute or two)

Now it is time to say good-bye to Jesus...notice how He bids you farewell...does He invite you to return for another morning together? How does He leave you? Once He is gone, gaze at the scene around you once more...Notice what you feel at this moment...Give thanks to God...It's time for you to leave this place....to leave your imagination and return to this room ..take your time...when you are ready, open your eyes.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Create your own closing prayer or ask a member to bring in a prayer. End with the song, "Friends" by Michael Smith <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZVWi8pCODw>.

Friends

*Packing up the dreams God planted
In the fertile soil of you
Can't believe the hopes He's granted
Means a chapter in your life is through
But we'll keep you close as always
It won't even seem you've gone
'Cause our hearts in big and small ways
Will keep the love that keeps us strong*

Chorus:

*And friends are friends forever
If the Lord's the Lord of them
And a friend will not say never
'Cause the welcome will not end
Though it's hard to let you go
In the Father's hands we know
That a lifetime's not too long to live as friends.*



Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The Exercises are above all a time for intimate contact between God and the retreatant (SpEx #2).

Our only desire and our choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me (SpEx 23).

The Spiritual Exercises is a "school of the heart" which fosters a personal knowing, loving, and following of Jesus. This intimacy with our Brother and Savior brings us to a greater identification with Christ poor and humbled, crucified and risen (CLC Spirituality).

#9 Hidden Treasures



Scripture

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroys, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be. (Mt 6:19-21)

Prov 2:4-5 “If you seek [Wisdom] like...hidden treasures search her out: then will you understand ...”
Lk 18:22 “You lack of one thing: sell all you have.....you shall have treasure in heaven...”

Introduction & Welcome (1’)

I. Opening Prayer (5’)

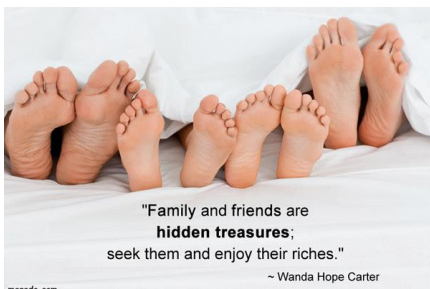
Grace: to become more aware of the love of God and others through the things in this world and what we value.

Use the grace or a suggested scripture above to create your own prayer, or use the one below: *God, in becoming one of us, You tangibly revealed Yourself in flesh and blood. You entered into this world and made it possible for us to know You in this world. We thank You for all the gifts and treasures You have given us. Give us the grace of openness to become more aware of Your love and that of others through the things in this life and what we value in it. May our sharing of our objects help us to know each other more deeply and to become “friends in You.” Amen.*

II. Short Check-In (5’)

III. Focus Exercise (40’): Hidden Treasure

Materials Needed: Members’ objects, papers, markers



✠ **Introduction:** make sure everyone has brought an object representing something important about him/herself, e.g. picture, heirloom, special gift, etc. If a member forgot to bring an object, invite him/her to draw the object on a sheet of paper.

✚ **Exercise:** invite everyone to spend 5-7 minutes in prayer (with some instrumental background).

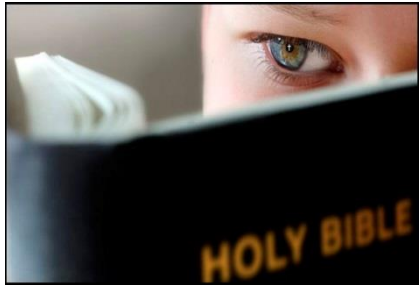
Suggested questions to pray and share about (in their journal booklets)

1. How did you get this object? (Did you buy it? Did someone give it to you?)
2. What were some of your feelings when you got it?
3. Why is this object so important to you?
4. Why were you inspired to bring this particular object today? What image, grace, or experience could God be reminding you of?

✚ **Sharing:** invite members to share. Use suggested questions to facilitate the conversation.

✚ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities?
2. How have you been feeling throughout the meeting? Comfortable? Anxious? Curious?
3. Is there anything you would like to share after listening to another person share?



IV. Moving Forward (5')

✚ **Wrap Up:** draw upon examples of what was shared in the meeting and tie them into your understanding of Ignatius' view of the things in this world: "All the things in this world are gifts from God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily" (Ignatius' First Principle and Foundation).

✚ **Action:** invite the group to pray over the question, "Are there any ways God is inviting me to share my gifts, material or otherwise, with others at this time?"

✚ **Announce:** topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events.

REMINDER: If this is your last meeting, make sure that you all agree with a meeting time and place for next quarter.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Encourage everyone to pray for each member by praying for the person to their left. Coordinator should begin first....

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

Consider God's gifts to me. God creates me out of love and desires nothing more than a return of love on my part. So much does God love me that even though I turn away and make little response, this Giver of all good gifts continues to be my Savior and Redeemer (SpEx #234).

The more I grow in gratitude of God's plentiful love for me and all of creation, the more will I respond fully and generously in service or and with others. Gratitude fuels my striving to love as I have been loved (CLC spirituality).