

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS

It can be difficult at times to know that God is with you. God is mystery; most of who God “is” exists beyond our human capacity to experience with our senses or intellect. Any feeling of God present can be fleeting and elusive. Nevertheless, God is to be encountered in your prayer and in your everyday life: God wants to be known.

To help you to appreciate God’s nearness to you, you may wish to try a way of praying that has been in the Church for centuries – imaginative contemplation. When reading scripture, you imagine the scene and perhaps imagine yourself in that scene, with the characters in the story, with the Lord. In your imagination, you see the story unfold; as spectator or participant, you are entering into God’s “story”. It becomes part of your story: the Lord is with you.

Some pieces of scripture do not have a “scene”. In such cases, it can help to imagine yourself in your favourite place – somewhere that you feel comfortable, safe, content. Jesus, or God the Father, or Spirit, is there with you; the words of scripture spoken to you personally.

Hear your own name as you sit with God. Know that God's words, addressed to his people are addressed to you personally.

Isaiah 43: 1-5

But now, _____ listen to the LORD who created you.

_____ the one who formed you says,
“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.

I have called you by name; you are mine.

²When you go through deep waters,
I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown.

When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up;
the flames will not consume you.

³For I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

. . . you are precious to me.

You are honored, and I love you.

⁵“Do not be afraid, for I am with you.



STAYING IN TOUCH

The gentle repetition of a verse of scripture can be a reassuring way of staying in touch with God's presence in your day, however near or far-away God may seem to you. Repetition can lead to insight, instil calm, or provide a welcome anchor amid the choppy seas of life. Repeat the words throughout your day. Let them be your words to God. Let them lead you into the conversation you need to have with him. A few examples:

When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, I will let you find me. Jeremiah 29:13

God, you are my God, I pine for you; my heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you as a land parched, dreary and waterless. Psalm 63:1

Or Repeat these Latin words slowly and gently.

Velle Deum esse Deum . . . They mean . . . Let God be God.

Let the rhythm of the Latin (Veh-lay day-um ess-say day-um) lull you into restfulness and help you to slow down. Use the connection that Latin provides with history to remind you that you seek and find God in the company of others who have gone before you and shared the journey. You are not alone

GOD IN HIS CREATION

Go to your favourite outdoor place, be it a wind-swept beach or a bench in a busy city park. Look around you. Notice the colours, the smells and the noises of your surroundings. What grabs your attention? What surprises you? Remember that the creation that surrounds you was brought into being so that God could pour himself into it.

Everything that you see before you is full of the divine energy, is linked to God. As you sit there, know that the world we have been given is precious because it comes from God. It is ours to take care of, to keep in balance, to protect.

As you sit or walk around, remember also that you are unique among God's creation and that as a person you have a special dignity because God has chosen you for relationship with him. He wants to be close to you. He is with you, beside you now. Speak to him, in gratitude for his gift of creation, for the gift of your life.

Know that even if you do not feel his presence, he is all around you in every living creature and in you. He is listening. He cares for you.

MEDITATION ON THE HANDS

Look for a moment at your own hands. Perhaps cup them as you would when receiving the gift of Christ's Body during Eucharist. Recognise them as the hands of the Body of Christ: God's love made flesh

Yours are the hands that Christ will fold in prayer for others
Yours are the hands that Christ will use to comfort others
Yours are the hands that Christ will put at the service of others
Yours are the hands that will receive the Body of Christ
so that you can grow more and more in the likeness
of the Christ you bring to others.

Lift your cupped hands before you. Offer them to God. Know that these hands have been specially chosen to touch the people you meet in your world. Trust that, with your cooperation, God living in you will bring to fruition within you everything you need to use these hands and become the wonderful person he created you to be. He will be with you always; loving you; loving others through you.

Your closing prayer: Loving God, Bless the hands I hold out before me. May they always be open to receiving your immense love. May I use them to share that love with others so that they might experience through me your loving nearness. AMEN.

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Ever at play in his presence

*The Wisdom of God cries aloud:
The Lord created me when his purpose first
unfolded, before the oldest of his works.
From everlasting, I was firmly set, from the
beginning, before the earth came into
being . . .when he fixed the heavens firm, I
was there . . . when he laid down the
foundations of the earth, I was by his side,
a master-craftsman, delighting him day
after day, ever at play in his presence, at
play everywhere in his world, delighting to
be with the sons of men.*

Proverbs 8: 22-31

How often we associate God with duty and responsibility and, assume that surrendering ourselves to nearness with him equates to volunteering for a spiritual obstacle race of suffering and sorrow. Life is tough and we cannot deny the suffering that happens as a natural consequence of frail bodies and selfish desires for wealth and power. We cannot deny the presence of suffering in our world

However, this scripture is an invitation to savour Sabbath, being at rest with a God who created us for joy; who created us for play: a God who invites us to have life and to have it to the full (John 10:10).



The child in us remembers how to have fun. By revisiting our childhood memories, we might reacquaint ourselves with that child so that our adult selves can remember what it is to wake with delight into a new day, a day stretching ahead with all its promise.



If our childhood was not an experience of freedom and we can as adults try to create that playful space within us by using our imagination. We can call to mind our favourite place, somewhere we feel free and at home. Wherever we choose, we are free in that place for now, free from the worries of the world; free to be; to enjoy this moment.

Can we imagine God with us in our place of freedom and joy? Can we hear again his invitation to play, so that we might enjoy and *for this Sabbath moment* delight in his company, trusting that he delights in ours?

*Lord
To find a part of me where joy
resides;
Where each new day is unwrapped
gift from you;
Where I know myself as I truly am:
The source of your delight;
Beloved child.
Creator God,
Excited God,
Delighted God,
Teach me to play.*

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