

Thoughtful Men and Women of God

A Guide to Contemplative Prayer

By Anne, a lay apostle

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Introduction

It is true that in each time, God visits His people with the remedies for the specific time in which they live. God desires that we live as children of light, trusting in His providence and filling our minds with what is good, pure and hopeful.

We accept that the Gospel message of Jesus Christ has been personally entrusted to each one of us. Truly, God has hopes which He places in each of our souls. Each day, there is work that God hopes we will do for Him. Which tasks will be uncompleted if we are distracted? Who will remain unloved? Discouraged? Yes, apostles, each day we must say our Allegiance Prayer, telling God once again that we are on His side, and in doing so acknowledge to ourselves, 'Today, the Gospel message has been entrusted to me.'

Now, we are each unworthy proclaimers of the Gospel message, it is true. We accept our imperfection and allow the knowledge of our imperfection to liberate us. God can do big things with people who are willing to be little, like St. Therese of Lisieux. Yes, St. Therese offered us The Little Way and she offered us a blessed glimpse into her struggles.

Lay apostles, we understand that the process of personal transformation is active and dynamic. We must be fully engaged in this process every day. We must have goals, resolutions and actively imagine what holiness looks like for us personally. We must picture ourselves as

saints. How will we speak? Pray? Serve?

In terms of recovering our minds from the overstimulation caused by too much entertainment and information, we introduce our contemplation formula. The goal of this formula is to give us all a methodology for allowing Jesus to actively direct and heal us.

We know that Jesus wants to use our minds to do very important work in our souls. The Catechism teaches that there are three types of prayer: vocal, meditative and contemplative prayer.

This formula is offered as one type of contemplative prayer.

A Formula for Contemplative Prayer

Sit quietly for a minute or so. Close your eyes. Give your body a chance to drop into the action of stopping. All activity ceases. All electronic devices are silenced. You are a spiritual being with a temporary human body, created to do good things and God is hoping you will look His way for direction. You are doing exactly that right now. All is well.

While breathing, slowly, and deeply, count backwards from ten. There is no prize for getting to one fast. Go slowly. You are succeeding simply by your decision for contemplative prayer. You are a child of God seeking God and everything is exactly as it should be in this moment. Lovely.

When you get to one, say to yourself, “Body, relax. It is time to pray. Mind, be still. Jesus is coming.” Say this three times in a friendly, loving way. You would not speak to a child harshly. We are all children. We must speak to our minds and bodies lovingly.

Next, direct all of your attention to your soul. It is not just your brain and it is not just your mind, although these things influence and impact your soul. Your soul is the part of you that can never be caged. It is the space where you and God are together and can work together to protect your relationship with Him and to protect His plan for your life.

You can picture your soul as a large room, a heavenly workshop. Initially, if your mind is cluttered and you are

new to this experience, you can feel somewhat disoriented in this type of prayer exercise. It can take a little time. But you are committed to taking charge of your mind and using it to rest with God in your soul. God is committed to helping you succeed. We are guaranteed to succeed if we first begin and next persevere.

Your eyes are closed. Your body is still.

Here come the distractions! When the thoughts come, simply picture yourself picking them up and putting them on a shelf, to look at later if you decide you need to do so. For now stay in the spacious room reserved for you and Jesus. The room is so big and relaxed. It is such a relief to be there. It is safe. You were always meant to be here with God.

There is a corridor with rooms or areas where you can concentrate on certain projects with Jesus. When we are finished reclaiming our minds and learning to rest in our souls effortlessly, we will not need the structure and there will be blissful order in our souls.

Now we will talk about the kind of work we might do in each room.

Conscience

An initial area is that of our conscience. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls our conscience our ‘sanctuary’.

“Conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” –CCC 1795.

Here, in our sanctuary, our safe place, we look with Jesus at all the things we are doing well and take joy in these offerings. A good initial practice in the conscience is to look at everything we are doing right and resolve to do more of those things.

