

Part 2: Who is God for Me?

1. Break Review
2. I'm Spiritual but not Religious
3. Who Is God for Me?
4. Finding God through My Own Life Experiences
5. Finding God through Other People
6. Finding God through Creation
7. Finding God through Creation and Justice
8. Finding God through Scripture
9. Finding God through Prayer

Part 2: Who is God for me?

1/ Break Review

- Purpose: to identify the graces over the break and get in touch with our hopes and goals for the year.
- Exercises: Break Review questions
- Action: pray, “What do you hope to get out of the CLC this quarter?”

2/ I’m spiritual but not religious

- Purpose: to identify where I am at and where I want to grow in my faith this year.
- Exercises: discuss, “6 Paths to God” & “I’m spiritual but not religious”
- Action: pray with your hopes and commitments of the year.

3/ Who is God for me?

- Purpose: to get in touch with our experiences, images, and questions of God
- Exercises: Lectio Divina (God Is by Danielle Rose), My Experiences & Images of God
- Action: ask family and friends about their experiences of God

4/ Finding God through my own life experiences

- Purpose: aware of how God has been present in my own faith journey
- Exercises: My life experiences (part 1)
- Action: pray with Part 2: Experiencing God.

5/Through Other People

- Purpose: experience God through other people
- Exercises: Vat. II statement, “On the Church”
- Action: recognize God through other people

6/ Through Creation

- Purposes: experience God through creation
- Exercises: my creation
- Action: pay attention to God’s creation

7/ Through Creation and justice

- Purposes: see connection between God’s creation and our care for creation
- Exercises: The Village of Versailles video clips, NY times article
- Action: one way of caring for God’s creation

8/ Through Scripture

- Purposes: experience God through scripture
- Exercises: The Refiner’s Touch, My experiences of the Bible
- Action: pray with your desires and commitments to study or pray with scripture.

9/ Through prayer

- Purpose: encounter God in prayer
- Exercises: guided meditation, “Jesus washes his disciples’ feet”
- Action: pray with your favorite bible story.

#1 Break Review



Scripture

Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light. (Mt 11:28-30)

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 after the break and to the new quarter. Thank them for coming.

I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: to identify the graces over the break and find God in all things

Use the grace or the suggested scripture above to create your own prayer or use the prayer below. After reading the scripture, say . . . , “*Almighty God, we thank You for gathering us here tonight. Thank You for Your invitation to come to You for rest and learn from You for Your yoke is easy and Your burden light. We pray for the grace of being attentive to how You have loved us over the break and help to identify those graces and give You glory. Amen.*”

Note: ask for a volunteer to lead opening and closing prayers for the next meeting.

II. Short Check-In (5’)

III. Focus Exercise (40’)

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

✝ Introduction:

1. Feel free to use any song to set the tone.
2. This meeting will center around looking back at the past few months and the 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 on 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 whatever changes or transitions might be taking place for us now as well as more commonplace moments of each day.

† **Action:**

1. Pray with the question, "What do you hope to get out of CLC this quarter?"
2. Ask God, "What do you hope for me this quarter?"



† **Announce:** Topic for next meeting and upcoming CLC events

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

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Invite members to lift up their intentions before or after reading the prayer below....

Dear Lord



Dear Lord, as I close the door on this old year,
I ponder on the things I've done...
on the things I've said and the joys I've had...
then I wonder, have I lost or won?

I've thought of the new friends I have made,
and of the old ones staunch and true...
the path of the old year was made easier Lord,
because I have walked it with You.

I think of all the many times,
when my burdens were so heavy to bear,
and how my faith slipped away from me...
but somehow You were always standing there.

Now as I open the door to this New Year,
and carefully peep inside,
I wonder what it holds for me...
but I'll throw the door open wide

And whatever it brings to me and mine,
I'll meet it with a heart so true...
I know that, Lord whate'er it may be
You'll be there to carry me through.

(by Mrs. Merrel Thompson)

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The way of life of Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community, 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).

Truly it is a retreat in every day life (SpEx 19).

#2 I'm Spiritual but not Religious



Scripture

O LORD, you have searched me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. My travels and my rest you mark; with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me. ... Where can I hide from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? (Ps 139: 1-7)

Matt 7:7-11 Seek and you will find

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to identify where I am at and where I want to grow in my faith and beliefs.

Invite someone to lead an opening prayer around the grace and the scripture passage or use the one below.

After reading the scripture, say.... *“Almighty God, we thank you for gathering us here tonight. We ask you for the grace of knowing where we are at and where we want to be in our faiths and beliefs this year. Help us to be open and honest with ourselves and each other. Amen.”*

Note: ask for a volunteer to lead opening and closing prayers for the next meeting

II. Short Check-In (5')

- * What were some of your high and low points of the week?

III. Focus Exercise (40')

Materials Needed: CLC Journal booklets, CLC supply box

✠ Introduction:

1. Use any song to set the tone
2. Tonight we are going to discuss different ways and paths to God: ranging from atheism, exploration, spiritual but not religious, to “Yay God!” Each path has its benefits and pitfalls. You may find yourself on several different paths during your lifetime. You may even feel like you're on more than one path at the same time.

✠ Exercise 1: Six Paths to God

(Based on Chapter 2 of James Martin, SJ *The Jesuit Guide to Everything*, pp 29-44)

Invite members to take turns to read each path below out loud and discuss it. Ask members to elaborate and give examples to clarify and understand each path. The following questions might be helpful during discussion.

- * Can you elaborate or give examples?
- * Do you know anyone on this path?
- * What leads people to this path?
- * How would you respond to the people on this path?
- * Do you see yourself on this path?

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 sufferings into a framework of meaning.
- Pitfalls: you may not understand non-believers 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-balance 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 allows children to choose.

