

Writing a Meditation On A Personal Experience

(Drawn from work of John Veltri, SJ)

Writing can sometimes raise our awareness of ourselves. It is a fitting mode of prayer. Here is a guide to help you get started.

1. How shall I call upon my God?

The first step in entering upon this prayer exercise is to reflect upon how you wish to address God at this time. What name or image speaks to your present experience? Friend, Beloved, Healer, Teacher, Mother, Creator, Life, Light, Father, Rock, Savior, Suffering Servant, Shepherd, Holy One, Unknown One, or some other name or image from scripture or your own experience?

Addressing God by a personally chosen name begins to focus your thoughts and feelings and to establish a sense of Presence.

2. State the heart of the matter.

Briefly write a general statement of what you intend to dwell upon. What's on my mind is ... What I would like to talk about is.... For example, you may wish to focus upon a relationship with another person, an event that has significance for you, a feeling of anger, grief, joy, anxiety, fear, hardness of heart, control, need to forgive, pain, etc.

Describe the context, background, and your own feelings about the situation in greater detail.

Begin to fill in the overall picture. It all started when ... It took place at ... My feelings at the time were ... My feelings now are ... This should be done freely and without censorship or judgment. "Irrational" feelings are not to be excluded.

3. Ask for what you want.

What I want to know is.. What I need your help with is ... For example, "Lord, give me insight into this relationship. Heal me of the hurt and bitterness I am experiencing."

4. Wait and listen for what presents itself.

After focusing your desire, wait in stillness for whatever comes to mind. What images, feelings, memories, or thoughts present themselves? Record without judgment whatever bubbles up from within. Keep returning to what you desire and then wait for whatever appears.

Don't follow long chains of associations. Keep focused on the matter at hand. For example, you might imagine the content of the meditation as the hub of a wheel. The thoughts, images, and feelings are like spokes connected to that hub. After each spoke presents itself, return to the center or hub and wait for another association to arise. Some of the associations may be

understood, others may seem strange and obscure. Some may clarify at a later time. At this point the important thing is simply to gather thoughts, feelings, and associations without judgment as these occur. Forming connections, seeing patterns, or achieving insight may well happen, but one should not feel anxious if this does not happen.

5. Dialogue.

Feel or imagine Jesus (or God or saint or wisdom figure) present with you. Begin to speak with one another in a totally open way. You may be helped by including the person whom you have been praying about and allow them to enter into the dialogue. Say what is on your mind, and then allow Jesus or the other to speak to you. Record the dialogue as it happens.

6. Remember and evaluate.

Review in your mind the sequence of feelings and experiences involved in the meditation. Record these. Then re-read the whole meditation and note the emotions that arise as you read and also how you feel about the experience as a whole.