

**The Way of Stella Maris:
*A Pilgrimage of Visitation in Daily Life***



A Guide for Pilgrims

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Introduction

You are unconditionally loved.
Sit with that for a while and consider it.
It is true.

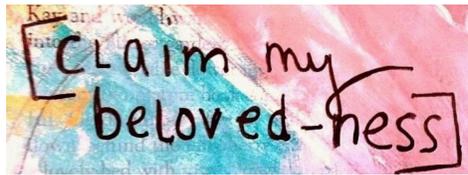
You did nothing to earn it but you are being invited to deepen in this truth.
You are being invited to encounter the living God who is the source of this love.
You are also being invited to encounter the true person you are created to be.

You are unconditionally loved.
Sit with that for a while and consider it.
It is true.

Let this truth dwell in you richly.
You cannot contain it. It overflows.
Let it flow forth through you.

*Come unto me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will
find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

-Matthew 11:28-30



What is The Way of Stella Maris?

The Way of Stella Maris is a six-day walking retreat pilgrimage that was started in 2019. Based on reports from the 57 pilgrims who walked this inaugural pilgrimage, it was such a wonderful and spiritually enriching experience we decided to make it an annual event. The 110km route begins at Holy Cross Church, Middle Musquodoboit and ends at Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica, Halifax. It traverses the beauty and tranquility of the Musquodoboit Valley before picking up a series of trails along the stunning Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia: The Musquodoboit Trailway, Blueberry Run Trail, Atlantic View Trail, Salt Marsh Trail, High Flyer Trail and the Dartmouth Harbourwalk.

***The purpose of The Way of Stella Maris
is to provide a walking pilgrimage,
centred on prayer,
for the renewed life of each other and our local church.***



Our physical destination, Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica, has been the seat of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Halifax-Yarmouth since the diocese was carved out from the Diocese of Quebec in 1817 as an Apostolic Vicariate becoming its own diocese on February 15, 1842. Interestingly, Catholics were not permitted to own land or to build a church as per the anti-Catholic English Penal Laws which were largely enacted in an attempt to dissuade immigration from France as imperial tensions remained high between England and France. These laws were repealed in 1783 making way a year later for the construction of the first church building on the current location of Saint Mary's Cathedral, named after Saint Peter. It was used until it was floated across the harbour to support the growing Catholic community in Dartmouth after the new Saint Mary's Cathedral was opened in 1829.

Given that the cathedral was named after the Blessed Virgin Mother, and the patronal feast day of the

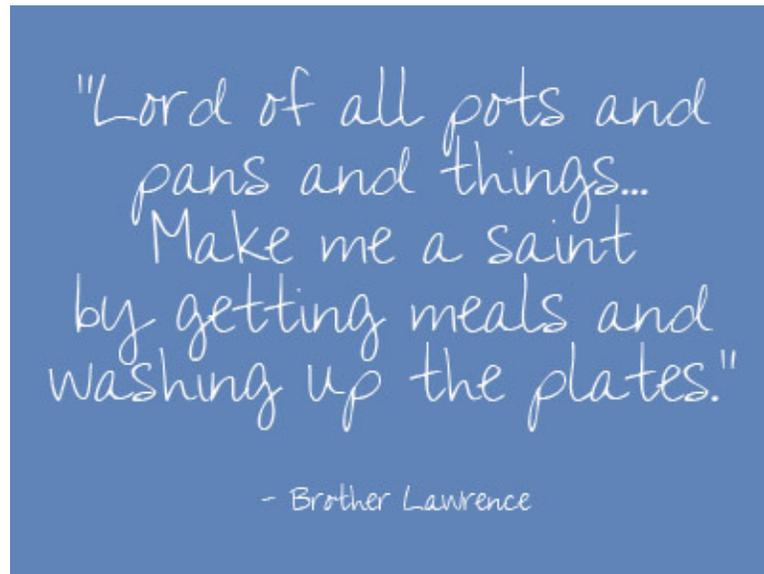
Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth is the Assumption of Mary, it was prayerfully decided to name our pilgrimage The Way of Stella Maris: A Pilgrimage of Visitation. Stella Maris is an ancient title for the Blessed Virgin Mary, which means Star of the Sea, referring in some way to her role as the guiding star for our pilgrimage through life toward Christ. Historically, under this title, Mary intercedes as guide and protector of seafarers, which seems poignant for a maritime province such as Nova Scotia. She is also the patroness of the Acadian people, thus the star in the Acadian flag, pointing to Mary as she leads us to know her Son more intimately. Mary's mother, Anne, is the patron saint for Mi'kmaq people, and, related to all of this, The Way of Stella Maris is "a pilgrimage of visitation," a celebration of Mary's 'yes' to the Holy Spirit as we consider her walking pilgrimage to visit her relative, Elizabeth. As such, it seems right to entrust our pilgrimage to Mary, under her title Stella Maris, in awe of her docility to the Holy Spirit and her gentle, guiding desire for all people to know the truth, beauty and goodness of Jesus, who is The Way.

