

# Intercessors of the Lamb



## **JOURNALING WORKSHOP**

# Journaling

## A. What is journaling?

1. It is a method of communicating with God.
2. It is writing a love letter to the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Blessed Mother.
3. God not only wants to hear from us, but He also wants to speak to us.
4. This hearing from the Lord is helpful to establish an intimacy for prayer to grow and deepen.
5. There are many ways to listen to God; journaling is a tool to help facilitate this listening.

## B. How to journal:

1. Write to the Lord about your feelings, heart thoughts, prayers, insights, and questions.
2. It is important to journal our feelings.
  - a. Often people are afraid to go into their hearts and express their feelings because it may be very painful, but it is very important to let our feelings out.
  - b. It's not so much what we think, but what we feel.
  - c. We journal and tell Jesus where we are right now; we need to be honest.
  - d. Jesus will respond to our honesty and our feelings and Jesus will meet us in truth.
  - e. Don't be afraid of feelings because acknowledging them will hurt; rather bring your feelings to God for Him to touch and respond to.
3. If you are having trouble identifying your feelings, journal on:
  - a. What am I most grateful for?
  - b. What am I least grateful for?
  - c. These questions will help us to better identify our feelings.
4. Allow yourself time to listen to His response; record this also
  - a. When asking the Lord a question, keep it simple - only ask one question at a time.
  - b. Let the Lord respond to it.
  - c. Simply begin with whatever greeting the Lord may use for you.
  - d. Simply begin to write whatever comes into your heart, your mind, or whatever just comes naturally.
  - e. In this act of faith in writing, you will begin to very gently experience the movement of the Holy Spirit within you.

- f. Just let it come - don't worry if this is you or your own thoughts at this time.
5. Go down deep to where you feel that you are in Jesus' presence and then listen to what Jesus has to say to you.
  6. If you have trouble writing what the Lord says to you, you can start out by writing, "This is what I think the Lord saying to me today" and then finish the sentence.
  7. Prayer and journaling need to be a daily experience, preferably with a consistent time and setting to help you be free of distractions.
    - a. Allow a minimum of 30 minutes, preferably one hour.
    - b. Take time for adoration, praise, thanksgiving, reading Scripture.
    - c. Throughout your prayer, dialogue with the Lord; then journal.
  8. Possible journal starters:
    - a. Jesus wants to show us our true identity – He wants to show us who we are.
      1. Journal beginning with Jesus. "Jesus, when You look at me, tell me what You see. Jesus, who do You say that I am?"
      2. Ask the Father, "Father, who do You say that I am?"
      3. "Holy Spirit, who do You say that I am?"
    - b. Helpful Scriptures to begin journaling with to grow into our identity:
      1. Jeremiah 1:4-5 -- back to when it was just you and God--ask God, "What was I like?"
      2. Ps 139 -- in the womb setting the stage of God being so present.
      3. Gen. 1: 27 -- created in the image and likeness of God, not our parents; our identity should come from God.
    - c. You can read the Mass readings of the day, write down any insights or feelings, and then allow the Lord to teach you about His Scripture.
    - d. You can ask the Lord questions about things or Bible passages you don't understand.

9. Dryness in prayer:

- a. Initially in journaling one will find that the Lord has a lot to say.
- b. Once you get more depth in prayer, where you really know the Lord's voice, there will come periods of dryness and your journaling may slow down.
- c. Some days you may only receive two words, and the next day, pages.
- d. This encourages us to be very attentive to what the Lord says to us; our heart listens even more intently.
- e. If nothing comes in prayer, we can journal on "Why was the prayer dry? Was I present? Where were You, Lord?"
- f. Give God a chance to respond to the dryness.

10. Summarize the message each day.

- a. Weekly review these recaps. It will show clearly where the Lord is leading.
- b. Look for the consistent message.
- c. Make a monthly resolution on how you plan to do whatever the Lord is telling you.

11. Don't worry about spelling or grammar!

C. Possible reasons for blocks in journaling:

1. You may be blocked in your journaling because you may be upset with God.
  - a. If so, find out what is at the root of this anger.
  - b. Ask yourself, "What is it that I perceive that God didn't do for me?"
  - c. Get these feelings out in the open.
  - d. Sometimes there is seemingly no room for Jesus in people's hearts because there is too much hurt.
  - e. Bring your hurt to the Lord.
2. Misconceptions: Doubting that God wants to speak to me.
3. Not living in the present moment.

- a. Jesus accepts people where they are; begin journaling where you are at right now.
  - b. Our journal does not have to be grand things.
4. Fear of what God might ask of me.

