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# Finding Christ in the World

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A Twelve Week  
Ignatian Retreat  
in Everyday Life

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## Preface

Students of St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* might want to notice that the exercises in this book technically serve the purposes stated in Annotation Eighteen: "some instruction and the attainment of a certain degree of peace of soul."

To meet people's need in his day, St. Ignatius taught them to use the Examen. He taught them to pray by reflecting on their behavior in light of the Commandments, the Capital Sins, the precepts of the Church, and the Works of Mercy. He taught them a simple kind of centering prayer with the body's five senses. He was helping people who might have "little natural ability," and who probably had little or no education. Their faith-life was thoroughly structured into their public lives and culture. Few of them, even those who could read, had access to a vernacular bible.

Judging by current practices and publications, most people who want to make the *Exercises* today have the same purposes in mind: "some instruction and the attainment of a certain degree of peace of soul." They and their situations differ from St. Ignatius' times, of course. Their faith is not structured into public life. Their culture is, anywhere it matters, inimical to holiness of life in Christ. They feel that we are all "separated brethren" and yearn for a deeper feel of communion in the Mystical Body and a more dynamic grasp of how their faith in Christ plays out in family and marketplace.

What these pages present as "simple *Exercises*," in consequence, necessarily draws on materials different from those used by St. Ignatius. To start with, everyone has a bible, or several, and hears about scholars' discoveries and speculations. Believers at the end of modernity struggle intellectually and affectively rather with belonging to the Church than with keeping precepts and Commandments. Furthermore, the need now is for the quiet that allows reading the signs of the times and promotes an appreciative awareness of God's action within and among us.

The *Spiritual Exercises* "must be adapted" specifically for the post-moderns if they are to find clarity of mind and peace of heart. So there is nothing here about choosing a way of life and little about the technical discernment of spirits beyond the experiences of consolation and desolation appropriate to First Week prayer. Everything is about finding The Way in the gospels, grasping the true Principle and Foundation in Christ Jesus, and accepting the First Week's grace of God's loving mercy.

Any individual can pray through this book alone and find good in it. But the adult Americans whom the book aims to help belong to one of the best educated laities in history, whose need just now is to be in communion with others and to communicate. Hence, the book is best used with companions to share its graces and experiences.

Aware that American Catholics continue pursuing adult spiritual formation groups but lack group leaders, the authors have added an appendix of practical steps we have found helpful in guiding groups.

Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J.

## Authors' Introduction

As you have picked up this book, we would like to tell you why we wrote it – with the help of many people, singly and in groups.

Many of the individuals we encounter in spiritual direction and in groups betray a sense of wanting something different in their faith-life. They are not sure what this means but they are sure they feel a desire for a clearer, perhaps deeper, relationship with God the Lord.

We see them working hard at their faith – they attend Mass, pray the prayers of the Church, sign up and participate in bible study or faith formation groups, volunteer constantly, and give generously. They are not sure why they are doing all this; but they are sure that they aren't gaining what they want from doing it. They still don't feel God's pressing love or know God's penetrating truth in the way they want to.

Some of this alienation is cultural. But at least part of it is a sense of absence rooted in their belief that the faithful disciple of Christ has to do all the work. So they are working hard to make this faith thing happen. There is little recognition – none, really – that God is at work in them and in their life world. Yet Revelation is quite clear: God works a lot harder to break into their lives than they can possibly work to find God.

You may recognize some of these feelings and yearnings. Here is where this book begins – in a yearning to know and love God better, to know more clearly where you are, and to have a real love for Jesus Christ. This calls for prayer, and this book invites you to let God show you where and how He concretely breaks into your life.

You begin what some great spiritual writers have called a “graced striving” – working freely in the knowledge that God is working in you and moving you forward into life. For we are not lost in the universe, vaguely searching for an unknown God. No. The context of our striving is the revelation given us in Christ Jesus and handed down through the centuries in His Mystical Body, the Church. We know that we are His disciples because He has chosen us and made us His own. So now we set ourselves to grow in our commitment to Him.

