



**WITHIN  
&  
BEYOND**

**SELF  
ENCOUNTER**

**GABRIEL CALVO**

Within and Beyond by Fr. Gabriel Calvo

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# SELF ENCOUNTER A JOURNEY FROM WITHIN AND BEYOND

By Gabriel Calvo

## PREFACE

*"The author that speaks of his own books is almost as bad as the mother that speaks of her own children." -Benjamin Dirsraili-*

Despite the fact that I have no particular talent as a writer, throughout fifty three years of priestly ministry I have written several books, a series of manuals and many articles. Why? The truth is that both circumstances and friends have compelled me to do so.

In 1961, realizing the need to build a spiritual bridge between the couples that I knew who were happy in their marriage and those who, in my judgment, were not at all happy in their marriage, I wrote my first manual "MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER" as a service to the Christian Family Movement.

In 1965, encouraged by a writer-friend and wishing to help married couples in their spiritual lives, I wrote, in Spanish, "ENCOUNTER: Dialogues for Husbands and Wives". In 1970 these were followed up with the book "ENCOUNTER: Dialogues for Engaged Couples". In 1972 I wrote a *manual* entitled "MARRIAGE RETORNO" to help married couples to encounter God using Sacred Scripture: This was intended as another service of CFM- the Christian Family Movement.

During the decades between 1970 and 1990, having already moved to the United States where I have lived ever since, I wrote a *series of manuals*, as services for

F.I.R.E.S (an acronym for FAMILIES, INTERCOMMUNICATION, RELATIONSHIPS, EXPERIENCES, SERVICES) and *four books* that have been translated into several languages. The titles of the books are:

- FACE TO FACE: To achieve a happy marriage.
- FAMILY ENERGY: How to liberate it.
- HAND IN HAND: An aid to couples preparing for marriage.
- ENCOUNTER: dialogues for both married and engaged couples.

The book that you have in your hands is my *fifth book*. I am still thinking that I am not a good writer, but there is something within me that pushes me to write. That "something" is a personal need, one that comes to me in the Autumn of my life, and urges me to share with you what I feel deeply in my heart.

## INTRODUCTION

*"You carry within you  
the mysterious light of all secrets."*  
Amado-Nervo

### Finding true inner joy

*"Happiness is something within us"*  
John Powell

Since the beginning of time, not only during this age of consumerism, man has continued on a relentless journey of seeking happiness and has tried, but has time and time again failed, to achieve that goal. Why is it that we never seem to overcome those nagging feelings of sadness, dissatisfaction, frustration, stress, emptiness, etc.?

Experts in the study of human behavior give us this important clue: almost all of us look for happiness outside of ourselves – mainly through the possession of material goods, things that can be touched and seen. Whereas real happiness lies not outside ourselves, but rather within each one of us.

Therefore, if we want to be truly happy, we have to change our way of thinking and living -- starting by searching out our **internal values**, in the deepest part of our being, where **God** is.

We have to discover that our body is only something exterior through which we do indeed experience fleeting pleasures of the senses, but is not in itself the source of real joy. What is really valuable, and what engenders real happiness, is what is inside each of us, in our minds, in our hearts, in our willpower, in our souls. There is a whole universe of marvelous memories, all for us to use. These are the things that we must discover.

But no, we continually worry about our appearance -- hygiene, clothes, fashion, jewelry, hair styles, diets, physical exercise, and our own fame -- we content ourselves with just taking care of what is outside and looking at that exterior self in a mirror. It is natural that we feel the need daily to take care of our external appearance, but we cannot be truly human if we daily neglect our internal world.

How do we embark on this wonderful adventure towards our inner self? This is precisely the purpose of this "*half*" book you have in your hands. Where is the other "*half*"? Inside yourself, waiting for your creativity, for the magic of being able to discover it within your deepest part -- your best part.

What will be my choice?  
If I don't do it, nobody will be able to do it for me.....

## Let's wake up!

According to ancient Tibetan scriptures, God comes many times to visit each of us, but leaves because He simply does not find us. We are not at home in our inner selves, the only place where God can find us, because we are living outside ourselves.

In other words, when God comes, we are physically and molecularly where our body is, but our minds, our hearts, our consciences and our souls, are as if asleep.

Therefore, we need to wake up -- to connect our internal reality - - so that we can face reality and our own lives and then go out to meet God. And with the pre-requisite help from God, break free from the vicious cycle of our exterior selves in order to be in a position to find real happiness.

Without doubt,  
The Secret to True Happiness  
Is to be Awake When God Comes By....  
Wake up,  
And Decide to Live Your Dreams.  
If You Don't Dream,  
You Could Be Dead...  
Inside!

## Let's ask ourselves!

*"Asking oneself is the beginning of any sane philosophy"*  
Michel Eyquem de Montaigne

Let's observe the first thing that happens to us when we wake up. We generally get up asking questions like:

Where am I?  
What time is it?  
What day is today?  
What is in store for me today?

Then, being aware that our life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to lived, let's make it a point to wake up inside. In other words, without fear, let's commit ourselves to face our own reality. If we do, we will find inside ourselves the answers we've been vainly looking for outside. It is a fact that the answers to the existential questions that life's mystery daily poses to us are always found inside. But we have to bravely and honestly ask ourselves the right questions. The basis for all meaningful experiences in our lives is an

Encounter With Oneself,  
The Unconditional Starting Point,  
For all other Encounters,  
Including an Encounter  
With GOD

## **What are the great questions of every human being?**

Here is a very valuable text which might help us assimilate the existential questions of men and women of all times. It is an enlightening page from among the hopeful documents of the Vatican II Council.

“In reality, it is true that the unbalance which tries the modern world is connected with that other fundamental unbalance, whose roots are deep in the human soul. Those destructive elements which are found inside man are many. And because of the present evolution of the world, those elements increase more and more each day and hinder man from considering the most fundamental matters:

**What is man?**

**What is the meaning of pain, evil, death,  
that stay with us no matter how much progress we have made?**

**What value do the victories won at such high prices have?**

**What can man give society?**

**What can he expect from society?**

**What happens  
after this temporary life?**

Gaudium et Spes 10

We conclude this introduction with *Plato*'s wise saying:

*“If a man is asked the right questions, he will find the truth on his own.”*

**Which are the right questions we need to pose in order to find ourselves?**

## **I. Who Am I?**

***“Know Yourself”***

Delphoi Oracle

## To Know Myself

*“Knowing oneself means recognizing and discovering  
God’s image in oneself.”*  
A.Cencini

To know oneself is both the starting point and the goal of self-encounter. Do I know myself? I should not be content with answering a simple “Yes”, or with stopping at giving my first and last name. That would be a superficial and totally incomplete answer. Nor should I limit myself to an easy answer by simply saying “No!” That would indicate irresponsibility.

Socrates used to say to his disciples: “Observing is what will change you”. There are two ways to observe: a theoretical way – observing with my eyes – and an experimental way: which consists of observing from my own heart. But the path from the eyes to the heart is long and difficult. It is the path of interior experience that is worth taking.

From that moment on, if I so desire, I will have the opportunity to have small experiences that will help me switch from my eyes to my heart, and my soul.

Now in a few words I will write in my notebook:

1. Who am I?
2. Why have I written that answer?
3. How do I feel?

Then I can listen with my heart to what St. Augustine says to God in the book of “Confessions”:

*“Lord, that I may know myself like you know me.... No one among men knows the intimacy of man, but the spirit of the man that is within him.... You, Lord, know all things about man because you have created him.”*

## Connecting With My Bodily Senses

*“What we experience through our senses cannot be expressed in  
words.”*  
Hanna Arendt

This is the **first step** of the first stage of this exciting journey towards the deepest part of my being. To what extent am I willing to be aware of what I feel inside myself when I use my five senses? I can easily, if in only a small way, have an experience if I reflect upon my answer to the following:

### **What is it that I enjoy the most?**

To look:

To listen:

To smell:

To taste:

To touch:

### **What is it that I dislike the most?**

To look:

To listen:

To smell:

To taste:

To touch:

An honest answer to these questions will indicate to me which bodily senses have the strongest positive and negative impact on me- a first step in getting to know myself.



## Penetrating My Mind

*“Discovering what until now we ignored, is the beginning of wisdom”*  
Indian Proverb

Now I can take the **Second Step**.

It is A bit deeper:

To discover  
What is in my Mind:

My memories

My imagination

My different criteria

And

My questions

A real  
Spiritual Adventure  
Which is well worth while!

## My Memories

*“The true art of memory is attention.”*  
Samuel Johnson

I must be willing to remember with attention as I concentrate on the following:

- The best experience of my life.....
- The saddest.....
- The most painful .....
- The one which has influenced me the most.....
- The person by whom I have felt most loved.....
- The person whom I have loved the most.....
- The place where I have felt the happiest.....
- Something I will never forget.....
- What I don't really want to remember.....
- When I have felt closest to death.....
- When I have felt closest to God.....

## My Imagination

*“Without playing with fantasy,  
there is no possibility for any creative work.”*  
Karl Jung

I will take this opportunity to use my fantasy:

- I would like to be.....
- I would like to live in.....
- If I were a millionaire I would spend my money on.....
- If I were born again.....
- I would be completely happy if.....
- The worst thing that could happen to me would be.....
- If I knew I would die tomorrow.....
- How I would like to die.....
- If I were the leader of my country.....
- If I were the Pope.....
- If I were God.....
- What I would like to ask God.....

## My Criteria

*“Where there is no vision, people perish”*  
Book of Proverbs

I must remember the answers are inside myself:

- I think the best possible thing in life is.....
- I think the worst possible thing in life is.....
- Concretely the best thing in my life is.....
- Concretely the worst thing in my life is.....
- The best part of my family is.....
- The worst part of my family is.....
- The best part of my country is.....
- The worst part of my country is.....
- The best aspect of my religion is.....
- The worst aspect of my religion is.....
- The best thing for children is.....
- The worst thing for children is.....
- The best thing for young people is.....
- The worst thing for young people is.....
- The best thing for adults is.....
- The worst thing for adults is.....
- The best thing for the elderly is.....
- The worst thing for the elderly is.....

## My Questions

*“Why have you come to Earth?  
Do you remember?”*  
John Astin

I already know the secret. If I concentrate and ask myself honestly and courageously, I will find the answer within myself. I must ask myself what *my views* are on:

- Life and death
- Good and evil
- Pleasure and pain
- Love and sex
- Generosity and selfishness
  
- My family and myself
- Truth and skepticism
- Liberty and debauchery
- Nature and the Universe
- God and what lays beyond

## Observing my Heart

*“Let’s not pretend to understand the World only with our intelligence,  
Our feelings can also help us to understand it.”*  
Karl G. Jung

### The **third step**

Is

An amazing journey

Towards the innermost part of my heart.

It has to do with a unique opportunity:

To identify

Some of my deepest feelings and emotions:

About myself

About my family

About those around me

About existing circumstances

About what I perceive when contemplating nature

About life

About death

About that which lies beyond

## My Self

*“Show me a person unsatisfied with himself and I will show you an angry person.”*  
Nikki Giovanni

What comes to mind when I consider my feelings about:

Love	Admiration	Happiness
Gratitude	Satisfaction	Fulfillment
Pride	Hope	Indifference
Disdain	Sadness	Peace
Frustration	Humiliation	Hopelessness
Dissatisfaction	Disappointment	Shame
Worry	Hate	Dislike
Confusion	Restlessness	Tension
Frustration	Humiliation	Hopelessness

**N.B. Some of these feelings and emotions have been an integral part of my life.**

**Have I lived my life up to now failing to be aware of and to identify them?**

## My Family

*“From the deepest part of myself, I am part of my family”*  
David H. Lawrence

What are my feelings about my family members and how would I grade myself from 1 to 10 concerning the points that I will have chosen?

### **For my Father:**

Respect? Admiration? Appreciation? Animosity? Indifference? Love? Trust? Fear? Distrust? Hate?

### **For my Mother:**

Love? Affection? Trust? Distrust? Resentment? Protection? Support? Dependence? Domination? Unloved?

### **For my Husband or my Wife:**

Love? Affection? Respect? Trust? Distrust? Attraction? Interest? Apathy? Need? Indifference?

### **For my Children:**

Love? Affection? Acceptance? Understanding? Lack of understanding? Worry? Indifference? Trust? Distrust? Lack of love?

### **For my Siblings:**

Love/ Lack of love? Affection/ Jealousy? Trust/Distrust? Solidarity/Lack of Solidarity? Help/Indifference? Interest/ Disinterest?

### **For my Grandparents:**

Love and respect? Affection/coldness? Care/abandonment?

## My Neighbors

*“Love others as you love yourself”*  
Leviticus

What are my feelings about my neighbours, and how would I grade myself from 1 to 10 concerning the points that I will have chosen?

- For my friends:** Love/selfishness? Trust/Distrust?  
**For my enemies:** Hate/unfriendliness/indifference?  
**For my neighbors:** Friendship/unfriendliness/indifference?  
**For the sick:** Compassion/ lack of concern?  
**For the poor:** Solidarity/ lack of solidarity?  
**For immigrants:** Appreciation/ antipathy/discrimination?  
**For people in jail:** Compassion/apathy?  
**For the young:** Hope/anxiety  
**For the elderly:** Respect/love/understanding/indifference?  
**For addicts:** Acceptance/rejection/condemnation?  
**For those who don't believe:** Respect/understanding/dislike?

