

A PRAYER OF TAKING STOCK

Lord, You Search Me and You Know Me ...

In the course of this prayer, I jot down the 'vital statistics' of my life. As I note each piece of information, I raise my mind and heart to God my maker, and praise and thank the Creator for this detail in my life history and in myself. Note that God chose that I should come to be in a particular place and time, with particular parents and nationality, and all the rest. Am I content with God's choices for me?

To begin with, I write down my parents' names, and (if I know them) their birth places and dates of birth. I note my own birthday, where I was born, and any significant medical details. I note my gender, nationality or ethnic group, hair and eye colour, and my physical build. I note also my brothers and sisters – names, birthdays, significant details; and I note my extended family of uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces. I note the places and addresses I lived at before I was seven years' old. All this, God chose for me; for all this, I praise and thank God.



God the Father loves us as His children with a tender and unfailing love. (T-02550-01)

Then I note down half-a-dozen personal characteristics and qualities that were bred into me before I had a choice. Self-assurance or anxiety, intelligence, the language(s) I speak, habits of work and leisure, the activities I take pleasure in, even my sexual orientation. I note at the same time half-a-dozen characteristics and qualities that I have inherited from my parents and my extended family, those that I like and perhaps some too that I would just as soon not have. All this, too, God chose for me within the human family; for all this, I praise and thank God.

If I have time, I go on to note down five or six personal qualities in myself that I particularly like. Perhaps I am quiet, or outgoing, and I like that about myself. Perhaps I am very thorough, or sensitive to others' feelings, or truthful. Perhaps I have lots of energy, or accomplish a great deal. I note down these qualities and acknowledge them as gifts from the One who makes me. All this, too, God chose for me within the human family; for all this, I praise and thank God.

Finally, if I still have time, I go on to note down five or six personal qualities in myself that I do not particularly like. Perhaps I feel that I am too tall or short, or cannot shake off an ugly attitude. Perhaps I have a negative image of myself. Or find it too easy to dislike other people. I note down these qualities and acknowledge them as gifts from the One who makes me. All this, too, God chose for me within the human family; for all this, I praise and thank God.

Whenever my time is up, I recite Psalm 139. But I remember that God did not finish making me once, long ago, when I was conceived or born. I remember that God continues making me and has hopes for me and desires that I keep growing in love until I love as completely as God loves.

(Adapted from Choosing Christ in the World by Joseph Tetlow SJ)

THE HEALING OF MEMORIES

Did Not Our Hearts Burn Within Us?

Sometimes the memories of old hurts, of injuries done to me in the past, can surface when I come before God in prayer. Perhaps I find myself still full of resentment for events that occurred years or even decades ago. Maybe I recognise that I am unable to forgive another person, even if part of me would like to.

The following prayer-exercise has been found helpful in these kinds of situation. However, as with all such exercises, it is important not to force it. If I am asking to be able to forgive, or for healing, I can be sure that God will respond when the time is right. Is now the right time? Try this exercise gently, and see what happens.



Relax in whatever way you know helps you (e.g. recognising the sensations in your body; listening to sounds around you; awareness of your breathing).

Allow yourself to become aware of some memory that is still painful for you, and / or some person you tend to hold responsible.

In imagination see yourself with the person who you feel is the cause of the pain, anger, hurt or resentment. Take time to picture him

or her in a situation that would be familiar to you both.

When you are ready (without forcing anything) say everything you want to say to that person. Don't deny or censor any feelings you have ... or balk at strong language!

Go on until you have said all that you can and want to.

Listen to anything the other person might say to you.

Then let Jesus come into the place where you are together – talk to him about what you are feeling – listen to him as he speaks to you – to the other person – see him with them – speak to him from the heart – stay with this in any way that seems helpful.

However you are feeling at the end of the prayer time, and whatever has happened, take time to 'say it as it is' as you reflect on what has happened.

Healing is a gradual process; you may want to return to this prayer on other occasions.

Some people find it useful to write out this prayer as a dialogue, or to use art work while following the exercise.

(Adapted from Sadhana – A Way to God by Anthony de Mello SJ)