As this booklet is being written, we are three months into the global COVID-19 pandemic and we have just cancelled The Way of Stella Maris as had been originally planned. This has caused the planning team to consider to surrender a little more deeply to the sovereignty of God and to consider Providence in this moment in history. Our pilgrimage in life in this period of history has us dealing with COVID-19, along with a myriad of other socio-political and economic issues. Our faith causes us to confront challenges with hope and love and so we pilgrimage through these historic times with the same faith, hope and love that sustained many before us.

I am reminded of my return to Halifax a few years ago after having had just walked the Camino de Santiago. I specifically remember the



process of unpacking my backpack and having a deep sense that my real pilgrimage was just beginning. I walked my first Camino de Santiago with my son, and I admit our backpacks were thinned out along The Way of Saint James from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela. As I unpacked my backpack at home, I experienced a longing to unpack the many graces I received along the Camino as I deepened in the reality that all of life is a pilgrimage from life to death, from this earthly home to our eternal home and the beauty of participating in the Kingdom of God which is among us along the journey.



The Way of Stella Maris grew out of this experience and knowing that one doesn't need to go to Spain to deepen in these graces. Likewise, one doesn't need to walk The Way of Stella Maris to deepen in these graces either. Sure, it's good to set time apart in a new location dedicated to God for retreat and pilgrimage, but they are not necessary to experience and deepen in the truth, beauty and goodness available to us every day as we pilgrimage through life. God is as present to us as we wash

our dinner dishes as He is walking across Spain. *Lord, grant us the ears to listen.* As such, the planning committee is pleased to offer The Way of Stella Maris: A Pilgrimage of Visitation *in Daily Life*.

What is The Way of Stella Maris: A Pilgrimage of Visitation in Daily Life?

Born out of the consequences of the cancellation of The Way of Stella Maris 2020, this *Pilgrimage in Daily Life* version is the fruit of praying about what God may be speaking into the local church, and each of us, in the midst of COVID-19. So, we have put together this seven-day pilgrimage in daily life spiritual guide to help each pilgrim set aside some time to consider their own pilgrimage through life. Just as Saint Ignatius of Loyola adapted his Spiritual Exercise for those who could not go to a retreat house for forty days, so too we have adapted The Way of Stella Maris to accommodate the reality of daily life and that God is with us. So, if you can't get away because of the normal demands of life, such as feeding children, cooking, cleaning and work, (or COVID-19!) you can still set aside time for the spiritual disciplines of retreat and the graces that flow from simply spending time with Our Lord. The Way of Stella Maris is based on the same logic as this great



Saint of the 16th century – making the discipline and graces of a retreat accessible to those who cannot get away for various circumstances. In our case, it's COVID-19.

What's the Routine for a Pilgrimage in Daily Life?