## My Feelings in Certain Circumstances

*“Man depends on circumstances, not circumstances on man”*  
Herodotus

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| I feel happy when....      | I feel sad when.....         |
| I feel generous when.....  | I feel selfish when...       |
| I feel optimistic when.... | I feel pessimistic when..... |
| I get excited when....     | I get depressed when.....    |
| I am sensual when.....     | I am spiritual when....      |
| I trust if.....            | I distrust if.....           |
| I feel anguish when.....   | I calm down when....         |
| I am brave if.....         | I am a coward if.....        |
| I feel satisfied if.....   | I feel dissatisfied if.....  |
| I am trustful if.....      | I am distrustful if....      |
| I am happy when.....       | I unhappy when .....         |
| I feel calm when.....      | I feel nervous when.....     |
| I feel secure when....     | I feel insecure when...      |
| I feel peace when....      | I feel confused if....       |

**Do my answers indicate that have my feelings under control?**

## Contemplating Nature

*"Nature is God's Art" - Dante Alighieri*

How do I feel in the winter?  
And in the summer?

What do I feel when it rains?  
And when there is a storm?

What do I feel when it snows?  
And if there is a hail storm?

How do I feel when there is an earthquake?  
And a hurricane?

What do I feel about fire?  
And about things burning down?  
What do I feel when I climb a mountain?  
And when I reach the peak?  
What do I feel when I contemplate the sea?  
And when I walk through the desert?  
What are my feelings towards dawn?  
And sunset?  
How do I feel on a starry night?  
On a cloudy night?

## Thinking About Life

*"When you stop fighting you stop living."*  
Howard Newton

*"Life is a succession of moments, and living each of those moments is  
the secret to true victory."*  
Elizabeth Kenny

Do I find life to be exciting, or a heavy drudgery?

Do I accept life as it comes or do I run away from it?

Do I appreciate and take care of my life or am I careless with it, and  
ignore it?

Do I respect life or destroy it?

Do I want to live each day more fully or am I tired of living?

Do I live primarily for myself or for others?

Do I live in the presence of God or do I virtually ignore Him?

## Thinking About Death

*"The opposite of life is not death, it is indifference."*  
Elie Wiesel

Do I fear death?

Does it frighten me?

Do I run from it?

Do I underestimate it?

Do I hate the very thought of it?

**OR**

Do I accept it?

Do I complacently await it?

Does it stimulate me?

Does it challenge me?

Does it convey such an intimacy as to call it "my sister" as *St. Francis* did?

*"What matters is not how one dies,  
but how one lives."*  
Samuel Johnson

## Thinking About What Is Beyond

*"We feel and know we are eternal!"*  
Baruch Spinoza

And, I.....

Do I believe that I will continue to live forever?

Do I believe there is an after life ?

Do I have a desire to live on after my bodily death?

Do I have a hope of meeting my deceased loved ones again?

**OR....**

Do I expect nothing?

Am I full of doubts?

Do I want to clarify those doubts?

How can I do that?

Who can help me?

When?

*"He who has created you without counting on you, will not save you  
without counting on you."*  
Saint Augustin

## Exploring My Will

*“More than anything in the world,  
Jonathan Livingston Seagull loved to fly.”*  
Richard Bach

The **fourth step** toward my inner self  
is very hopeful.

It is about discovering  
a source of energy within myself.

To liberate my vital energy,  
I have to find out what are:

My great aspirations,  
My basic attitudes,  
and

My most important decisions.

## My Aspirations

*“Aspirations are half of life,  
indifference and apathy are half of death.”*  
Kahlil Gibran

What is my lifelong dream?  
My three biggest wishes?

What do I expect of marriage?  
What do I expect from my family?

What do I expect of myself?  
Do I want to be a leader?

What do I imagine will be my “masterpiece”?  
I would like to write a book about.....

I aspire to be rich in order to.....  
I would like to spend my free time on.....

What could I do to stop hunger and misery?  
What needs to be done in order to have more justice and peace?

What are my religious aspirations?

What can I do to deepen my personal relationship with God?

*“We all live in a stream, but some of us look at the stars.”*  
Oscar Wilde



## My Attitudes

*“The great discovery of each generation is verifying that as humans,  
we can change our lives by changing our attitudes.”*

Albert Schweitzer

In this **fifth step** I will attempt  
to take a look at my attitudes,  
in other words, at my outlook on life.

It is my positive attitudes  
that improve the quality  
of my existence and daily living.

In reality,  
my attitude precedes events.

This is a step to open up to myself.

I must ask myself: *“Am I improving or getting worse?”*

## Improving?

*“Don’t wait for the final judgment, it happens day by day.”*

Albert Camus

What would be my answers  
to the following questions?

YES NO SOMETIMES

I am faithful to my promises  
When I can see things clearly I act  
I suffer when I see injustice

I am punctual  
I listen when people talk to me  
I express my thanks when I receive help

When I feel rushed for time I pray  
If I have problems I communicate them to others  
I enjoy working

I do not get excited when confronted with unforeseen problems

I help those who need me  
I believe what people tell me

I strive to improve each day  
I try not to borrow money  
I always pay my debts

**Check - How many times I Am answering YES, NO, SOMETIMES  
respectively.  
Am I improving?**

### Getting Worse?

*“A person who stops being better stops being good”*

Oliver Cromwell

YES NO SOMETIMES

I tend to be individualistic  
When I am offended I take revenge  
I put off things until tomorrow

I make decisions without consulting anyone  
I enjoy listening to gossip  
I am resentful

If people do not accept me, I get angry  
When I get nervous I raise my voice  
I am distrustful of people

I distrust myself  
I am disorganized  
I am a pessimist

**Check- How many times for answering YES, NO, SOMETIMES  
respectively**

### My Decisions

*“A decision is a risk one has to take in order to be free.”*

Paul Tillich

The **sixth step** is a good opportunity  
to be open with myself  
and to  
verify  
my power of decision making in life.

In other words:

It is about making myself aware  
of what comes easily  
or what comes only with difficulty.

*“The size of a person is measured by the things he achieves.”*

Saint Francis

### Things that come easily

What would be my answers to the following questions?

It comes easy for me: YES NO SOMETIMES

- To read
- To write
  
- To reflect
- To communicate myself
  
- To listen
- To give
  
- To receive
- To give hope
  
- To smile
- To help
  
- To work
- To organize
  
- To show solidarity
- To pray

**Which of the above is the easiest for me?**

### Things I Find Difficult

What would be my answers to the following questions?

I find it difficult: YES NO SOMETIMES

- To be content with daily living
- To be responsible
  
- To serve
- To collaborate
  
- To be patient
- To be humble
  
- To always tell the truth
- To be just to all
  
- Not to judge
- Not to blame others
  
- To respect
- To listen to
  
- To love
- To suffer
  
- To accept
- To trust
  
- To forgive
- To ask for forgiveness

**Which of the above do I find the most difficult?  
Looking Deep Into My Soul**

*“Although our civilization is not the first one to deny the immortality of the soul, it is seemingly the first for which the soul has no importance.”*  
Andre Malraux

This **seventh step**  
helps me to submerge myself  
in the deepest part of **my soul**.

In other words, that place  
where human beings are conscious of an  
**Immortal Spirit** made in the  
*Image of God...*

**THE SOUL!**

*“From my soul, in the deepest of its core”*  
Saint John of the Cross

**Am I sufficiently open to take this seventh step?**

**Attention!**

*“Hiding in the deepest part of our bodies lives the soul.  
Nobody has ever seen it, but we all know it is there.”*  
Michael Snunit

To penetrate my soul I must go to a *quiet place*, concentrate and ask myself:

**What do I see through the eyes of my mind?**

Light or darkness? A mountain or a valley?  
A narrow road or a wide one?

**What do I hear in my heart?**

The voice of good or evil?  
The voice of love or hate and indifference?  
The clear voice of my conscience or confusing sounds?

**What do I feel inside my soul?**

Peace and hope or anguish and despair?  
Happiness or sadness?  
Fulfillment or emptiness?

**And, what do I sense from the center of my soul?**

The mystery and presence of God or of his absence?  
The coming of a better world or a worse one?  
Something beyond or nothing?

*“Lord, my soul is thirsty for you like dry soil without water....”* - Psalm  
62:2

## Review of the First Stage

Before beginning the *Second Stage* -- if I really want to know who I am it might help to write my answers to the following questions:

1. What did I like the most about the First Stage? Why?
2. What did I like the least? Why?
3. What is the most important thing I learned? Why?
4. What have I discovered?
5. What things can I improve? How?

## II. Who am I really?

*“The goal in life is to become that who one really is.”*

Sören Kierkegaard

## Understanding Myself

*“All that which bothers us about other people  
can help us understand ourselves better.”*

Charles G. Jung

Who exactly is the real me? The majority of us avoid facing ourselves so that we don't have to answer that embarrassing question. And when we feel questioned by others about the way we are, we are content to reply:

“That is just the way I am.”

What happens in reality is that we are afraid to know both the truth and the lies about ourselves, and we run away from every mirror that might reflect a clear image of our identity.

At other times, to avoid others recognizing the way we really are, we hide behind numerous masks that we fabricate, stimulated by our surroundings. We first try to fool ourselves, and then we try to fool others -- and even God, if only we could. But frequently, events, life's circumstances and our own passions and tendencies, show us as we really are. Then, we feel, but we don't accept the judgments and criticism of the people who can see us as we more or less really are.

All these combined attitudes, feelings and actions produce suffering and unhappiness and are the cause of many mistakes in life.

## Appraising my Willingness:

To take a *mental picture of myself* and discover the image of God which is inside of me.

To *answer* the great question of this Second Stage by conducting three experiments.

1. A self-portrait of my temperament. In other words, of the congenital dispositions which make me act in a certain way.
2. A second self-portrait of my character. In other words, of the group of qualities acquired through education and my own efforts.
3. And a self-portrait of my personality -- the way I am, and the way I react and relate to others.

If I become aware of these three dimensions of myself I will have my self- image.

As in the first Stage, I will proceed step by step, slowly and clearly, without rushing.

## My Temperament

*“Moderating one’s temperament is a virtue”*  
Thomas Paine

The objective of the first step of this Second Stage is to discover the congenital dispositions that make me act in a certain way. It includes my temperament, which starts from my physical constitution and affects the way I feel, think, love and act.

As a result of this natural mechanism, and according to a principle of psychology, there are several different types of temperaments, corresponding to the various tendencies and peculiarities that individuals have. The classical temperamental types, each having both positive and negative qualities, are:

**Sanguine:** Vigorous / active.

**Phlegmatic:** Calm/ inconsistent

**Choleric:** Excitable/emotional

**Melancholic:** Profound/ vague and sad

Even though in each of us one of these four types predominates, we all have a combination of two or more.

**What do I consider to be my predominant temperament?  
I will do a little introspection to find out!**

I must remember that the light is inside me. When I look at myself reflected in a special mental mirror, what do I see? Underlining the words below that I feel describe me can help me:

### **Sanguine:**

Full of energy, vigor and activity.

Passionate, warm, welcoming, loving

Base my decisions on feelings rather than on reason

Frequently speak before thinking

By nature restless and undisciplined....

### **Phlegmatic:**

Quiet and slow

Understanding, compassionate, likeable

Inconstant, indolent, lazy

In need of motivation

### **Choleric:**

Practical, conclusive and decisive

Easily excitable, with prominent emotional impulses

Independent and hard to live with

### **Melancholic:**

Very sensible

Usually sad

Abrupt, unpleasant, rough, severe and rigid

**What are some concrete examples that describe what I have underlined?**

**The examples may indicate my predominant temperament.**

## My Character

*“Character is forged slowly but can weaken fast”*

Faith Baldwin

As I go through this second step I will discover the root of my personal characteristics in my family and religious education.

### My family education

(I will answer YES, NO, SOMETIMES)

1. The type of discipline used by my parents at home was authoritarian. My parents would make the rules and impose them without explanation.
  - When I would break a rule my parents would punish me and I was never sure why.
  - I did not feel understood and felt insecure.
  - I had a hard time in school
2. The type of discipline used at home was based on trust and responsible freedom: My parents would sit with me and listen to me.
  - My parents would explain the rules to me
  - They would punish me within reason
  - I felt loved and accepted
  - I did very well in school

**Which type of discipline do I now exercise in my family, or intend to utilize when I raise my own children?**

Authoritarian                  Trust and responsible freedom

## My religious education

### My forefathers were:

Very religious                  Not very religious                  Faithless

### My Father:

Very religious                  Not very religious                  Faithless

### My Father:

Very religious                  Not very religious                  Faithless

My parents taught me to pray  
My parents did not teach me to pray  
I had experiences of faith at home  
I did not have experiences of faith at home

### Personally I think of myself as:

A very religious person  
Not very religious  
Faithless



## My Personality

*"If you are not yourself, who will you be?"*  
Henry Thoreau

The third step: Now I am ready to identify and discover my authentic personality, my unique way of being, acting and relating. For this task I can utilize these three practical exercises.

### My mental qualities

What is prominent in me is:

Sensitivity	Logic
Reflecting before acting	Intuition
Technical vision	Spiritual vision

### My emotional qualities

In general:

I think I have self-esteem  
Love is the driving force of my life  
I have control over my feelings  
I have compassion  
I am affectionate  
I need to be loved

### My moral qualities

Personally:

I follow the voice of my conscience	I am sincere
I give my family priority	I am obliging
I give of myself to others and am concerned about them	I relate to a moral way of life and to God.

### I consider my personality to be

Very good      Good      Fair      Bad

## My strong points

In order to deepen the positive aspects of my personality  
I must first of all discover what my strong points are.

I consider myself as a person who possesses the following checked points:

Honest	Mature	Hard working
Obliging	Responsible	Patient
Generous	Communicative	Organized
Welcoming	Peace loving	Cultured
Believing	Faithful	Giving and concerned about others

### What is the strong point that I live out most fully?

## My weak points

There is a dark side of my personality which displays  
my weaknesses, my limitations, my predominant faults.