D. Whose voice? Personal discernment / movement of the heart:

1. There are three spirits that we are constantly discerning: the Holy Spirit, our human spirit, and the evil spirit. Use a discerning ear to be sure that you are listening to the right voice.
2. Sometimes when we journal, our own hopes and desires can get in the way of our hearing clearly.
3. Initially, journaling may be 90% you and 10% the Lord, as everything is filtered through our humanity.
  - a. With consistent effort, journaling will gradually change to less of you and more of the Lord.
  - b. Our journaling comes forth from the silence and solitude so our journaling will change as we grow deeper.
  - c. Even in our journaling it is the action of the Holy Spirit Himself.
  - d. **Call upon the Holy Spirit** to overshadow you as you journal.
  - e. **Ask** for the gift of journaling! This is the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself.

E. This charism and journaling:

1. Everything in this charism is based on the solid foundation of hearing what the Lord is saying and what He wants to do. Understand that the Lord wants a deep relationship with you more than you want it with Him. You can expect to hear from Him.
2. Journaling is a tool that helps us get past all the clutter in our mind and the distractions of our daily life to hear what the Lord is saying to us.
3. Sometimes we forget what He has said to us; journaling helps us remember what He has said and encourages us to do it. We will have a record of our prayer and God's reply back to us. This is helpful when we are looking for direction, or when we are in desolation and feel that God never answers our prayers or speaks to us.
4. This will build up your trust in God.

5. Practicing listening to God's voice will help you in all areas of ministry (intercessory prayer, spiritual warfare, healing prayer, discernment, etc.), as we pray and do only what we hear from the Lord.
6. We are called to share what we receive in the silence and solitude.
  - a. We are called to prudently share the fruits of contemplation with others.
  - b. Sometimes we are called to share insights that we receive in prayer.
  - c. Often this witness will be through putting what we receive in prayer into action within our own life. Good witnessing is not telling about us; good witnessing is always pointing to the Trinity and Scripture.

## **Sharing Heart Thoughts**

*What does it mean to share your heart thoughts? Have you ever shared the deepest feelings and thoughts inside your heart with anyone else? Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." Now Jesus is speaking to you and He is saying, "I want to share My heart thoughts with you."*

**Leader: Read meditation slowly, pausing at each //**

Get comfortable, let go of all the distractions, and close your eyes. I want you to imagine yourself standing inside Jesus' heart.

What would it be like? // Can you feel His heart beating?

How would you feel? // Can you feel His tremendous love for you?

What would He say to you? // *Would He say, "I love you so very much. You are my beloved child. / / I died for you so you could live with Me forever. / / There has not been a time of your life that I have not thought about you or cherished you. "*

Once again, imagine yourself inside of Jesus' heart. It is so big that you can even stand in there! Can you feel His heart beating? / / As you can feel His heart beating let each of His heartbeats beat inside your heart. // Continue to feel these beats until your heartbeat and His heartbeat are one in the same beat. / / Can you feel how full of love His heart is for you?

Jesus says something to you now and you listen very closely. / / Open your eyes. Journal 1 or 2 sentences of what He said to you or what you experienced.

Once again go back into Jesus' heart. You can feel His heartbeat, full of love, so you are not afraid to be there in Jesus' heart, but instead you feel very secure and protected. / / This time be aware of all the things inside you that hurt. Maybe all the things that you are afraid of, or all the things about you that you do not think are any good, all the things that hurt you. / / Be aware of all these hurts as you are standing within Jesus' heart of love. You do not have to be afraid here. / / Give Jesus your hurts, one by one. / / Let all your hurts be washed away by Jesus' tremendous love for you. / / Give Him all your fears, all the things that make you nervous. Let His blood cleanse you and heal you. / /

Jesus is saying something to you now / / and you listen closely. / / Journal 1 or 2 sentences of what He said to you or what you experienced.

Now imagine yourself going back into Jesus' heart. // You can feel His heartbeat and His blood washing away your hurts and fears. // Rest your head upon His tremendous heart of love and just rest. // Let Him fill you With His peace and His joy. //

When you are ready, open your eyes but remain in the peace of Jesus' heart.

Whenever you feel afraid, uptight, or full of hurts, you can go back into Jesus' heart and experience His love and care for you. You can let Him wash away all the pain. Jesus loves you so much! And He wants to share His heart thoughts with you and He wants to listen to your heart thoughts, too!

**Leader: Instruct everyone to further journal this experience with the Lord.**

## **JOURNALING**

We will address how to journal, the reasons to journal, and the fruit of journaling. The first point on how to journal: Remember that you are a beginner and to simply, like Jesus says, be a child. There is nothing more important when it comes to journaling than that – to simply be a child.

