

PRAYING WITH HOLY IMAGES.

From the book "You Can Pray" of Fr. P.Ribes, s.j. published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash

Paintings, Holy Pictures, Icons, Carvings and Statues of Christ

Introductory Note:

- ✓ *Reverently gazing, with love and faith, at Holy Images has sort of a sacramental value. With God's grace, contemplating sacred images, we can perceive and even assimilate something of the spiritual and transcendent nature of the things they represent...*
- ✓ *Till Modern times, especially in the Middle Ages, the common folks – mostly illiterate - gazing at holy images, so abundant in their Churches, Cathedrals and Shrines, not only learned the word of God but also felt God's presence.*
- ✓ *The Medieval Cathedrals, not for nothing, called "Bibles in Stone" so full of Sacred paintings, stained glasses, carvings and statues, taught our forefathers not only the basics of our faith, but also, imbued them with a spiritual sense, surely more genuine than we, children of XXI century are, flooded with so much printed material and mass media.*
- ✓ *By using the Method of **Praying with Holy Images** we attempt at experiencing in our day, the depth and warmth of prayer that was so congenial to the pious folks of former days.*
- ✓ *A picture or a sacred image, if we take the trouble to look intently at it for a length of time, search for details, and linger on until we discover its hidden treasures, can speak to us a thousand words,*

PROCEDURE:

- Choose a Picture/Icon/Carving/Statue of Our Lord or of his Blessed Mother those appeals to you.
- Quiet down. Relaxation exercises may help.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the love of Jesus and his Mother.
- In silence open wide your eyes and gaze at the picture you chose.
- Do not be in a hurry. Pay attention to every detail.
- Allow the image you contemplate to leave its imprint in your mind. .
- Next, close your eyes. Try, through your imagination, to recall – so to say duplicate - that image in your mind, as accurately as possible.
- Alternatively now, open and close your eyes. Keep contemplating the image both in reality and in your mind. .
- Finally, with open or closed eyes, talk to the holy person represented in the icon or picture.
- Tell him/her what you like most in him/her and how much you love him/her.
- Tell Jesus or His Mother, how much you wish to be like them. .
 - Affectionately, ask him/her to make you more loving, humble, prayerful, etc
 - Tell him your difficulties and worries, if any.
 - Keep talking. Ask for the courage to accept whatever comes your way.

- At this moment, while conversing –actually, praying to the sacred person - be aware of your feelings. Happy? Sad? Sorry? Hopeful? Etc.
- Stay with your feelings for a while. Do not be in a hurry.
- Now, stop using words to communicate with God, Jesus or Mary. Stay on in silence while staring at that image. listen with your heart
- As far as possible, express your feelings to God, to Jesus or to Mary nor verbally, with looks, gestures, postures, sighs, singing, humming, etc.
- End your prayer with “The Our Father” and “The Glory be”
- Sing an appropriate hymn.