I consider myself also possessing the following checked points:

Insecure	Shy
Hard-headed	Distrustful
Violent	Selfish
Proud	Domineering
Weak willed	Alcoholic
Drug-addict	Rebellious
Revengeful	Agnostic

### What do I feel is my most outstanding weak point?

## My masks

In this fourth step, I have the opportunity to ask myself about my masks -- those behaviors we all adopt to hide our true personality: to make people believe that I am a person that I am really not, or to hide the kind of person I feel that I really am.

Some of my possible masks:

Happy	Kind	Sincere
Intellectual	Humble	Honest
Religious	Generous	Virtuous
Simple	Poor	Hardworking
Powerful	Cultured	Peace loving
Others...		

**Which mask do I most often wear?**

## My preferences

My favorite time of day...	My most awaited day of the week...
My favorite month...	My favorite season of the year...
My preferred occupation...	The sport in which I have the greatest interest...
My favorite song...	
My favorite music...	
The movie I have liked the best...	
The television show I watch the most...	
My favorite video...	My favorite book...
My favorite food...	My favorite drink.....
The best trip of my life...	My hobby...
The favorite pages from my country's history...	
The key event in the history of the Universe...	
My favorite passage in the Bible...	
My life's dream...	My motto in life...
	My epitaph...

Within and Beyond by Fr. Gabriel Calvo

## Review of the Second Stage

Before moving on to the Third Stage of my journey, this is a good time to take a short break to discern the actual state of my inner self. I can consider the following to help me achieve this important goal

1. What have I liked the most about this Second Stage? Why?
2. What have I liked the least? Why?
3. What is an important thing that I have learned?
4. What have I found out about my personality?
5. How can I improve my personality?

**III.**  
**My Life – What Meaning Does It Have?**

*“Man is a being in search of meaning.”*  
Plato

**Is life worth living?**

*“There is a reason to live:  
We can rise over our own ignorance,  
discover ourselves as creatures of perfection, intelligence and ability.  
We can be free! We can learn to fly!”*  
Richard Bach

Today,  
millions of men and women  
-of all races and cultures-  
upon feeling that internal void,  
ask themselves about the meaning of life.

The confusion of many of them  
comes from the fact that at night, when they go to bed,  
they are not sure why they woke up that morning,  
nor why they should start again tomorrow.

And with anguish they ask themselves:  
Why must I live? Why must I suffer? Why must I die?  
Why must I do good or avoid evil?

This Third Stage  
is like a vital synthesis of what I have reflected on and experienced  
in the First and Second Stages.  
It is about finding out the meaning of my own life.

**Is that something that really interests me?**

## Accepting Myself

*“...as you love yourself”*  
Leviticus

The first step in the Third Stage is an important key to self-encounter -- finding out the degree of my self-esteem, or the extent to which I accept myself.

One's self-esteem is a positive love of oneself that is healthy and mature. It is a peaceful feeling of respect and trust in oneself. On the other hand, there is a self-love that is unorganized and unhealthy, selfish and narcotic. This is the excessive and obsessive accentuation of “me”, in preference to anyone else.

A low self-esteem renders a person incapable of loving others, and is the root of many problems. Low self-esteem is expressed in some of the following ways:

“Nobody loves me”, “I am good for nothing”; “I am a failure”; “This is the way I am”; “I cannot change”

To break this vicious and obsessive circle I have to learn to accept myself as I really am – with my own qualities as well as defects and limitations – and so make peace with myself.

### How to achieve it?

**By being sincere with myself!**

**Considering the following suggestions can be helpful.**

## My level of self-esteem

*“Love everyone unconditionally, including yourself”*  
Ken Keyes

YES NO SOMETIMES

Criticism hurts me  
I am shy but aggressive  
I hide my feelings  
I develop a complex easily  
I tend to blame others  
I make up excuses not to have to change  
I avoid new experiences  
I am worried about my physical appearance  
I don't voice my personal achievements  
I am glad when others fail

**If my answer was YES to most of these statements, I probably need to think about whether there is a deficiency in my self-esteem.**

**Is it important to me to be willing to do so?**

## Improving my self-esteem

*“A healthy self-esteem is decisively important for your happiness.”*  
L.S. Barksdale

I can improve my self-esteem by:

1. Looking inside myself, not outside.
2. Discovering what is good as well as bad in me.
3. Accepting myself, right now, just as I am.
4. Not judging or condemning myself.
5. Avoiding comparing myself to others -- just being myself.
6. Recognizing my efforts to improve.
7. Not blaming others for my own faults and problems.
8. Being at peace with myself.
9. Trusting my good will and charisma.
10. Asking God for the gift of self-acceptance.

**Which one of the above 10 points am I in the most need of?**

## Valuing Myself

*“Tell me what you value and I will tell you who you are.”*  
Spranger

Psychologists agree that hidden deep within ourselves, there exists a great potential of personal good values that affect our daily conduct and life style.

The majority of the people are not aware of their true values, not even of their existence. But whether we know them or not, they are there waiting to be released.

Before discovering what my personal good values are, it will be helpful to reflect on several types of general values:

- Material values: Nature, things, techniques...
- Basic values: Honesty, self-discipline, family....
- Moral values: Honesty, kindness, solidarity, justice.....
- Spiritual values: Love, communication, friendship, peace.....
- Esthetic values: Beauty, art, music, painting.....
- Religious values: Principles, beliefs, rituals.....
- Transcendental values: God, revelation, prayer....

A clear knowledge of my personal good values is the key to discovering my vocation and mission in life.

**Only then will I find real meaning in my life...**

## My good values

*“Many people overestimate what they aren’t and underestimate what they are.”*

Malcom Forbes

The second step in this Third Stage is to gain awareness of and unleash my personal good values. It is possible that my real values are not those I might have imagined. Many confuse their values with their ideals. My ideals, which certainly affect my personal life, can motivate my quest for real values, but my ideals themselves, are not my values, but rather indicators of what my good values might be. Other indicators are the things I give precedence to -- those things that I consider to be most important in my personal life, (although very often what I give preference to are negative values). Examples of positive values:

Inner happiness	Amiability	Love
Friendship	Art	Authenticity
Kindness	Communication	Joviality
Good human relations	Community	Understanding
Trust	Cooperation	Cordiality
Dignity	Self discipline	Docility
Education	Equilibrium	Enthusiasm
Hope	Family	Faith
Fidelity	Generosity	Gratitude
Children	Honesty	Humility
Justice	Liberty	Maturity
Marriage	Morality	Prayer
Forgiveness	Religion	Work
Life		

## Practical exercises to discover my authentic values

*“Values are not invented or created, they are simply discovered.”*

Max Scheler

My values ultimately define who I am,  
so I must discover what they are  
and accept them.

As a matter of fact,  
Living out our good values  
is what strengthens me inside.

If I want to discover  
Which values I possess -- my real values --  
I will have to find out:

How I spend:

1. My time
2. My energy
3. My money

These are three potential indicators that might help me identify my authentic values.

I can answer with YES, NO, SOMETIMES:

**How do I generally spend my free time?**

Myself	My family	My community
My church	Volunteering	Sport
Music	Cultural activities	Recreation
Television	At the computer	Studying
Reading	Physical exercise	Writing
Physical exercise	Politics	Prayer
Apostolate	Friends	Hobbies

**How do I generally spend my energy?**

My daily work	My studies	My obligations
My business	My education	My marriage
My family	Helping those in need	
Sports	Lottery, betting	Having fun
Civic and political activities		
Religious activities		
Going out with my friends		

**How do I generally spend my money?**

Personal things	Books and magazines
Videos and CDs	Jewelry
Gifts	Family needs
Charity	Recreation
Clothes	Dining out
Drinks	Betting
Social works	Charitable donations -- to church etc.

**Pause for reflection**

*“The most important task in a man’s life is giving birth to himself.”*  
Erich Fromm

Before immediately going on to the next step it might be a good idea to pause now and honestly and sincerely reflect, once again, on the above three points to determine what my real values are.

The truth is that I spend my time on:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The truth is that I spend most of my energy on:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The truth is that most of my money I spend on:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**What then are my true values?**

## Discovering My True Self

*“What you are able to do is only a drop in the Ocean,  
but that is what gives meaning to your life.”*

Albert Schweitzer

We live in a consumeristic and materialistic society, where individuals are not considered as someone who needs to be valued, but rather as something that needs to be exploited.

In this day and age millions of human beings, consumed with the need to possess and to do, feel totally lost. As a result, when faced with a tragedy, like the death of a loved one, we are forced to reflect:

“Why am I here?”

”Why do I want to go on living?”

”Do I have any worth as an individual?”

And many of those who do not find clear answers that motivate and stimulate, take refuge in one or more of many kinds of escapes like alcohol, drugs or sexual pleasures, leading to addiction, delinquency, homicide and suicide.

### Remember:

Knowing my values is the key to discovering my vocation and my mission. And my own happiness and that of others greatly depends on whether or not I discover my vocation and mission.

### What do I plan to do with my life?

## What is my mission in life?

*“What is life for if not to give it away?”*

Anonymous

This is the third step in the Third Stage of my inner journey:

It is time to discover  
why I have come to this Earth -- why I was born.....

Because living is walking,  
and walking is serving.

The end of this Third Stage invites me to  
sincerely ask myself:

**What (in the world) am I good for?”**

**If I try, I really can find a clear answer inside myself!**



## To Serve!

*“Your worth depends on the extent to which  
you serve others”*

Popular saying

It is true that serving others is our common vocation in life. But I need to find my own way of realizing my fundamental vocation. To be able to recognize which way to serve, in other words, my personal mission, I have to determine:

- The circumstances in which I live
- My own talents and abilities
- My real values
- My personal gifts
- My own charismas

Being accommodating is that basic attitude -- daily and habitual -- which I put in the service of the needs of those around me. I should start with those who are the closest, with the needs of my family, followed by those of my neighbors and then trying to reach those who need it the most -- like the poor and needy.

Naturally, to serve I need a certain level of maturity, simplicity and trust in myself. As *Einstein* said,

*“Only a life lived for others is worth living.”*

**Now I can check on my willingness to serve**

## Mini-test

Am I an obliging person?

YES, NO, NOT SURE

- We are all born to serve others.
- To try to dominate is radically opposed to an attitude of serving.
- My family and friends say that I am obliging
- When I serve others without wanting to, I lose my internal peace.
- When I sacrifice myself in order to serve others, I feel a great internal peace.
- I think I can improve my attitude towards serving others.
- My ideal is to serve others with happiness and enthusiasm.

**Did I pass the test?**

## Review of the Third Stage

## IV. Do I Believe in God?

Before moving on to the Fourth Stage, I should first take an overall look at the Third Stage.

***“It is the heart that experiences God,  
not the reason.”***

Pascal

1. What did I like the most about the *Third Stage*? Why?
2. What did I like the least about the *Third Stage*? Why?
3. What I have learned?
4. What have I discovered?
5. How can I and must I improve?

## I Ask Myself About God

*“The XXI century will be mystical, or it will not be the XXI century.”*

Andre Malraux

This Fourth Stage is an invitation to ask myself about God. The question is not an arbitrary one. It comes from my deepest personal reality.

Does God exist?

Who is God? What kind of a reality is God? Where is God?

Why does God allow suffering, injustice and evil?

Is it because God is dead?

Certainly, God is not dead. He is the source of life. He is immortal. What has happened is that we, his creatures, have lost God. We have lost the sense of what is important. We have lost the dimension of profundity and spirituality. We have lost transcendence.

Our heart, anguished by doing and having, has become so taken up with the material that we have lost sensibility to perceive what is invisible to the eyes. It is our hearts that have died by becoming atheistic. The same happens as with a person born blind who denies the existence of light because he has never seen it.

In reality, the question about God is the most fundamental one and most radical of all, because all questions about life are rooted in the question about God.

As a matter of fact and according to the revelation in the Bible (as we will experience in this Stage), willingly or not, knowingly or not, we are always related to God because he is the Creator of the Universe and of each of us.

Within and Beyond by Fr. Gabriel Calvo

However, today, as we can see in many ways, but especially by what we see in the media and society, in the technical and political systems, the subject of God is not a familiar one to millions of human beings.

### **Is God real for me? I must ask myself!**

Who is God for me? Can I meet him? How?

What does God want from me?

Does he talk to me? Does he love me?

How can I respond to God?

The goal of this *Fourth Stage* is to help find God in the deepest part of myself.

Concentrate on this substantial and existential testimony:

*“Lord, you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts cannot rest until they rest in you .”*

Saint Augustine

## Looking and Listening to God in the Sacred Scriptures

### Because

- God is present in the Bible as a person who reveals himself.
- The Bible is not a book to read. It is a collection of messages that have to be listened to.
- God is not something to possess, but someone to receive. When we receive someone, we sit and listen.
- It is fruitless to look for God if we don't make an effort to listen -- to really listen with the heart of a child.
- The Bible is not a code to judge others but a mirror to see ourselves.
- In the Bible we are all reflected, portrayed, prophesied, called, invited....

As Paul the Apostle said in his letter to the Hebrews:

*“Indeed God’s word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart.”* Hebrews 4:12-13

### My personal experience with God’s word is:

Very good                      Good                      Non existent

## Testimony of a Poet

Last night as I was sleeping,  
I dreamed—marvelous error!—  
that spring was breaking  
out in my heart.

I said: Along which secret aqueduct,  
Oh water, are you coming to me,  
water of a new life  
that I have never drunk?

Last night as I was sleeping,  
I dreamed—marvelous error!—  
that I had a beehive  
here inside my heart.  
And the golden bees  
were making white combs  
and sweet honey  
from my old failures.

Last night as I was sleeping,  
I dreamed—marvelous error!—  
that a fiery sun was giving  
light inside my heart.  
It was fiery because I felt  
warmth as from a hearth,  
and sun because it gave light  
and brought tears to my eyes.  
Last night as I slept,  
I dreamed—marvelous error!—  
that it was God I had  
here inside my heart.