- Benefits: you may know other religions well and be enriched in your own faith as a result. You may appreciate your 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.

✠ Exercise 2: I'm Spiritual but not Religious (10')

(Based on Chapter 2 of James Martin, SJ *The Jesuit Guide to Everything*, pp 46-50)

* Discuss the following points and questions....

Many people call themselves, "I'm spiritual but not religious." It's also known as SBNR (spiritual but not religious). What does it mean? It's a trendy phrase people often use to describe the belief that they don't need organized religion to live a life of faith.

Q1. What does SBNR think about religion or "being religious?" How would you respond to the following thought about organized religion?

SBNR often sees being "religious" as abiding by the arcane rules and conventional dogmas, and being the tool of an oppressive institution that doesn't allow you to think for yourself. Religion is narrow-minded and prejudicial—so goes the thinking—stifling the growth of the human spirit.

Or worse, religion is the most despicable of social evils, responsible for all the wars and conflicts around the world. Sadly, religion is responsible for many ills in the modern world and evils throughout history: among them, the persecution of Jews, endless wars of religion, the Inquisition, not to mention the religious intolerance and zealotry that leads to terrorism.



Being "spiritual but not religious" means you do not need a church or a community. A beach will do.

Q2. What does it mean to say, "I'm spiritual?" How would you respond to the following thought, "I'm spiritual, but not religious?"

Being spiritual means being freed from unnecessary dogma, you can be yourself before God. The term also implies that you have sampled a variety of religious beliefs that you have integrated into your life. You meditate at a Buddhist temple; participate in Seders with Jewish friends at Passover; sing in a gospel choir at a local Baptist church; and go to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve at a Catholic church.

You find what works for you, but don't subscribe to any one church: that would be too confining. Besides, there's no one creed that represents exactly what you believe.

Q3. "Just me and God.....I don't need organized religion to live a life of faith." Is it possible to be spiritual without religion?

Q4. "My faith is just on Sunday. I go to church on Sunday and fulfill my obligation. My faith has nothing to do with the rest of my week." Is it possible to be religious without being spiritual?

‡ **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.

‡ **Action:**

1. switch prayer partners
2. pray: with your hopes and commitments of the quarter and share with your prayer partner.

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

V. Closing Prayer (5')

‡ Encourage each member to pray for each other's hopes for the quarter by praying for the person to their left.

(Coordinator should begin first) *I would like to pray in thanksgiving for*

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

Each member assumes responsibility for participating in the meetings and other activities of the Community, and for helping and encouraging other members to pursue their personal vocation, always be ready to give and receive advice and aid as friends in the Lord (GP#12).

It is good to remember that we are always in the context of prayer...(SpEx 3).

#3 Who is God for Me?



Scripture

When the Lord saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of Your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the Lord said, "I have witnessed the affliction of My people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. So indeed the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them. Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" He answered, "I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring My people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain." "But," said Moses to God, "when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is His name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I AM who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you." God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. "This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations. (Exodus 3:4-15)

1 Kings 19:11-13 "A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord--but the Lord was not in the wind..."

Psalms 104 "...Lord, you are great indeed!...You spread out the heavens like a tent...You fixed the earth on its foundation..."

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: for a greater awareness of how we have experienced God and the openness to know and experience God even more.

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

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40')

Materials Needed: "God Is" by Danielle Rose, CLC journal booklets

✠ **Introduction:** Explain that the purpose of this meeting is to deepen our faith by re-examining our experiences of God. When we were young, we were taught and told by other people what to believe. Now, we are in college; we encounter so many different beliefs and ways of life. We might wonder about our faith and question our Church teaching. So, tonight we are going to explore this topic. We are going to focus on how we have experienced God so far. We all have experienced God, whether we are aware of these experiences or not. They may be positive, negative, affirming, confusing, etc.

✠ **Exercise:**

Part 1: "God Is" *Lectio Divina*

Invite members to listen and follow along to the words of the song "God Is" by Danielle Rose. Encourage them to pay attention to the words or phrases that stand-out to them, that stir up particular emotions or questions. Perhaps suggest that they mark those words or phrases on the lyrics in their journal booklet.

After the song has finished, *allow for additional time in silence for each member to savor the parts that stood-out for them* (perhaps gazing at the words on the page or prayerfully repeating them silently to themselves, as in *Lectio Divina* forms of prayer). After a few minutes in silence have passed, *prayerfully encourage each member to say aloud just those words or phrases that touched them*. Close this time of prayer by thanking God for speaking to each of us uniquely, in different words and in different ways.

Part 2: My Experiences of God ("7 Common False Images of God" page)

Have each member reflect on the following questions.

1. What have your experiences of God been thus far in your life?
2. Last year ("Phase 1"), we drew our images of God to help us become aware of how we understand and think we experience God. Deepening that awareness, let's look at some common false images of God. (*Briefly go over the "7 Common False Images of God" page in their journal booklets*) Do any of these images speak to you? When might you have imagined God in these ways (consciously or unconsciously)?
3. Who in your life most influenced how you experienced God or what your images of God were?
4. What image of God do you hold now? The same as before? Or different?
5. Have you ever doubted God's existence or God's nature? What questions do you have about God?
6. If you were God, how would you reveal yourself to human beings?

✠ **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?