This is serious but it is far from dull. In a culture that focuses on the individual, you can embrace the conversion of heart that shifts the tight focus on self to the graced focus on God-and-you-and-us. As a mature disciple of Jesus Christ, you are graced to embrace the mature conviction that God is continually, moment by moment, creating you out of chaos – the chaos of your own life experiences and the chaos rampant in your life world in the twenty-first century.

So you begin the adventure of finding out what you are really doing, and of experiencing God and what your Creator and Lord is doing in you and among all of us.

Praise Him!

Joseph A. Tetlow  
Carol Atwell Ackels  
Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, 2013

## Retreatants' Introduction

You are beginning a Retreat in Daily Life inspired by and rooted in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola.

You are invited to pray every day during the next twelve weeks. You will know that you are making the Retreat generously if you give yourself to faithful, daily prayer. Keep in mind that we can never be more generous than God is: give the Lord a little time, and be surprised at the abundance of love, and everything else, the Lord pours on you.

You will want to have a special place and a definite time to pray each day. Find a place where you can expect to be undisturbed. How much time? A half hour has proven a good start. Over the weeks, you will find your own measure.

Now, about the matter in this book. You have here prayer material for each day of twelve weeks. Each Week has its own spiritual topic which an *Introduction* unpacks, and a page called *Prayer Talk*, which explores some experiences in prayer and gives a few helps as your prayer unfolds.

Two facing pages give the material for each day.

On the right-hand page, in the narrow column, you find:

- *Week, Day, Title* E.g.: Week One/4 God Cares for Me Intimately.
- *Grace I Ask* What you seek in each week's prayer.
- *My Thought for the Day* A few lines to jot down something to remember during the day.
- *Furthermore* Something a wise person or saint jotted down.

On the right-hand page, in the main body of text, you find:

- *Keep in Mind* A paragraph with four points to help focus where you are today.
- *Prayer for Today* A scripture text to pray with.

On the day's left-hand page, you find one of two things:

- *Brief Note* Some further matter from the Tradition.  
Or else,
- *What about My Life? Applying My Prayer* Some specific things to reflect on and pray about, and further points from our tradition of prayer. These do not replace your prayer but suggest ways to make it richer.

At the end of each week, you will find two pages with helps to absorb what you have prayed about:

- *Touchstones* A basic reference and sum of the week's graces.
- *I Review My Week of Prayer.* You might note on this page what stands out from your week. You could also prepare to share your experiences with others, if you are praying with a group.

We have found that praying along with others magnifies the results of the Retreat in Everyday Life. You might meet with a group every week, and we find that having a facilitator deepens the prayer experience and the sharing. Never fear about sharing. With the helps given in the materials, you will readily find what to talk about and how to do it.

## How to Proceed: Using This Book

On the first day of your week, read the *Introduction* and *Prayer Talk*. And each evening, look at, browse, or read the material for the next day. You might then decide what to pray about on the morrow and how to go about it. Be patient as you begin.

As you go to pray, first come to self-concentration or recollection. Remember that you are in God's presence. You may already have your way of praying, and you'll find various suggestions about the Church's great tradition of prayer as you go along.

Take the scripture passage (or the *Brief Note*) and pray with it. You will find that some scripture passages are repeated, so that you pray the same one on two days. This repetition is an established Ignatian practice and as you go along, you will find it a very fruitful one.

Always be ready to turn to the Lord, at any time. God's loving gaze is steadily on you and God is always listening to you, just the way gravity is always pulling you whether you think about it or not.

On some days during each week and always at its end, you'll come across pages that help reflect on your prayer: *What About My Life? Applying My Prayer* during the week and its end, *I Review My Week of Prayer*. Both of these are Ignatian practices. They have been helping mature disciples for five centuries.

You will find a lot of space on the pages for your notes. Write on them. Writing down things to remember is a mature spiritual practice. It produced the *Spiritual Exercises*, actually. You'll do very well to continue a journal if you keep one. But at least makes some notes as you finish your prayer each day. And you will be encouraged to go back over your experiences on the last day of your week. The few lines of *My Thought for the Day* is a simple way to keep remembering your prayer during the rest of the day.

