

“Living Well: Spiritual Practice **a Lenten Journey**

A quick note about spiritual practices from Sister Michelle Walka:

Simply put, spiritual practices are how we pay attention to God in our midst. ‘Paying attention’ happens in a variety of ways and engages our whole selves (our minds, bodies, emotions, actions, relationships) as we pause, reflect, and connect. With these Lenten spiritual practices, I invite you into a sense of holy curiosity, play, and wonder as you dwell with God. Be kind and gentle with yourself; knowing that the living Christ will again and again greet you in the ordinary and extraordinary of this journey with compassionate relationship and divine grace. Happy practicing, beloveds!

Ash Wednesday (Spiritual)

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10, NRSV)

Silence is at the roots of spiritual practice. A way to dwell with God in silence is through the practice of centering prayer. For a great “how to” resource on the practice of centering prayer, go to:

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-1>

Don’t have capacity to set aside a special time for centering prayer? Pay attention to when a quiet moment in your day might arise, and then: pause, notice yourself and your surroundings, take a slow cleansing breath, offer a silent word of gratitude to God, take a slow cleansing breath, and then continue with your day.

Week One (Financial)

Jesus replied, “Scripture has it, ‘We live not on bread alone but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:4, The Inclusive Bible)

We are often tempted to live into a worldview of scarcity that directly contrasts God’s abundance. As a spiritual practice, you are invited this week to dwell in God’s abundance through acts of generosity. Reflect on what motivates and impacts your generosity. Then, find an opportunity to be generous with your time and/or with resources you have to share. Big or small, extra or ordinary, planned or unexpected, individually or as a community... Notice the stirrings of your heart and how God might be active in these stirrings.

Week Two (Intellectual)

Nicodemus said to [Jesus], “How can anyone be born after having grown old?” (John 3:4, NRSV)

The spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* (*meaning sacred reading*) invites us into a deep listening of the sacred texts with an openness and curiosity to God’s presence. In Creating a Life with God, Daniel Wolpert describes this prayer practice as “a living conversation between you and God.” To engage in this practice: Choose a passage of scripture and read it through slowly. Notice what words, phrases, or images catch your attention. Read through the passage again. Notice what thoughts, memories, or feelings emerge. Write, draw, and/or offer a prayer to God in response to these noticings. To end the practice, pause for a few moments of stillness and gratitude.

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Week Three (Socio-Emotional)

And Jacob’s Well was there. Jesus, weary from the journey, came and sat by the well. It was around noon. (John 4:6, The Inclusive Bible)

For this week’s spiritual practice, you are invited to engage in a caring conversation where, as St. Benedict describes, you listen with the “ear of your heart.” Invite someone for a cup of coffee, a playdate, a walk... call a friend on the phone or video chat with a distant loved one... get to know someone new or connect with an old companion... Whatever the form, practice intentional listening as well as speaking, notice your experience with this person, and offer gratitude for the connection. After the caring conversation, hold this person in your prayers throughout the week. Notice how your connection and prayers impact your own well-being and your relationships.

Week Four (Vocational)

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23, 25, NRSV)

Like many of us, St. Ignatius of Loyola wondered about his own journey of faith, asking: How do I know what is of God? and How is God calling me to be and act? Through these basic discernment questions, St. Ignatius developed a way to pay attention in a daily prayer through, what is now known as, the Prayer of Examen. This prayer practice, inspired by the fruits of the Spirit, includes a series of questions to reflect on your noticings of God and yourself from the day. Click [here](#) for a worksheet to write/draw/pray with these questions. Start and end this practice with some silence, slow cleansing breaths, and offering gratitude for the time of connection with God.

Other Examen resources: “Reimagining the Examine” App, and for any age FAITH5™ which can be found at: <https://faithink.com/the-faith5-steps>

Week Five (Physical)

Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” And Lazarus came out of the tomb, still bound hand and foot with linen strips, his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus told the crowd, “Untie him and let him go free.” (John 11:43-44, The Inclusive Bible)

Jesus invites us into a truly embodied faith; in life, death, and resurrection. Spiritual practices help us connect with this invitation to dwell and journey in our physical bodies. The ancient practice of “pilgrimage” is a type of spiritual journey with God, where your outward physical journey parallels the inner spiritual journey. To practice a posture of pilgrimage, you are invited to go on a wonder prayer walk. On this walk*: offer a prayer of openness to God to guide your journey; move slowly and intentionally; pay attention to all your senses; also notice what arises in your thoughts, feelings, memories; if something on the way catches your attention pause and dwell at this place; at the end of your journey reflect on any learnings/noticings; offer a prayer of gratitude to God for this time of pilgrimage. *This “walk” can be any length, inside or outside, and you are invited adjust this practice to your body’s abilities. The important aspect of this practice is being mindful and connected to your body as you pray and connect with God, who meets you where you are.