

THE REVIEW OF PRAYER

After a prayer exercise is over it is helpful to make a review. This is done by reflecting upon the experience of the prayer exercise just finished. The focus of the review is what happened during the prayer exercise itself: not so much what finished ideas you had but rather what heart-felt understandings were emerging - the interior reactions of the heart. Therefore, pay attention to the movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. Questions like the following may help:

- What happened inside me during the period of prayer?
- How did I feel about what went on?
- What was my mood, change in mood ... what feelings flowed through me ...
- What thoughts came in and out of my mind ... where was I drawn to dwell?
- How were God and I present or absent to each other?
- Did I receive the grace I was seeking?
- Is there some point I should return to in my next period of prayer?

During this review I thank God for favors received and ask pardon for any carelessness on my part.

This review is an instrument to help one reflect upon what was happening in one's heart during the times of prayer. It helps one notice one's interior reactions. Thus it enables one to be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and to go with the flow of experience. If you were to monitor yourself during the period of prayer, you might be interfering with the free flowing communication between you and God. Let happen what is happening during the prayer time. Afterwards take a look to see what the Spirit means through all this.

During the review make a brief record of these happenings. Note down those moments and experiences that strike you. With this you can more easily prepare for your next period of prayer. The Spirit may be inviting you to go back to a point where you were moved. St. Ignatius says one should remain quietly meditating upon a point until one has been satisfied i.e., until the movement has been completed (the insight completed; the struggle resolved; the consolation ended; the meaningfulness finished ... for now.) This written record is also a help for you to discuss your prayer experience with the spiritual guide. In addition, this practice in time will empower you to discern for yourself.

The review is not a continuation of the prayer. It is not a moving forward with the process of experience. Rather it is a looking backward in order to judge how to move forward when I go to prayer. So the review is not a notebook of insights and partial essays or letters. Because this instrument is different from the prayer exercise itself, it is helpful to symbolize the difference by separating the place where you do this activity from the place you make your prayer exercise.