Next, we examine our conscience using the formula which connects our sins and mistakes to our humanity. We think of our sin and then we try to connect it to the wound or human characteristic which prompted it. It looks like this: ‘I felt rejected and then I did this. I felt angry and then I said this. I was bored, tired, anxious, hungry, addicted or what have you and then I did this, that or the other.’

We must examine our consciences regularly but not obsessively. Be honest and brief when examining your conscience. Resolve to confess your sins, do so, and then begin to move into the opposite behavior of the sinful behavior. Practice in your head how you will be successful in the virtue in the future. How will you be feeling? How will you behave? How might you be tempted again and when? What does God hope you will do or say in the face of a similar temptation?



Relationships

The next area we look at is the Relationships Room. This is where we ask Jesus what He needs from us each day in each of our relationships. This can be fast or it can take time if Jesus needs to show us that we are hurting another, getting hurt by another, or perhaps neglecting our duty to someone.

In this room, it is helpful to allow Jesus to show us the people in our lives. Perhaps we imagine pictures of those important to us hanging on the walls. Jesus may direct us to a picture of someone whom He hopes we will contemplate with Him. There is no doubt that Jesus loves each of the people in our lives and that He has hopes about how we will interact with them, particularly in our families.

How are we treating the people around us? Our spouses and children, for example, are primary relationships in our lives. And each parent should consider daily, however briefly, each child and how they are developing. After this we look at our relationships outside the family and into our circles of service with friends and at work.

This relationship area connects very naturally to the Forgiveness Room.



Forgiveness

If you are a human being you will need to forgive others and you will need to ask for forgiveness. That is for certain. It would be best for each of us to pick up a sign which says, "I AM IMPERFECT," and carry it with us into this room. Additionally, we remember that each person not only carries a similar sign but they may also have felt the weight of our mistakes. Our imperfection can delight those who love us, if they truly love us, but it can also wound them. This stated, it might be that the first picture hanging on the wall in the Forgiveness Room should be our own. Very often we find it hard to forgive others and that is because we do not know that we must forgive ourselves first. Sometimes, when others hurt us, we hate that we were vulnerable to being hurt. We are upset that we trusted. We feel foolish because we may have behaved badly, too, or in summary, we hate that we care.

My friends, look for pride in this area.

Jesus created us to crave love from others just as He craves love from us. Being vulnerable to being hurt makes us like Christ. Christ was vulnerable in His life and He remains vulnerable now. Truthfully, Jesus is vulnerable to rejection and to rebellion, often from His closest friends.

Someone commented to me recently, "A bird in flight is woundable," meaning, we can decide that nobody will ever get the chance to hurt us again but that will make us very closed off to love. We cannot preach the Gospel if we are closed to others. So we must forgive ourselves and then begin to forgive others.

Imagine a picture of whoever hurt us hanging on the wall of the room of Forgiveness. Maybe we have been hurt by many people. This might be difficult. It can be really painful to think about someone who has hurt us. Perhaps we study their image with Jesus, though. How does Jesus view them? He knows all of their hurts, all of their wounds. Jesus understands every injustice that this person has suffered in life. And while Jesus does not like that they hurt us, He has compassion for them as He has compassion for all sinners. Jesus also has hopes for this person who has hurt us. And so, we might pray for them. It can take time to forgive others.

Often forgiveness is a process rather than an event. Do not worry about this. Jesus will help us to recover from the pain and disappointment. But to be clear, we will forgive those who hurt us before we enter heaven.

Courage and Consolation

Moving to the room of Courage and Consolation, we can use our memory to recall those times when we felt sure of God. We can remember Scripture verses which consoled us, perhaps the verse from the Philippians 4:13 which states, "I can do all things in God who strengthens me". We can let Jesus draw our attention to those truths which inspire us. Perhaps we can list the things we love about the Church, the Sacraments, the Catechism, or the saints. Jesus will bring us into this room when we need to be there.

Temptation

The next room is the room of Temptation. We never stay there long. It's a place for a quick stop with Jesus where we acknowledge that our perceptions are imperfect and that whenever we are feeling outraged, furious, angry or totally discouraged, we may be experiencing temptation. Also, if we are contemplating sin, we know that we need to drop the temptation in that room and hurry quickly to another room, perhaps to the room where we study the work of the day.

