

# JULY 9, 2023: 14<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



Last week we saw that 'praying through scripture' is one way to establish a prayer life. The use of scripture in prayer is ancient. And when we use scripture we do not have to guess whether we are hearing God, because the Bible is God's very word proclaimed to us. The power of the scriptures is grounded in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit ensured that the scriptures would never contain an error when it comes to faith and morals. The Holy Spirit gives us the insight to understand the wisdom contained in the scriptures. Last week we focused on a simple way to meditate on God's word through scripture. But, in a prayer life there are many different ways to make use of the Bible.

When we want to develop a relationship, one of the most important elements is coming to know the person with whom we desire to have a relationship. God understands our need to know Him. We were created to be in relationship with God, and so we are only truly grounded when we have a real relationship with Him. Like all others, that relationship is built upon trust, fidelity, mutuality, and real communication.

Once humanity wrecked our relationship with God, God decided to fix it. He had a plan for how our salvation would work. It took time, for God wanted to prepare the way for our salvation. He helped us experience the truth of salvation through being on a journey—a journey that needed a roadmap. God knew that we could not achieve salvation on our own; in fact we can never achieve salvation. So, the Father sent Jesus to do that for us.

Many people have their own ideas about who Christ is. And quite frankly, many of their ideas are simply wrong. They try to box Jesus into a nice, neat little package so that they can live their lives without really being challenged. Yet, that is why Christ came. He came to challenge us and help us find that roadmap. Basically, Jesus *is* the roadmap because He is the only way to salvation. If we want to learn how to read the roadmap, we need to understand how the roadmap works. We can only discover that through a real relationship with Christ. And we can only have a real relationship with Christ when we make use of the scriptures. As Saint Jerome wrote, "Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ."

Last week we presented a simple way of meditating on the scriptures; this week I would like to take a slightly different track. Saint Ignatius of Loyola developed this method as he came into a real relationship with Christ. He believed in using our imagination to place us into the scripture stories. The use of imagination can make some people uncomfortable, but it is a powerful way to make the Gospel stories come more alive for us.

1. I would like to propose the following steps to begin praying with and through the scriptures.
2. Find a quiet place to sit and relax.
3. Take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds and then release.
4. Pray a prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance (something like the following):
5. "Come, Holy Spirit, fill my heart with Your holy gifts. Open my heart to hear Your voice and to respond."
6. Then say "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."
7. Select a passage from one of the Gospels in which Jesus is interacting with others.
8. Recall what you are doing in engaging with the Word of God and what you desire from this encounter. God is present and because God is present, you need only rely on God.
9. Read the Gospel passage twice so that the story and details of the story become familiar to you.
10. Close your eyes and reconstruct the scene in your imagination. See what is going on and watch the men and women in the scene. What does Jesus look like? How do the others react to Him? What are

the people saying to one another? What emotions fill their words? Is Jesus touching someone? As you enter into the scene, sometimes there is the desire to be there. So, you can place yourself in the scene, perhaps as an observer, or as one lining up for healing, or as one helping others to approach Jesus.

11. Some people's imaginations are very active and so they construct a movie-like scenario with a Gospel passage. Others will enter the scene with verbal imagination, reflecting on the scene and mulling over the actions. Vividness is not a criteria for this kind of prayer to be effective, but engagement is necessary to gain a more interior knowledge of Jesus.
12. As you finish this time of prayer, you should take a moment to speak person to person with Christ, saying what comes from the heart.

From *Finding God in All Things*: See more at: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-what-how-why-of-prayer/praying-with-scripture/#sthash.JRFmmlOU.dpuf>

My presentation next week will be on how to pray the rosary.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at [fr.brian@theholyrood.org](mailto:fr.brian@theholyrood.org) , or if easier please call or text me at (978) 254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".

Fr. Brian