

PRAYER OF PRESENCE

THE WATCHMAN

Intent of this Exercise:

- ✓ *To realize that God is ever present within us.*
- ✓ *Only those who wait for Him will feel His presence.*

The Story.

There was a castle lost in a desert. From time to time a lonely caravan halted there. Life in the castle was very dull; one day was hardly different from any other day.

One day the King sent a message: "Be prepared, we have been told that God will come to visit our country. Someday or other he will halt at the castle. Make ready to receive him."

The authorities in the castle followed the instructions of the King. They tidied the place; they painted the old walls of the castle and ordered the watchman to be very alert for any signs of the coming of God. The watchman felt very proud. Never before, had such an important mission been entrusted to him.

The watchman for ever alert, stood erect on the top on the watch-tower, night and day, scanning the distant horizon. "Time and again he questioned himself: "How must God look like? Will he arrive with a large retinue? Will he come accompanied by a powerful army?" Absorbed in such thoughts, the faithful watchmen spent endless weeks and months for ever waiting and watching for the arrival of God.

After a long time, the officers and soldiers in the castle forgot all about the visit of God. Only our watchman full of hope still stood like a pillar of faith on the watch-tower waiting and waiting for his God.

Some times weary and tired he muttered: "Will I ever be able to see God when he comes? Why does he take so long to arrive? Will he ever care to meet a poor man like me?" However, our watchman, faithfully, went on scanning the vast desert sky-line with his weary and failing eyes.

After a long time, he could hardly move or see or hear. He felt that his end was near. In sadness he spoke to God: "Oh, God, I spent all my life waiting for you. I wanted to see you but you did not come. Will all my hopes fail me?"

Instantly, close to him, nay within him he heard a reassuring voice: "Can't you recognize me? Can you not see me? I am here next to you, inside you, in your very heart!"

Full of joy the watchman exclaimed: "So, my God, have you finally come? What's wrong with me? I have not heard or seen you coming! Sweetly and reassuring the voice whispered: "From the very moment you made your mind to wait for me, I have been

close to you, nay, I have been within you! Don't you know the secret? Only those who wait for me see me!"

An unspeakable peace filled the watchman's heart. Quietly, he replied: "So, you were within me whilst I was looking for you outside me? What a blunder I did! "Now, that I now the secret, I may go in peace!"

An adaptation of a Spanish audiovisual " El Vigia"

POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does the castle; the people living in it and the watchman stand for? Who and what do they represent?
2. Can we really find God in life? Where? How? What have we to do?
3. Have we to wait long for God to come to dwell in us? Why?
4. Who are those to whom God makes his presence felt first? Why?
5. What are the attitudes necessary to receive God?
6. If God is apprehended with our inner vision, how would you call that vision?
7. Can you find New Testament texts confirming the lessons of the story? *The Magi, The Old Man Simeon, Anna the Prophetess, Our Lady, Peter, Nathanael, 'the Good Thief, The Centurion at the foot of the Cross and others*
8. Has this story been enacted in your life? Have you ever felt the presence of God within you? When? How? How many times? Explain. Share with group.

APPENDIX

Prayer of Presence

A method of prayer to experience God's presence within you

*This appendix is an excerpt from the book "You Can Pray" of Fr. Peter Ribes, s.j
. published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash*

God is ever Present to Us

Introductory Note:

- ✓ *This prayer method is based on the words of St. Paul (Acts 17:22-28) to the Greeks at the Areopagus of Athens; "In Him We Live, In Him We Move, In Him We Exist"*
- ✓ *Through this sprayer method we strive to experience the presence of God in our very act of 'living', 'moving' and 'existing.'*
- ✓ *This prayer method may help you to become 'contemplatives in action.' It is a door to the prayer of silence.*
- ✓ *This Prayer Method can be used both for personal prayer as well to direct others in groups.*

Introduction:

- Sit down. Close your eyes...
- Relax. Some relaxation and /or breathing exercise may help.
- For a while, stay alone in reverent silence.

- Pray to the Holy Spirit for assistance. A hymn to the Holy Spirit will help.

Scripture Meditation: Reading and reflect on Acts 17:16 – 22 and .17:22-28.