God Is

By Danielle Rose

You want to know Me? You want to see My face?
I do not age with time; I do not fit into a space
I transcend the capacity of your eye, so who am I?
It is the question of the moment;
It is the question for all time
I am you, and you are mine

Refrain

I am the beginning and the end
I am the faith in your believing
I am the color of truth
I am the dreamer of your dreams
I am the falling in your love
I am the words of a prayer
I am the silence in the music
I am the music in the silence

I am your father; I am your mother
I am the man who cannot cry
I am the story in your eyes
I am the orphan of war
I am the leper begging on the corner
I am the black slave in chains
I am the Muslim bride who cannot show her face
I'm the cross you carry again

Refrain

I'm all you have forgotten
I am all that you have not been
I am in you - all of this is within you
Let the journey begin, Amen
I am in you, Amen



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 Claus 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, perhaps, 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. Encourage them to pay attention to how they experience God and their images of God this quarter.

✠ **Action:**

- 1) Consider asking friends and family what their experiences of God have been, perhaps for the first time or on a deeper level. Be mindful that others may not be open to answering. Perhaps consider sharing your own experiences with them as well (maybe even taking the initiative to share first).
- 2) Meet with your prayer partner and likewise explore sharing your experiences and images of God.

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

V. Closing Prayer (5')

*Nothing is more practical than finding God,
That is, than in falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.*

*What you are in love with,
What seizes your imagination,
Will affect everything.*

*It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
What you will do with your evenings,
How you spend your weekends,
What you read, who you know, what breaks your heart,
And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.*

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

Pedro Arrupe, SJ

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

“The Three Divine Persons, contemplating the whole of humanity in so many sinful divisions, decide to give themselves completely to all men and women and liberate them from all their chains” (GP#1).

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

#4 *Finding God* Through My Own Life Experiences



Scripture

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." ... When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was. (Job 1:20-21, 2:11-13)

Psalm 121 *The Lord will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life.*
John 14:15-20 *But you know him, for he lives with you and also in you.*

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to pray for the deep appreciation and awareness of how the Creator God has been present in my own faith history.

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): My Faith History (based on the work of John English, SJ)

✠ Introduction: We know through faith that we can find God present in all things in all the events and dimensions of my life. But has the awareness of this presence throughout my life really taken hold of me? Memory is the sacrament of God's presence. The material over which I shall pray is the story of my own personal history -- the events, the experiences, the people who have crossed my path, the jobs I have held, the gifts I have been given, my accomplishments, my failures.

After placing myself in the presence of God, I go down memory lane and ponder contemplatively the people and events of my own personal history. I seek how the Divine Shepherd has been involved in my life and where there have been moments of consolation and moments of desolation.

† Part 1: My Life Experiences

Coordinators should read each section below prayerfully giving members time to reflect and journal page in their CLC journal booklets between each paragraph.

1. My Events: I begin by remembering. This remembering is an awareness of the exterior events in my life and my interior reactions to them. I remember those that give meaning to me (both pleasure and pain) or those I still can't find meaning for but that I am still searching out. Let one memory touch another by association. This may be neither logical nor chronological. As I remember all these events and items in my life history, I try to notice the gifts that I have received.

*** What are some of the key events that surface for me as I reflect?**

Allow some time for members to reflect and write down the answers on their journal booklets.

2. God Speaks to Me About My Events: After I have been in touch with the many ways in which I have been gifted, I now begin to notice how God has been present in my life.

* I can approach this by recalling those peak experiences where I have profoundly felt God's presence or those where I have felt God's absence or distance from me. Spend time just remembering and savoring each of these moments to receive a deep-felt appreciation of them. Job spends much of his life analyzing and interpreting God's actions in his life. He is filled with doubt and anger at God at times. This is not about analyzing right now, but simply recognizing if there are ways in these events that you have felt a closeness or absence from God. (pause for members to answer the question below)

*** 2a—Are there any peak experiences where I have profoundly felt God's presence or where I have felt God's absence or distance from me? (pause.....)**

*** 2b—Are there any images that stand out for me about how God has been working in my life? (pause)**

3. I Listen to God: Can I identify any patterns of how God has been working in my life in a constant way, not just in isolated instances or events? I can begin this investigation of remembering by trying to get hold of the various rhythms of my life, for example: the cycles of success and failure; periods of being alone and periods of being with others; periods of fatigue and periods of energy; cycles of work and cycles of leisure. This same pattern of covenant gave me a touchstone for recognizing the leading of God's Spirit. The patterns by which God encounters me can be a help to recognize God's presence, a touchstone to discern authentic consolation and the peace of Christ in my life.

*** Are there any patterns that emerge for me at this time?**

† Sharing

1. Invite each member to share their reactions to the exercise... What is stirring within you? Were there any events or experiences that came up in the first portion of the reflection that surprised or particularly moved you?
2. Ignatius defines consolation as that which leads us towards God and fills us with peace and life, while he speaks of desolation as something which pulls us away from God or leaves us discontent, empty or sad. Suffering and dealing with painful situations in life is different than a feeling of desolation. Sometimes God can speak to us in our pain and fill us with a sense of consolation. Were there any patterns that emerged for you? Did they bring you joy, peace, sadness? Were there any movements that you might identify as consolation or desolation in your own experience? (see the Appendix for more on consolation and desolation)

Part 1: My Life Experiences

1. What are some of the **key events** that surface for me as I reflect?

2a. Are there peak experiences where I have profoundly felt **God's presence** or where I have felt **God's absence** or distance from me?

2b. Are there any **images** that stand out for me about how God has been working in my life?

3. Are there any **patterns** that emerge for me at this time?

Part 2: Experiencing God Through My Own Experiences My Faith Journey

Below are some examples of the types of experiences that may have led to or accompanied an experience of God in our own lives. However these points are just a beginning and there may be others.

What was the starting point?
What initiated my faith journey?



Were there any things I had to leave behind as I have gone on my faith journey, such as friendships that held me down or activities that conflicted with Church or spiritual activities?

When has my attention been drawn to others in need?
To social injustices?
How have I responded?