Firstly, there is some spiritual advantage for making a retreat in daily life because you will confront the necessity to build into your daily routine the spiritual disciplines that will sustain you throughout the pilgrimage but, also, throughout the rest of your life. Regular reading of Sacred Scripture, prayer, journaling and examination of conscience heightens one's awareness of the abiding presence of God throughout life. Our effort to integrate these disciplines into daily life will bear fruit at home, work and all aspects of our lives. I am reminded of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, where he writes:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

-Romans 8:38-39



Before the daily routine is discussed, the decision to participate in this pilgrimage in daily life must come out of your own freedom. God desires you to be free; free to deepen in who you were created to be. The seat of our freedom stems from our deep inner identity as beloved children of God as the source of our innermost identity. This core sense of our identity will help us keep God at the centre of our lives, for God is the source of our being and worthy of our complete trust. So, working out your

identity as *beloved* is a key to deepening in the beauty of your true freedom. Freely choose to deepen in the journey into the heart of God by taking one step at a time along this pilgrimage in daily life; it will impact your journey, one step at a time, through your journey of life.

Each pilgrim of The Way of Stella Maris, the *Daily Life* version, commits to the following routine for the seven-day pilgrimage: *I will change to the first person in the text so that as you read it you know the "I" being addresses is 'you' the reader. I want you to understand that this is your retreat, a time you have set aside for intimacy with God.*

Upon waking: I will bring to mind the image of Jesus delighting in my decision to make this pilgrimage in daily life. As I put my feet on the bedroom floor I say, "I am grateful for this day. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen."

Morning routine: As I wash, eat and prepare for the day I am reminded of my deep inner desire for the living waters of God's love to well up inside me so as to renew my knowledge of the intimacy with which I am a beloved child of God.

Preparation for the day: I go to a place in my home where I commit to praying daily. I read the assigned guided text and Scripture for the day. Having read the assigned text, made my desired graces known to God, and prayed according to the prescribed routine, I pack my backpack (see Note 1) including my two stones (see Note 2) and I begin my daily walking routine (see Note 3).

Return home: After my return home from my daily walking routine, I unpack, clean and relax prior to preparing my next meal.

Meet with other pilgrims: At 7:00pm, I join the Zoom meeting group.

Daily Examen: Before going to bed I complete a Daily Examen (see Note 4). At bedtime, I commit all that I am and all that I experienced this day into the merciful arms of God as I say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen."



*Lord, You have made us for Yourself,
and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.*
-Saint Augustine

Preparing for Your Pilgrimage

There is no member of The Way of Stella Maris Planning Team who wants to take credit for anything we are able to offer throughout this pilgrimage. It is a journey that has been well trod by many in our faith over the centuries. There is one source, however, that has been particularly influential, which was written by Father Kevin O'Brien, SJ "The Ignatian Adventure". Having made this 32-week-long retreat a few years ago, I am happy to admit that I still plumb the graces today. I have no doubt this retreat, and O'Brien's book, have influenced the planning for The Way of Stella Maris: A Pilgrimage of Visitation in Daily Life so I want to give credit to Fr. O'Brien.



Fr. O'Brien offers some helpful tips for those about to embark on a retreat in daily life which is relevant to the pilgrimage we are about to embark upon together. These suggestions will help you develop a rhythm for each day of the pilgrimage and are taken from pages 23-28 of the book:

- a. First commit to spending thirty to forty-five minutes per day in private, personal prayer. If you are not currently in the habit of praying that long daily, take some time before August 9th to start working toward that goal.
- b. Find a prayer place in your home or along the route you will walk. To help you emphasize the specific nature of your prayer, it is recommended you bring along an object that is spiritually meaningful for you such as a crucifix, an icon, or any object that will help you acknowledge that this is a dedicated time of prayer.
- c. In the time immediately prior to your prayer, try to avoid information or sensory overload. Turn off your computer, mobile phone or television and unplug for a while. Spend a little time transitioning from your daily routine to your time in prayer.