One Ignatian practice will be introduced as you go along: the *Examen*. For some five hundred years, this exercise has helped mature disciples maintain steady reflection. It helps you keep aware of where you are with the Lord and how you are growing and maturing in grace.

If you are blessed to proceed with a group, you will have a regular meeting time with the others making the retreat. You'll find that time helpful if you prepare a bit beforehand.

Now – turn to Week One and begin your Retreat in Daily Life.





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# God cares for Me Intimately

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Finding Christ  
in the World

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Week One

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## WEEK ONE: GOD CARES FOR ME INTIMATELY

### INTRODUCTION

You are starting a retreat in everyday life. You heard the Spirit whisper in your ear and raise a yearning in your heart. You experienced the indwelling of the One who knows you by name, claims you as His, and desires you to come close.

The desire you felt to make this retreat was placed there by the Holy Spirit, so come in confidence trusting this to be a special moment of grace.

During a retreat in everyday life, you do not leave aside the activities of your day but you do intentionally pause to evaluate the status of your interior life.

Here is what you know already: your interior life matters. What goes on inside of you impacts your daily life and the world around you.

Think of it. Your day has been filled with aggravating interruptions and you've had to leave some pressing tasks undone. What happens when your teenager greets you with questions as you enter the door of your home?

Or you are stressed about a situation at work or home. What happens at the grocery check-out after waiting in a long line?

Or alternately, you were able to give yourself a quiet time of reflection and repose today. What happens when you encounter others at your child's athletic event?

Your interior life matters, and the way you are encountering your loving God interiorly matters even more.

St. Catherine of Siena wrote that there is a room in each one's heart where no man, no woman, no devil, no angel can go. Only you and God can go into that interior space. The first effort of this retreat is to locate that room, open the door, and find out how things are there.

One grows in knowledge of self in God through introspection and prayer. Hence, beginning at the beginning, calm under God's loving gaze, you will realistically and regularly search your mind and your feelings.

This week you will get started in the prayer of the retreat. You may well take a little while to get into it and to find your own way. Think of it as something like a warm-up before a brisk walk, a time when you preliminarily assess where you are and where God is in your life.

The background music for your warm-up stretch may include: How am I emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually? Where am I seeking God? Where do I find Him? Where is He seeking me? Where does He find me?

There is a kind of genuineness to beginning a retreat with an open and magnanimous heart toward God. So perhaps the warm-up question for this first week might be one that St Paul asked the Galatians, which could be put this way: "What has happened to your openhearted spirit?" (Gal.4:15).

You are encouraged to embrace this opportunity to discover yourself in God's love, loving you. You may find it difficult at first but richness awaits those who come and see.

## PRAYER TALK

On these “prayer talk” pages, you’ll find some suggestions about how to pray this retreat. To begin with, remember that prayer, like everything else, is a gift from God. You will open the gift God is giving now.

In this retreat, you will be praying each day with selected scripture passages. Praying with scripture is different than studying it. Study engages mainly your mind. Prayer engages not only your mind, but your heart, as well – and you bring to it all of your experience.

Praying with scripture, you remember that it is the revealed word of God, handed down to you through the Church’s centuries. Jesus’ disciples have always understood that the Holy Spirit keeps inspiring these words and inspiring us who read and pray them.

In all ways of praying, you want to be sure to do two things: listen, and say what you need to say. Sounds easy, but it may prove a little harder than it appears at first.

We aren’t much used to listening, rather more to hearing. After all, there is so much noise in our life that listening to everything is quite impossible.

In prayer, as you move into each day’s scripture, you will listen to the words rather more than just read them. There may be a word or phrase that captures your attention. You’ll highlight it.

You will actively listen to what caught your attention. You might ask yourself: What does God hope to show me about Himself? What does God

hope to show me about myself in this passage? What does He want me know, or to consider, or to explore? How is God expressing his love for me?