*Antonio Machado*

### Does God live inside of me?

Yes                      No                      I don't know

## Guidelines to Listen to God Inside Myself

In this Fourth Stage, if my attitude is like that of little Samuel, I have only to open the Bible to 1 Samuel 13:9 and I will find God -- **inside myself.**

### Guidelines for me to follow for each of the following pages:

#### First Step:

Assimilate the question at the top of each page.

#### Second Step:

Read carefully each of the Biblical passages.

#### Third Step:

Underline or write down the word that most illuminates me.

#### Fourth Step:

Listen to that word in my heart, where God is.

#### Fifth Step:

Ask God, "What are you telling me Lord?"

#### Sixth Step:

Answer truthfully the last question on each page.

#### Seventh Step:

Thank God, wholeheartedly for that word.

## Some have said: "That God Is Dead."

### What Do I Say?

"The fool says in his heart, "there is no God". Such are corrupt: they do abominable deeds: there is not one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be one who is wise and seeks God. All alike have gone astray: they have become perverse: there is not one who does good, not even one." Psalm 14: 1-3

"For all men were by nature foolish who were in ignorance of God, and who from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing him who is, and from studying the works did not discern the artisan: but either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circuit of the stars, or the mighty water, or the luminaries of heaven, the governors of the world, they considered god.

Now if out of joy in their beauty they thought them gods, let them know how far more excellent is the Lord than these, for the original source of beauty fashioned them. Or if they were struck by their might and energy, let them from these things realize how much more powerful is he who made them. For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen. But yet, for these the blame is less: for they indeed have gone astray perhaps, thought they seek God and wish to find him. For they search busily among his works, but are distracted by what they see, because the things seen are fair. But again, not even these are pardonable. For if they so far succeeded in the knowledge that they could speculate about the world, how did they not more quickly find its Lord?" Wisdom 13: 1-9

### Has God died inside of me?

Yes                      No                      Maybe

## If I Am Alive, Who Am I?

*“I am who am”* Exodus 3:14

*“I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me.”*  
Deuteronomy 5: 6-7

*“I am the Lord since the beginning and will be until the end.”* Isaiah 41:6

*“My decrees you shall carry out, and my statutes you shall take care to follow. I, the Lord, am your God. Keep, then, my statutes and decrees, for the man who carries them out will find life through them. I am the Lord.”* Leviticus 18: 4-5

*“I the Lord, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go.”* Isaiah 48: 17

*“There shall be no strange God among you nor shall you worship any alien god. I, the Lord, am your God.”* Psalm 81: 10-11

### Is the Lord of Heaven and Earth My God?

Yes

No

I don't know

## God, Why do you allow suffering?

*“Who is it that obscures divine plans with words of ignorance? Gird up your loins now, like a man: I will question you, and you tell me the answers! Where were you when I founded the Earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its size? Do you know? Who stretched out the measuring line for it? Into what were its pedestals sunk, and who laid the cornerstone, while the morning stars sang in chorus and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”* Job 38: 1-7

*“The Lord then said to Job: Will we have arguing with the Almighty by the critic? Let him who would correct God give answer!”* Job 40: 1-2

*“Gird up your loins now, like a man. I will question you, and you tell me the answers! Would you refuse to acknowledge my right? Would you condemn me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like that of God, or can you thunder with a voice like his?”* Job 40:7-9

*“I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you. Therefore I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes.”* Job 42: 5-6

### Do I repent and ask for forgiveness for my questioning God?

Yes

No

I don't know

## Lord, do you love me?

*“I, the Lord, am your healer.”* Exodus 15: 26

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I dedicated you a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”* Jeremiah 1:5

*“Fear not for I have redeemed you: I have called you by name: you are mine. When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned: the flames shall not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in return for you. Because you are precious in my eyes and glorious, and because I love you.”* Isaiah 43: 1-4

*“Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name: your walls are ever before me.”* Isaiah 49: 15-16

*“In an outburst of wrath, for a moment I hid my face from you: but with enduring love I take pity on you, says the Lord, your redeemer.”* Isaiah 54:8

*“As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you: in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.”* Isaiah 66: 13

*“I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking form your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts.”* Ezekiel 36: 26

### Have I personally experienced God’s love?

Yes                      No                      I would like to experience it

Within and Beyond by Fr. Gabriel Calvo

## Where Are You Lord?

*“Do not fear for I am with you”* Genesis 26:24

*“I am with you. I will protect you wherever you go.”* Genesis 28: 15

*“Be not afraid for I am with you.”* Isaiah 41:10

*“Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”* Jeremiah 1:8

*“I am with you to deliver and rescue you.”* Jeremiah 15:20

*“I am with you to deliver you.”* Jeremiah 30:11

*“Never fear for I am with you.”* Jeremiah 46:28

*“I will establish my alliance with you, and you will know I am the Lord.”* Ezekiel 16:62

### Do I Live in the Presence of God?

Yes                      No                      Sometimes

Within and Beyond by Fr. Gabriel Calvo

## Lord, How Do I Get to Know you?

*“Your own wickedness chastises you, your own infidelities punish you. Know then, and see, how evil and bitter is our forsaking the Lord, your God, and showing no fear of me, says the Lord, the God of hosts.”*

Jeremiah 2:19

*“Fools my people are, they know me not: senseless children they are, having no understanding: they are wise in evil, but know not how to do good. I looked at the earth, and it was waste and void; at the heavens, and their light had gone out! I looked at the mountains, and they were trembling, and all the hills were crumbling! I looked and behold, there was no man: even the birds of the air had flown away!”* Jeremiah 4: 22-26

*“You must now prove your rank among kings by competing with them in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink? He did what was right and just, and it went well with him. Because he dispensed justice to the weak and the poor, it went well with him. Is this not true knowledge of me? But your eyes and heart are set on nothing except on your own gain.”*

Jeremiah 22:15-17

*“I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord.”*

Jeremiah 24:7

*“You are my witnesses, my servants whom I have chosen to know and believe in me and understand that it is I.”* Isaiah 43:10

### Do I make an effort to get to know God?

Yes

No

I doubt it

## Lord, What Are Your Commandments?

1. *“I the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.”*

2. *“You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God in vain.”*

3. *“Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day”*

4. *“Honor your father and your mother”*

5. *“You shall not kill”*

6. *“You shall not commit adultery”*

7. *“You shall not steal”*

8. *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”* Exodus 20:1-6

9. *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife”*

10. *“or desire anything that belongs to him”* Deuteronomy 5:21

### “Listen Israel, The Lord Our God Is the Only Lord.”

*“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength”.* Deuteronomy 6:4-5

*“You will love your neighbor as yourself”* Leviticus 19:18

### Are the commandments of the Lord present in my mind?

Yes

No

I don’t know



## Lord, What Do You Want From Me?

*“Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.”*

*“Do not turn aside to idols, nor make molten gods for yourselves.”*

*“Do not lie or speak falsely to one another.”*

*“Do not oppress or exploit your neighbor.”*

*“Do not mock the mute or trip the blind.”*

*“You will judge your neighbor justly.”*

*“You will not hate your brother but correct him.”*

*“You will not take revenge or bear a grudge.”*

*“You will love your neighbor as yourself.”*

*“Do not go to mediums or consult fortune-tellers.”*

*“Stand up in the presence of the aged, and show respect for the old;  
thus shall you  
fear your God.”*

*“When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You  
shall treat  
the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born  
among you;  
have the same love for him as for yourself.”* Leviticus 19:1-37

*“If you wish to return, return to me. If you put your detestable things out  
of my sight, and do not stray.”* Jeremiah 4:1

### Is God’s Will the most important thing for me?

Yes

No

Sometimes

## How Can I Answer To You Lord?

### With praise:

*“Alleluia! Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him, all you his  
angels, praise him, all you his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise  
him, all you shining stars.*

*Praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; His majesty  
is above earth and heaven.”* Psalm 148:1-3, 13

### With thanksgiving:

*“Alleluia! Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures  
forever: give thanks to the God of gods, for his mercy endures forever:  
Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his mercy endures forever.*

*Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his mercy endures forever.”* Psalm  
136:1-3, 26

### With Complete Trust:

*“Oh Lord, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty;  
I busy not myself with great things, nor with things too sublime for me.  
Nay rather: I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child, like a  
weaned child on his mother’s lap.*

*Oh Israel, hope in the Lord, both now and forever.”* Psalm 131:1-3

### Being humble and faithful:

*“If I forget you, may my right hand wither! May my tongue cleave to my  
palate if I remember you not.”* Psalm 137:5-6

### **Accepting Your Loved Son as my Only Lord and Savior:**

*“I will proclaim the decree of the Lord,: the Lord said to me ‘you are my son: this day I have begotten you.’ Ask of me and I will give you the nations for an inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. Happy are all who take refuge in him!” Psalm 2:7-8,12*

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me, far from my prayer, from the words of my cry? My throat is dried up like baked clay, my tongue cleaves to my jaws: to the dust of death you have brought me down. They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones. They look on and gloat over me: they divide my garments among them.” Psalm 22:2,16: 17-19*

### **What does God want from me right now?**

I know

I don't know

I would like to know

### **Review of the Fourth Stage**

Before going on to the Fifth Stage, I will take an overall look at Stage Four:

1. What have I liked best about the Fourth Stage? Why?
2. What have I liked the least? Why?
3. What have I learned or discovered about God?
4. Who is God for me?
5. How can I, and how must I, love God more?

**V.  
Who is Jesus for me?**

***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”***  
St. Paul in the Letter to the *Hebrews* 13:8

**I Ask Myself About Jesus**

*“For believers, Jesus Christ is the key in history. For the secular man,  
Jesus is the dominating figure in western culture.”*  
Kenneth L. Woodward

The Fifth Stage  
Is an invitation to ask myself  
about Jesus of Nazareth.

For the past 2000 years untold millions of men and women  
of all ages, races, civilizations and social conditions,  
with varying degrees of curiosity,  
have asked and still ask themselves:

***“Who is Jesus Christ?”***

Did he exist?  
Does he exist today?  
What kind of a Person is He?

Where is Jesus?  
Is it important or urgent to meet him?  
Why?

How does one find him?  
Do I personally want to encounter him  
starting right now?

**The prophets of the Old Testament announced of the Messiah that:**

**He would resemble a son of Man:**

*“As I watched, thrones were set up and the Ancient One took his throne. His clothing was white as snow, and his hair as white as wool: his throne was flames of fire....*

*“As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven: when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship: nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:1-14*

**He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David:**

*“But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel” Micah 5:1*

**He would be born of a virgin:**

*“The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel” Isaiah 7:14*

**He would bear on His shoulders the sins of all mankind:**

*“He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned; and we held him in no esteem. Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed.” Isaiah 53: 3-5*

**He would bring salvation:**

*“Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit: he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, nor shouting, not making his voice heard in the street.” Isaiah 42:1*

**And he would willingly complete his mission:**

*“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me: he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.” Isaiah 61:1-3*

**From among these six prophecies  
which one strikes me most strongly?**

**Why?**

## Thousands Of Years Went By...and...

*“And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to David’s town of Bethlehem – because he was from the house and lineage of David – to register with Mary, his wife, who was with child. While they were there the days of her confinement were completed. She gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged.” Luke 2:1-21*

Towards the year 30: *“Jesus, full of the strength from the Spirit came to Nazareth where he had been reared, and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath as he had the habit of doing, he stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:*

*‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me: therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.’*

*Rolling up the scroll he gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began by saying to them, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4: 18-21*

*“What little sense you have! How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced! Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into his glory?” Luke 24:25-26*

And...towards the end of the First Century, John, disciple of Jesus, begins his Gospel by writing: (John 3:16)

***“GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD  
THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON,  
THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM  
MAY NOT DIE  
BUT MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”***

During these last twenty centuries of the history of the world, millions of men and women – children, teenagers, young, adults, elderly – belonging to different countries, races, cultures, beliefs and social conditions, have PERSONALLY FOUND JESUS OF NAZARETH. They have followed him more with actions than words, and with their lives transformed, they have changed the world.

**Do I dare to go out to meet him?**

**Jesus of Nazareth, Who in the world Are  
You?**

*“Look and you shall find..... He who looks finds.”*

**Jesus of Nazareth**

Luke 11:9-10

**“The Father And I Are One”**

...John 10:30

**“I am**

**the way,**

**and the truth,**

**and the life.”**

John 14:6

**Is Jesus of Nazareth my Way, my Truth, and my Life?**

Yes

No

I want Him to be

**“I am  
the light of the world.  
No follower of mine  
shall ever walk  
in darkness;  
No, he shall possess the light of life.”**  
John 8:12

**“While you have the light,  
keep faith in the light:  
thus you will become  
sons of the light.”**  
John 12:35

Is Jesus the Light in my life?  
Yes                      No                      I would like Him to be

**“I am  
the good shepherd.  
  
I know my sheep  
and my sheep know me  
in the same way  
that the Father knows me  
and I know the Father:  
For these sheep I will give my life.**

**I have other sheep  
that do not belong to this fold.  
I must lead them too,  
and they shall hear my voice.  
There shall be one flock then,  
one shepherd.”**  
John 10:14-16

What is the status of my personal relationship with Jesus?  
Very good                      Good                      Non existent

**“I myself am  
the bread of life.  
No one who comes to me  
shall ever be hungry,  
no one who believes in me  
shall ever thirst.”**

John 6:35

**“I came  
so that they might have life  
and have it to the full.”**

John 10:10

**Is Jesus’ word my spiritual food?**

Yes

No

I would like it to be

**“I am  
the true vine  
and my Father is the winegrower...  
you are the branches.**

**He who lives in me  
and I in him,  
will produce abundantly,  
for apart from me  
you can do nothing.”**

John 15:1-5

**Am I convinced that without you Jesus I am lost?**

Yes

No

I have doubts



**“I am  
the resurrection  
and the life:**

**whoever believes in me,  
though he should die,  
will come to life:**

**and whoever is alive  
and believes in me  
will never die.”**

John 11:25-26

**Do I believe and live by this promise of Jesus?**  
Yes                      No                      I would like to

**“I am  
the Alpha and the Omega,  
the One who is  
and who was  
and who is to come,  
the Almighty.”**

Revelation 1:8

**“I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the beginning and the end.**

**To anyone who thirsts  
I will give to drink without cost  
from the spring of life-giving water.**

**He who wins the victory shall inherit these gifts:**

**I will be his God and he shall be my son.**

**As for the cowards and traitors to the faith, the  
depraved and murderers, the fornicators and  
sorcerers, the idol-worshippers and deceivers of  
every sort –**

**their lot is the fiery pool of burning sulphur,  
the second death!**

Revelation 21:6-8

**Am I concerned about the possibility of being destined to the fire?**  
Yes                      No                      I don't know

**Lord, what do you tell us about Mary, your mother?**

**And you mother, what do you tell us about Jesus?**

**“This is your mother!”**

John 19:27

**“Do whatever he tells you”**

John 2:5

**What is the quality of my relationship with Mary?**

Very good

Good

Non existent

**Do I seek out and try do what Jesus wants from me?**

Yes

No

I don't know

## In the Sacred Scriptures

### Where are you Lord Jesus?

*“Have you seen him whom my heart loves?”*  
Song of Songs 3:3

“What little sense you have!  
How slow you are to believe  
all that the prophets have announced!