We use Scripture, and Scripture only, to teach people how to journal. Most of our retreatants begin journaling with the Jeremiah 29: 11-14 Scripture. In this Scripture, the Lord talks about how He has our future planned out and it is a future filled with hope. For a beginning retreatant, we would simply have them take that notion of a future filled with hope and just put that before the Lord in a question of. "Lord, how is my future filled with hope?" And then to simply to take that question and give the Lord a chance to speak to it.

For example, if your name is Mary, simply say, "Dear Mary" and just listen in the silence for a moment to whatever comes into your heart and mind. Just simply begin to write whatever comes naturally. In that act of faith in writing, you will very gently begin to experience the movement of the Holy Spirit upon you. As you begin to listen, and as you begin to write what you feel the Spirit is telling you, just let it come. Write it. Don't worry about if this is you or your own thoughts. Don't worry about: "Is this really the Lord?" Just simply write.

When you have finished writing what you receive, you can stop and go back and reread what Jesus may have said to you. Without a doubt, one of the first things that you will say is, "I would never have written this myself." The second thing may be of how the Lord spoke of His love for you; His caring for you; His guidance for you; and the hopes that He has for you.

The main point we want to emphasize about journaling is, just be a child. Just ask the very simple questions that a two, three, or four-year-old child would ask. Ask these questions to the Lord, and ask in faith. Just listen with the heart and write as you listen to the response Jesus speaks to you.

Now, you may still be struggling, wondering, "Is this really me who is talking?" This is when it is good to have a spiritual director who you trust and who you can really open yourself up to one hundred percent, because this is a time to really keep nothing hidden. Bring everything into the light. Don't be afraid to expose your heart to the Lord because behind that, ultimately, there are healing graces for you. This kind of journaling will bring you into a whole new relationship with Jesus Christ, and with you and the community of believers around you.

There is another point in journaling where there has to be some type of discernment on who this journaling is for. Is it simply for you? Or is it to be shared with others? The answer would be both. There are times in your private prayer, where the Lord may be working on areas of sin and healing areas that may be somewhat delicate. He would not ask you to expose that to the larger

community. This would be something between you, the Lord, and your spiritual director.

Once a group of thirty men began to journal using Scripture. In the first few weeks it was very difficult for these middle-aged men to really open their hearts and to let down the walls that they used to protect themselves and to really expose their hearts to whatever was going on with them, whether it was family relationships, alcohol problems, work problems, or problems with the children. There came a point at about three weeks, when it became apparent most of them were journaling. The challenge had come for them to really share that word that was coming to them through their journaling with their other brothers. When these men were able to do that, openness came that they'd never experienced before in a group of men. They were able to cry together. They were able to laugh. They were able to know that they are not the only one who feels this way, that there are other people who feel the way they do. There are others who have the same fears; there are others struggling with challenges in their work. As was seen in this group, the strongest and most powerful part of the experience came out of their journaling because it was there that Jesus began to let them see themselves and the beauty of how to love in a whole new way.

When we first began this seminar, the challenge was there because these were older men who were very well-educated, very sure of themselves. For them to come into that experience of allowing the Lord to speak to them through journaling, it was very, very difficult at first. Again, they needed to come back and put the simple little teaching before them not to worry about where this is coming from, who's writing it, but simply just surrender that, and just write the simple little questions that a child would ask of Jesus. Just pick up your pen and begin to write.

We can't emphasize this enough. Do not try to think it through, but just let the Holy Spirit come into you. Let Him come into your hand and just begin to write, even if it's only an, "I love you." That is a perfect place to start. What would Jesus say to any of us if He walked through the door right now? He would say, "I love you. Peace be with you!" Look at what Jesus said to the Apostles when He first came back after appearing to them in the Upper Room after the Resurrection, "Peace." And that's what He will say to you, "Peace."

If you look at Scripture, many times Jesus taught in images. So often we may receive what we call an "image". It is not a vision, but is simply a very simple little picture that will come into your mind. Let's say it is of a lamb that is being led. If you receive an image of a lamb that is being led, you could simply ask Jesus a question. "Who is this lamb? Is it I, Lord? Where are You taking me? Where are we going?" Just ask that simple little question, and once the question is asked, stop and give Jesus a chance to answer, "Dear Mary, you are the lamb." Or maybe, "This is where I am taking you. I'm calling you to a new lifestyle. I'm calling you to holiness. I'm calling you to prayer." If you hear that answer from

Him that He is calling you to prayer, then you might turn around right there again and ask, "Lord, then teach me how to pray. Teach me how to really come into a new relationship with You, on a Heart-to-heart level."