When you begin to pray, remember these tips:

Compose Yourself – Ignatius writes, "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make and act of reverence or humility." (SE 75)

- *Imagine how God looks upon you: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon you.*
- *Once you are in your prayer space, still yourself. Although it is sometimes hard to settle your mind, you can relax your body by breathing deeply and slowly. With each breath, you may utter a short mantra, such as, "God be with me," or "Come Holy Spirit."*

- *In prayer, the body and spirit work together. Find a posture conducive to prayer: sit, kneel, stand or recline in a relaxed position (SE 76). Finding a comfortable posture will keep you from changing it as you pray, which can be distracting. Also, be aware that you are not so comfortable that you fall asleep!*
- *Ask God to be with you in this time of prayer. In words that flow naturally, make a simple offering of your time, attention and energies. For example, Ignatius suggests one such preparatory prayer: "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty." (SE 46)*
- *In making the offering, you remind yourself at the outset that you are not thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.¹*

Pray for the Grace

Ignatius went from being zealous for the king through his military service to being gently nudged toward serving God who patiently and lovingly turned his heart toward serving the church for the greater glory of God. Therefore, at the beginning of each prayer period, Ignatius invites us to pray for a certain grace, or gift from God. Simply naming what we deeply desire opens us to receive the gift God wants to give us... If you find yourself resisting a suggested grace, then pray not for the grace itself but for a desire to want the grace. For example, "Lord, I'm really having a tough time asking to walk with you by living a more simple life; for now, give me the desire to want to do that."

Although grace is revealed in the particular gifts God gives you, grace above all is God's presence in your life. The Giver is the gift!²

Do the Prayer

After having taken some time to prepare for your prayer and to centre yourself on this prayerful activity, follow the instructions included in this booklet for each day. If you have any questions, please email info@thewayofstellamaris.com or ask the question when we meet each evening during the pilgrimage.

Close Your Prayer

Just as it is recommended to begin each time of prayer with a specific ritual or prayer, so too you should close your time in prayer accordingly with an Our Father or Hail Mary.

¹ Kevin O'Brien, "The Ignatian Adventure" (p.25).

² Ibid, p.26

Review Your Prayer

After your close your time of prayer, spend a little time reflecting on the experience. It is highly recommended that you keep a journal. I assure you, when this pilgrimage is over, you will be thankful you kept a journal!

Consider the following to help you journal:

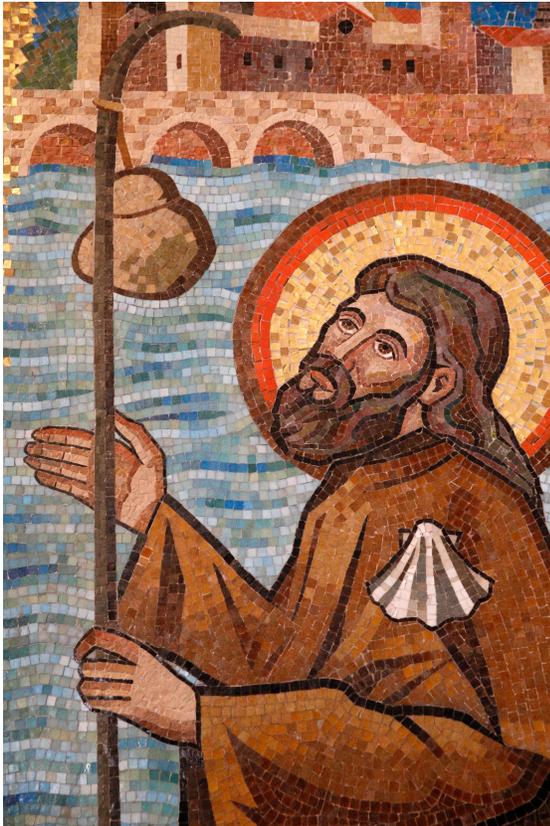
- *What were the significant interior movements (that is, feelings, reactions, intuitions, desires, emotions, thoughts, or insights)?*
- *What was the prevailing mood of my prayer: peace, agitation, excitement, boredom, confusion, calm?*
- *Was my prayer more about the head or the heart, or about both?*
- *What word, phrase, image, or memory meant most to me during prayer?*
- *Is there some unfinished business that I think God is calling me to return to during another time of prayer?*
- *Is there something happening in my life that is becoming part of my prayer? Do I feel moved to do something concrete in my life?*
- *Am I making the necessary preparations for my prayer? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that is getting in the way of my listening to God?³*

These questions are only to help you journal. You need not answer any of these questions, they are offered to help you go deeper as you reflect and write about your time in prayer. It's often helpful to journal as if you were writing a letter to God.



