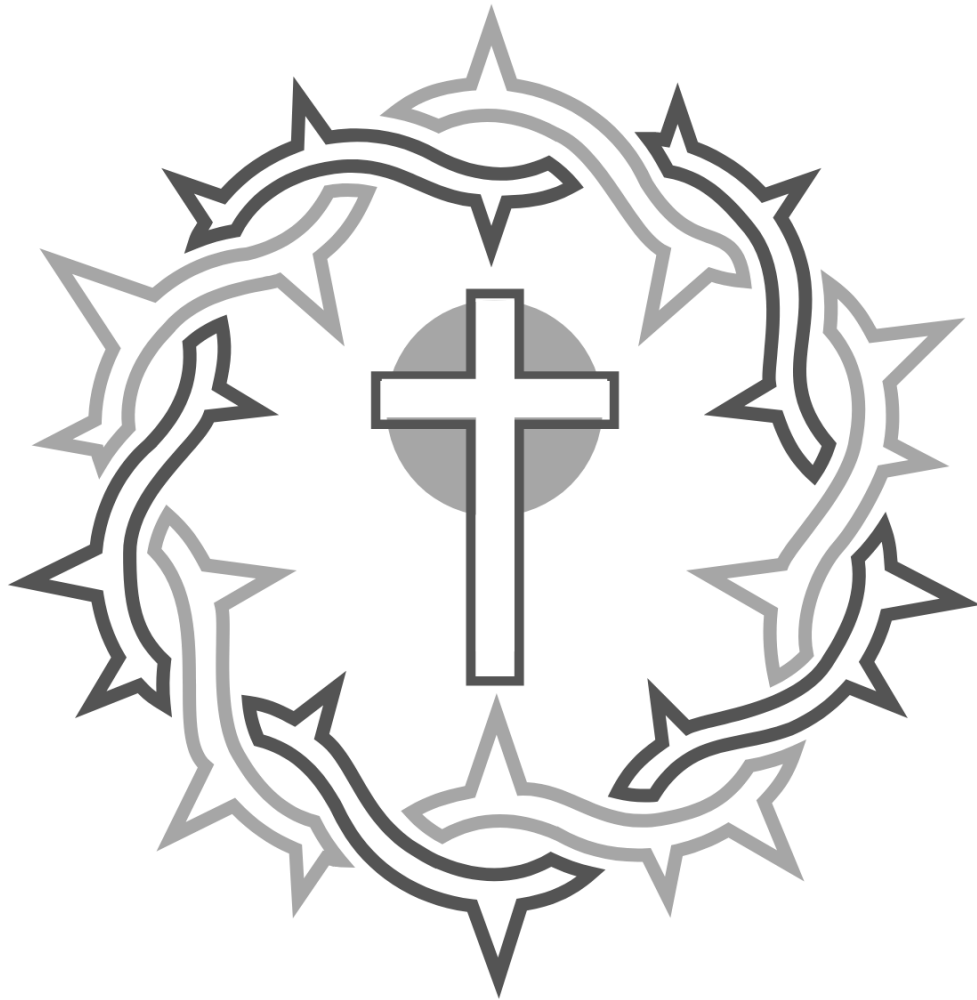


My Life's Journey:

An Exercise of Reflection

This exercise is adapted for you by the Rev. Todd Thomas of scriptureprayers.com
And is based on the alternative examination proposed by the late Fr Anthony de Mellow SJ.



As a reflective experience these five sessions may be done over five days, five weeks or in five hours if you'd like to do it all in one day. You're also encouraged to revisit and consider these reflections more than once to see what you recall and what changes in you each time.

Note: These pages may not provide all the room you need for recording the answers to these reflection prompts, so please have a journal or other paper with you when you get started.

Getting started...

Getting Into a Frame of Mind: A Liminal Space?

Imagine yourself at the cusp of a major transition in life; *you might actually be in such a place and time*. You're dealing with a move across the country or the world, beginning a new job or you're retiring from work, or you have one of those scary moments in life when it seems as though you only have a short time to live. You could be at a moment of reflection like this at almost any age. This is the setting for reflecting on the coming prompts. ***This is your story... what will you share?***

Commit This Exercise to Yourself

Make a commitment to yourself about how you will pursue these sessions, what timeframe do you choose for the exercise? Will it be daily, will it be weekly, or some other schedule? Say your plan and your commitment out loud to hear your promise to yourself that this matters and your story matters. ***Believe it: your story matters.***