And you will ponder, wonder, and deliberate in an unhurried and measured way what is opening up in the scripture for you. You should be aware that you are doing *lectio divina* – the prayerful reading that disciples have done ever since God’s word was first written down.

When you give your attention to listening, you inevitably end up with questions to ask - or responses to make to what you’ve heard. So say to the Lord what you need to say.

We aren’t necessarily comfortable with saying what we need to say. We most often say what we think the other person wants to hear, or perhaps needs to hear.

With God, it is different. You will listen for what the Lord wants to reveal to you; and you will say what *you* need to say to the Lord.

Perhaps it is a question, perhaps it is a request, perhaps an observation or realization – what is important is that you tell the Lord what is on your mind or in your heart. Talk with the Lord from where your heart is right now.

Remember you are in your inner room where only you and God go, so what you say there is safe. It’s a relationship, you see.

**AS YOU BEGIN**

Take a few moments to complete the following. Jot your thoughts down here.  
You may want to expand them in your prayer journal.

I decided to participate in *Finding Christ in the World* because ...

I want to learn how to grow ...

I want in my relationship with God ...

I expect this experience to affect my daily life by ....

My hope for this experience includes ....

**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: In the place where you will pray, stand for a moment and collect yourself in God’s holy Presence. Once you have made yourself comfortable, read the selected parts of the psalm slowly, perhaps highlighting words that strike you. Then go back and consider those you marked, taking your time.
2. During this week: As you enter the little room in your heart, you know that God is always there for you.
3. Notice in the scripture: The intimacy between the psalmist and the Lord is the same intimacy the Lord shares with you.
4. Ask: Always remember to ask the Lord for what you want in this time of prayer. Now, you want to accept maturely that God is always caring for you, all your life long.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**

**Psalm 139**

Lord, you know me and you probe me, you know when I sit  
 and when I stand; you know my thoughts from afar.  
 You watch when I walk or lie down,  
 you know every detail of my conduct.  
 A word is not yet on my tongue before you, Lord, know all about it.

Such amazing knowledge is beyond me,  
 a height to which I cannot attain.  
 Where shall I go to escape your spirit?  
 Where shall I flee from your presence?  
 If I scale the heavens you are there, if I lie flat in Sheol,  
 there you are.  
 If I speed away on the wings of the dawn,  
 if I dwell beyond the ocean, even there  
 your hand will be guiding me, your right hand holding me fast.  
 I will say, ‘Let the darkness cover me,  
 the night wrap itself around me,’  
 even darkness to you is not dark, and night is as clear as the day.

You created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb.  
 For so many marvels I thank you;  
 a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.  
 You knew me through and through,  
 my being held no secrets from you,  
 when I was being formed in secret . . . .  
 In your book all my days were inscribed,  
 every one that was fixed is there.  
 How hard for me to grasp your thoughts, God, how many there are!  
 If I count them, they are more than the grains of sand;  
 if I come to an end, I am still with you. . . .

God, examine me and know my heart,  
 test me and know my concerns.  
 Make sure that I am not on my way to ruin,  
 and guide me on the way everlasting.

**WEEK ONE/1**

**GOD CARES  
 FOR ME  
 INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK**

I want to accept maturely that  
 God is always caring for me,  
 all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
 FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

In your desert of busyness,  
 you have heeded Jesus’  
 invitation to His disciples:  
 “Come aside and rest for a  
 while.”

**BRIEF NOTE:  
DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

As a young seminarian, Bishop Robert Whalen (+2001) was walking across the campus at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. He passed an internationally famous theologian lecturing to the seminarians there. The great theologian nodded to him and said, “Hello, Bob.”

Decades later, the bishop would tell how astonished and deeply pleased he had been that this theologian had known his name. “He knew my *name!* He knew who I was.”

It’s easy to feel the joy of being known by someone important. We want to know that we are known. We want to know we are loved.