³ Kevin O'Brien, "The Ignatian Adventure" (p.28).

Note 1: Packing Your Backpack



One of the spiritual practices of a long walking pilgrimage is that you must carefully consider what you will carry. For long pilgrimages, it's recommended that a pilgrim carry no more than ten percent of her bodyweight. When one considers a pair of walking shorts, trousers, socks, underwear, sunscreen, toiletries and sleeping bag, one has to make important decisions concerning what to take and what to leave behind. This is an important aspect of the spiritual nature of a pilgrimage because, let's be honest with ourselves, we live in a period of history and a society that is, on the whole, materially rich. A pilgrim gives serious consideration to questions like: Do I need to take my nice outfit for evening dinners? Do I really need to bring [you fill in the blank]? There is so much stuff that we could take, and part of the initial few days is often ridding oneself of the unnecessary weight we carry. I remember throwing away the pillow I packed because the pillows provided at the albergues were fine, or I would roll-up my fleece and use it as a pillow. We carry too

much stuff; materially, emotionally and spiritually. A walking pilgrimage is an ideal time to renegotiate your relationship with *stuff*.

Given that this version of The Way of Stella Maris is a home-based walking pilgrimage, I recommend you apply the same logic somewhat in reverse. Beyond your snacks and water, you must decide what you will pack in your backpack and why? Will you take a copy of a travel Bible and make time to read it during a break? Will you pack your journal? Will you bring your camera? What about a book about a topic of spiritual interest to you? Maybe you'll take a special memento from something in the past that was meaningful for you? Maybe you will take a small icon or some other meaningful religious object to sit with at some point in your day? The possibilities are endless. Decide what you will carry and why you have decided to carry it with you.



Note 2: The Two Pilgrimage Stones



Pilgrims of The Way of Stella Maris carry two stones. These stones can be small pebbles or larger stones, depending on the desires of the pilgrim. One stone is intended to symbolize a specific prayer intention for the renewal of our local church. Many of our local parishes have been in the process of slow decline for a few decades, which has led to the necessity of closing some church buildings and a larger archdiocesan reorganization. This is a painful reality for many to confront but it must be confronted. I pray this is a time of re-grouping, repentance, re-discovery of the Gospel and re-evangelization.

The second stone is to symbolize a specific prayer intention for the pilgrim. It can symbolize a desired grace, a past hurt that you are struggling to heal from, a sin, a specific gratitude...or whatever you want it to be. For pilgrims who walk from Middle Musquodoboit to Halifax, they will place their personal stone at the foot of the crucifix in Saint Andrew's cemetery, Eastern Passage. What will your stone symbolize? Pray about it. Where will you leave it and why?

The stone symbolizing the intention for the local church is placed at the foot of a cross inside Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica. Please pray for the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth especially our Archbishops, Anthony Mancini and Brian Dunn, all priests, deacons and lay leaders in our local church. Pray for the renewal of our beloved local church. Find a place to release your stone as a symbol of releasing your prayer for the local church into the merciful arms of God.

Note 3: The Pilgrimage in Daily Life Walking Routine



This is your retreat, time you have set aside to deepen in intimacy with God. Whether you walk 30 kms a day, walk 1 km around your city block, or a walk in the hallway of your seniors' home is entirely up to you. The route you create is entirely up to you. God is with you, sustaining you and drawing you ever more deeply into His merciful embrace. God's abundance is not merited based on the distance you walk, but on the walk He did for you to Golgotha. Everything we do is in response to this great love.

The recommended daily routine, beyond the routine mentioned earlier, should involve time set aside from your walk to sit, read, pray, journal. If you plan to walk in an urban setting, find a bench to sit and pray. Likewise, if you will walk in a rural setting, maybe there is a brook or a meadow which seems like a good place to sit, relax and journal? Whatever you choose, be open to freely receive and to freely listen to God's promptings. Trust the graces that you receive along the way and their promptings throughout each day.