Did not the Messiah have to undergo  
all this so as to enter into his glory?

Beginning, then, with Moses and all the prophets,  
he interpreted for them  
every passage of Scripture  
which referred to him.”

Luke 24:25-27

**Do I believe along with the prophets, that Jesus is  
the living Son of God?**

Yes                      No                      I want to

## **And He Lives Among Us**

“In the beginning  
was the Word;  
the Word was in God’s presence,  
and the Word was God.

The Word became flesh  
and made his dwelling  
among us,  
and we have seen his glory:

The glory of an only Son coming from the Father,  
filled with enduring love.”  
John 1:1,14

**Do I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Word of God?**

Yes

No

I want to

## **Among the disciples**

“Where two or three are gathered  
in my name,  
there am I  
in their midst.”  
Matthew 28:20

**Do these promises of Jesus Christ strike my heart and motivate me?**

Yes

No

Sometimes

## **In the Eucharist**

“I am the Bread of Life descended from Heaven.  
He who eats this Bread  
will live forever.

And the Bread  
which I will give you  
is my Body...  
for the life of the world.”

He who eats my Body  
and drinks my Blood  
lives in me  
and I in him.  
John 6:35-56

**Do I believe in Jesus' presence in the Eucharist?**  
Yes                      No                      I don't know

## **The poor and needy**

“Come. You have my Father's blessing!  
Inherit the kingdom  
prepared for you  
from the creation of the world.

For I was hungry  
and you gave me food;  
I was thirsty  
and you gave me drink.  
I was a stranger  
and you welcomed me,  
naked and you clothed me.  
I was ill  
and you comforted me,  
in prison  
and you came to visit me.”  
Matthew 25:31-46

**Do these prophetic words of Jesus influence my daily life?**  
A lot                      Some                      Not at all

## **In Paradise**

“Do you not believe  
that I am in the Father  
and the Father is in me?”

John 14:9-10

“In my Father’s house  
there are many dwelling places:  
otherwise, how could I have told you  
that I was going to prepare  
a place for you?  
...then I shall come back  
to take you with me,  
that where I am  
you also shall be.”

John 14:1-3

“I assure you: this day  
you will be with me in Paradise.”

Luke 23:43

**Do I hope to be with Jesus in Paradise?**

Yes

No

I would like to

**Lord Jesus,  
What is the “good news”  
you have given us  
for the Third Millennium?**

*“Jesus Christ is Lord”*

Saint Paul in his Letter to the Philippians 2:11

## The Good News of the Kingdom

“The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the gospel!” Mark 1:15

“Seek first the kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides.” Matthew 6:33

“I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God.” Matthew 18:3

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God.” Mark 10:23

“I solemnly assure you, no one can see the reign of God unless he is begotten from above.” John 3:3

“The reign of God is already in your midst.” Luke 17:21

“My Kingdom does not belong to this world.” John 18:36

### Am I interested in the Kingdom of God?

A lot

A little

Not at all

## Personal Follow-up

“Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps.” Luke 9:23

“Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” Luke 9:24

“Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.” Matthew 11:28-29

“I have come to call, not the self-righteous, but the sinners.” Matthew 9:13

“Follow me!” Matthew 9:13

### Do I attempt to follow Jesus daily by taking up my cross?

Yes

No

I would like to

## The Criterion of Jesus

“Not on bread alone is man to live but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

“No man can serve two masters..... You cannot give yourself to God and money.” Matthew 6:24

“Treat others the way you would have them treat you. This sums up the law of the prophets.” Matthew 7:12

“You must be clever as snakes and innocent as doves.” Matthew 10:16

“He who is not with me is against me.” Luke 11:23

“Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined.” Matthew 19:6

“Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

**Do I make it a point to follow the criterion of Jesus?**

Yes                      No                      Sometimes

## The Beatitudes

“Blessed are the poor in spirit; the reign of God is their.

Blessed too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled.

Blessed are the lowly; they shall inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.

Blessed are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.

Blessed are the single-hearted for they shall see God.

Blessed too the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those persecuted for holiness' sake; the reign of God is theirs.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.” Matthew 5:1-12

“Woe to you who are full; you shall go hungry.” Luke 6:25

**Am I really and truly happy?**

Yes                      No                      I don't know



## Advice From Jesus

“If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23-24

“You are the light of the world. Your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.” Matthew 5:14-16

“Do not swear at all. Say **yes** when you mean yes and **no** when you mean no.” Matthew 5:34

“If you want to avoid judgment, stop passing judgment.” Matthew 7:1

“If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor.” Matthew 19:21

**Which one of these pieces of advice appeals most to me?**

## Promises From Jesus

“Again I tell you, if two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. **Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.**” Matthew 18:19-20

**“Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!”** Matthew 28:20

“The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.” John 6:55-56

“... And I -- once I am lifted up from earth -- will draw all men to myself.” John 12:32

**“Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling, and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him, and he with me.”** Revelation 3:20

**Do I have experience with any of these promises?**

Yes                      No                      I don't know

## A New Commandment Given By Jesus

“I give you a new commandment:  
Love one another.  
Such as my love has been for you,  
so must your love be for each other.”  
John 13:13-34

“There is no greater love than this:  
to lay down one’s life  
for one’s friends.”  
John 15:13

“I have come to light a fire on the earth.  
How I wish the blaze were ignited!”  
Luke 12:49

**What is the quality of my fraternal love?**  
Deep                      Ordinary                      Shallow

## This is how you are to pray:

”Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread,  
and forgive us the wrong we have done  
as we forgive those who wrong us.  
Subject us not to the trial  
but deliver us from the evil one.”  
Matthew 6:9-13

**Do I take seriously the words of this prayer?**  
Yes                      No                      I would like to

## **What must I do to follow you Lord Jesus?**

*“How can a man be born again  
once he is old?”  
John 3:4*

### **Listening to Saint Paul:**

#### **A new life in Christ**

*“I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own:  
Christ is living in me.”*

Galatians 2:19-20

“Stop lying to one another. What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his Creator....

Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another.” Colossians 3:5-17

#### **Honestly, who rules in me?**

The “new man”

The “old man”

## Living according to the Spirit

“You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within -- the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own.” Corinthians 6:19-20

“My point is that you should live in accord with the Spirit and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed. This is why you do not do what your will intends. If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

It is obvious what proceeds from the flesh: lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I have warned you before; those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity. Against such there is no law!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:16-25

### Honestly, who rules in me?

The spirit?                      Disorderly appetites?

## God blesses the weak

“In Him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything.” Philippians 4:13

“My brothers, you are among those called. Consider your situation. Not many of you are wise, as men account wisdom; not many are influential; and surely not many are well-born. God chose those whom the world considers absurd to shame the wise; he singled out the weak of this world to shame the strong. He chose the world’s lowborn and despised, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who were something; so that mankind can do no boasting before God.” 1Corinthians 1:26-29

“As for myself, brothers, when I came to you I did not come proclaiming God’s testimony with any particular eloquence or wisdom. No, I determined that while I was with you I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. When I came among you it was in weakness and fear, and with much trepidation. My message and my preaching had none of the persuasive force of wise argumentation, but the convincing power of the Spirit. As a consequence, your faith rests not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God.” 1Corinthians 2:1-6

### Has the power of God been manifested in me?

Yes                                      No                                      I would like it to be

## Review of the Fifth Stage

Before moving on to the Sixth Stage, I will take a look at the Fifth one:

1. What did I like the most about the Fifth Stage? Why?

2. What did I like the least? Why?

3. What have I learned or discovered about **JESUS** ?

4. Who is **JESUS** for me?

5. Have I decided to follow **HIM**? How?

## VI. Is love the driving force in my life?

*“Love is the most universal, formidable and mysterious of all  
cosmic energies.”*  
Teilhard de Chardin

## **I Ask Myself: What is It that drives my life?**

*“Whenever there is a hole in your life, fill it with love.”*  
Amado Nervo

This is the First Step of the *Sixth Stage* of this journey towards my inner self. Here I have to sincerely and fervently discern what is the most profound need of human beings, which is expressed in the existential wish that we all have of loving and being loved.

More and more people are becoming aware of what is getting to be a universal affirmation that life, happiness, liberty, and personal growth finally depend on one’s capacity to love, which in turn is proportional to the capacity to relate to others. Therefore, if love is the only satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence, which is what gives meaning to life, we have to make an effort to find out if we are living, or trying to live, with real love in our hearts. In other words, if love and interpersonal relationships are dimensions in this powerful aspiration which beats in the deepest of all human spirits, each one of us has to discover what is his or her personal experience of love, and the quality of his or her own interpersonal human relationships.

The goal of this *Sixth Stage* is precisely to have a *face to face* confrontation with ourselves to find out what is the most profound motivation, the real purpose of our existence. What is the secret interior spring which keeps us awake and pushes us to be and to act, regardless of whatever internal and external difficulties we might be confronted with. It has to do then with asking bravely:

### **What do I live for?**

**Loving** is a fundamental *personal experience*. Here are some clues to discover whether or not love is *the norm* and *driving force* in my own life.

### **Selfish reasons would include whenever I think it very important:**

YES NO SOMETIMES

To be more powerful  
To be richer  
To be more famous

To increase pleasure and comfort  
To dominate and be waited on  
To have and possess more

To take revenge  
To escape problems  
    through the use of drugs  
To liberate myself  
    from everything and everyone

### **ATTENTION!**

If most of my answers are “YES” or even “SOMETIMES” that is a clear sign that I am walking towards self-destruction. In that case the driving force of my life is not authentic love but, on the contrary, selfishness – a self-centered type of love indicative of a feeling of both not being loved and not being able to love, and making unfortunate and undesirable choices due to the consequent loneliness.

### **Is selfishness the driving force in my life?**

Yes No Sometimes

## What is love?

*“Nobody has a greater love  
than He who gives his life for his friends.”*  
Jesus of Nazareth

According to Saint Thomas Aquinas in the “Summa Theologica”:

- All actions in human life, in one way or another, have to do with love, be it because they affirm it, or because they deny it.
- Love is the most human and profound use of the will. To love is an act of the person and therefore above all, it is directed to others.
- Without these acts, or without feeling them, or thinking about them, human life does not deserve to be lived.
- Love is not a feeling, but an act of the will, which may or may not be accompanied by a more or less intense feeling. It is certainly possible to have love without feeling, just as it is equally possible to have feeling without love.
- Therefore, true love is combined of affection, which is the result of feelings, but also of positive and lasting effects, which are the result of the will. If what I experience is limited to affection, then what I have is not true love but only infatuation.

*“Acts of love are deeds  
which do not require reasons to do them”*  
St. Theresa of Jesus

## THEREFORE,

Loving is sharing what one is, feels, looks for and accomplishes.  
Loving is being glad of the good in others.  
Loving is making those around us happy.  
Loving is really forgiving.

Loving is accepting others as they are.  
Loving is serving humbly and willingly.  
Loving is listening to the heart.  
Loving is communicating from within ourselves.

Loving is believing and trusting others.  
Loving is generously giving of oneself.  
Loving is humbly receiving so that others can give themselves to us.  
Loving is creating new things.

Loving is helping others unselfishly.  
Loving is teaching and educating with respect.  
Loving is correcting tactfully.  
Loving is sincerely giving thanks.

Loving is relating to others in a friendly manner.  
Loving is walking together in the same direction.  
Loving is understanding those who are most in need and giving them priority.

Loving is being a voice for those who don't have one.  
Loving is constructing bridges instead of walls.  
Loving is..... (*my own definition*).

*“Life consists of learning how to love.”*  
Abbe Pierre

## The song of love

“If I speak with human tongues and angels as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous. It does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love’s forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

Love never fails. Prophecies will cease, tongues will be silent, knowledge will pass away. Our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect. When the perfect comes the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child I used to talk like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man I put childish ways aside. Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. My knowledge is imperfect now; then I shall know even as I am known.

There are in the end three things that last: Faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love.” 1Corinthians 13:1-13

### An honest answer:

Is love the *driving force* of my life?

Yes                      No                      Sometimes

## What is love’s energy?

“Love is a sacred reserve of energy,  
like the blood of the spiritual evolution.”

