



MEETING CHRIST IN PRAYER

Dear *Meeting Christ in Prayer* Participant:

Welcome to *Meeting Christ in Prayer: An 8-Week Life-Enriching Experience!* Thank you for choosing to participate in our journey together toward personal spiritual renewal through daily guided prayer.

As our first meeting grows closer, perhaps you are wondering just what this program is all about—how it works, what is expected of you, and what you can expect to get out of it. Or perhaps you are concerned about the time commitment involved, praying in front of others, or sharing your life experiences with other people. With these issues in mind, allow me to offer some further information that may respond to your questions.

First, please be assured that you will be entering into a welcoming, trust-filled environment where you can enjoy the experience that is *Meeting Christ in Prayer*.

Meeting Christ in Prayer is modeled on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which is a tried-and-true method of spiritual renewal. By means of prayer, reflection and faith sharing, *Meeting Christ in Prayer* will introduce you to various ways of praying and will help you to form regular habits of prayer, providing you with an opportunity to meet Christ anew and to experience support in the Christian life in a new way.

No prior experience in praying with others is needed for you to enjoy and benefit from *Meeting Christ in Prayer*. What the program asks of you is your personal commitment to spend at least twenty to thirty minutes in daily prayer, to keep a journal of thoughts and reflections during this prayer time, and to attend eight, one-hour-and-fifteen-minute weekly meetings of small-group prayer, discussion, and faith sharing.

The seven weeks of simple daily prayer exercises that you will practice on your own are described in your Participant Guide on pages 173–177. All that is requested is a commitment on your part to practice these exercises daily. The participant guide also includes the plan for each weekly meeting.

Each week for eight weeks, you will meet in a small group of six to ten participants to pray together and grow in faith. At these meetings, members will be invited to share a significant experience they had during their prayer or daily life that week—something that moved or challenged them, caused a new awareness, or indicated a connection between their life and the life of Christ. This particular type of discussion—commonly known as “faith sharing”—is a form of spiritual conversation and is the core of the weekly meeting. Sharing is voluntary but highly encouraged. In addition, material will be presented to prepare members for the upcoming week’s daily prayer exercises. Following the meeting, there will also be a chance for members to socialize briefly.

These meetings may feel different from other discussion sessions, book clubs, or adult education you might have experienced in the past. The sessions are a time of prayer—of connection with our Creator—and of interior reflection to help us discern where we can recognize God’s grace in our daily lives.

In order to allow for personal sharing, all participants are asked to refrain from using our time together for debating on any issues of theology or doctrine. The goal is to help participants draw nearer to God in friendship. With this assurance, all members of the group should feel free to speak from their own experience without fear of conflicting opinions. At the same time, however, all participants are encouraged to reflect on one another’s faith sharing, as this is often a wonderful way to gain new perspectives on events and teachings in Scripture, to learn new prayer techniques, or to be inspired by the faith of others.

Though faith sharing is essential to the dynamics of the group, participants should not feel obligated to share every week. At the same time, members of your group may occasionally share some very personal thoughts and experiences. In order for this to be a safe environment in which participants can feel comfortable sharing personal experiences, trust between members is *essential*. A promise of respect and confidentiality is therefore expected of everyone in the group.

Regular attendance at meetings is recommended, however, if you miss a meeting, you can keep up with the group by using your participant guide. For our first meeting together, please bring with you the following:

- your *Participant Guide*
- a Bible
- a spirit of openness, support, and generosity

It’s that simple. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me via the information provided below. I look forward to our time together.

We meet: _____.

Sincerely,

Your *Meeting Christ in Prayer* Group Leader

[Your parish, school, or organization]

P.S. A map to the location of our first weekly meeting is included for your convenience.’