

guía

How to begin the meditation?

1. Begin the meditation by taking a few minutes to put yourself in the presence of God. That is, free yourself of all anxiety and any distractions that might bother you, such as thinking about what you'll have for your next meal. A favorite piece of spiritual music might help you to get into the right state of soul for prayer, but as soon as you are there, turn off the music so that you can concentrate better on your Way. Spend a few minutes centering yourself just on the natural rhythm of your breathing, your steps, or the birds. Use the [notes on breathing](#). Repeat some short prayer that centers you on the presence of God or on your being present in prayer with God.

2. Consider the introductory prayer of the Spiritual Exercises (which is the principal aim of the whole experience) and the special petition for the day. [See the importance of this](#) in the attachment.

3. Read the introductory text that provides the setting for the key themes of the day's meditation.

4. Read the passage of scripture for the day, slowly. Then read it a second or even a third time, dwelling on various points of the day if you feel yourself drawn by them.

Don't inject a lot of thinking into your prayer. Many people are tempted to make lists with lots of ideas, and then to combine the ideas with one another, and so on. Instead of this, see if you can let God speak with you. Allow him to reach you through prayer. It is important to be patient with yourself and with God. You should be ready to walk in all tranquility until the images, the ideas, or the thoughts begin to filter out. Ignatius says that we should "pause wherever fruit is found" - a very useful suggestion. You may feel attracted or struck by a phrase from scripture or by some idea. Stay there as long as seems appropriate, savoring the fruit of your reflection. Distractions will inevitably arise - "I wonder what my friends are doing right now" - but just let them pass, without giving

them much importance or keeping them in mind.

It will help to observe a regular schedule for prayer - for example, the first hour of each day's walking. Or it could be a half hour in the morning and another half hour in the afternoon. You should be faithful to whatever schedule you decide on. Apart from the hours of formal prayer, you'll keep having other related ideas, which you should welcome. For example, in the long stretches by the canals of the Ebro River, there may be moments when by analogy you feel yourself "floating spiritually" downstream. Enjoy those moments of closeness to nature and to God, who speaks to us through nature.

But don't get obsessive, especially if you are meditating on something hurtful or difficult. A painful idea can get you into a vicious mental circle. Avoid this kind of trap, because it can exhaust you and turn you aside from your path. Sometimes this can happen even with "pious" ideas: Ignatius warns us that at times we may be tempted to stray from our path because of what appears to be a good idea. In other words, we can think about something that appears to be good, but in reality it only wears us down or carries us far from our intended route and the goal of the stage we are on.

5. End each period of prayer with the same formula. First and most important, we should be grateful. We should give thanks for the prayer time we just shared, for the communication that took place, for the other blessings of the day, and for the gifts of the pilgrimage, such as having the free time, the financial resources, the health, and the desire to journey as a pilgrim. End with an Our Father.

Write a daily journal. At the end of each day, or even after each period of prayer if you feel inclined to it, note down the key thoughts or ideas that moved you, the key images from the scriptures, and other meaningful details. A spiritual diary will help you recall and reflect on your experience at the very end of the Ignatian Way in Manresa. Or if you do the pilgrimage in stages, the journal will help you keep track of your experiences from year to year.

If you're on pilgrimage with a small group, you may want to share with your companions the gifts or the ideas that have struck you most, BUT it is not recommended that you do it every day. Furthermore, such sharing does not mean debating or "intruding": it should be a moment of communicating and of listening with respect to what God has been doing in the life of each participant. It is not a

time to be “playing God” in someone else’s life. The way of the Exercises is essentially personal, something that happens between “the Creator and his creature.”

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