Teilhard de Chardin

We live in a society that is aware of the reality of physical energy and its surprising capacity to produce change. We all know that the material world around us: the houses where we live, the table and chairs where we sit to eat, what we eat and drink, the air we breathe, the minerals, animals, plants, trees, flowers, stars and even our own bodies, are composed of billions of minute atoms, that only microscopes can detect. Experts in physics and chemistry explain that there are two types of physical energy -- *atomic energy*, which is liberated by the fission or division of atoms; and *thermonuclear energy*, which is obtained by the fusion or union of atoms. This second type of energy is the most powerful and it is also known as *chain energy* by the way it multiplies itself.

Both energies can be used for construction as well as destruction. The same can be said about our relationship with God, the Creator of the Universe. If we are in communion with Him, our relationship is built up. If we have alienated ourselves from Him, our relationship deteriorates. But *physical energy* –the force which produces light, heat, sound and movement -- is only a symbol of the most powerful and hopeful energy of Creation, i.e. the *spiritual energy of love* that God has created within every man and woman.

### Do I feel this *energy of love* inside of me?

Very much                      Not too much                      Confusedly



## **How can I release this internal energy of love?**

*“One is only human, being with the other and for the other. In other words, transcending himself and being there for each other.”*

P. Lain Entralgo

If love is a mystery that sprouts out of the depths of human liberty, loving is letting the soul free to go towards others. There is no doubt that it is here that we are shown the substance of human life -- our relationships with one another. Therefore to liberate the energy of love which beats inside each of us, we need to put ourselves in a position to communicate, to listen to each other, to talk, to reconcile, to accept each other and share with each other.

If we want to liberate the energy of love inside of us, it is necessary to share ourselves through various forms of communication, which of course include verbal communication. What would happen if there were no one else to listen to us, to recognize us, or to accept our conversation? It stands to reason that the life of such a person would be a failure, a tragedy of complete solitude. Humans are not meant to be alone. We need others in order to learn to recognize ourselves. The other person is always a mirror where we can see ourselves reflected.

A child learns to recognize his mother before he can recognize himself. Therefore if I want love to be the driving power in my life, I have to review, take care of, and improve the quality of my personal relationships.

**Am I willing to make this effort?**

I will utilize the following pages to help me move from my center to what is beyond myself, not as it were in a circular fashion (selfish narcissism) but in a loving and growing spiral.

**I Ask myself:**

**What am I doing  
with the loving energy  
that God has created  
*inside of me?***

*“You who see, what have you done with the light?”*

Paul Claudel

## What is the status of my personal relationships?

*“Only in living relationship does man become  
what he really is.”*  
Gabriel Marcel

### YES OR NO:

With my father.....I communicate with him  
With my mother.....I trust her

With my wife.....She is my friend  
With my husband.....He is my friend

With my children.....I sacrifice myself for them  
With my siblings.....I always help them

With my grandparents.....I care for them lovingly  
With my relatives .....I am at peace with all of them

With my friends.....I am loyal to them  
With my neighbors.....I am kind and obliging

With my enemies.....I pray for them  
With immigrants .....I am hospitable

With the sick.....I care for them and cheer them up  
With the imprisoned.....I visit them

With the ostracized.....I pay attention to them  
With the handicapped.....I make myself available to them

## With whom do I need to reconcile?

*“From hostility to hospitality*  
E. Nouwen

### **YES or NO:**

Asking for forgiveness

Forgiving

With my father

With my mother

With my husband/wife

With my children

With my siblings

With my grandparents

With my relatives

With my neighbors

With my enemies

With immigrants

With the sick

With the imprisoned

With those who are ostracized

## ***SUMMARIZING***

1. With whom do I have the best personal relationship?
2. With whom do I have the most difficult relationship?
3. With whom do I need to restore a relationship? Why?
4. With whom do I need to be reconciled?
5. Am I ready to decide when and how I will do it?

## **HONESTLY**

1. What has been the driving force in my life until now?
2. What can and must I do from now on so that love will become that driving force?

*“We are called to love.  
Love is not words but deeds.”*  
Mother Theresa

## **Listening with my heart**

“Let us love one another  
because love is of God;  
everyone who loves  
is begotten of God  
and has knowledge of God.  
The man without love  
has known nothing of God,  
for God is love.  
If anyone says,  
‘my love is fixed on God’,  
yet hates his brother,  
he is a liar.

One who has no love for the brother he has seen  
cannot love the God he has not seen.”

1John 4:7-21

**My personal relationship with God, Who is Love  
Is it reflected in my relationship to others?**

Yes                      No                      Sometimes

## Review of the Sixth Stage

Before moving on to the Seventh Stage, I will reflect on this previous one:

1. What did I like most about the Sixth Stage? Why?
2. What did I like the least? Why?
3. What have I learned or discovered?
4. What is the real motivator in my life?
5. What do I need to do or stop doing so that love will become the real driving force in my life?

## VII. Do I need to pray?

*“Be wakeful and pray so you can face the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”*  
Jesus of Nazareth

## Is prayer necessary?

*“We are only the wire, God is the electric current.  
Our only power consists in allowing the current to run through us.”*  
Carlo Carreto

This is the First Step in the Seventh Stage of this interior experience of my spirit in the light of the word of God.  
I will start with the premise that in the last stage, I made a firm decision to improve -- to renew and strengthen my personal relationships, so as to make real love the central motivator of my life.  
I might have asked myself: “What if all this is a utopia or an impossible dream?” In the following pages I can dispose myself to ask the vital questions that every man and woman of goodwill asks him/herself about prayer, so that I might also find the answers inside myself.

### I ASK MYSELF:

**Do I pray at all? Do I need to pray? What is prayer? How do I pray? Where do I pray? When do I pray? Do I have any concrete personal conditions about prayer?**

Mother Theresa of Calcutta, in her little book ‘A Simple Path’ that is such a treasure, shares with us her personal insight.

*The fruit of silence is prayer.  
The fruit of prayer is faith.  
The fruit of faith is love.  
The fruit of love is service.*

Here she points out very clearly that if I want real love – love that must necessarily include service -- to become the central driving force in my life, I have to pray in the silence of my own heart.

## What is prayer?

### It is:

- Sincerely searching for God more than anything else.
- Living in His presence day and night.
- Listening to the Word of God in my heart.
- Being aware of God’s calling.
- Discovering that God loves me.
- Experiencing that I am/we are the temple of God.
- Talking to God in silence
- Re-discovering the face of God in my fellow men.
- Asking God with the trust of a child.
- Putting myself at God’s disposal.
- Giving Him my time.
- Letting myself be penetrated by his loving glance.
- Giving thanks to God for all his mercy.
- Worshipping God in all his creatures.
- Worshipping God in his angels and his saints.
- Contemplating God in nature.
- Communing with each of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.
- Putting myself under the care and guidance of the Mother of God.

**Praying is...**  
(my own description)

## Without prayer there can be

- No fullness of life.
- No living Faith.
- No spirit of service.
- No complete vision or sense of mission.
- No light to determine what God wants.
- No strength to suffer in the Peace of God.
- No experience of God's Love.
- No deep joy in the midst of persecution.
- No serenity or balance in a crisis.
- No fear of God, hope or peace of heart.
- No understanding of God's Word.
- No encounter with God.
- No return to the Father.
- No encounter with the Son.
- No consciousness of being enlightened by the Holy Spirit.
- No true humility.
- No true sincerity.
- No true honesty.
- No self-respect or respect for others.
- No will-power.
- No salvation.
- No.....

## How do I start to pray?

*“When you go to pray, enter your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is in secret, and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.”*

Jesus of Nazareth

If prayer is a gift from God, but as with every gift from Him, meaningful to me only in relation to my free will, then I have to want to receive that gift. How do I go about being willing to receive that gift?

## Interior silence

*“Silence is the language God speaks inside each of us”*

Anonymous

In the beginning of a life of Prayer, and especially when there is no habit of living in the presence of God, we need internal silence. But what does this internal silence mean?

- Silence is not running away, putting up with, repressing, feeling of anguish, depression, isolation or anger.
- Silence is an attitude developed beforehand in anticipation of a deep experience. It is a door that opens to peace, beauty, calm, and listening to the Lord, resulting in our hearts becoming empty of everything but Him.
- Silence frees the heart to be most fully open to words, reflection, music, respect, listening, encounter, knowledge of oneself or others, liturgy, friendship, interior openness, ecstasies, embrace, prayer, contemplation, etc.

## Are there spaces of silence in my life?

## Cleansing of the Heart

*“You can not resort to prayer with rage and altered spirits.”*

Origenes

Prayer, a straightforward encounter with Him who is Truth and Holiness itself, requires a clean heart. It is true that the Mercy of God can touch us and overflow into every area of our lives, but our sins become obstacles to experiencing His Presence and Merciful actions.

For such an experience we need humility, and a willingness to free ourselves from a sinful way of life. God resists the proud and knocks down those who are powerful. On the other hand, He listens to the humble, the poor and to widows.

A necessary attitude is that of reconciliation and forgiveness -- in our relationship with God, with ourselves, with others, and even with nature and all of creation.

Jesus warns us (Mt 5:23-24) that no one is to approach the altar without first being reconciled with his brothers. And that prayer does not allow any kind of mediocrity or compromise. St. Theresa expresses it like this: *“You cannot sit two adversaries at the same table: God and sin.”*

In other words, prayer springs from God’s initiative; of being the clay in the hands of an artisan; of faith; of the search for truth; of the desire to improve; of the calling to be with God and responding to that call; of grasping the Absolute; of friendship with Jesus; and of trust in Mary’s intercession.

### **Do I live with an attitude of constant conversion?**

Within and Beyond by Fr. Gabriel Calvo

## Practical matters

### **HOW TO COME CLOSER TO PRAYER?**

I must quiet my mind with a trusting heart.

### **WHAT IS A CHANNEL FOR PRAYER?**

It is within my reach.

I must get closer to the Holy Scriptures, especially as they are presented in the Liturgy. Therein I will find God revealing Himself.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST MODEL OF PRAYER TO FOLLOW?**

That same model through which our heavenly Father has chosen to speak to me -- the most Perfect of all human beings -- JESUS CHRIST!

I must follow HIM.

### **HOW CAN I STAY RELATED TO GOD?**

By waking up every morning and being conscience that life is a GIFT of God, and resolving to value that gift.

### **HOW CAN I OBEY THE COMMAND TO PRAY ALWAYS?**

Trying to live in the presence of God.

He is my heavenly, Who watches over me. (God above me).

He is my Savior. (God beside me).

He is Spirit Who strengthens me. (God within me).

### **Do I have a determined plan to deepen my personal prayer?**

Which one?

## Is there a connection between prayer and faith?

The relationship between praying and believing, which can readily be ascertained when we observe the difference between those who pray daily and those who do not, is direct and profound. I could formulate it like this:

### **The more I pray, the more will I want to pray.**

This is what Jesus tells a Samaritan: *“If only you recognized God’s gift, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him instead, and he would have given you living water.”* John 4:10

### **The less I pray, the less will I want to pray.**

This is the state of tepid spirituality described in the Book of Revelations: *“I know your deeds; I know you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were one or the other – hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth!”* Revelation 3:15

### **The more I pray, the more deeply will I experience God within me.**

It is the inevitable testimony of the Saints: *“I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me.”* Gal 2:19-20

**If I stop praying, God will be of no consequence in my life.** It consists of a complete cutting off of God -- contemporary atheism: *“God is dead”* F. Nietzsche

## Honestly

### **What is the current state of my spiritual life?**

## Suggestions

- I feel loved by God, and my life-style, my Faith, my vocation, my history are proofs of that love.
- When trying to understand the meaning of prayer, I consider it to be the most loving and free relationship in my life.
- To discover if in my prayer I look for myself or for God, I must examine the place that adoration, worship, and blessing occupy, as I try to discern whether those things do have priority; or whether what I discover is that in reality I incline to a self-centered begging rather than a sincere longing for peace, harmony and interior unity.
- The Scriptures, the lives of the Saints and numberless clerics and religious are often examples of a loving and free prayer for God himself.
- The most important thing is that Prayer be the breath of my existence as a believer.
- I must remember that God does indeed take the initiative, but that it is important that he finds me waiting when He comes.
- And when, for whatever reason, I find myself in a situation of need or crisis, I must not be upset- remembering this advice:

*“May nothing upset you, nothing frighten you. Patience can accomplish anything. He who has God, lacks nothing. Only God is necessary!”* St. Theresa



## How to pray?

*“The Spirit too helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech.”* Romans 8:26

We are all called to pray. Prayer is not an exclusive call to especially chosen peoples, something that involves costly methods and complicated systems that separates people who pray from their ordinary contemporaries.

The interior Master the Spirit of God -- lives in all of us, and is constantly crying out: but too often there are so many other noises inside us that we can't hear his pleading.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Living Son of God, reveals to us that in order to pray with wisdom, we must have the soul of a child.

*“Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children.*

*Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh.”* Matthew 11:25-28

## Forms of Prayer

According to Saint Theresa of Jesus, each person has to discover his or her way of experiencing God in his life. There are no set rules, but there are paths and each has to discover his own. Experiencing God's love is fundamental in people's lives. I can pick out seven ways to pray that have been suggested by those versed in a life of prayer:

**Vocal prayer:** the prayers we normally do by moving our lips, like reciting psalms, litanies, and prayers formulated to worship God, give him thanks, make offerings, beg for his help, and trust him. This is a good way to start to pray.

**Mental Prayer:** a reflection or meditation on the Word of God as it is made known to me through the Holy Scriptures, the Liturgy, and the events of life. With this type of prayer the Word of God becomes the Fountain of Light.

**Contemplative Prayer:** when we listen to the Word of God with our hearts, contemplating nature or our fellow man, in the daily and ordinary or extraordinary events, in our jobs, in our relationships, and above all inside ourselves. The Word of God becomes the Fountain of Life.

**Prayer of Simplicity:** belongs to those who always say “yes” to God with the heart of a child. The admirable model of unconditional giving of myself to God, typical of the prayer of simplicity, is Mary of Nazareth: Luke 1:38 Then the Word of God is Fountain of Love and Hope.