Work of the Day

In the Work of the Day Room, we study our duty and possibly our schedule. What is Jesus asking us to do today? What areas may be difficult? Which people may be difficult? We have confessed sins in the recent past if we are adhering to our monthly confession commitment. We can treat those sins like something we push off from to proceed into sanctity. What is the opposite of those sins and where might we be able to practice it in this day? For example, if we have confessed being impatient with another, can we resolve to practice patience all of this day?

Here in this room we should decide where we will get our silence in that particular day. Our need for silence is compelling. We must treat it like food. We might think about where we will eat each day. We should also think about where we will pray and be silent.



Characteristics of the Divine Will

The last room is the room where we study the characteristics of the divine will as set out in the book *Lessons in Love*. These characteristics are: gentleness, kindness, generosity of heart, truthfulness, eagerness to serve, prudence and humility.

It is a good exercise to sit and study these with Jesus and allow Him to shine a light, perhaps, on which of these He would like us to study in our day. “Where am I letting myself, others, or Heaven down,” we might ask, “in relation to these characteristics?”

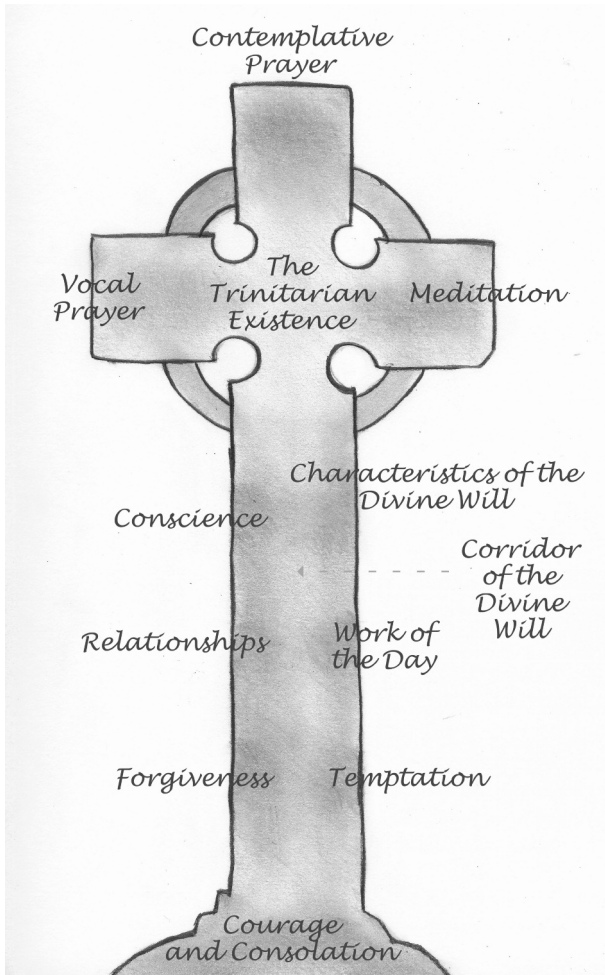
My friends, when we study the saints we have a tendency to see only those areas where God behaved supernaturally. We would do well to accept that the battles fought by the saints were very human, daily, grounded battles. Saints are ordinary people through whom God can do extraordinary things because they are willing to sacrifice and focus.

We must reclaim our minds, lay apostles. We must be as careful about what we put into our minds as we are about what we put into our bodies. And we must give Jesus a minimum of ten minutes each day for this contemplation exercise with which we can discipline our minds.

If we do this for Jesus, He will recover us and transform us with contemporary graces for this time.

This writing is an excerpt from the book *Transforming Grace* by Anne, lay apostle.





In these writings Jesus is calling us all to be His lay apostles. Here are the guidelines given to Anne, a lay apostle.