Praying

by
Mary Oliver

*It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch*

*a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway*

*into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.*



Note 4: The Daily Examen

It's important to spend some time in quiet reflection at the end of each day so that you don't miss how God may have been made known to you in some ordinary event that might otherwise go unnoticed. As such, you must take time to reflect on each day and then look ahead into the next day so that you may walk a little more intimately with Our Lord. The following is a five-step guide to completing the Daily Examen:

Step 1: Recall that you are in the presence of God and give thanks – I acknowledge that God is always with me as I sit in silence and take a few slow breaths and gently relax into an awareness of God's presence with me now. Imagine Jesus welcoming you with tenderness, gentleness and great joy. Make a sign of reverence, maybe the cross, and relax into an awareness of God's presence at this very moment.

Step 2: Ask for Help from the Holy Spirit – Ask God to help you review your day. Review the day with a deep sense of gratitude because gratitude is the foundation for our relationship with God. As is said, "Gratitude is the attitude!" Focus on the clear gifts of the day, the joys, any moments of awe and wonder as well as any of the small or simple things you are grateful for. Perhaps you are grateful for an unexpected greeting, a call from a friend, or simply a flower you noticed along the way or a thought, maybe even something you ate. This step need not be an hour-by-hour mechanical exercise but a gentle letting go to be led by God through your day. Remember, God works through the small things as well as the big things! Sit with these experiences and feelings of gratitude for a few moments.

Step 3: A second review of the day but pay attention to your feelings – There are many 'interior movements' that can help us have a deeper understanding of our day such as our feelings, emotions, attractions, repulsions or our moods that come and go. As you review your day, pay attention to any other strong feelings that arise. Did you feel particularly alive, at peace, full of joy, comforted, embraced, accepted, connected or, likewise, any moments when you felt anxious, angry, confused, sad, self-doubt, hurt, insecure, irritated, isolated, unaccepted or bored. Keep in mind that feelings are neither morally positive nor negative, they simply are feelings. What you do with these feeling brings the moral issues to mind. Choose one or two of the strongest feelings of the day and sit with them, pray with them, and ask God to help you understand what brought those feelings forward for you. Ask God to bring the graces forward and ask for the healing you may need.

Step 4: Give thanks and ask for pardon – Rejoice in the moments when you felt close to God and responded to God's promptings. Likewise, ask forgiveness for the times when you resisted God's presence and went on your own way. Offer a statement of gratitude for a deeper awareness of the day and the immeasurable depts of God's merciful love. Be aware of the seeds of healing that are being sown deeply within you.

Step 5: Resolve to listen to God's voice – Ask for the grace to better serve God tomorrow. Each person is called into life to become God's beloved. You may make a specific request to God for help in a particular area of your life where you need to trust God a little more deeply. You may end by having a conversation with God and close off the conversation with the Our Father.

August 9th (Day 1)
God's Unconditional Love for Me⁴

Introduction:

As I begin this retreat, I bring to mind God's unconditional, patient, kind, gentle love for me. Before I pack my backpack or take one step along this journey, I now spend some time simply considering that I am a beloved child of God. Each human being is a beloved child of God: this is the basis of our true identity.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: To become more aware of how God is near to me and to trust in God's personal love for me.

Text:

Psalm 139:1-18 (*or, if you prefer: Isaiah 43:1-7 or Psalm 23 or Psalm 131 or Luke 12:22-34*)

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

How does God see me? Am I open to receive how God sees me and how God desires intimacy with me? Who is God for me? Do I carry any broken images of God with me?

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

⁴ Kevin O'Brien, SJ, "The Ignatian Adventure", Loyola Press (2011), p.38. Fr. O'Brien has put together a fabulous Annotation 19 (retreat in daily life) to the Spiritual Exercises. To deepen in the spirituality that you will be introduced to along The Way of Stella Maris, I highly recommend this book.

August 10th (Day 2)
God's Invitation to Greater Freedom

Introduction:

Saint Ignatius said the Spiritual Exercises were intended, "To overcome oneself and to order one's life, without reaching a decision through some disordered affection." (SE 21) Spiritual freedom comes from a deep understanding of your core identity and how you are living it out in the world knowing your own strengths and weaknesses. Our desire today is to pray for a deepening in the freedom to be who we are created to be.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: To become more aware of my attachments that prevent me from loving God, others and myself. I desire to grow in interior freedom.

