

IDI Summer Curriculum—Session I (June 21-26, 2026)
“Ignatian Prayer with Scripture” **—Rev. Mark Yavarone, OMV**

Course Outline

E-mail: myavarone@discernment.institute

Summer Session phone: (720) 751-1472

Course Summary

In his Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius of Loyola used two basic methods of prayer—meditation (based primarily on reflection) and contemplation (based on the use of imagination). As there can be no discernment without prayer, this course will clarify these methods of prayer and the relationship between them. Questions addressed will include: “Is imaginative prayer really grounded in the tradition? Suppose I don’t have much of an imagination? How do I test or verify the inspirations I seem to be receiving?” The course will also help students to apply the methods of meditation and contemplation to their own spiritual practice.

Course Requirements:

Attendance at and participation in class, and an understanding of the course readings will be required. For those participants seeking certification, course material will be included in the online exam given near the end of July 2026 (more details to come).

Required Texts:

- 1) Gallagher, Timothy, OMV. *Meditation and Contemplation: An Ignatian Guide to Praying with Scripture*. New York: Crossroads, 2008. ISBN: 0-8245-2488-3

Course Outline:

- 1) **6/24/26 Ignatian Prayer with Scripture-I**
Gallagher, pp. 1-36
- 2) **6/25/26 Ignatian Prayer with Scripture-II**
Gallagher, pp. 37-99

Class Outline #1

Date: 6/24/26

Prayer, and the Use of the Imagination in Prayer

1. Prayer in General / Listening to God

- Raising of the mind and heart to God
- Perhaps better: Opening to God
- God can speak in whatever way He chooses.
- God speaks in all the events of our lives and not merely in times of formal prayer.
- In order to hear God, you have to *want* to hear Him.

2. How God speaks to us when we pray

- Through our ideas
- Through our imagination
- ★ Through the movements of our heart
- Through extraordinary phenomena
- Beyond all of these

3. Ignatian mediation and contemplation

- Many movements of spirits (primarily consolation and desolation) occur during prayer.
- We notice these movements more during prayer (e.g. retreats).
- Teaching discernment of spirits will be difficult or impossible without a prayer life, both for the teacher and for the student!

4. Text of *Meditation and Contemplation* by Fr. Gallagher

- Meditation is the primarily *reflective* approach to prayer.
- (Acquired) contemplation is the primarily *imaginative* approach to prayer.
- As Ignatius describes them, they differ only in the body of the prayer.
- Sometimes prayer is a personal mixture of both approaches.
- Example of Mark (meditation): the words “swim in his heart.”
- Example of St. Thérèse (meditation): prayer begins with desire; then she calls to mind, ponders, and embraces the truth.

Introduction &
Chapter One

Chapter Two

5. The use of the imagination in prayer

- An imaginative experience can be an intuition of the real (Schuchts).
- Everyone has an imagination, and uses it all the time.
- Some people have a more “visual” imagination than others.
- Some people “hear” things better imaginatively (more like listening to radio than watching TV).
- Others don’t picture/hear things as clearly, but feel/sense the impact of images more.
- Example of Kathryn (contemplation): “I placed myself completely into that scene.”

Chapter Three

6. Basis for using the imagination in prayer

- Many of the saints prayed this way (e.g. St. Teresa of Avila)¹
- The witness of tradition²
- Scripture itself often engages the imagination
- God is outside of time; He wants us to tap into the ever-present grace of the event.
- (Acquired) contemplation is like watching a scene play out: analogy of spotlight on stage.

¹ “Then, daughter, as you are alone, you must look for a companion—and who could be a better Companion than the very Master Who taught you the prayer that you are about to say? Imagine that this Lord Himself is at your side and see how lovingly and how humbly He is teaching you—and, believe me, you should stay with so good a Friend for as long as you can before you leave Him.” (St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, Chapter 26)

² “Picture him among his disciples and in the company of sinners; when he converses and preaches; when he walks and when he sits; when he sleeps and when he keeps vigil; when he eats and when he serves others; when he heals the sick and when he performs other miracles. Ponder in your heart his conduct and his actions: how humbly he carried himself among the people and how gently he dealt with his disciples; how merciful he was to the poor, making himself like them in everything so that they seemed to be his special kin. Observe how suitably he acted in all things and how concerned he was for the salvation of souls, out of love for whom he was willing to die; how he made himself an example of all goodness; how compassionate he was with the afflicted; how he patiently bore with the imperfections of the sick and did not scorn sinners; how mercifully he welcomed the penitent, how obedient he was to his parents, and how promptly he served the needs of all.” (Venerable Ludolph of Saxony, *Life of Christ*, Part I)

Class Outline #2

Date: 6/25/26

The Authenticity of Ignatian Prayer and Practical Aspects

1. Ways of verifying the authenticity of a particular experience of acquired contemplation

- Testing the inspiration against a higher standard of truth
 - The Scriptures
 - The teachings of the Church³
 - A spiritual director or confessor
- Grace of your Baptism
- The element of surprise
- An ongoing impact that is greater than other imaginative experiences
- The prayer relates you more to God and to others.
- The prayer increases your reverence.
- The fruits of the prayer in your life is good. ★★★★★
- Duck test

2. Before and after the body of the prayer

Chapter Four

- Remote preparation before prayer time: choosing a Scripture passage, using a commentary, choosing a time, place for prayer

• Beginning the prayer—Preludes:

Chapter Five

- Considering how God looks at me
- Offering my will and actions to God
- Bringing to mind the history of the event
- Imaginatively entering the place of the Scripture

- Preludes can be utilized to re-enter meditation after distraction.

- Colloquy (dialogue) with God the Father, the Son, Mary, or all three

Chapter Six

- Colloquy can happen at any time during the prayer, especially near the end.

- We can relate to God in colloquy as our master, friend, etc.

- St. Thérèse’s “colloquy” after finding her vocation

- Conclude with Our Father—the perfect vocal prayer of Jesus.

- Review of prayer: especially “consolations, desolations, spiritual appreciation”

- Journaling as a help to spiritual direction; even more important to teachers of discernment!

³ “We can consider, understand, and express the meaning of Sacred Scripture in as many ways as we find helpful provided they are not contrary to the truth of life, justice, or doctrine; in other words, so long as they are not contrary to faith and morals. So, you will find me saying the Lord Jesus, or other persons, said or did something; if this cannot be demonstrated from Scripture, you should consider what I say to be no more than a devout reflection.” (Venerable Ludolph of Saxony, *Life of Christ*, Part I)

3. Further counsels for prayer

Chapter Seven

- Importance of our bodies in prayer
- Importance of going slowly; stay with the fruit
- Importance of perseverance
- Importance of spiritual direction

4. Extended example of prayer (Susan)

Chapter Eight

- A “colloquy” can extend over a day or days.

5. Fruits of prayer

Chapter Nine

- Notice examples of consolation and desolation in the descriptions of prayer in this chapter.