Are there any challenges I have faced or obstacles that I have had to overcome?

Do I have fears or doubts about who God is or how God could allow certain things to happen?

How have some portions of the journey been celebrated or recorded for posterity—such as First Communion, Baptism, important retreats, journal entries, art work?

Are there any persons or things that have helped me on this faith journey – family members, Saints, teachers, religious articles or devotionals?

Are there any places that have brought me great peace or consolation?

Do I see this faith journey leading in any particular direction right now?
Closer to God, further away from God, into a more distant or more intimate place?

‡ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities? *Any common experiences and images of God?*
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:** try to spend some time praying about these events and continue to reflect on where patterns of grace have emerged in your experiences of God. This process may take much longer than one or two weeks. Use the handout “Part 2: Experiencing God” in the journal to continue this reflection throughout the week.
- ‡ **Announce:** next week we will continue to explore the people who have shaped our experience of God and faith.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Ignatius, in the Spiritual Exercises, instructs us to speak with God in a form that he calls “the colloquy.” The colloquy is a kind of conversation with God. Tonight as we close, we will take a few moments for each one to imagine in silence that we are communicating with God, as a friend or mentor, going over what we have experienced, what has challenged us, or what has been helpful to us in our day or in our meeting tonight.



1. Read the line of #54 from the SpEx listed below to create the scene if helpful.
2. Invite each person to speak with God aloud.

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The Colloquy is made, properly speaking, as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant to his master; now asking some grace, now blaming oneself for some misdeed, now communicating one's affairs, and asking advice in them (SpEx 54).

I presuppose that there are three kinds of thoughts in me: that is, one my own, which springs from my mere liberty and will; and two others, which come from without, one from the good spirit, and the other from the bad (SpEx 32).

#5 Finding God Through Other People



Scripture

And the Lord said, "I will cause all My goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim My name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (Exodus 33:19)

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...."

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to experience awareness and gratitude of the ways in which God reveals himself to us through the people in our lives.

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): Companions in Faith

† Symptoms of Love:

First, spend five minutes to allow each person to imagine an experience of being cared for and loved. Invite members to share adjectives or actions that indicate how someone has loved or cared for them: a sense of security, peace, joy, happiness, loving challenge, etc. We can think of truth, beauty, and goodness as ways of experiencing God's love. In the next meeting on creation, we will focus more on God's beauty through creation. In this meeting we will explore **those people who reveal to us goodness, beauty, and truth**- about ourselves, about others, and about the world. We will ask the question "what do these experiences or people reveal to us about a God of truth, goodness, and beauty?"

† Introduction:

These symptoms of love help us get to know these people and how they have loved us, but they can also reveal to us something about God's love. He loves us through these people and also uses their love to show us that He is a God of love. Many of these symptoms of love also show us symptoms of God's love. Other people can show us something of the way we want to live our lives and challenge us to be our truer selves. Through the Communion of Saints image in the Catholic Church, we see the image of Holy men and women who we are united with in faith. Other faith traditions do not recognize "Saints" in a specific way, but they do carry on a tradition of looking to the **community** as an example of how God cares for us. The community is also there to support us in our journey towards building a relationship with God and discovering what God calls us to do in our lives and in the world.

✠ **Exercise:** Reflection from Council of Vatican II, On the Church, No. 50

*When we look at the lives of those who have **faithfully followed Christ**, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the City that is to come and at the same time we are shown a most safe path by which we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is perfect holiness. In the lives of those who, sharing in our humanity, are however more perfectly transformed into the image of Christ, **God vividly manifests His presence and His face to people**. God speaks to us in them, and gives us a sign of His Kingdom, to which we are strongly drawn, having so great a cloud of witnesses over us and such a witness to the truth of the Gospel.*

✠ **Sharing:**

Take time to reflect on and answer each of these questions personally before sharing.

1. Do you agree with the statement “God vividly manifests to people His presence and His face” and uses the lives of others to reveal His love to us? Why or why not? Can you give some examples? What are the concrete ways in which they help you see that God is alive?
2. Are there any people in your own life that seem to have “faithfully followed Christ” based on what you have experienced through your interactions with them? Many people see the work of Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta as a model of faith and she has been named a “Blessed” person in our Church. Are there any people who help you to see the way you want to live your life?
3. Sometimes we may experience God’s abundant love for us through the witness of a family member or neighbor. These persons may be of a different faith background or have no explicit faith at all. Are we “powerfully drawn” to God through the witness of any individuals or groups of people around us?
4. Is there something about the way all these people care for and interact with me that reveals to me something of how God cares for me and who God is? What does God look like through these people?

✠ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities? **Any common experiences and images of God?**
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:** are there any final thoughts before we leave?

✠ **Action:** Try to be more aware of people in your life who may have shown you something of who God is. Are there any people you may have overlooked? Are there any ways you can offer a gesture of gratitude, whether through prayer or a note or a random act of kindness to that person.

✠ **Announce:** Next week we will explore how God is revealed through Creation. Bring leaves or things that can be recycled or reused for our meeting next week.

V. Closing Prayer (10')

In Relationship

God - You are the mother some of us have ...
the mother who embraces because the child is cold
the mother who feeds because the child is hungry
the mother who constantly affirms, because
the child is afraid.

God - You are the father that some of us have ...
the father who listens, because the child speaks
the father who knows his gentleness,
because the child reaches up,
the father who guides and answers, because
the child asks and seeks.

God - You are the friend some of us have ...
the friend who is always there, even when we shove them away,
the friend who believes in us, even when we don't believe in ourselves
the friend who stands face to face, even when we turn away.

God - You are the brother or sister some of us have ...
the brother who teases, when we take ourselves too seriously
the sister who sings, when we have lost the song
the brother, the sister who comes, when crisis comes
and we know we are not alone ...

