

PRACTICES OF REPENTANCE

Meditating on the wounds of Christ

Appropriate to Holy Week, our final spiritual exercise focuses on the four wounds of Christ – feet, left hand, right hand and side. This practice is adapted from the daily devotions of Pope Francis. What was striking was the Holy Father's daily habit of reciting the Lord's prayer four times before bed, meditating on each of the wounds of Christ in turn.

Bishop Eleanor: "I decided to integrate this into my prayer life, but felt that God was inviting me to do this slightly differently. This adapted practice fits well with our Lenten focus on repentance."

"You can continue this daily practice as long as it is beneficial to you. Pope Francis has been doing this for many years, I did it for a number of weeks. For me, the process was a transformative process of repentance – like stones in a stream, this practice helped to soften and smooth many rough edges."

The practice puts us in touch with the things that wound God, and the powerful idea that resurrection and suffering come together. The wounds of Christ are utterly transformed in His resurrected presence, and we have hope that God has the power to overcome any sin.

MEDITATION ON THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST, ADAPTED FROM POPE FRANCIS

To undertake this spiritual exercise, take a moment to pray in the morning, at noon and again in the evening. Each time, pray the Lord's Prayer four times. The first time, hold your hand on Christ's feet. Visualise Him standing directly in front of you, and consider the wound that was made there. The second time, hold your hand on His left hand. The third time, His right hand, and the fourth time, His side.

As you are praying the Lord's Prayer and holding Christ's wounds, there is also a theme of repentance to pray for. In the morning, pray for wounds in our world – conflicts, climate change, poverty, human trafficking. At noon, our theme of repentance is the wounds of other people. Think of four people to intercede for. Hold them in prayer as you touch the wounds of Christ.

Bishop Eleanor: "When I did this, I was especially interceding for people I was in community with, and in discipleship with. Part of what I was doing while praying was allowing God to correct me, to refine my relationships with these four people."

In the evening, hold in prayer four of your own wounds - parts of your life that need freedom, healing or transformation. As you touch Christ's wounds, hold your own wounds in his mercy.