There are so many places in Scripture where Jesus refers to the heart and this is the type of relationship we are talking about. This is the beauty of journaling because it will take you into that Heart-to-heart listening, that Heart-to-heart response, where you are really listening. There is a dialogue going on between you and Jesus – an active, living, breathing dialogue; one that gives life. One problem with most prayer is that it is usually a one-way prayer. We pray a lot of what we call "canned prayers". They are beautiful prayers, prayers of the Church - the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, the novenas, the Rosary. There are many, many beautiful prayers, but what we are trying to do here with the journaling is to get a conversation going on between you and the Lord.

The written word will take on a whole new power because all of us hear from the Lord in our thoughts, in our dreams, in many, many ways, even from each other; but the problem is that we lose it. We forget about it and we go on to something else, but the beauty of journaling is that that word is always there - you can go back. Something might happen a week later that the Lord will remind you, "I spoke to you about this" and you will go back and review your journal and you will see that this is really a confirmation of how Jesus is speaking to you. That in itself will give you the confirmation that you need that you are really hearing from Jesus, and that's when the journaling becomes so exciting. That's when it goes to a Heart-to-heart communication because you will know that Jesus is responding to you, and how precious you are in His eyes.

When you begin to journal, the best thing to do is simply pour yourself out. We will ask a lot of questions initially. "Lord, teach me to pray. How do I pray? Am I really praying?" One of the most important things for people who are beginning to journal, because they ask five, ten, fifteen questions in a row, is to stop and ask one question at a time. When we throw out three or four questions and the Lord begins to try to respond, there can come in a little confusion because we really don't know what He might specifically be responding to.

So ask one little question at a time. Once He answers that question, go back and review it, because what Jesus does in journaling will be the same thing He does in Scripture. Someone will ask Him a question and He will answer it. But if you look at Scripture closely, in Jesus' answer there is always another question that He is putting before the person who asked Him the question, to draw them deeper, to get to the very core of what they really want to talk about. A lot of times we want to talk with Jesus about things, but we're afraid to really expose ourselves totally. In this beginning process of learning how to journal, the very gentle Shepherd, Himself, will continue to draw you there through His answers. But again, have that insight to constantly go back and say, "Lord, by Your answer, what are You really showing me?" Look for the very next question which will draw you deeper.

When we get into healing, especially healing of the heart where there has been a lot of pain, these are probably the most difficult areas for people to really open up and begin to talk to the Lord about. Interestingly enough, when we get into this type of healing, we find that we project a lot of the pain upon the Lord Himself. We need to be honest enough to talk to Jesus about that, because from the very beginning of our life we have known the Lord. We have known God and so we know how He takes care of us; how He watches over us; how He's responsible for us. But when these pains come, we blame Him. We really do. And so what we need to do is to have the courage to talk about that with the Lord. This is a very good thing to do because it is true, and Jesus can handle the truth. If there is anything there that is hidden, if you want to really see the fruit of journaling, then simply ask the Lord about these types of pains. "Where were You, Jesus, when this happened to me? Why weren't You there to protect me?" And again, give the Lord a chance to respond to that and He will tell you. He will give you the information you need that will really bring forgiveness, bring healing and bring you into wholeness of self.

Now as you begin to journal, initially, you will find that the Lord has a lot to say. As you begin to get more depth in prayer, where you really begin to know the Lord's voice, there will come times when a dryness may set in, and the journaling may slow down. Some days, there may be only two words. Some days, there may be none at all, and the next day, there may be pages. I think that is the beauty of this kind of prayer because it makes us very attentive to what the Lord is saying. It makes us listen with the heart even more deeply. If we are listening that closely, it is in the desert where we have to sit in the silence and learn how to be silent, that the most beautiful type of prayer comes forth. We really come into a trust and a faith in the desert that we are really being led and guided by the Spirit.

There are the times when a flood of information just begins to come on several different levels. Dialogue with the Lord about what's to come in the future or as far as some problems you may be having in your own life. Journal this with Him. The beauty of it is mind-boggling. There are times when you just put your journal away, and a week or two down the road something happens in a situation and you get the reminder, "I think the Lord spoke about this." You go back and review your journal and sure enough, time after time, exactly what He said would happen is exactly what happens.

One of the most important things about journaling and about prayer in itself, is that it is truly a discipline, a discipline of self. We have to allow a minimum of a half hour, and hopefully an hour, of prayer daily where you take some time for praise and thanksgiving, dialogue and journaling, always taking one or two points that may have come in the prayer and journaling that out. If your prayer is dry, if nothing came at all, try to journal that out in itself. "Why was the prayer dry? Was I present? Where were You, Lord?" Just give Him a chance to respond to the dryness.

The challenge: Just pick up your pen and ask one simple little question and give the Lord a chance to respond to that. We all have to make that step in faith and just begin to write. Become a child. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is for children. If you want to know what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, then be a child. Begin to write and Jesus will tell you what is waiting ahead in His Kingdom for you!