Text:

Luke 1:26-36 (The Annunciation)

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

Consider Mary's freedom to say "yes". There were many potential consequences for Mary but she chose to say "yes". How did Mary deal with her fears? What are my fears? How do I deal with my fears? What is the source of my fear? Does fear make the decisions for me in my life or do my decisions come from a place of freedom? How do I know the difference? How do I feel when I make 'the right' decision in spite of it having the potential for difficult consequences for me?

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

August 11th (Day 3)
Dry Bones and New Life

Introduction:

God desires to make all things new and God can bring new life to dead things. Even things that are very dead...and very dry.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: To become more aware of my attachments that prevent me from loving God, others and myself. I desire to grow in interior freedom.

Text:

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

What are the dry bones in your own life? Do you carry past hurts or hang-ups, broken relationships or a heart that feels dry as a bone? Will you ask God to take these dry bones in your life and to speak life back into them? What does that sound like? What does it look like? What does it feel like? God wants to breathe life into the dry places in your life; will you open up the places that need to feel God's life-renewing breath? Are there dry places in your life that you are afraid to ask God to enter into? Trust God's loving presence to heal these dry places.

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

August 12th (Day 4)
Obvious Love in an Oblivious World

Introduction:

You are now halfway through the time you have set aside for The Way of Stella Maris: A Pilgrimage of Visitation in Daily Life. The spiritual structure of the pilgrimage thus far has caused you to consider your true identity as a *beloved* of God. Internalizing this core identity and, out of your freedom, giving a 'yes' to God to work through you has caused your heart to swell with gratitude for all that God has done for you, for ordinary people like Mary, Joseph and you! You have come to realize that you did nothing to merit such a great gift, but that it is freely given out of God's abundance for you. Today you will consider working this out in the midst of the real world which can seem oblivious to this reality or, in some instances, hostile toward it.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: To know Jesus more intimately, to love him more intensely, and to follow him more closely.

Text:

Luke 4:14-30 (or Luke 17:11-19)

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

How the Spirit of the Lord moving you? How will you express this movement of the Holy Spirit within you? How will you deal with rejection? How will you keep motivated when met with ambivalence? How will you express your gratitude?

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

August 13th (Day 5)
The Inner Life Illuminates the Outer Life

Introduction:

"It is almost impossible to overestimate the value of true humility and its power in the spiritual life. For the beginning of humility is the beginning of blessedness and the consummation of humility is the perfection of all joy. Humility contains in itself the answer to all the great problems of the life of the soul. It is the only key to faith, with which the spiritual life begins: for faith and humility are inseparable. In perfect humility all selfishness disappears and your soul no longer lives for itself or in itself for God: and it is lost and submerged in Him and transformed into Him." -Thomas Merton

Jesus turns his face toward Jerusalem and, out of his own freedom, walks his pilgrimage in poverty, humility and self-giving.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: To become more detached from that which inhibits me from knowing Jesus more intimately, loving him more intensely, and following him more closely.

Text:

Luke 11:33-41

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

What is true humility? How do I understand my own spiritual poverty? What deprives me of my inner peace and how do I process these feelings? Do I want to look like I got it all together on the outside but on the inside I am struggling? Do I have the humility to admit it to myself and to ask for help?

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

August 14th (Day 6)
Release your Stone: The Kingdom of God is at Hand

Introduction:

The Kingdom of God as taught by Jesus is among us and accessible to us. It is not some distant place, but a way of living by and through relationship with God, which informs our relationship with one another. The Kingdom of God is neither all about the end of the world nor is it all about some sort of secular utopia, it is all about the relationships we are called into through Jesus and how we live that out in our daily lives.

Today, you will also place your personal stone at the foot of the cross, or in some place which symbolizing that petition you have been carrying and releasing it into the loving care of God.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: To become more detached from that which inhibits me from knowing Jesus more intimately, loving him more intensely, and following him more closely.