God - You are all this and more.
You take the image of that one ...
that relationship that *loves* us into living ... and say,
Here I am

Thank God - *you will not be limited by us.*
You come again and again!

by Karen Toole-Mitchell

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

Those who are of great heart and set on fire with zeal to follow Jesus... will not only offer themselves entirely to labor for such a mission, but will act against anything which would make their response less total (SpEx 97).

We propose to commit ourselves as Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the church and society which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation (GP 4).

#6 Finding God Through Creation



Scripture

Then Paul stood up at the Areopagus and said: "You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, 'To an Unknown God.' What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor is He served by human hands because He needs anything. Rather it is He who gives to everyone life and breath and everything. He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and He fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for Him and find Him, though indeed He is not far from any one of us. For 'In Him we live and move and have our being,' as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are His offspring.' (Acts 17:22-28)

Jer. 18:1-4
Rom. 1:19-20

"Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel .."
"...Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made."

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: for greater awareness and openness to how God reveals Himself through creation.

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

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): Experiencing the Creator through Creation

Materials Needed: art, craft, creative supplies of any kind (markers, paint, clay, play-doh, stencils, crayons, pencils, paper and glue, stickers, etc.), enough for all members to choose what they would like, if possible (whatever you have access to or are willing to provide for your members *or that members would like to bring*; be as creative as possible...if needed, use ordinary objects easily at your disposal...i.e. fallen leaves, materials to be recycled, etc.); CLC journal booklets

✠ Note: If possible, hold this meeting outside.

‡ **Introduction:** don't imply too much about what is going to be explored in the meeting. Rather, let members experience the exercise for themselves first, before giving some sort of explanation. Simply remind them that tonight's topic is experiencing God through creation.

‡ **Exercise: Experiencing God through Creation**

Lay out all the art materials you've provided or that members have brought. If members have brought something they know they want to use, have them note it. If possible, encourage sharing. Have each member spend 5-8 minutes creating something of their choosing (*Note: please try to help keep your meeting area clean for future meetings. Lay down newspaper if using paint, etc.). If they need help with ideas, ask them to make something that depicts how they are doing right now or something about themselves. When they are done, have them pass their creation to the person on their right. Share using the following questions:

1. What do you think your fellow member made? What do you think she/he was trying to communicate, if anything, in making it? What does the person's creation tell you about them?
2. (For each person to answer about their own creation) What is your creation? What, if anything, were you trying to communicate in making it? What do you think your creation says about you?

Then explain something like...God reveals God's self through creation. We know a lot about a person through his or her works or behaviors. When we look at a piece of art, we learn something about the artist. When we see the order and the beauty of creation (if outside, *highlight what can be seen around you*), we know something about the creator. By seeing the great power of the ocean with its waves and tides or the order of the universe, we know that its Creator must be great and powerful. By seeing the beauty of spring flowers, we know that its Creator must be beautiful, too. By seeing the goodness of a human person, we know that the person's Creator must be good. God is spirit and invisible but His works are visible.

3. If God is the Creator of everything that exists (if members disagree on this, encourage discussion), why do you think God created them?
4. What, if anything, do you think creation communicates to us about God?
5. What does creation say about humanity (since we are creatures and part of creation as well)? If helpful in forming your answer, keep in mind why you think God created and what creation says about God.
6. If God is forever Creator and continually willing creation to grow and develop, where are you in your process of being created? Are you allowing God to shape you, as a potter sculpts and molds clay? How do you feel about continuing to be "created"?

‡ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities? *Any common experiences and images of God?*
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) Take an intentional period of time out of your week to pray about creation in any way you would like. Perhaps this might even mean just taking time just to savor what you enjoy about the natural world. Soak it in as God's work of art made for you and thank God for the gift of creation and for yourself as a creation.
- 2) Take a "Following Your Senses" walk by yourself or with your prayer partner.

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



V. Closing Prayer (5')

Prayer on Contemplating Nature

You, O God, Majestic Creator, are the origin of all life.
Nothing can exclude itself from Your creative influence.
You are wonderful in Your words and in Your sovereignty.
Amazed, I contemplate the perfection of the world You created for human beings.
You are unmatched in Your power and in Your goodness.
O Lord, You direct like a conductor the orchestration of a storm, and
You shape like a sculptor the petals of a flower.
You are prodigious in Your majesty and in Your wisdom.
Lord, You have fashioned human beings to accept the challenges of nature
and to be Your voice in creation.
O Lord and King, Majestic Creator, You have made Your mystery transparent
in the world You have created.
I worship You in Your creation and in Your providence.
Amen.

*(From Prayers of Blessing and Praise for All Occasions,
Hugo Schlesinger and Humberto Porto.)*

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

*Out of love, the Word became human and was born of Mary, the humble Virgin of Nazareth.
Living with the poor and sharing their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves
continuously to God and to bring about unity in our human family... (GP #1).*

*...God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever....All the things in this
world are also created because of God's love and they become a context of gifts, presented to
us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily ... (SpEx 23).*

#7 Finding God Through Creation and Justice



Scripture

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed--the sixth day (Gen 1:26-31)

Lev. 19:9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleaning of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God."

Is. 42:5-6 "Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spreads out the earth with its crops, Who gives breath to its people and spirit to those who walk on it: I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice..."

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to see more clearly the connections between our care for creation, our care for our human family, and our fight for justice in building God's Kingdom.

