

My Day with God: An Evening Prayer

The day is drawing to a close. Work, family, chores, children, life itself have filled every moment. Or perhaps the day was empty, long and lonely. There may have been no time or inclination for prayer, but there has been plenty of time and space for God.

Where was he? How was he?

This prayerful reflection, which can be made in as little as ten minutes, has been used for centuries by countless believers. It can help to draw your day together and open your eyes to the intricate and beautiful patterns of light, shade and color that the Lord has been weaving through the fabric of your minutes and your hours.

The pattern of prayer is like this:

Stillness. Relax; be still; let the tensions of the day slip away from you. Know that you are in God's presence. He rejoices that you have come to him, however forgetful you may have been of him during the day.

Thankfulness. Remember with thanksgiving the gifts of God to you today. A meeting with a friend; a glimpse of deep joy or sadness in a passing face; a flower at the wayside; a baby's first steps; a grandparent's smile; a friendly shop assistant; a considerate driver; a moment of insight; a job done; a problem solved; a child's hug; a lover's touch; a warm memory; a rising moon; a falling leaf....Be still in the memory, and offer God your thanks in your own way.

Light-seeking. Ask God to help you see and understand how his love has been working within you today. This is a gift of the Spirit, and it has been promised to all who sincerely seek it.

Reflection. Reflect peacefully on what has been happening to you and in you today, trusting that your prayer for the light of his Spirit has been granted. Let him show you whatever he may want to show you. The questions that follow are only suggestions to prompt your reflection. If you feel drawn to a particular question, stay with it, and let God speak to your heart about it:

- How were you drawn to God today: by a friend, the beauty of nature, a book, a letter, or a gentle thought?
- Have you learned anything today about God and his ways in the everyday events of living and in the world around you?
- Did you meet him in fears, joys, work, misunderstandings, weariness, pain? (One way of meeting God is to recognize our need for him.)
- Did his word come alive for you in prayer, in Scripture, in liturgy, in his creation?
- Did you bring Christ to those around you? Did they bring him to you?

- Have you been a sign of God's presence and love to the people you met today? Did you come across someone who was lonely, sad, discouraged, or in need; did you recognize the need in their eyes; did you respond?
- Did you sense the presence of God in the wider world, perhaps in what you saw on TV or read in the papers? Can you bring him your feelings—your anger, your compassion?
- Did anything happen today to make you feel loved? Were you able to show love to another person today?
- Did you feel the absence of God in any part of your day? If so, why do you think that was?
- How were your moods today? What made you feel peaceful? Where did you experience unease or even turmoil? Reflect on what it was that seemed to cause you to react with these feelings, and open them up to God, for affirmation or for healing.
- Did you feel God calling you, prompting you, nudging you in any particular way today? How did you respond? Out of all your day's experience, is there one special incident or discovery that you would like to thank him for?

Sorrow. With hindsight you may realize that much of your reaction to the events of the day has been centered on your own kingdom. This may have led you to fail to respond to the cry of another person, or to allow your own preoccupations to take center stage and crowd out other people's needs. Your day may have left little space for an awareness of God or of his creation. Whatever inadequacies you find in your day's living, let them be there before God now, not for judgment, but for his Spirit to hover over the mess, bringing wholeness out of brokenness, as once that same Spirit brought creation out of chaos. Express your sorrow to God, and confidently ask for his healing and forgiveness.

Hopefulness. Look forward to tomorrow. Ask him to open your heart to whatever surprises it may bring; to open your eyes to notice him in unexpected places; to open your ears to become tuned in to the unceasing song of his kingdom. Pray for the sensitivity to recognize the Lord in whatever ways he may greet you and call you. Something of God lies still concealed for you in tomorrow's journey. Look forward to discovering it.

Even if there is no other chance for prayer during your day, try to form the habit of reviewing your day quietly in this way each evening (or at some other appropriate time). You will quickly find that you start to look out for God's presence and his action in places you would not have thought to look before. And his promise is sure...those who seek him will find him.

Excerpted from *Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality* by Margaret Silf