Text:

Luke 17:20-21 and Luke 6:27-38 or Luke 12:22-34

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

What is your understanding of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God? What is God stirring in you about how to live out of the Kingdom of God more intimately? What frightens you?

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

August 15th (Day 7) The Great Banquet

Introduction:

This is last day of The Way of Stella Maris and the first day of your renewed pilgrimage through life. We invite you to join us for Mass being celebrated at Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica at noon. As you prepare for Mass, take some time to reflect on your pilgrimage.

Desired Graces:

I ask for the following graces: For the wisdom and courage to live a life of gratitude with our hearts and minds fixed on Jesus Christ.

Text:

Luke 24:13-35 (The Road of Emmaus)

Pray:

Having read the text, a few times if desired, I take some time to centre myself as I consider the text in light of the graces I asked to receive. I am attentive to the words that I read and where my thoughts go. Was there a word or a verse that stood out to me? Perhaps the text created an image in my mind or a memory. Trust these movements and sit with them in quiet prayer. Let them come to their natural end and sit in silent prayer.

Maybe these questions will help you focus:

When have I failed to see Jesus along my journey? How do I desire to open my ears, my mind and my heart to see him more clearly in unexpected places? How does this impact how I participate in the Mass?

Close Your Prayer:

I conclude each time of prayer with a prayer that is well known to me, such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary. I make a sign of reverence by bowing my head or making the sign of the cross.

Review Your Prayer:

After we formally close this time of prayer we sit and take stock of our experience of this time of prayer. Journal about it. Write whatever comes to mind. It doesn't need to be written in theological language, nor does it need to articulate a concept, it is merely a reflection in your own words of your experience in prayer. Consider the interior movements you experienced during your prayer. What was my prevailing mood throughout the prayer; were there several? Was my prayer more in my head or in my heart? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that may be getting in the way of my listening to God? No one else will read your journal. If you don't want to share anything you have written with other pilgrims, don't. This is your journal.

The Pilgrimage of Life Continues

Thy word is a light unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Ps 119:105

May the graces you received along The Way of Stella Maris console you, be a light and a source of peace and strength as you pilgrimage through life in this wonderful but deeply wounded world.

May you take time to retreat into prayer each day for a renewed encounter with Our Lord who desires you know an abiding peace that surpasses all understanding.

During a visit to Montreal last year I found a prayer card near the tomb of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys. Here's the text of that prayer:

*Mary, Our Lady of Good Help,
Jesus, your Son has assured me
that you are also my mother.
With you, I come to praise and thank
God.*

*You taught Jesus to pray – teach me
too.*

*You hurried in joy toward Elizabeth –
help me reach out to others with the
same love.*

*You interceded at Cana –
teach me to do all that Jesus tells me.*

*You suffered with your Son:
stay with me always.*

*You were present with the apostles at
Pentecost –*

Be with us in the Church today.

*Mary, Our Lady of Good Help,
keep us close to you,
obtain for us steadfast faith,
unfailing hope
and a love that knows no measure.*

Amen.

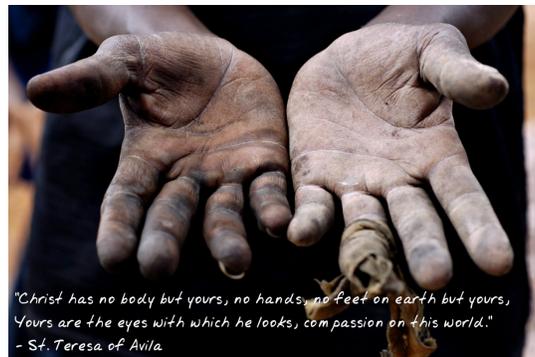


A Prayer by Saint Theresa of Avila

*Christ has no body but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes
with which He looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet
with which He walks to do good.
Yours are the hands
with which He blesses all the world.*

*Yours are the hands.
Yours are the feet.
Yours are the eyes.
You are His body.*

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.



Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed this type of daily prayer routine and you want to explore it more deeply, I highly recommend the following book:

"The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life"
by
Kevin O'Brien, SJ
(Loyola Press: 2011)