Commit This Exercise to God

Make a commitment to God that you will do this exercise with the Holy Spirit and in honesty. You should begin this whole exercise, and maybe each session, with a prayer of gratitude and invitation to God. That prayer could be framed by the brief introductions to each session or something like this: ***"God of my story, thank you for the chapters of my life. Thank you for the chapters of excitement, adventure, joy and even struggle which fill up the years of my journey. Be with me as I reflect, and may the Holy Spirit help me when I struggle over the words. With Christ I pray. Amen."***

The First Session:

Let's begin with gratitude. Consider this idea attributed to the 13th Century mystic Meister Eckhart, ***"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, that is enough."*** Gratitude itself is a prayer and a re-orientation for our interior life, because it lifts us out of ourselves and recognizes our connection to another or others. Can you begin this session with the simple prayer, *"Thank you."* You might try repeating it until it becomes a deeper expression of your heart.

This session's reflection begins with experiences which have delighted and changed us. Those are simple things like tastes and smells, and bigger things which made lasting impressions on our hearts and minds.

1. My heart was full when with my senses I...

Tasted:

Saw:

Smelled:

Heard:

Touched:

2. I have never forgotten:

3. Life was forever changed when I learned:

***You should take some time after you finish this reflection to prayerfully consider your responses for anything you might have forgotten to include.**

The Second Session:

Over the years we all grow and change. Some ideas and perceptions we collect along the way are given up or exchanged, and other things are found to be worth keeping. We begin this session with wisdom from Fr Anthony de Mello, ***“On the day you cease to change you cease to live.”***

In your mind’s eye see yourself at some different times of life, maybe thinking of specific favorite photos. See yourself as a child, a teenager, and on your last birthday or at a recent event. How has your appearance changed over the years? Our beliefs and thoughts also change throughout the stages of life, and some deepen to become our strongest anchors and foundations in tough times.

4. I once held these beliefs, but outgrew them:

5. These are truths I have found constant and dependable:

6. I’ve tried to stay centered on these ideas/values/convictions:

7. In my life, I have come to believe this about...

God:

The World:

Human Nature:

Jesus Christ:

Love:

Religion:

Prayer:

Myself:

***You should take some time after you finish this reflection to prayerfully consider your responses for anything you might have forgotten to include.**

The Third Session:

Our lives are filled with action: *experiences, decisions and consequences*. In this session we're thinking about those interactions with life and all its people, places and things.

Are you familiar with the Lord of the Rings books? Even if you're not, there's a poignant moment we can all appreciate when the character Bilbo Baggins warns his nephew Frodo about the perils of unexpected journeys, "*It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.*" — **J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings**

In our lives we have all walked our roads sometimes taking risks and other times avoiding them. Some adventures found us regardless of our intentions. In this session we look back on the risks, events and influences of life which contributed to who we are in this time.

8. I took these risks, accepted these dangers:

9. I have been taught and formed, and maybe even strengthened, by these sufferings:

10. From the lessons life has taught me, I might give this advice:

11. My life has been impacted and shaped by these...

Persons:

Successes:

Failures:

Books:

World Events:

12. In my life I can relate most to this person in scripture, because...

***You should take some time after you finish this reflection to prayerfully consider your responses for anything you might have forgotten to include.**

The Fourth Session:

One of the most amazing quotes from St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta would have to be, ***“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”*** One of the most tragic things that can happen in life is isolation and a breaking of our vital interconnectedness and interdependence. The next reflections explore some of our sense of regret and fulfillment, and our connectedness to people and places.

13. In the totality of my life, I do regret:

14. In all my striving and achievements I am most proud of:

15. I have always carried within my heart these and reserved my purest love for these...

People:

Places:

Activities:

