

Some ideas to lead and facilitate prayer with young people

(YWG ed.2 – nymo site edition Dec 2002)

Setting the atmosphere for prayer to focus attention of the spirit through the senses:

Use one or more as suitable for the occasion.

- Use of candles (or spot light) on an ikon, Bible (open), painting, statue
- Use drapes over a table to show something from nature
 - o Stones, flowers, bowl of water with floating candles
- Use of incense, incense sticks
- Use of sacred music e.g.
 - o Margaret Rizza's "Fountain of Life" CD
 - o Taize chants
 - o Adagios
 - o Or secular track with suitable words for theme of prayer
- Ask everyone to take their shoes off (standing on holy ground)
- Seating – should be comfortable, or possibility of lying down
- Give the group an idea of how long they will be there
 - o E.g. Quick opening prayer and later we will come back to spend time meditating
 - o Or 10 mins morning/evening prayer

Content of prayer

This should fit in with what the group is meeting about, if possible, e.g. a prepared sheet of short readings and prayer arranged attractively

This can be shared out among the young people to read when appropriate in the short service.

The reading(s) for the Sunday could be used creatively:

- Ask group to settle themselves and to let tensions go with stillness exercises (see example at end) , and then slowly read a passage. Ask the group to hold onto one phrase or word and repeat it. Later, the group might like to share their word (if they know each other well and would be comfortable with it)
- They could act out the reading, or work out a way of representing it in today's terms.
- Use paint/clay/other forms of art to express the feelings in the reading
- Use a video clip to help the group to see the reading in a different way. There is a book called "Lights, camera . . .faith! A movie-lover's guide to Scripture" by Peter Malone and Rose Pacatte, available for years A and B.
- A verse of a psalm could be read by each member of the group, or one or two members who are comfortable with reading.
- Listen to music to create a quiet space.
- Finish with a prayer, e.g.
- Using a candle to pass around the group inviting them to pray for their loved ones by name (they can simply hold the candle and pray silent)

Contributed by Sr Mary Stella, St Bernard's Convent

Sample of a typical "stilling/centring" exercise taken from "Guided Meditations for Youth on Personal Themes" by Jane Arsenault. To be accompanied by appropriate gentle / ambient music.

"Today you will enter the hush of your quiet place and meet Jesus in your imagination. First, we will begin by doing some deep-breathing exercises. When I say to, if you can, breathe in and out through your nose during these exercises. Close your eyes and get comfortable. You will be relaxing your entire body.

"Breathe in deeply Hold it ... breathe out slowly and completely. Breathe in deeply Hold it ... breathe out slowly and completely. Again, breathe in deeply Hold it ... breathe out slowly and completely.

"Allow your feet and ankles to relax. Relax your legs and your hips. Keep in touch with your breathing. Relax your stomach muscles, and now your chest..... Just relax. Let your arms grow limp. Relax your wrists, your hands and your fingers Keep breathing in deeply and out slowly.

"Allow your shoulders to become heavy Let all the tension drain from your shoulders.... Relax your neck, your facial muscles, and even your eyelids.... Just relax.... Breathe in deeply...hold it...breathe out slowly and completely." [Pause]

[Then proceed to set the scene or visualisation in which the young people are to imagine encountering Jesus.]