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

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): *The Village of Versailles* video clips, NY Times Article

Materials Needed: laptop, links to *The Village of Versailles* video clips, NY Times article

- ✚ Introduction: last week, we reflected on how we can get to know and experience God through creation. This week, we are going to continue this theme by looking at how our care or neglect of the environment directly affects humanity. We can easily forget that, as creatures made in God's image, we have been given special responsibility to take care of God's creation and each other as His creatures. We need to care for the earth because it is God's creation in itself, how we treat the environment directly affects our human family (particularly the poor and marginalized).

‡ **Exercise:** *A Village Called Versailles* movie clips (or newspaper article),
“Ten Commandments of the Environment” reading

As a group, watch the above two clips. Explain how they help connect care and concern for creation with justice and care for humanity, especially for the powerless. They depict the story of a Vietnamese community in New Orleans (the Mary Queen of Vietnam parish community) who has had to fight to have a landfill removed from their community upon returning to their homes after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. As a minority community, living in an area closer to the poorest neighborhood of New Orleans, they had little voice in the toxic destruction of their land and the endangerment of their health. (*NOTE: Many of the members of this community are in CLC groups of their own, from the youth to the older adults!)

The clips can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/village-called-versailles/film.html>. Watch the top two clips (total time = 3 min.) If time allows, watch the third regarding the community’s initial experience of Hurricane Katrina. Together, share your reactions to and reflections on the clips using the following questions:

1. What were your feelings while watching the clips? Was there anything that particularly moved or challenged you?
2. After watching the clip, what connections can you see between care for the environment and care for humanity? between justice and care for creation?
3. How might you have experienced or observed these connections in your own life?

As a group, go over the page “Ten Commandments of the Environment.” After reading it together, encourage members to share their thoughts and reactions. Then invite everyone to share on the following questions:

4. How are you currently caring for the environment and humanity?
5. How might you better care for the environment and humanity?
6. If caring for creation (and humanity via creation) is not something that speaks to you, why do you feel this way? What causes or means of service speak to you most? Why do you think these touch you in this way?

If you are not able to access the clips or do not have additional time, read the story of the community on the same website, or see the New York Times article covering it, “A New Landfill in New Orleans Sets Off a Battle”
(found at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/08/us/08landfill.html?pagewanted=1&r=1>).

Ten Commandments of the Environment

Presented by Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, at a congress on the theme "Ethics and the Environment" at the European University of Rome in 2005. These ten principles of environmental ethics are drawn from the [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#). The Bishop was clear that these principles are not to be interpreted as replacing the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses.

Here is an abbreviated version:

- 1) The human being, created in God's image, is placed above all other earthly creatures, which must be used and cared for in a responsible way.
- 2) Nature must not be reduced to a utilitarian object of manipulation, nor absolutized or placed above human dignity.
- 3) Ecological responsibility involves the entire planet in a common duty to respect a collective good, for present and future generations.
- 4) In dealing with environmental problems, ethics and human dignity should come before technology.
- 5) Nature is not a sacred or divine reality, removed from human intervention. Thus, human intervention that modifies some characteristics of living things is not wrong, as long as it respects their place in the ecosystem.
- 6) The politics of development must be coordinated with the politics of ecology, and every environmental cost in development projects must be weighed carefully.
- 7) Ending global poverty is related to the environmental question, remembering that the goods of the earth must be shared equitably.
- 8) The right to a safe and clean environment needs to be protected through international cooperation and accords.
- 9) Environmental protection requires a change in styles of life that reflect moderation and self-control, on a personal and social level. That means moving away from the logic of consumerism.
- 10) Environmental issues also require a spiritual response and a greater awareness that the created world is a gift of God.

‡ **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?
4. *If you have to describe your image of God tonight, what would it be?*

IV. Moving Forward (5')

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

‡ **Action:** as a group or individual, commit to one way of caring for the environment and/or the poor that recognizes how the poor are often those who are most affected by environmental neglect or abuse (e.g., plant a tree in an inner-city neighborhood, etc.). Use “Ten Commandments of the Environment” for help, if needed.

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

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Encourage members to take turns praying. Ask them to consider praying petitions for a certain area of the world or aspect of the environment that particularly needs attention and healing. Invite them to ask for the grace to see how they might be able to incorporate the values of environmental justice into their own lives.

Close the prayer with the first half of Ignatius’ First Principle and Foundation (found below). Let members know before the prayer that it is from Ignatius and part of his expression of the purpose of life and our best way to live. Note that a full meeting on the First Principle and Foundation will come next year.

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

“God, who loves us, creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise, reverence, and service of the God of our life.

All the things in this world are also created because of God’s love and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we show reverence for all the gifts of creation and collaborate with God in using them so that by being good stewards we develop as loving persons in our care for God’s world and its development. But if we abuse any of these gifts of creation or, on the contrary, take them as the center of our lives, we break our relationship with God and hinder our growth as loving persons...”

(adapted from St. Ignatius’ First Principle and Foundation)

#8 Finding God Through Scripture



Scripture

Again Jesus began to teach beside the lake. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the lake on the land. He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.’ And he said, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’

When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.’ (Mk 4:1-10, 13-20)

Heb. 4:12 “Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.”

2 Tim. 3:16 “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

Introduction & Welcome (1’)

I. Opening Prayer (5’)

Grace: for greater awareness of and openness to how God reveals Himself through Scripture and how we have experienced God in this way.

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

II. Short Check-In (5’)

III. Focus Exercise (40'): "The Refiner's Touch" story

Materials Needed: journal booklets, bibles (have members bring their own or provide enough)

Introduction: last week we focused on experiencing God through creation, particularly in our care for all of creation. So far, we've explored how we can get to know and experience God through the events of our own lives, other people and the natural world. Over time, God has continually been revealing Himself to our human family in each of these ways. The Scriptures (the bible, containing the old/Hebrew Scriptures and new testament), are a special record and way of expressing what God has done. They contain a collection of writings that convey the story of God's relationship with humanity over time, from the creation of the universe to the culmination of His revelation in history in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus and the beginning of His Church. In the Christian tradition, these writings hold a special place in how we can come to know and experience God because they are God's word to us, His unique way of communicating to us through human writing. So tonight we are going to focus on coming to know and experience God through Scripture.

