

**A R R R**  
*A Fourfold Aid to Pray from My Heart*

**ACKNOWLEDGE.....**

what is stirring within me—feelings, thoughts, joys, emotions, my desires, consolations, disappointments, my hopes, expectations, temptations, my relationships, etc. By doing this I turn my attention **to becoming aware** of what I am experiencing. As I reflect on what is going on within me I am able to grow in self awareness, and more consciously be able to choose to **act** rather than *simply impulsively react* to my surroundings and to others. I strive to **find my center** and be attentive to my life in the here and now.

By this type of “acknowledging” I foster an awareness of what stirs within me and what is affecting me from outside myself as well. This helps me to avoid passively allowing streams of consciousness to flow by—abandoning myself to be drawn hither and yon by my thoughts, imagination, feelings, hurts, regrets, wants, memories, and yearnings—like dry leaves blowing in the wind. I become a person more **“at home with myself”** able to relate, receive, respond.

**RELATE.....**

what I am experiencing to the Lord. I come to God in all confidence. God loves me. He **has blessed me** at the very core of **who I am**: Christ opened his heart on the Cross to redeem me. I am the beloved son/daughter of the Father. I am the temple of the Holy Spirit. **God loves me as his own**. He desires that **I dwell in him and he dwell in me**. Jesus says, **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love”** (John 15:4, 9).

Because the Lord desires this intimate relationship with me, it follows that:

- 1) He desires to enter **into** my most holy and noble thoughts, feelings and desires. He desires to share my joys. **“May my joy be in you”** (John 15:11).
- 2) He also desires to enter **into** my most sinful, shameful, shabby areas of my heart, my wounds, loneli-ness, and angers. **“The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost”** (Luke 19:10). **“It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners”** (Mark 2:17).

Therefore, in all confidence I invite my Lord directly **into** my thoughts, feelings, desires, temptations, sinfulness, my loneliness confusions, sadness, joys and relationships. Nothing is off limits to the Lord who comes to bring peace and joy and to heal and forgive. Jesus who touched the leper desires that I invite him **into** my restlessness and confusion— **into** all the memories of shame and into that which is “unclean” within me. I relate to the Lord with all that I am.

I avoid simply *'thinking about'* all this. I **speak directly and candidly** to the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, who desires to relate personally to me, **for God loves me as his own**. I ask Mary or the saints to pray with me and for me.

I come into God's presence ***just as I am and just how I feel***. I turn to psalms 23, 73, 77, 139, 42, 88, 131, 22, 62, 102 (among others). These will aid me in expressing my true and deepest feelings: joy, gratitude, anger, pain, sorrow and peace—even anger at God. In the psalms God reveals that he desires that I speak to him candidly and personally **without fear, hesitation or inhibitions**.

## **RECEIVE.....**

***Lord, give me the grace to be generous to receive and to experience your great love for me.***” Like Mary, mother of Jesus and my mother, I ponder in my heart the presence of God and welcome him and receive him into those areas of my life that I have acknowledged thus far. An attitude of receptivity opens my eyes to see the Lord present: in Scriptures, silence, prayer, in my imagination, emotions, in my relationships, in nature and through my job, my ministry and in my memories. **Inviting the Lord into one such vivid memory is an effective way to receive a particular grace he desires to give me now**. Faith assures me that Christ was present to me in that past event, even though I was unaware of his being present to me at that time. Time collapses in prayer, for I am in the presence of God who is eternal. ***“There is no time with God: a thousand years, a single day: it is all one”*** (2 Pet 3:8). A memory awakens my imagination, but with a graced difference. Jesus also is **now** actively present in my memory. He was with me then and **is** with me **now**. Time disappears in Christ. I can be with him and interact with him even in my experience of the past.

**As I recall a joyful memory**, I realize that its source is a gift from God. The Lord blesses me, but I may neglect to fully receive the strength and savor the hope that God has given me. It is good to linger in the presence of the Father, or Christ or the Spirit by recalling what I experienced. His peace and well-being draw me to himself. Recall a memory of a blessing and ponder the circumstances in which God bestowed this blessing. Such a relived memory deepens prayer, and God renews me in the present moment. By praying **into** a particular experience of God bestowing his gifts on me in the past, I become more aware and receptive of his goodness to me **now**. I grow in gratitude and praise of God.

**As I recall a painful memory** I realize that often hurt or guilt and loneliness are embedded in this memory—like a tumor. God desires to heal and if there is sin, to forgive. On my part, I must trust in him to receive healing and forgiveness. But fear and shame can hinder me from receiving grace: **fear** that I am held captive by the past and **shame** that isolates and prevents me from coming to my God **who loves me as “his own”**. As a result I may hesitate to receive God *in this particular memory of my life*. As I image the Lord in that memory, I seek his grace **to accept his healing, forgiveness and strength**. **“now.”** And even if he must admonish, Jesus consoles, heals and forgives. He strengthens my ability **to receive** his love. Jesus says,

*“Come to me all you who are weary and are burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Mt 11:25). *“Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you”* (Luke 11:9).

**RESPOND.....**

I respond to the Lord prompted by all that I have thus far experienced. By opening my heart to the Lord and receiving all that the Holy Spirit has inspired, my heart is awakened to give a prayerful response. I speak heart to heart to the Lord who is present in my thoughts, memory, and emotions and in my imagination and my relationships with others. As a result, my desires stir to receive God who desires to come to me “with the fullness of life.” My prayer is inter-personal and truly engaged, a conversation.

In the Old Testament the Lord calls men and women by name. They respond, *“Here I am Lord.”* In the Gospels Jesus often calls his disciples with a simple, **“Come to me.”** Andrew and John ask Jesus, *“Where do you live”* (John 1:38,39)? Jesus with a heart open to them says, *“Come and see.”* They went and stayed with he the rest of that day. Their simple **response** changed their lives. **Jesus cries out to all of us**, *“Come to me all who are weary and find life burdensome. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. And you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt 11:28-30). Christ speaks to you in Scripture, prayer, at mass, in nature, in a time of need, a time of consolation, a time of great trial. He calls you by name and invites you, *“Come to me.”* How will you **respond**? Answer him by **acknow-ledgeing** what stirs in your thoughts and emotions. Ponder how the Lord himself and his word **relates** to your life. Open your heart to **receive** the gift of his peace, healing, forgiveness, hope, joy and strength. Respond to the Lord with an open heart. Let him embrace you as the Good Shepherd. The great gift that Christ Jesus gives you is the gift of himself. Your personal daily conversation with Christ opens you to receive him more abundantly in the Eucharist, in his Word and the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

***St. Augustine surrenders his entire being to the desire of the Lord for him  
by receiving the Lord as the fulfillment of all his desires.***

*“You have made us for yourself, O Lord,  
and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”*

*“Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new,  
Late have I loved you!*

*Lo, you were within, but I was outside,  
seeking there for you.*

*And in my unlovely state I plunged  
into the lovely created things which you made.*

*You were with me, but I was not with you!*

*Those lovely things kept me far from you.  
Although if they did not have their existence in you,  
they would have no existence at all.*

*You called, shouted,  
and broke through my deafness.*

*You flared, blazed,  
and banished my blindness.*

*You lavished your fragrance,  
I gasped, and now pant for you.*

*I tasted you,  
and I hunger and thirst for you.*

*You touched me,  
and I burn for your peace.”*