

Time on our hands 2

Do you make lists? If you do you may have thought how you are going to remember the members of your family and friends, the community, the nation (now it's getting too big), the world (got a headache), and then how do I remember myself after all that. Prayer is not simply "read the words and all will be well", we do need a structure. Think of the preparation you would put into a meeting with the Queen, and in prayer we are meeting God our Father.

My spiritual director, many years ago, told me when we agreed to meet together that he would pray for me on the 7th of the month, every month. That was because my name began with a G and his list was in alphabetical order through the month.

I have a black ring folder and inside it is set out with dividers, 1-6, 1-12, A-Z.

1-6 These are the big divisions, family, friends, community, nation, world, myself.

Inside those divisions you can have others dividers, A-Z, 1-31, depending on the way you want this to develop. If you have a lot of family names and friends to remember you may need to divide alphabetically, you can remember the names on the corresponding day in each month, George on the 7th, Joan on the 10th and so on.

Community takes a little bit of thought. We have lots of people, businesses, groups and others who support the life of our community. Then there is the church at the heart of the community, so we remember our diocese, our parish, the people who hold office, the groups. We can go on. That's why it takes a little bit of thought, but that thought is also a form of prayer as you think of someone or some group. If you have intercession booklets from missionary societies they can be fitted in wherever is appropriate.

The nation and the world are huge. Over time, perhaps as you read the newspapers, hear or see things on the news, you will want to add them. Please don't forget to pray for the Royal Family, I only say that because they do get forgotten in the blanket phrase I have just used, they are individuals who need our prayer. The same is true of "the Government" and "world leaders". The Archbishops and all those who work with them, and the Church throughout the world are all individuals we can look up and pray for. This is not wasted time, you are praying as you remember and add to the list. The pattern of prayer from last week gives some of that time.

Then finally, there is yourself. Only you know what is in your heart that you want to bring before God. Sometimes it is a help to write down what that is, sometimes it is simply a reminder that you need to pray for yourself. The Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, have a form of prayer they use at the end of each day. It's called the Examen. If you go on line and put Examen into the search engine you will get lots of suggestions, look for the web page that is from the Jesuits. If you use a smart phone or Tablet, you will find an app you can use. It is a way of looking back through the day and calling to mind, in God's presence, all that has happened, the good, the bad, the happy and the sad. It ends with the prayer that tomorrow I may make a better job of following Jesus.