16. For all I have experienced and loved, I do have these unfulfilled desires:

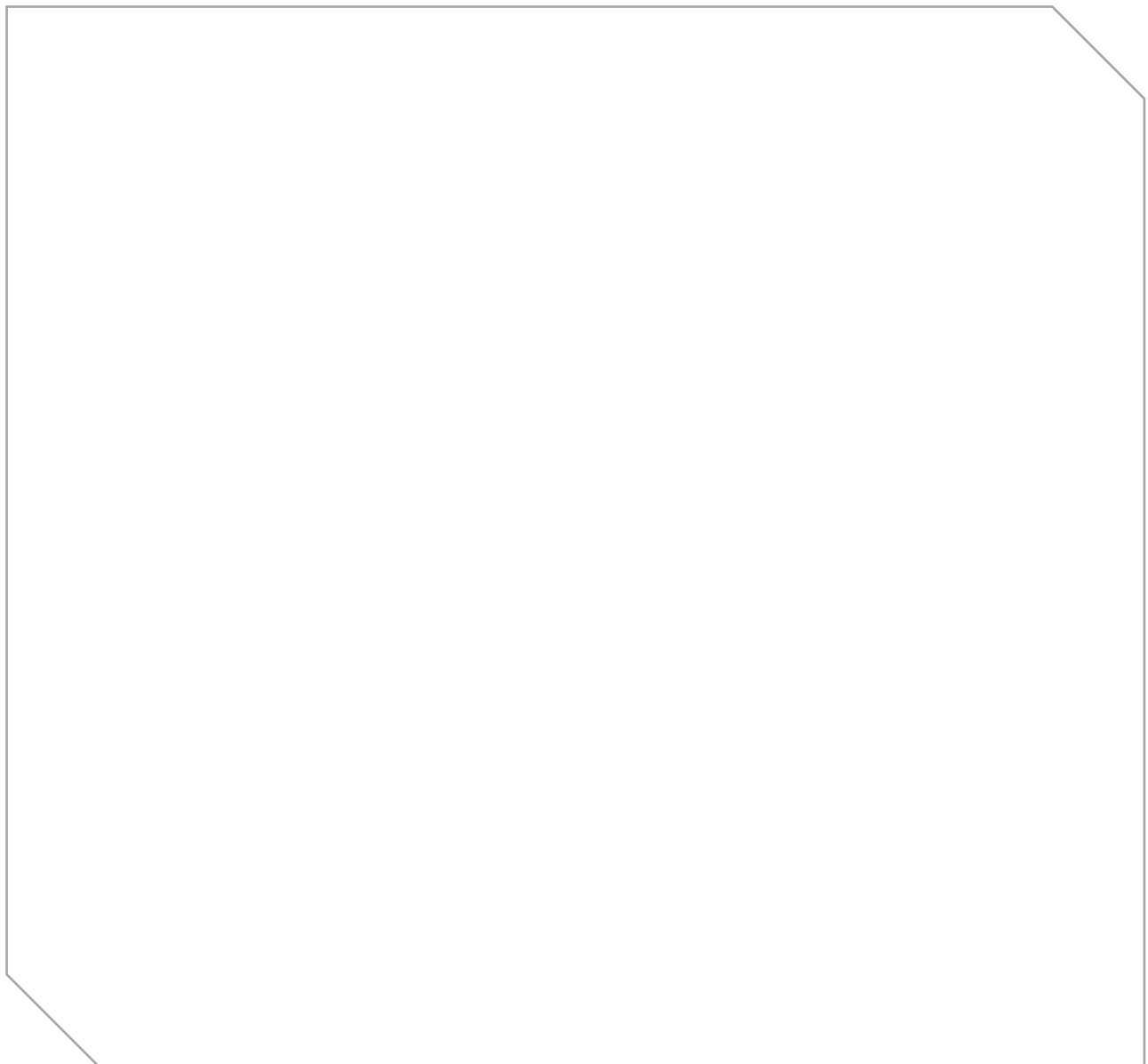
***You should take some time after you finish this reflection to prayerfully consider your responses for anything you might have forgotten to include.**

The Fifth Session:

Consider this quote from Maya Angelou, *“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”* We have been telling our story through these reflections. Think of this session as creating the cover image for your story, or perhaps a conclusion or an illustration for the story.

What would you share here about your life from a more creative perspective like poetry, visual art or photography? This could be something you created or something from an artist or author who has inspired you. You can cut something from a magazine or print something to be glued or taped right onto the page, attach a photo here or copy something out by hand.

If you would enjoy an artistic exercise you might use this space to create a collage with magazine clippings to represent one of the previous reflections that keeps coming back to mind for you. *Was there a memory or insight from these reflections that surprised you?* You could collage it or sketch something right here. This is your space.



After you're done...

***As you were prompted to prayerfully consider your reflections at the end of each session, now you're invited to look back over the whole story and consider these questions:**

1. What surprised you? Did memories surface which you had completely forgotten?
2. What chapters of your story didn't fit within the provided prompts? Was there something else you want to include in your story?
3. Who should hear your story? Who do you want to know you better?

We close with the **Suspice Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola:**

(The word *suspice* is Latin for *take* or *receive*.)

*“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory,
my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own.*

You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.”