**Gathering Prayer:** when God takes control of the mind of who is praying by a purification of his body. It is the night of the senses. In the Bible, there are two amazing examples: In the Old Testament, the

patient Job. In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth in the Mount of Olives sweating blood as he says “yes” to the Father.

**Quiet prayer:** When God takes the will of the one who is praying, putting him through difficult internal tests, including a feeling of being abandoned. It is known as the “dark night of the soul”, which all God’s chosen ones experience in one way or another and to a greater or lesser degree. A mysterious example of this kind of prayer is the prayer of Jesus on the Cross, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” Matthew 27:46

**Prayer of complete union:** ecstatic and transforming, when the soul of the one who is praying is totally empty of itself and filled with the Spirit of God.

And it is precisely the moment when God and the soul are totally united—that state for which Jesus prayed to the Father before his Passion and Death:

*“I consecrate myself for their sakes now, that they may be consecrated in truth. I do not pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word, that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”* John 17:19-21

**Which of the above is my favorite kind of prayer?**

## **Suggestions**

If I want to pray, I must do it in a way that comes to my heart as well as to my lips. I should never stop praying just because I might think it is not a proper way.

If I pray in a personal and spontaneous way, I will not feel the need to confine myself to a stereotyped, complicated way. Praying is living, and just as is true of life itself, it has many different expressions. To really pray I have to LIVE!

Daily events and news are a source of prayer. Therein is a constant potential to exercise my Faith with pleadings, praises and blessings directed toward God.

I should not become absorbed in praying in a particular fashion that values the method over the reason for the prayer itself. I will recognize authentic prayer by its fruits of peace, good deeds, strength and fidelity in its belief.

I should not compare my way of praying to that of others. God made me a unique person. Therefore I can and must pray from my own deepest self, and not what I judge to be someone else’s deepest self.

I should not complicate everything by devising magical formulas, or adhere to practices just to earn justification. Prayer is not something magical, but rather the loving expression of the most captivating relationship between God and myself.

And I must never forget that the One Who really prays -- who really prays in us -- is...

**The Holy Spirit!**

## Where to pray?

*“Yet an hour is coming and is already here,  
when authentic worshipers will worship the Father  
in Spirit and truth.”*  
John 4:23

After reflecting on the meaning of prayer, and how to pray, if I want my friendship with God to become an experience of faith, it is important that I choose a suitable place where I can really have an encounter with Him. It should be a quiet, cozy place with comfortable surroundings that invites one to pray, and helps one to pray by providing a suitable atmosphere.

The surroundings are very important for prayer. Depending on the surrounding conditions, I can be either encouraged to pray on a regular basis, or to stop praying altogether. Monasteries are the best demonstration of how important the surroundings are when it is time to find out the most suitable conditions for a spiritual life.

Among the symbolic spaces that are most suitable is the biblical space of the desert -- the physical as well as the spiritual desert. Whether my response is due to a conscious personal choice or due to the conscious awareness that I am being helped by Divine Providence, I am constantly being prodded by the Spirit to relate to Him, even in the midst of crises, fights and temptations.

Saint Theresa describes her experience with prayer as a trip to the interior of the castle of her soul.

## Practical Suggestions

God comes to meet his creatures:

- Through nature
- Through misfortunes like accidents
- Through illnesses
- Through the poor
- Through the Eucharist
- Through inspirations of the heart

### What are some of the best conditions for meaningful prayer?

- God Himself encourages me and accompanies me. So I must remain faithful and be willing to follow his schedule.
- I must care for His sanctuary that is my body -- respect it and make it a space where I can live my life in the permanent presence of God.
- Both the easiest and at the same time the hardest thing about prayer is to actually do it. Perseverance and patience are two imperative requirements.
- There must be a particular “consecrated” spot in my home that will help me to pray.
- I should make it a practice of going often to that “consecrated” place in order to pray. There I will feel supported and stimulated.
- If it should happen that, over a period of time, I don’t feel anything while praying, I should first examine to discern whether I am in serious sin. If that is not the case, I should not be afraid, but continue with patience. I can be assured that I am at the doors of the garden and soon I will hear my name.

## Where do I tend to pray with greater fervor?

### When to pray?

*“God also walks along the Stews”*  
Saint Theresa of Jesus

Another vital point of prayer is to know when to pray. The majority of religious traditions have indicated to us there are different times of the year, days of the week and hours of the day in which prayer is most recommended. There also exist special years of grace.

For believers, every circumstance is open to a deeper relationship and communication with God. The person who is contemplative is in a position to retain a permanent bond in his relationship with God.

Real believers do not separate life from prayer, or work from petitioning. How do they achieve this? By trying to live always in the presence of God.

For God’s friends, prayer is like breath and breathing. They pray with every beat of their hearts.

If we turn our faces toward God, we will face each new dawn with a new divine possibility. Each new day we are presented with precious time to renew ourselves in the light of God’s Grace.

The new day, in the light of faith, offers us a new call from God, to live that day moved by love.

### My favorite time to pray is...

### Practical Suggestions:

- When I feel God’s mystery in my heart, I will embrace it.
- Whenever I wish to pray, I will put myself in the presence of God.
- Whether I am working, eating, suffering or recreating, I will reflect that I am always in God’s loving sight.
- If I want my work to be prayer, I will not look upon work as a necessary evil; or something that is only good to occupy my time with; or a time to earn money. I will look upon it as something creative, because work offers the opportunity to imitate God’s creativity.
- During the day – and during the night if I wake up – I will get into the habit of invoking God’s name with short phrases like, “My God, I love you!” or “God, I trust in you!”
- Before going to bed, I will open the Bible, read a couple of lines and maybe write down in a notebook what I feel the Lord is saying to me through that passage.
- I will respect the Lord’s day- that this day may be for me a day dedicated to rest, to family life and to the celebration and participation in the mysteries of God.
- I will be sensitive to God’s continuous graces by saying

### Thank you Lord!

## What can I do when I need inspiration to pray?

### Open the Sacred Scriptures!

#### To Give Thanks

Psalms 29, 33, 57, 67, 92  
100, 102, 103, 104,  
107, 11, 118, 136, 148;  
Luke 1 46-55 and 67-79

#### Love

Psalm 100:5; Proverbs 3:28;  
Wisdom 3:9; Hosea 2:21-22;  
Isaiah 49: 15 and 54:8; Matthew 9:13;  
Luke 10: 33-34;  
John 3:16; 13:1, 34 and 15:13;  
Acts 2:42; Romans 5:5 and 8:35;  
1Corinthians 8:2; 13: 1-13;  
1 John 4: 7-21

#### Harmony, humility and sanctity

Philippians 2:1-18

#### Regret

Psalms 51 and 106;  
Luke 15: 11-32

#### Trust

Psalms 13, 22, 23, 25, 31, 38, 39, 43, 46, 55, 56, 62, 77, 84, 86, 108, 115,  
116, 121, 125, 127, 131, 136, 146, 147; Matthew 7: 7-12

#### Control of the tongue

James 1: 3-12

#### Conversion

Ezekiel 18:21-32; Matthew 3: 2-3;  
Acts 3: 17-21

#### Interior growth

Psalm 139; Ephesians 4: 14-16;  
1Corinthians 3: 1-15

#### Telling apart of the spirits

1Thessalonians 5: 5-22

#### Spiritual Gifts

Psalm 127; Isaiah 11: 1-4;  
1Corinthians 12: 1-30

#### True Happiness

Matthew 5: 1-11;  
Luke 6: 20-25

#### Fidelity

Psalms 1, 119, 123, 128

## Review of the Seventh Stage

Before moving on to the *Eighth Stage*, I will first review the *Seventh*:

### The need to pray

Psalms 7, 19, 27, 28, 40,  
42, 54, 61, 63, 65, 70,  
73, 95, 98, 100, 102, 113,  
121, 127, 130, 141, 143, 146, 150;  
Matthew 6: 5-15; Ephesians 6:18-20

### Patience

Job 1:1-22 and 42:1-6; Colossians 1:9-14;  
Romans 12:12;  
1Thessalonians 5:14; 2Timothy 2:24; James 5:7-8

### God's Saving Plan

Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:18-30; Colossians 1:15-29

### New Life

Ephesians 4:1-6 and 17-32; Colossians 3: 1-17;  
Romans 8:4-11; Romans 6:2-11

### Living according to the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 8:1-17;  
1Corinthians 3:16

### God's Will

Matthew 5:10; Matthew 7:21; 12:50; 26:42;  
Luke 10:21; John 6:40; John 14:10;  
Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:4;  
1Peter 2:15 and 3:17

1. What did I like most about this Stage? Why?
2. What did I like the least? Why?
3. What have I learned or discovered about Prayer?
4. What is the current condition of my prayer life?
5. Starting today, what do I commit myself to in order to deepen my prayer life?

## Am I afraid to face death?

*“Everything has a time, a time to be born and a time to die.”*  
Ecclesiastes 3:1

## VIII. Do I fear Death?

*“It is not that I am afraid to die,  
I simply don’t want to be there  
when it happens.”*  
Woody Allen

In this First Step of the Eighth Stage of my self-encounter I ask myself whether or not I am afraid to face death. Let’s face it. Dying is an unavoidable phase of all human life. Each and every one of us, whether we like it or not, will one day die. This death sentence engenders a certain indignation. Why does life have to end with such terrible finality?

Death angers us and scares us because it is synonymous with suffering and finality. It also angers us because it breaks the bonds of human love by bringing about a total separation from our loved ones. We see it as something ridiculous, and incomprehensible. Some respond to these feelings by saying that it is simply a natural phenomenon. From this point of view, death is no more than a law of natural evolution, an unavoidable phase of human life. A life without death cannot exist.

Death is an unavoidable reality and I should simply accept it. But that is only one side of this reality. If I am conscious of my own death, then I am better able to appreciate the richness of life, and therefore am encouraged to live it more intensely. Yes, my lifespan is limited, but for that very reason, the time I have been given has value. I should make the most of it. Each hour could very well be the last. Not a single moment will ever return. Thus, I have to act while I still have time.

In this way, death makes of life a challenge- a constant decision. Therefore, taking death seriously is what gives meaning to life. Life and death are one. When death is silenced and hidden as if it were a taboo, human life itself is attacked.

Only if I look at death in the face and accept it can I be in a position to truly live.

## I have to Ask myself!

Am I ready to accept death and truly accept it?

- Do I see death as something that gives meaning to my life?
- Do I believe that a part of me will continue to live after the death of my body?
- Do I think that my death will mean the end of everything?

*“I am going toward him who comes”*  
Theillard de Chardin, a few days before his death

## What is death?

*“You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die.”* Genesis 2:16-17

## Death Is Not God’s Doing

*“God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. Since He has created everything, all creatures of the universe are for good; there is no deadly poison in them, and the netherworld has no dominion over the earth. Because justice is not submitted to death.*

*“Life is short and sad, and there is no cure for death. It was never heard that someone had come back from the netherworld. By chance we were born; when life is over, it will be as if we never existed.*

*“It was the wicked who with hands and words invited death, considered it a friend, and pined for it, and made a covenant with it, because they deserve to be in its possession .. For they say among themselves thinking not aright: ‘Brief and troublous is our lifetime; neither is there any remedy for man’s dying, nor is anyone known to have comeback from the nether world. For haphazard were we born, and hereafter we shall be as though we had not been...*

*“The breath in our nostrils is like a puff of smoke, and thought is no more than a spark resulting from a movement of the heart. Put this out and the body turns to ashes and the spirit disperses like idle air.*

*“ Life passes like the shadow of a cloud, disappearing like a mist chased by the sun and conquered by its heat. The duration of life resembles the passing of a shadow; from death there is no turning back. The seal is set. No one returns.”* Book of Wisdom 1:13-15 and 2:1-5

## Actually, am I among those wicked people?

Yes                      No                      Sometimes



## Am I concerned with finding the secret of death?

“Do you want to know the secret of death?  
But how will you find it  
if you don’t look for it in the heart of life?”

The owl  
whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day  
cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death,  
open your heart wide  
unto the body of life.

For life and death are one,  
even as the river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires  
lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow  
your heart dreams of spring.

Trust the dreams,  
for in them is hidden  
the gate to eternity.  
K. Gibran: the Prophet

### Do I know the secret of Death?

Yes                      No                      No idea

## Death Is A Mystery

“The greatest enigma of human life is death.

Man suffers with pain  
and the progressive dissolution of the body.

But his maximum torment  
is the fear of perpetual disappearance.

He judges with decisive instinct  
when he resists to accept the idea  
of total ruin and a definitive goodbye.

The seed of eternity that he carries  
rises above death.

All the efforts by modern techniques,  
no matter how good,  
cannot calm man’s anxiety.

The prolongation of longevity  
that modern biology brings,  
cannot satisfy the desire  
of something beyond  
that arises from the human heart.”

Vatican II: Pastoral Constitution “Gaudium and Spes” 18

### Do I have a desire for eternity?

Yes                      No                      No idea

## Death Is A Great Hope

### It Is An Encounter

“Dying  
is only dying.  
Dying  
is crossing a door by chance  
and  
finding what one had been  
looking for so long.”  
Jose Maria Martin Descalzo

*“Christ has been raised from the dead!”*  
1Corinthians 15:20

This proclamation of Paul writing about the jubilant cries of the first disciples upon the incredible happening which the Sacred Scriptures talked to us about, is deep in the heart of Christian Faith. It has to do with something so amazing that Paul adds, *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith lacks meaning.”* 1 Corinthians 15:17

It is true, Jesus of Nazareth was the first to overcome death. He died. His death on a cross was the cause of a great deal of confusion. Yes, Christ lived his human existence to the limit. He knew anguish, and loneliness before death. But he totally trusted his Father Who gave Him eternal life.

