



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

159 – February 1, 2022

A Best Practice: Prayer Stations

During the Lenten season, it came time to help the RCIA elect explore prayer in their lives. Fortunately, our rich Catholic tradition is filled with various ways of prayer.

To provide an experience of various ways of prayer, Erin Wolfe, Pastoral Associate for Adult Religious Formation & Ministry, RCIA, and Infant Baptism at St. Mary Magdalen Parish, Howell, MI, assisted by Diane Davidson, created ten-twelve different prayer stations. It was designed so that participants could pick which stations they wanted to take part in. They could pick what was comfortable to them, but were also encouraged to try others too, in an effort to stretch their methods, definitions and experiences of prayer.



The Process

In the room, the lights were dimmed and soft instrumental music was playing in the background. The tables were spread out for privacy. Each individual table was covered with a tablecloth contained decorations. The main table was decorated with a beautiful cross and candles.



To begin, the group started together with a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit. This was followed by a discussion of how there are as many ways to pray as there are pray-ers.

Each station was then described, providing suggestions of how to pray there. The participants were then free to go wherever they wanted. Erin shares, “We did not have enough time to close with a group discussion or more reflection. We are planning to use these stations for a staff prayer retreat. That will include time for those things.”

A Look at the Various Prayer Stations

Prayer with the Saints.

This station had numerous prayer cards on the table. The participants were invited to read about the saints as they prayed. They were encouraged to take a prayer card with them.

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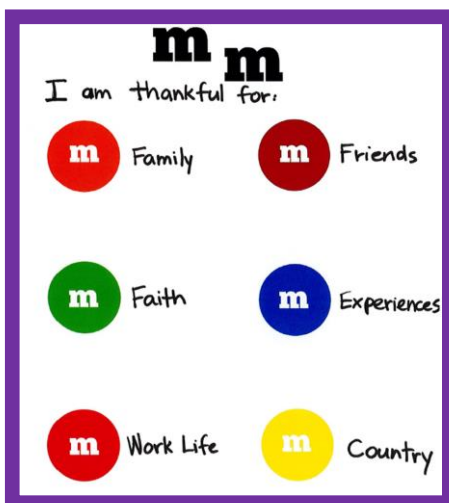
Pray with Mary (Candle lighting prayer). In front of the Mary pictures in their community room, a table was set up with thin taper candles in a large silver bowl of sand.

The RCIA elect were invited to take an unlit taper and pray their prayer as they light their candle from an already-lit candle and placed it back in the sand.)



Praying Through Art.

With a table set up with an amazing array of art supplies (paint, paper, markers, crayons, pencils, chalks, canvases, journaling books, mandalas, etc.), participants could choose whatever they wanted and return to the main table to create something in prayer.



I am Thankful for...

On the table were preassembled baggies of M&Ms (or Skittles for vegans!). They were invited to eat each piece from their bag while praying a prayer of thanks for something or someone in the appropriate category. (Each color represented a different area: Friends, Family, Faith, Experiences, Work Life, Country.)

Let Your Light Shine.

This prayer activity was designed to help everyone become more aware of how to nourish their "light" and be a beacon to the world.

The directions were:

- Light three candles.
- Over one of them, place the blue clay pot. (Can you still see the light? How bright is it?)

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- Over the second candle, place the glass vase. Watch what happens to the flame? What do you see?
- Leave the third one burning.



- ❖ Which of these lights is similar to your life in the darkness of the world around you?
- ❖ Are you keeping your light hidden?
- ❖ Are you allowing your light to show, but also allowing it to fade without the fresh oxygen of the Holy Spirit?
- ❖ Are you a beacon of light to the world around you?
- ❖ Pray your thoughts to God.

✿ Hand Crosses.

The RCIA Elect were invited to create a hand cross out of white air-dry clay, forming two strips of clay into a cross. They then squished their hand into the cross, creating their personal, made-to-their-hand cross. (They were then let to dry over the week and received them the following week.

✿ Finger Labyrinth.

Instead of taping a labyrinth on the floor, finger labyrinths were placed on a table facing out through a floor-to-ceiling window.

The directions that were provided included:

- Before you begin, decide what you are going to pray for. Today we will use paper labyrinths to pray with the request, "Lord, be with me in this important time in my spiritual journey."
- Place your finger near the entrance of the labyrinth. Ask God to move with you as you pray.
- Begin following the path with any finger.
- Trace all the way to the center of the labyrinth. Rest in God's presence as your finger rests there. Welcome any feeling of peace that you experience.



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- When you are ready, move your finger out of the center and back along the path toward the threshold (entrance/exit), pondering what you heard or experienced in the center.
- When you come to the end of the path, pause and thank God for whatever has happened.
- Take time to reflect on your labyrinth experience. Please move to your RCIA table to write your thoughts down or creatively express what has taken place. (This allows someone else to experience the Labyrinth Prayer Station while you are reflecting.)