We are known by The One who is most important. Not just known, but loved and sustained, so the *Catechism of the Catholic*

*Church* states: “With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being.” (301)

Hard as it is for each of us to grasp, God the Almighty cares for each of us in the concrete and in immediate things. He knows us by our names. He knows the name that calls the deepest self in us, our soul.

God cares for our souls because God wants to live with us forever.

Realize: You did not decide this. You did not “deserve” it since there was no *you* when God chose to create you.

Now there is *you*, and God knows you by your name.

**NOTES**

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**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: Read and ponder Isaiah’s words the way you read and pondered the psalm. This way of praying is named *lectio divina* and has helped Jesus’ disciples for more than a thousand years.
2. During this week: God cares for the entire Church, Christ’s Mystical Body, and for each one of us. Consideration of the People whom God has chosen may raise some feelings in you about God’s knowing your name. You might jot them down below or in your journal.
3. Notice in the scripture: Isaiah means *you* when he reports God saying “I have called you by your name.”
4. Ask: As you begin, quietly and calmly ask the Lord for what you want. Now, you want to accept maturely that God is always caring for you, all your life long.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**

**Isaiah 43: 1-7**

And now, thus says Yahweh, he who created you, Jacob, who formed you, Israel: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine.

Should you pass through the waters, I shall be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire, you will not suffer, and the flame will not burn you.

For I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I have given Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

Since I regard you as precious, since you are honored and I love you, I therefore give people in exchange for you, and nations in return for your life.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I shall bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west.

To the north I shall say, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back!’ Bring back my sons from far away, and my daughters from the remotest part of the earth, everyone who bears my name, whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, whom I have made.

**WEEK ONE/2**

**GOD CARES  
FOR ME  
INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK**

I want to accept maturely that God is always caring for me, all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

There is a kind of knowing that afterward you can never not know. The kind that, no matter what anyone says, you know what you know, and that deep foundational knowledge is unshakeable.

—Margaret Silf

**WHAT ABOUT MY LIFE? APPLYING YOUR PRAYER**

As I begin this retreat, I wonder ...

Sometimes, I feel swallowed up by ...

I feel precious and honored when ...

Sometimes I am afraid. Right now, I am concerned about ...

When I am able to hear God call my name, I think and feel ...

Now, I decide I want to turn over to the Lord's care ...



**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: You will give your spirit time to pause with words and phrases that capture your attention. In the Church, this *lectio divina* is being used by many mature disciples.
2. During this week: As you accept that the Almighty God cares about you, be aware that acknowledging that demands real humility on your part.
3. Notice in the scripture that you are repeating a passage. So, again: Place your name in the space indicated. Some thoughts and feelings may rise when you do that. Underline them or jot them down. Turn to God to talk about them.
4. Ask: As you begin, quietly and calmly ask the Lord for what you want. Now, you want to accept maturely that God is always caring for you, all your life long.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**

**Isaiah 43: 1-7**

And now, thus says Yahweh, he who created you, [your name], who formed you, [your name]: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine.

Should you pass through the waters, I shall be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire, you will not suffer, and the flame will not burn you.

For I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I have given Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

Since I regard you as precious, since you are honored and I love you, I therefore give people in exchange for you, and nations in return for your life.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I shall bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west.

To the north I shall say, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back!' Bring back my sons from far away, and my daughters from the remotest part of the earth, everyone who bears my name, whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, whom I have made.

**WEEK ONE/3**

**GOD CARES  
FOR ME  
INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK**

I want to accept maturely that God is always caring for me, all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

Love takes up where knowledge leaves off.

-St. Thomas Aquinas

**BRIEF NOTE:  
GOD CHERISHING EACH**

God creates each one of us, even more personally than do our parents. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (366) makes this theological statement: “Every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not ‘produced’ by the parents.” What does that mean to you?

On top of the Himalayan mountains perch fifteen thousand glaciers. When twelve million cubic kilometers of snow start melting, they feed many rivers. Among these is the Indus River. Enormous amounts of drinkable fresh water run down that river, supplying fresh water to millions and millions of men, women, and children.