That is why, in Christ, death has been transformed into a step towards a new life. In this way, He has overcome death and leads all men towards the path of resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is a unique happening in the history of mankind. No man, except for Jesus, ever came back alive after his death. Paul writes joyously:

*“Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we are also to live with him.”* Romans 6: 4,8

**What is it that I look for in Life and can't find?**

**Do I Believe In Resurrection?**

Yes

No

No idea

## Face To Face With Death

*"I am not dying, I am entering life."*  
Saint Therese of Lisieux before dying.

### I must ask myself !

Am I fully aware that life is fragile and that I will not be on this earth forever?

#### What is my reaction to the death of a loved one?

- I feel depressed mentally and spiritually
- I try to live as if nothing had happened
- I look for reasons to keep on living
- I look for consolation in the Bible

Am I able to look at my own death as a friend who will take me to my final home with God?

Yes                      No                      Sometimes

How do I take care of my life?

Very well              Well                      Badly

How do I take care of the life of those around me?

Very well              Well                      Badly

### What Do I Plan To Do In Regard To This Subject?

## Review of the Eighth Stage

1. What did I like the most about the Eighth Stage? Why?
2. What did I like the least? Why?
3. What have I learned or discovered about Death?
4. What does Death mean to me?
5. Have I made any practical resolutions?

## **IX. And after Life, What?**

*“We believe and feel that we are eternal”*  
Baruch Spinoza

### **Do I Believe In What Is “Beyond”?**

Believing and Knowing,  
what is the difference?

To say, “I think”, is not the same as saying “I know”.  
It is necessary to distinguish the use of these two verbs.

From experience I know  
that if I release an object from a high place,  
I absolutely know that it will fall.

It is clear that I can’t experience eternal life in the same way.  
I cannot prove beyond doubt that eternal life exists.

Those who believe wait for it trustingly.  
We are persuaded.  
But we can’t demonstrate its existence.  
It is an act of faith.  
Believing is trusting God –  
believing in His Word  
revealed to us in the Sacred Scriptures.

**Do I trust Jesus of Nazareth?**

**Do I believe in His Word?**

**Jesus of Nazareth solemnly declares:**

***“I am  
the resurrection  
and the life***

***whoever believes in me,  
though he should die,  
will come to life;***

***and whoever is alive  
and believes in me  
will never die.”***

John 11: 25-26

**Jesus of Nazareth asks:**

***“Do you believe this?”***

John 11:26

**What does Greek philosophy say  
about the “Beyond”?**

Plato, a Greek philosopher of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, clearly distinguished that there exists in man a body and a soul. According to him, the body – a material principle born from the earth is the prison of the soul. After death, this body decomposes. The soul, on the contrary, is a spiritual reality of divine origin, and therefore immortal.

Likewise, when man dies, he should not view it as a disgrace. On the contrary, the soul is liberated from that prison that is the body, and can be free in the divine world of pure ideas.

The consequence of this dualist conception, in which the soul and the body are distinguished in such an absolute manner, is in opposition to the message of Jesus.

Plato affirms that only the soul is worthy of interest and that the body is to be looked down on. From this perspective, the possibility of a resurrection of the body is totally excluded.

There is no hope for the soul as long as it is united with the body. Therefore if the body were resurrected, it would be like condemning the soul to eternal unhappiness.

Radical separation of the soul and the body is, in a nutshell, the view of the Greeks on what lays beyond.

## What Is Beyond According To Jewish Tradition?

*“In your hands are the souls of the living and the dead.”*

Kaddish

The Jewish point of view was completely different. They believed that man, body and soul, is a whole which death cannot divide.

Therefore man is meant to rise up again as a whole on the last day. This conception that the Jews had of life and death during the time of Jesus, was the result of a great evolution.

Contrary to common belief, the idea of the resurrection of the dead does not appear until late in the Old Testament. The hope of another life after death is proven to be real in Israel after the second century BC.

Earlier the belief was that the dead would go to a place called “Sheol” where they would become shadows. (2 Samuel 12:13)

In the second century BC, some Jews decided to rise up against the successors of Alexander the Great and purify Israel from the cult of foreign divinities. This was known as the Maccabean Rebellion. The death of the martyrs for God posed an interesting question about retribution. What sort of reward would they receive?

The book of Daniel presents an answer: they would receive it when God resurrects the dead, some for eternal life and others for eternal punishment. However, the majority of the Jews await a resurrection of the dead. This will be a collective happening. God will resurrect the whole world for a general judgment.

The just will take part in the banquet of the Kingdom and the infidels will be cast into hell. This Jewish conception of what lies beyond gives Christian hope solid roots.

## What Is The Significance Of “Beyond” According To Christianity?

*“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth”*

Revelation 21:1

The Second Vatican Council, in its Pastoral Constitution about the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium at Spes*) gives us a clear and brief synthesis of the Christian belief on what is beyond.

“We ignore the time in which the consummation of the earth and humanity will take place. Neither do we know in which way the Universe will be transformed. This world afflicted by sin passes, but God teaches us that he prepares for us a new home and a new earth where justice rules and whose prosperity is able to fulfill any wish of peace that arises from the human heart.

“So, death being defeated, the sons of God will resurrect in Christ, and what was sowed under the sign of weakness and corruption, will be stripped of it.

“We are warned that it is worth nothing to try to win the whole world if one loses himself. However, the awaiting of a new earth must not make us lazy, but wake up a caring for the perfection of this earth, where the body of the new human family grows.

“Although we must carefully distinguish temporary progress and growth of the Kingdom of Christ, as long as the first contributes to better arrange human society, it is of great interest to the Kingdom of Christ.

“The Kingdom is already mysteriously present on earth: when the Lord comes, its perfection will be consummated.” Vatican II: Pastoral Constitution “*Gaudium et Spes*.”

## But, What Is Heaven?

*“Heaven is the most profound aspiration of the human heart”*  
Peter Kreeft

**John Paul II**, in his catechism, wonderfully answers our question:  
“When this world has passed, those who have truly embraced God during their lives and opened themselves to His love, at least at the time of death, will experience complete communion with God, which is the goal of human existence.... This perfect life with the Holy Trinity, this communion of life and love with her, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the chosen ones is called Heaven....

In the Biblical language, “heaven” when hand in hand with “earth”, indicates a part of the universe (Gen 1:1) In the metaphorical meaning, “heaven” is known as where God resides and therefore distinguishes itself from that of man. (Psalm 115:16 and Matthew 25:14)

We know that when talking about revelation, “heaven” is not an abstraction or a physical place between the clouds, but a live and personal relationship with the Holy Trinity...

This final situation can be anticipated today, both in the sacramental life, whose center is the Eucharist, as in the gift itself through fraternal charity.” John Paul II:-21-VII-1999

**“Am I aware that while we walk on this earth we are called to look for things “from above”, where Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father?”**

Yes

No

I would like to

## Does Hell exist?

*“Out of my sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!”* Matthew 25:41

“God is our infinitely good and merciful Father, and we are called to freely respond to Him. But with that same wonderful Gift of free will, we can also freely choose to definitively reject His love and forgiveness, and so forever distance ourselves from a wonderful communion with Him.

“Therefore, the tragic situation of an eternal separation from God cannot be attributed to any initiative on God’s part, because He, being merciful love, wills only the salvation of the beings he created. Therefore, eternal condemnation is not a punishment determined by God, but the final rejection of God determined by man while he is in this life.

“In a theological sense, hell or eternal condemnation is the last consequence of sin itself which finally turns against the one who committed it. Hell indicates, more than a physical place, the situation in which those who freely and definitively distance themselves from God, the source of happiness and life, find themselves.

“The improper use of biblical images must not create psychosis or anguish. It simply represents the necessary and healthy freedom, within the announcement that the resurrected Jesus was victorious over Satan, donating the Spirit of God which makes us invoke, ‘Abba, Father’. John Paul II, 1999

**Do I personally believe in Hell?**

Yes

No

I don’t know

## Are Those Who Are Saved Many or Few?

“Enter through the narrow gate.  
The gate that leads to damnation is wide, the road is clear,  
and many choose to travel it.

But how narrow is the gate  
that leads to life,  
how rough the road,  
and how few there are who find it!”

Jesus of Nazareth  
Matthew 7:13-14

## Am I Concerned About My Eternal Salvation?

Yes                      No                      Sometimes

## Is There A Purgatory?

*“But they firmly believed in a splendid reward for those who died as believers; therefore their concern was holy and in keeping with faith. This was the reason why Judas offered this sacrifice for the dead -- so that the dead might be pardoned for their sin.”* 2 Maccabees 12:45-46

“Faced with the definitive option for or against God, human beings finally make their own choice between these two alternatives: to live with God eternally happy, or forever staying away from His Presence.

As the church’s doctrine teaches, those who die in the grace and friendship of God, but imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, suffer after their death a purification with the purpose of obtaining the holiness necessary to enter into the happiness of Heaven. The Church calls this final purification of the chosen ones, Purgatory. This temporary period of punishment is totally different from the punishment of those who have condemned themselves to eternal punishment.” Catechism of the Catholic Church #1030/1032

As Sacred Scripture reveals to us, to participate in the Divine Life, we must be totally purified, *“An ox or a sheep that is in any way ill proportioned or stunted, you may indeed present as a free-will offering, but it will not be acceptable as a votive offering.”* Leviticus 22:22

“Paul in his Letter to the Corinthians (3:14-15) talks to us about the worth of each person’s work which will be revealed on Judgment Day. *“If the building a man has raised on this foundation still stands, he will receive his recompense; if a man’s building burns, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as one fleeing through fire.”*

*“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and in the fear of God strive to fulfill our consecration perfectly.”* 2 Corinthians 7:1

*“Purgatory is not a physical place, but a condition of life.”* John Paul II: 4-VIII-1999



## What is the communion of Saints?

*“That all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you;  
I pray that they may be one in us,  
that the world may believe that you sent me.” John 17:21*

When the Lord comes in glory, and all His angels with Him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to Him. But at the present time some of His disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating in full light God Himself triune and one, exactly as He is....So it is that the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant Faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods....

Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness....”They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus...so by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.....

It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek rather that, by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity, the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. In effect, just as the union between Christians takes us closer to Christ, so the communion with the Saints unites us with Christ. (LG 50)

“All of God’s children are members of one same family in Christ. When we are united in mutual love and in the same worship of the Holy Trinity, we are responding to the intimate vocation of the Church.” (LG 51) Catechism of the Catholic Church #954-959

## What will happen at the end of history?

“Take care not to be misled.  
Many will come in my name saying,  
“I am he” and “The time is at hand”.  
Do not follow them.

Neither must you be perturbed  
when you hear of wars and insurrections.  
These things are bound to happen first,  
but the end does not follow immediately.

Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.  
There will be great earthquakes, plagues, and famines in various places  
– and in the sky fearful omens and great signs.” Luke 21: 9-11

“During that period, after trials of every sort,  
the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed its light,  
stars will fall out of the skies,  
and the heavenly hosts will be shaken.

Then men will see the Son of Man  
coming in the clouds with great power and glory.  
He will dispatch his angels  
and assemble his chosen from the four winds,  
from the farthest bounds of earth and sky.” Mark 13: 24-27

### Do I Believe In Jesus’ Second Coming?

Yes                      No                      I doubt it

## When is all this going to happen Lord?

“As for the exact day and hour, no one knows it,  
neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father only.

The coming of the Son of Man will repeat  
what happened in Noah’s time.

In the days before the flood  
people were eating and drinking, marrying and being married,  
right up to the day Noah entered the ark.

They were totally unconcerned until the flood came and destroyed them.

So will it be  
at the coming of the Son of Man.”

Matthew 24: 36-39

**“Stay awake therefore!  
You cannot know the day your Lord is coming.”**

Matthew 24: 42

**“Remember I am coming soon!”**

Revelation 22:7

AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I READY?  
AM I  
READY?

Yes

No

I don't know

## **Am I Vigilant Or Asleep?**

*“In the afternoon you will be tested on love”*  
Saint John of the Cross

“No, all of you  
are children of light and of the day.  
We belong neither to darkness  
nor tonight.

“Therefore let us not be asleep like the rest,  
but awake and sober!  
Sleepers sleep by night and drunkards drink by night.

We who live by day must be alert,  
putting on faith and love as the breastplate  
and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

God has not destined us to wrath  
but for acquiring salvation  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

He died for us, that all of us,  
whether awake or asleep,  
together might live with him.”  
Thessalonians 5:5-10

**Am I Vigilant or asleep?**

**‘MARANATHA!’**

**“COME LORD JESUS!”**

Revelation 22:20

## **Review of the Ninth Stage:**

Finally!

This is the final Stage

1. What did I like the most about this Last Stage? Why?
2. What did I like the least? Why?
3. What have I discovered about what is “beyond”?
4. If the Lord were to come today, would He find me ready?
5. What practical conclusions have I reached?

## **EPILOGUE**

**“All the faithful,  
of any condition and state...  
are called by the Lord,  
each on his path,  
to the perfection of that sanctity  
with which the Father himself  
is perfect.”**

Vatican II: 47 of “Lumen Gentium”

**Father,**

**I abandon myself into Your hands.  
Do with me what You will.**

**Whatever You may do,  
I thank You.  
I am ready for all,  
I accept all.**

**Let only Your will be done in me  
and in all Your creatures.  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.**

**Into Your hands  
I commend my soul.**

**I offer it to You  
with all the love of my heart.**

**For, I love You, Lord,  
and so need to give myself,  
to surrender myself into Your hands  
without reserve  
and with boundless confidence.**

**For You are my Father.**

Charles de Foucauld

## **Appendix**

**“The Heavens declare  
the Glory of God,  
and the Firmament proclaims  
His handiwork.”**

Psalm 19:1