

Forty Weeks ~ Sacred Story



Week Twenty Six Encouragements & Wisdom

E & W reflections are additional helps for your Sacred Story prayer journey. Reflect on them ahead of your prayer exercises for the week or outside of your fifteen-minute prayer windows during the week.

Finding Your Personal Paraphrase of the *Sacred Story* Chapters

The prayer exercises for each of the chapters of *Sacred Story* prayer were designed to help you understand the themes and apply them to your life. I have printed all these chapters in full below. You now have all of them in one place for future reference.

However, at this point, it is important that you personalize each of the chapters (Creation, Presence, Memory, Mercy and Eternity) so they become a living prayer in your own heart.

You might be interested to know that in my personal prayer I do not refer to the single sentence, prelude or illuminative grace any more than once or twice a year. I have learned the themes by heart. Now when I say one of the words, like “creation”, I have a number of things that might come into my mind/heart. Like: “All is gift” or “I am alive by God’s love” or “Am I grateful for what I have” or “Thank you God for ‘x’.” Knowing personally what “creation” means to me, I am able to let the idea permeate my daily experience as well as my Sacred Story prayer time. I have similar spiritual thumbnail sketches for each of the chapters in *Sacred Story*.

I might be walking from my office to the Jesuit community for lunch and be amazed by the beautiful summer day. I will say a “Thank You” to God for the beauty of creation. Or if I am annoyed by something I might say to myself “Bill, why are you not grateful now?” I find myself spontaneously saying these and similar things throughout my day. This is what happens after praying with these themes day in and day out. They become a living prayer.

And when I come to the time of my focused prayer, it becomes easier to for my heart to remember elements from my daily thoughts/reflections. Thus, the day's experiences of creation, presence, memory, mercy and eternity bleed into the time of prayer. And times of prayerful reflection move me back out into the day. Perhaps this is what St. Paul meant when he tells us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:15).

I would suggest that you look over the prayer exercises below and do what I have done. Find two or three short paraphrases for each of the five chapters in *Sacred Story*. Write them down in your journal. Let them become a living presence in your day and in your prayer. Make Them Your Own!

Remember how I asked you to find the personal name for God that most readily unlocked your heart? Do the same for these chapters of Sacred Story prayer. Find the touchstone phrases that will help you wake up in the midst of your day to see your life. This will help you focus on God's love and your faith in all aspects of creation, presence, memory, mercy and eternity.

CREATION

*I believe God created everything in love and for love; I ask for **heart-felt** knowledge of God's love **for me**, for **gratitude** and for the **general and particular graces of this day**.*

Prelude: God created the universe—all persons and all things—in love and for love. *Everything*, and every person in creation is linked in Love, through Christ, in whom and for whom everything was made. We are made to reverence God and each other, and to delight in creation as both Divine gift and support for our lives. The God of all knows me personally and loves me, even before I was knit in my mother's womb. So fearfully and wonderfully made am I! (Ps. 139:13-14). My gratitude increases as my awakening to these truths is illuminated.

Illuminative Grace: Here I ask for what I desire—to know and feel God's tender and passionate love, and to know myself as beloved—a treasure of God's heart in the grand symphony of creation. I pray for the grace of gratitude. I pray to know in particular by whom I am created and why I am loved. I pray to know and believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

PRESENCE

*I believe God is **present** in **each moment** and **event** of my life, and I ask for grace to **awaken, see and feel** where and how God is present.*

Prelude: The eternal God can only be experienced in the here and now, for everything in the universe is sustained by God's love in the present moment. When I worry about the past, or fret about the future, my consciousness of God, of creation, and of my deepest desires, is blocked. My challenge is to anchor both heart and mind **firmly** in the present: in each thought, word, and deed, as the story of my life evolves, in each moment, in God's presence.

Illuminative Grace: Here I ask for what I desire—to be present and awake to every feeling, thought, word and deed—in the present moment. I beg for the grace to wake up to God’s presence in every person, experience, event—good or ill—that I encounter in my day.

MEMORY

*I believe every violation of love committed by me and against me
is in my memory, and I ask God to reveal them to me,
especially those that have manifested themselves today, so I can be healed.*

Prelude: I hold in my heart, by the power of God’s grace, the memory of every action—of every thought, word and deed—done to me and done by me, that has eroded my innocence. I affirm that these unloving thoughts, words and deeds have spiritual, physical, and emotional consequences that wound God, me, others, and creation. I believe all these unloving actions have both generational and evolutionary consequences. At the root of my own narcissism are some events that, more than others, have distorted my heart and mind. These events cripple my desire and my ability to love selflessly and to freely forgive others.

Illuminative Grace: Here I ask for what I desire—to become conscious of my loss of innocence; the grace to see and the power to touch the original sins and wounds, especially the most vital ones, which shape an anti-story instead of a *Sacred Story*. I ask for the grace of an illumined consciousness to know intimately how these wounds and sins connect to **everything** I do that makes life burdensome; to know how and why they so often compel me to violate God’s presence in myself, others and creation. I ask God for the grace to wake up so I can see, feel, and name these thoughts, words, and deeds, and bring them to the light of day, to be healed by the Divine Physician.

MERCY

*I believe that forgiveness is the only path to healing and
illumination, and I beg for the grace of forgiveness, and the grace to
forgive, especially for the general and
particular failures of this day, and from my past.*

Prelude: The path to Christian holiness and an illumined consciousness, strangely enough, runs through the darkest memories and deeds of your life, for these memories and deeds corrupt your innocence and blind your vision to the sacredness of all life. These memories and deeds can, by choice, act as a wall blocking the peace that leads to holiness and highest consciousness, or as a gate opening to it. The gate is unlocked by forgiveness and compassion; both received from God, and then extended to all those entwined with the loss of innocence that broke your heart: those who hurt you, those whom you hurt, and the creation you abuse or misuse as a result. This miracle of peace and enlightenment is attainable through Christ, who, in love, bore the wounds of every sin and dark deed since time immemorial, and transformed them into grace for the salvation of the

world.

Illuminative Grace: Here I ask for what I desire—for the grace to forgive any person who wounded my innocence, or who broke my heart; not only forgive them, but to have compassion and mercy on them. I ask for the grace of mercy and forgiveness for those whose hearts I broke, and whose innocence I have wounded, and the creation I have misused. I beg to know personally the One who absorbed in his heart and body every wound and every sin of this dark evolution across the millennia. I beg for the dual knowledge of sin and mercy as it affects my life story. I beg for patience, knowing that accepting and offering mercy and forgiveness leads me to holiness. This awakening to highest consciousness takes a lifetime.

ETERNITY

I believe the grace of forgiveness opens my heart, making my every thought, word and deed bear fruit that endures to eternity, and I ask that everything in my life serve Christ's Great Work of Reconciliation.

Prelude: The Sacred Story of all history, opened on the last day, will reveal that the loss of innocence and the broken hearts of humankind inaugurated the Great Work of Reconciliation. Because of Christ's mercy, each of us is now being invited to take our part in this work. The grace of mercy and forgiveness, both received and offered, is the reconciling work that brings true progress to the world; it is the only work that brings fulfillment and bears fruit that endures to eternity. A holy life and the highest consciousness attainable come in knowing personally the One who reconciles my life, and all creation. In this reconciling Love, I daily discern how to direct each thought, word, and deed, to eternal glory—to the divine work of reconciliation.

Illuminative Grace: Here I ask for what I desire—to be graced daily with a profound consciousness of Christ Jesus' healing love, personally experienced, that will so enlighten my heart and mind that each thought, word and deed can serve His Great Work of Universal Reconciliation.