Leading Thoughts:

- Often enough we look for God outside ourselves, when actually He is within us!
- We search for him in temples and holy places when he is dwelling in the very depths of our hearts (Acts 17: 24). We are the living temples of God.
- We look for him in images and idols made by man (Acts 17:29) when in reality we are the living images of God! (Acts 17:/25).
- God is not far from us (Acts 17:27) In truth, he dwells in us, in the innermost recesses of our being. There we shall find Him!
- Since God is forever present within us, it should be easy to find Him and communicate with Him, in other words to pray.
- If we look inward and open the eyes of our mind and heart, lo and behold, we shall find ourselves in the presence of God!
- We have to become aware of the profound truth that **our very “living”, our very “moving,” our very “existing” place us in the presence of God!**

PART ONE; “In God We Live”

Feeling God’s presence in the Beating of your heart.

- Place your right hand on your chest on the top of your heart, press it tight.
- Feel the beating, the rhythmical throbbing of your heart...
- Be aware that your heart beats because of God’s mysterious and active presence.
- Your heart was made for God, and in God alone it must rest!
- Feel the presence of God within you!
- Stay on, as long as you can with this awareness of God’s dwelling within your heart.
- Every beat of your heart tells you that He is there and that He loves you!
- Rhythmically, keep repeating, **“Lord I believe - You are in my heart!”**

Feeling God’s Presence in your Breathing.

- Become aware of your breathing. Rhythmically breathe in, breathe out
- Breathing is a sign of life.
- Keep breathing rhythmically for a while. Every time you breathe in, imagine that you **take God in...**Every time you breathe out, say: **“Thank you Lord”**
- As you keep breathing in and out feel God’s presence
- God is the breath of your breath, the soul of your soul, the spirit of your spirit. He sustains your life.
- Stay with this feeling of God loving presence...
- As you breathe in and out keep saying: **“Lord I know – You are within me!”**

PART TWO; “In God We Move”

Feeling God’s presence in your Sensations, Gestures and Movements.

- While sitting down, gently and slowly move your arms upwards
- Keep the palms of your hands open in sign of supplication.
- Remain in this posture for a while

- Next, move your arms down. Clasp your hands. Rub one against the other.
- Be aware of your sensations. Stay with them
- Feel the presence of God in every gesture and sensation of yours.
- Next, with ease and grace move your body as you please.. You may stand up, bow, kneel, sit, prostrate, spin your arms, etc.
- Be aware of your movements. Feel the presence of God in every one of them.
- Say to yourself “ In Him I move, in him I feel”
- Stay a while with this awareness of God’s presence in your gestures and movements.
- Finally, standing or sitting with your eyes closed keep telling God:
- “It is in you, my God, I move. You are in my arms, you are in my hands, you are all over me” **“My God, I sense you. You are present all over me!”**

PART THREE; “In God We Exist”

Feeling God’s Presence in your very Existing.

- Sit down. Remain absolutely still.
- Do not move, just exist, and just be!
- In this motionless state think:
- Even if I do not move or speak or do a thing, still I am!
- I exist because someone else who exists holds me in being. It is God who holds me in the palm of His hand.
- Reflect on the following:
- If now, God withdrew his hold and his presence from me, instantaneously I would cease to be! I would turn into nothingness!
- God’s presence in me and my very existence are inseparable! As long as I exist, God is within me!
- God’s presence within me is the cause of my existence. My very existence postulates and assures me that God is present within me.
- Be conscious that God is holding you in the hollow of his hand. Stay quiet for a while...Keep saying:
 - “Lord, You are in me, and I in You”**
 - “Lord, in you, I truly am.”**
 - “Lord I am what I am because you are in me!”**
 - “I am, because you loved me into being”**

CLOSURE:

- Thank God for his continual and never ceasing presence within you.
- In silent adoration pause reverently before God, whose very presence within you, not only sustains you now in existence, but is also the promise of your eternal and never ending existence in His presence in heaven.
- End by reciting The Our Father.
- Singing of an appropriate: hymn. :(Suggested Hymns)

Abba, Father	I will never forget you, my people..
Holy God we praise thy name	Just like a Child.
Cause me to come	Day after day