The reflection sheet which was provided for the participants was taken from a resource by Rev. Jill H. K. Geoffrion, Ph.D. (www.jillgeoffrion.com):

- What am I feeling? (one or two words)
- What happened?
- What do I make of this?
- What do I want to be sure to remember?
- What prayer am I longing to pray?

Prayer Doodles.

A table was set up with instructions and supplies for creating Prayer Doodles:

- Start with a blank piece of paper and colored pens or pencils. (These supplies are on the Art Table.)
- In the center, write a name for God, the name of someone for whom you're praying, or a Scripture verse.
- Draw a shape around the words to start the doodle. This is your prayer space. Start to doodle around it, releasing your words to God in prayer. Doodle in silence or talk to God if you feel led.
- Add other people, other names for God, or other parts of the Scripture verse to your paper. Draw a shape around each set of new words to create a separate prayer space. Doodle around these and pray.

- Pause and pray "Amen" between each prayer space you add.

RCIA Candle.

St. Mary Magdalen Parish had a special candle which they "decorated" with their prayers throughout the RCIA process. It was a thick, white pillar candle on which they would light a colored taper candle and drip the wax down the sides of the white candle.

Over the course of time, all their prayers were represented in the layers after layers of different colors flowing down the white candle. The white candle itself was not lit until the Easter Vigil, when it was placed among the altar candles.

Then the candle continued to be lit for all of the Mystagoga sessions.



I am Sorry for...

This Prayer Station was a table with a candle, some purple decorations, purple paper, a pen, and a small shredder!

Participants were invited to write down anything they were sorry for, regretted, or would like to unburden themselves of. Then they would put them through the shredder!

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(They were reminded that this was not the same as celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.) While the shredder was kind of loud, it was a good reminder to all in the room that someone had unburdened themselves of something.



🌀 A Prayer Station for next time.

For the next time that this is offered, Erin plans to have a Scrabble board with lots of letters. (“I am in the process of collecting Scrabble games for the extra tiles.”) Participants will be invited to use the tiles to place their need on the Scrabble board. Others will add their prayers, just like when playing Scrabble. The finished product will be everyone’s needs interconnected.

Thoughts from the Participants

- (From a logical thinker): **“I took to** heart the suggestion to try things that were outside of my comfort zone. I was very surprised how much I was moved by the labyrinth experience. And then I spent some time working on one of the mandala drawings. I experienced a very strong sense of peace as I was coloring it.”
- “I grew up Protestant and therefore extremely comfortable talking with God. I can pray for a long time and not run out of things to say to God. That being said, I often tend to meander in these thoughts

and prayers and am not as concise and to the point as I could be.

I really liked two things about the Prayer Experience in particular:

- I liked that I could focus on one specific aspect of what was on my heart and work on meditating on that during a specific exercise.
 - I liked learning that there are so many other ways to pray other than closing your eyes and folding your hands and bowing your head and starting off "Dear God..." In my upbringing, that was the only way I learned how to pray. After that experience I felt my communication deepen with God and I felt so close to Him!”
- “Just as people connect with each other in different ways, it makes sense that we would connect to God in different ways. This Prayer Experience helped open my eyes to other ways to get closer to God, to step outside the everyday way I had been praying and realize, most importantly, that the best way to connect to God is simply set aside time to be with Him.”

Resources

Some of resources which Erin suggested for the participants to use in their prayer life included:

- Pray As You Go: <https://pray-as-you-go.org/>
- Give Us This Day: <https://giveusthisday.org/>
- Heart to Heart - A Catholic Media Ministry: <https://www.hearttoheart.org/>
- USCCB Daily Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/daily-bible-reading>
- Daily Inspiration from JesuitPrayer.org: <https://jesuitprayer.org/>
- Pencil Preaching: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/pencil-preaching/slow-learners>

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- Ignatian Solidarity Network: <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/>



- [GEMS #52](#): Praying with the Labyrinth
- [GEMS #53](#): Prayer Forms (Part II)
- [GEMS #71](#): Prayer Forms (Part III)
- [GEMS #72](#): A Busy Person's Retreat
- [GEMS #74](#): Icon Writing as Formative
- [GEMS #97](#): Lenten Spiritual Journaling
- [GEMS #98](#): Lenten Evening Prayer

GEMS Wonderings

- For which groups in your parish could you plan an event such as this?
- Which types and methods of prayer would you include?



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Other Best Practices

You might want to review some of these other earlier GEMS issues which chronicled other practices for prayer:

- [GEMS #25](#): A Lenten Evening of Prayer
- [GEMS #36](#): One Word
- [GEMS #37](#): Stations of the Cross
- [GEMS #39](#): Blessing of Bikes
- [GEMS 45](#): Prayer Forms
- [GEMS #50](#): It Happens at Home

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
 - <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/books.html>
 - https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5/164069/seasons_of_aff_journal_special_issue.pdf