Each one of these millions drink that water from the glaciers, individually, as though the only thirsty one. That pure water runs into all parts of their body, keeping it alive. And each can wash in it, letting the water cleanse and purify them intimately.

That’s how it is with God creating. God creates all the millions and millions of us. But His love and care flows into each one of us as though each were the only one He is making.

Just as the snow keeps on melting and sending fresh water down to the Indians, so God keeps on loving us into existence, moment by moment, or we would go dry.

“Lift up your eyes to the mountains, where your help comes from. Your help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121).

It’s that way with God creating us moment by moment. His love has to keep flowing into us, or we would go not only cold and dark, but out of existence.

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**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: Read Jesus’ words slowly, the way you did the psalm. Listen to His voice.
2. During this week: Jesus’ parable about God caring for birds and wild flowers may suggest some thoughts about how God is caring for you. You might underline them or jot them down.
3. Notice in the scripture, repeating: Jesus liked similes and metaphors, here He is saying in God’s hands you are like – but much more important than – the little sparrows and the lilies of the fields.
4. Ask: Ask the Lord to give you a sense of where you are in your pilgrimage, as He has cared for you all along.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**

**Matthew 6: 25-34**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

**WEEK ONE/4**

**GOD CARES  
FOR ME  
INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK:**

I want to accept maturely that God is always caring for me, all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

We are already God’s children, but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed.

- 1 John 3:2

**WHAT ABOUT MY LIFE? APPLYING YOUR PRAYER**

Following your prayer with the Scripture, you might consider these questions and note what you think and feel here. You may want to expand your thoughts in your own prayer journal.

I recognize there are things God has decided about my life that I did not decide, such as my height, eye color, and family of birth. I wonder about ...

Reflecting on my life, I see God clothing me with ...

Looking back, I can identify God caring for me like a little sparrow, and sustaining me in ...

I do worry about certain things, like ...

Now, I decide I want to turn over to the Lord's care ...

**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: Read Jesus’ words slowly, the way you did the psalm. Imagine what His voice sounded like.
2. During this week: Reminders of God’s ongoing care and sustaining love may rise in you. Jesus’ parable about God caring for birds and wild flowers may suggest some thoughts about how God is caring for you. You might jot them down.
3. Notice in the scripture that you are repeating a passage. So, again: Jesus liked similes and metaphors. Here He is saying in God’s hands you are like – much more important than – the little sparrows and the lilies of the fields.
4. Ask: Ask the Lord to give you a sense of where you are in your pilgrimage as He has cared for you all along.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**

**Matthew 6: 25-34**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

**WEEK ONE/5**

**GOD CARES  
FOR ME  
INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK**

I want to accept maturely that God is always caring for me, all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God’s creature. What you are in His sight is what you are, and nothing more.

-St. Francis of Assisi

**BRIEF NOTE:  
WHAT IS PRAYER?**

Every time we think of God with us, or feel that we love Jesus our Lord, we are praying, “raising our minds and hearts to God.”

The fact is this: we pray as naturally as we breathe. If we have reasonable care of our physical selves, we breathe easily. If we do things to harm our health, we may have trouble breathing.

It’s the same with praying. If we really believe that God lives and Christ is our Savior, we will pray naturally. If, on the other hand, we are living carelessly and going against our own consciences, then we will have trouble praying.

The first thing you notice about Jesus’ prayer is that He went out a lot during the night to pray alone. He was being with the Father, and we want this, too. His love for the Father is radiant, and He models this for us, telling us to call God *Abba*. Jesus knew what it takes to forgive your enemies. He knew what it takes to forgive your brother seventy-seven times.

Jesus prayed because He wanted to know what the Father wanted Him to do. We want the same thing. And He knew what wanting something other than what the Father wants can feel like. He felt it Himself right at the end. His prayer was surly deep and richly affective. And He told the Father what was in His heart.

We want to pray because we want the same as Jesus did. We want to know our Father better. We want to know what He wants and find out what He is doing. Jesus said “I only do what I see the Father doing” (John 5:19). So ask the Lord for openness and clarity about His work and desires. When you seek God, He will let you find Him.

