

Awareness Exercises and Preparation for Prayer

One of the things that can make prayer difficult for us is a lack of quiet and stillness within ourselves. We might be able to find a quiet place to pray, but sometimes finding interior stillness can be more difficult to achieve. The following two exercises may be helpful.

Awareness of my Body

Sometimes interior silence and stillness can be hard to find because our bodies are tense and we are finding it hard to relax. It may be helpful to run a 'body scan' whereby we become aware of each part of our body in turn and notice the feeling in each place and allow any tension to ebb away. Beginning with the feet, notice the feel of the ground beneath and any constriction of footwear. Let the awareness travel up the legs, flex the muscles and be aware of any tension. Slowly release that tension and allow each part of the body to relax. Let the awareness move around the body and at each point, relax and allow the tension to ease away. Look out especially for clenched fists, a tight jaw, tension in the neck, a frown or tightness around the stomach. You will begin to recognise where you are most likely to hold tension. Gently release and relax until you come to a point of rest and remain there quietly.

Awareness of my Breathing

Sitting in a relaxed position with your hands resting gently on your lap, slowly become aware of your breathing. Notice the in breath and the out breath. Don't try to change your breathing, just notice it. Feel the cool air entering your nostrils. As you breathe in, it might be helpful to imagine drawing God's life-giving Spirit into your being and as you breathe out release anything that feels like it may get in the way between you and God. You may wish to quietly, almost under your breath, utter a word or phrase that enables you to centre your mind upon God. "Abba Father," "Be still," "Peace," "O Lord my Rock," etc. Taking a few moments of preparation and awareness may enable us to find a place of silence, stillness and calm where we are more receptive to God.