✠ **Exercise 1:** "The Refiner's Touch" story

Read over the story "The Refiner's Touch." After reading, allow everyone time in silence or with meditative music to reflect on the following questions. Then encourage each member to share.

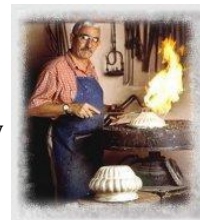
Story—The Refiner's Touch

There was a group of women in a Bible study on the book of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three they came across verse three which says, "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:3). This verse puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God.

One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study. That week the woman called up a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that, in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest so as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot - then she thought again about the verse, that He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. For if the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's the easy part—when I see my image reflected in it."

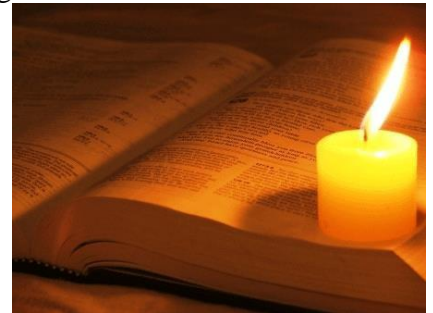


1. What were some of your feelings while reading the story?
2. Is there anything that you particularly related to or didn't relate to?
3. How did the woman's understanding and experience of God change as a result of deepening her understanding and experience of the Scripture passage?
4. How might have God been active in the story?

‡ **Exercise 2: My Experiences of the Bible**

Provide additional time for members to reflect on the following questions for themselves. Suggest that members use their bibles to read over any passages that have particularly touched or challenged them during their life if they need help. Then have each member share.

1. What has your experience of Scripture been so far? Has it changed over time?
2. Do you think that God reveals Himself through Scripture? What does this mean to you?
3. What questions do you have about Scripture in general? About how God reveals Himself through Scripture?
4. How might you have already experienced God through Scripture?
5. Do you have any favorite Scripture passages, figures (particular people), or images? Why do these speak to you? What might God be saying to you through them?



‡ **Deep Listening**

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities? *Any common experiences and images of God?*
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) Consider what role and time Scripture has in your life. Spend time asking yourself if you would like to grow in your understanding and experience of God through Scripture. If so, what concrete actions or habits might you be able to commit to in order to encourage this growth?
- 2) After pointing out tips on reading the bible in the journal booklet, consider if any of its suggestions might help you in how you read or understand Scripture.

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

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Teach Me Your Ways

Teach me Your way of treating others -
sinners, children, Pharisees,
Pilates and Herods,
and also John the Baptists.

Teach me Your way of eating and drinking,
how to act when I'm tired from work and need rest.

Teach me compassion for the suffering,
the poor, the blind, and the lame.
You who shed tears,
show me how to live my deepest emotions.
Above all, I want to learn how
you endured Your Cross.

Teach me Your way of looking at people:
the way You glanced at Peter after his denial,
the way You touched the heart of the rich young man
and the hearts of Your disciples.

I would like to meet You as you really are,
since You change those who really know You.

If only I could hear You speak
as when You spoke
in the synagogue of Capernaum
or on the Mount of Beatitudes!

Give me grace to live my life,
within and without,
the way You lived your life,
O Lord.

-Pedro Arrupe, SJ

Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. Our spirituality draws its life from the Sacred Scriptures....(GP #5).

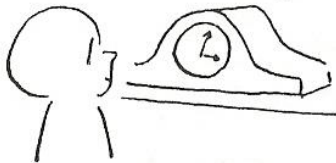
As I find myself immersed in the setting of this mystery of the Incarnation, I may want just to stay with.....the eternal Word, who has now become human—for me....(SpEx 109).

Some ideas on

HOW TO READ the Bible--

(the WORLD'S "BEST-SELLING" BOOK)

- ① set aside
TIME for
Bible reading



Make Bible reading a habit -- every day of the year.

- ② try to read a
"BOOK AT A TIME"



Many books of the Bible can be read in 20 minutes -- some in an hour, others require more time.

- ③ try to understand the
WRITER'S PURPOSES



Who was he? What was his "world"? Why did he write?

- ④ and **WHO**
the message
was for



Who was the audience for this message -- what did it mean to them? What does it mean to you?

- ⑤ keep a
NOTEBOOK
as you read



Jot down words to look up . . . and questions for which to find answers.

- ⑥ **LOOK UP THINGS** you
don't understand



Use a Bible concordance, dictionary, atlas, and commentary to help you.

#9 Finding God Through Prayer



Scripture

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet....I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:1-13, 34-35).

Introduction & Welcome (1')

I. Opening Prayer (5')

Grace: to find God in prayer.

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

II. Short Check-In (5')

III. Focus Exercise (40'): Ignatian Contemplation

Materials Needed: CLC journal booklets, CD instrumental music

† Introduction

1. Explain the topic and preview of the meeting: Finding God through prayer.
2. Recall phase 1: we talked about how we prayed and experienced God in prayer and learned new ways of praying (Awareness Examen and Ignatian meditation). Tonight, we are going to learn another way of praying called contemplation, which Ignatius found to be very helpful.
3. Explain contemplation: In contemplation, we enter into a life event or story passage of the Scriptures by way of imagination, using all of our senses (see, listen, taste, touch, and smell). In other words, we enter the story as if we were there. We choose to play the role of one of the persons or characters in the story and let God take our imaginations and guide us through the scripture passage.
4. Invitation: The best way to learn about Ignatian Contemplation is to experience it and then we can talk about it. We are going to contemplate on Jesus washing his disciples' feet at the last Supper (Jn 13:1-13, 34-35). (Note: If you have not read this passage for the opening prayer, now it's good time to read it before the guided meditation)

† Exercise 1: Experience Ignatian Contemplation

- Note: see next page for guided meditation
- Sharing: invite everyone to share after the meditation.

