

An Ignatian Method for Praying in the Light of God's Love

St. Ignatius of Loyola says in his Spiritual Exercises that God is "laboring to love us." Our job is to open our hearts and allow his love to enter in. How do you open your heart to God? This simple four-step movement in prayer is a helpful description of how you can open your heart and let God do his loving and healing work.

Acknowledge ~ First, *acknowledge* what is stirring in your heart. Observe whatever memory, thought, or desire is strongest in your heart at this moment. Call it by name in your prayer before God. Do not be afraid to be utterly honest with God and yourself.

Relate ~ *Relate* that thought, memory, or desire to God. You are sitting before God in prayer. Don't pretend that you are in this alone. Speak to the Lord from your heart in a way that acknowledges his active presence seeking to love you at this very moment.

Receive ~ The Lord is laboring to love you right now. God is moving toward you with love regardless of what you are currently experiencing, whether it be shame, anxiety, fear, bitterness, anger, unbelief, joy, or peace. *Receive* the love that the Lord is now giving you in the midst of this memory, thought, or desire.

Respond ~ Having tasted the Lord's love around the memory, thought, or desire you noticed in your heart, *respond*. Take action. Perhaps say a new "yes" to God's call or choose to obey God's leading. Renounce any of the Enemy's lies you have believed about yourself and about God's love. In all things, give God thanks and praise.

Steps for Praying in God's Presence

1. Have a PLACE where you can pray.
2. PRAY that you will know how (in what manner) the Father is beholding you, and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you, enlightening your heart and mind.
3. Each day, have a PASSAGE from one of the four Gospels to meditate upon. Stay with a Gospel passage (savor it) until you are satisfied or feel called to move on to another. (A few examples: Matt. 11:25-30; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 10:29-37; Luke 12:22-34; John 15:1-17.)
4. Being in God's PRESENCE, s-l-o-w-l-y read the passage. Read it again. And again. What phrase or image "takes hold of you"? Using your senses, imagine that you are in the scene.
5. PAY ATTENTION to what is stirring in your heart. Don't "edit" what you're thinking or feeling. Speak to God in your heart. In this time of prayer, what do you desire, want, long for? Listen to the voice of God. What do you sense God is saying to you, or to what might God be inviting you in light of this time with Him?
6. PEN notes from your time of prayer. (What happened, etc. Also, have a brief, written "colloquy" with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and Mary our Mother.)
7. Give God thanks and PRAISE.