Jesus invited his disciples to come away to a quiet place in part because they had a lot to tell him about what they had been doing. In other words, they had things they needed to say. Make a habit in your prayer of saying what you need to say, as Jesus surely did.

Still, when His disciples – who had watched Him pray during the long nights – asked Him to teach them to pray, what did He do? He did not begin by introducing them to high mystical insights. You remember what He told them. “You should pray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven...’” (Matt. 6:9f).

So one thing we are careful to do. Whenever we pray, and however long and in whatever way, we always end by praying as the Lord Jesus taught us: “Our Father...”

**NOTES**

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**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: Before you begin praying, always remember that you are in the Holy Presence of God. And when you finish, always pray the way Jesus taught us to pray, with the Our Father.
2. During this week: God will listen. Say what you need to say. Note what you find.
3. Notice in the scripture: Through the centuries, holy men and women have taken Jeremiah’s promise as made to all of God’s people. You can rely on it as God’s inspired word.
4. Ask: As you begin, quietly and calmly ask the Lord for what you want. Now, you want to accept maturely that God is always caring for you, all your life long.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**  
**Jeremiah 29: 11-13**

Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you,  
Yahweh declares,  
plans for peace, not for disaster,  
to give you a future and a hope.

When you call to me and come and pray to me,  
I shall listen to you.

When you search for me,  
you will find me;  
when you search wholeheartedly for me,  
I shall let you find me,  
Yahweh declares.

**WEEK ONE/6**

**GOD CARES  
FOR ME  
INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK**

I want to accept maturely that  
God is always caring for me,  
all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe, used to say that  
“prayer is wasting time with  
God.”

## **WHAT ABOUT MY LIFE? APPLYING YOUR PRAYER**

I imagine playing hide and seek with a small child. I remember how I allow the child to find me. I recognize God doing this with me. I feel ...

Knowing it is what God desires for me, how do I identify peace and hope? What is life giving to me ...

When I think about God listening to me, I want to tell him ...



**KEEP IN MIND**

1. About your prayer: Before you begin praying, always remember that you are in the Holy Presence of God. And when you finish, always pray the way Jesus taught us to pray, and say the Our Father.
2. During this week: God will listen. Say what you need to say. Note what you find.
3. Notice in the scripture that you are repeating a passage. So, again: Through the centuries, holy men and women have taken Jeremiah’s promise as made to all of God’s people. You can rely on it as God’s inspired word.
4. Ask: As you begin, quietly and calmly ask the Lord for what you want. Now, you want to accept maturely that God is always caring for you, all your life long.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**  
**Jeremiah 29: 11-13**

Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you,  
Yahweh declares,  
plans for peace, not for disaster,  
to give you a future and a hope.

When you call to me and come and pray to me,  
I shall listen to you.

When you search for me,  
you will find me;  
when you search wholeheartedly for me,  
I shall let you find me,  
Yahweh declares.

**WEEK ONE/7**

**GOD CARES  
FOR ME  
INTIMATELY**

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**GRACE I ASK**

I want to accept maturely that  
God is always caring for me,  
all my life long.

**MY THOUGHT  
FOR THE DAY**

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**FURTHERMORE**

Joan of Arc, asked whether  
she was in God’s good grace,  
said, “If I am not, may it  
please God to put me in it; if I  
am, may it please God to keep  
me there.”

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## TOUCHSTONES

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- God keeps loving you into existence, moment by moment.
- When you search for God, you will find God – and discover that God has been seeking you all along.
- You are loved and sustained by God, who wants you to live with Him forever.
- God’s intention is that you live in peace and contentment.
- Praying includes saying what you need to say, and listening to what God wants to share.

**I REVIEW MY WEEK OF PRAYER**

I came to see some things I had not noticed before:

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I have questions about:

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I felt God's presence this week in this experience of my daily life:

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I want to be sure to tell my companion and fellow retreatants:

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