Guidelines for Lay Apostles

As lay apostles of Jesus Christ the Returning King, we agree to perform our basic obligations as practicing Catholics. Additionally, we will adopt the following spiritual practices, as best we can:

1. Each day recite the Allegiance Prayer, the Morning Offering, and a brief prayer for the Holy Father.
2. Eucharistic Adoration, one hour per week
3. Prayer Group Participation, monthly, at which we pray the Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary and read the Monthly Message.
4. Monthly Confession
5. Further, we will follow the example of Jesus Christ as set out in the Holy Scripture, treating all others with His patience and kindness.

Daily Prayers

Allegiance Prayer

Dear God in Heaven, I pledge my allegiance to You. I give You my life, my work and my heart. In turn, give me the grace of obeying Your every direction to the fullest possible extent. Amen.

Morning Offering

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you the prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation for my sins, and for the intentions of the Holy Father. Amen.

Why should I serve Jesus as a lay apostle?

On May 12, 2005 Jesus made a promise to all who serve Him as lay apostles:

Your message to souls remains constant. Welcome each soul to the rescue mission. You may assure each lay apostle that just as they concern themselves with My interests, I will concern Myself with theirs. They will be placed in My Sacred Heart and I will defend and protect them. I will also pursue complete conversion of each of their loved ones. So you see, the souls who serve in this rescue mission as My beloved lay apostles will know peace. The world cannot make this promise, as only heaven can bestow peace on a soul. This is truly heaven's mission and I call every one of heaven's children to assist Me. You will be well rewarded, My dear ones.

What about the Monthly Prayer Group?

Jesus wants us to form lay apostle prayer groups. He asks us to meet once each month to pray the Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary and read the Monthly Message. A prayer group can be as small as two people within a family or as large as hundreds in a church.

The Five Luminous Mysteries:

1. The Baptism of Jesus.
2. The Wedding at Cana.
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God.
4. The Transfiguration.
5. The Institution of the Eucharist.

The Monthly Messages

For seven years Jesus gave Anne a message for the world on the first day of every month. Now, each month the apostolate reads and contemplates one of these monthly messages. These messages are found on our website.

20 Booklets

Anne recorded twenty small booklets called the “Heaven Speaks” booklets

Here is a list of all these booklets:

1. *Heaven Speaks About Abortion*
2. *Heaven Speaks About Addictions*
3. *Heaven Speaks to Victims of Clerical Abuse*
4. *Heaven Speaks to Consecrated Souls*
5. *Heaven Speaks About Depression*
6. *Heaven Speaks About Divorce*
7. *Heaven Speaks to Prisoners*
8. *Heaven Speaks to Soldiers*
9. *Heaven Speaks About Stress*
10. *Heaven Speaks to Young Adults*
11. *Heaven Speaks to Those Away from the Church*
12. *Heaven Speaks to Those Considering Suicide*
13. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Do Not Know Jesus*
14. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Are Dying*
15. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Experience Tragedy*
16. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Fear Purgatory*
17. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Have Rejected God*
18. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Struggle to Forgive*
19. *Heaven Speaks to Those Who Suffer from Financial Need*
20. *Heaven Speaks to Parents Who Worry About Their Children’s Salvation*

You can read any of these booklets on our website www.directionforourtimes.org. You can print out a copy for free or you can purchase booklets to share with others.

We have these booklets translated into many languages. We also have some booklets printed without staples so you can send them to prisons.

10 Volumes

Anne reveals her journey to the heart of Jesus
in ten small books called The Volumes.

- Volume One:** *Thoughts on Spirituality*
- Volume Two:** *Conversations with the
 Eucharistic Heart of Jesus*
- Volume Three:** *God the Father Speaks to
 His Children
 The Blessed Mother Speaks to
 Her Bishops and Priests*
- Volume Four:** *Jesus the King
 Heaven Speaks to Priests
 Jesus Speaks to Sinners*
- Volume Five:** *Jesus the Redeemer*
- Volume Six:** *Heaven Speaks to Families*
- Volume Seven:** *Greetings from Heaven*
- Volume Eight:** *Resting in the Heart of the Savior*
- Volume Nine:** *Angels*
- Volume Ten:** *Jesus Speaks to His Apostles*

Other books written by Anne, a lay apostle
can be found on our website.

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