† Exercise 2: Discuss Ignatian Contemplation

- go over some of the steps

† Deep Listening

1. What has struck you as you have been listening to others share? Do you notice any patterns or commonalities? *Any common experiences and images of God?*
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. Remind members that contemplation is the key for Ignatius to encounter a living Christ today not 2,000 years ago. By putting ourselves into the story and creating space for God, we allow God to reveal Himself to us through the life of Jesus Christ. Only then, we really know and fall in love with God.

† Action:

- pray: invite members to pray with their favorite scripture passages using Ignatian contemplation. If they need suggestion, encourage them to pray with the story of Jesus washing the feet again.
- prayer partner: share your prayer experience.

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



Guided Meditation: Washing the Feet **(John 13:1-13, 34-35)**

Note: Below is merely a suggestion. Feel free to paraphrase in your own words. 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..... If you have not read the scripture passage of Jesus washing the feet during the opening prayer, now it's good time to read it so that members can be familiar with the story.

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...

Now I invite you to go on a journey with me... Imagine you're in the room with Jesus and your friends. You're about to celebrate the Passover feast, which commemorates the story of the Exodus, in which the ancient Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. What do you notice and see in the room? Food? Wine? Friends? (pause for 1 minute)

You and your friends are excited about the celebration of the Passover feast. The room is full of noise due to conversation and people move around preparing for the feast. At one point, you look at Jesus. What do you notice? (pause for a minute)

As you look at Jesus, he also looks at you. What do you see? How do you feel?(pause)....You recall some of the memories you have with Jesus. What memories come to your mind? (pause)

During the supper, you notice that Jesus gets up and takes off his outer garments. He takes a towel and ties it around his waist. Then he pours water into a basin and begins to wash people's feet.....What do you see? What do you hear? How do you feel? (pause)

Then, Jesus comes to Peter....You watch the interaction between Jesus and Peter...What do you see? What do you hear? How do you feel? (pause)

Jesus comes to you and wants to wash your feet. What do you see? What do you hear? How do you feel? (pause)

When he finishes washing, you notice that Jesus put his garments back on and reclines at table again. Notice what is going on in the room at this moment....Then Jesus says, "You call me teacher and master....if I, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet..." How do you feel about his message? (pause).... Then Jesus continues, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." How do you feel about his new commandment? (pause)

Now, spend time with Jesus. Talk with Jesus whatever is in your heart.....Stay with it until you are ready to close your contemplation. When finished, slowly come back to the present. Thank Jesus for the experience. (pause for 2 minutes)

Review of Prayer

✝ Invite members to review their prayer experiences. See page.....in their journal booklet for suggestion.

✝ Suggested questions to review your prayer and share:

1. How would you describe your experience during prayer? Easy? Distracted? Peaceful? Challenging? What was helpful? Not helpful?

2. When you put yourself in the story, which character or figure were you in the story? What did you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste?

3. What were some of your feelings, thoughts, and reactions that emerged during prayer? Were there any particular moments that touched or moved you deeply? Describe.

4. How was your conversation with Jesus? Describe.

5. Was there anything that happened during prayer that you would like to come back to? Any invitation from Jesus to go from here?

6. How did the prayer impact you? Anything else you want to share?



IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION

PREPARATION

- Read the passage several times and pick 3 points (words, phrases, images, thoughts, ideas, etc.)

1. PRESENCE OF GOD

- Place yourself in God's presence
- Centering/Quieting
- Imagine the composition of place/scene
- Ask for the Grace desired

2. MEDITATION

- Use the points and let the passage stir your imagination. Put yourself into the story: see the people, hear the dialogue and engage in the actions (*what do you see, hear, touch, smell?*). Let the story come alive as if you are there, experiencing what is happening. Stay with a point until you are satisfied and ready to move to the next point.
- Notice what resonates or moves your *heart*, that is, any feelings, effects, memories, desire emerging as you contemplate. If something draws your attention or touches you at a deeper level, remain there and let the insight permeate your experience.

3. COLLOQUY/CONVERSATION

- Enter into an intimate conversation with the Lord. End the prayer period with an *Our Father, Glory Be*, etc.

(adapted from Chi Ngo, SJ)

THE REVIEW OF PRAYER

I take a standing break after my prayer experience. I take about 5-10 minutes to review my prayer experience; I then journal using the suggested questions below, letting 2-3 of them guide my review:

- What did I experience during prayer?
- What feelings surfaced? Were they positive or negative?
- What did God's Spirit reveal to me? Any insights or clarity?
- How were God and I present or absent to each other? Did I feel close or withdrawn from God?
- Is there some point to which I am invited to return in the next prayer?
- Was the environment or my posture helpful to prayer? What changes can I make that would be more conducive to prayer?

I thank God for graces received and ask pardon for any carelessness on my part.

V. Closing Prayer (5')

Invite members to lift up their intentions.....End with the Taize song below

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2o27qpvfUc>

Ubi Caritas

*Ubi caritas et amor
Ubi caritas Deus ibi est*

where is charity and love, God is there



Spiritual Exercises / General Principles & Norms

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).

I beg for the grace of being able to enter into the joy and consolation of Jesus as He savors the victory of his risen life ... (SpEx 221).