**Praying with Icons**

The word ICON simply means image. Icons are soul windows, entrances into the presence of the Holy. Icons serve as invitations to keep eyes open while one prays. It is prayer to just look attentively at an icon and let God speak. The profound beauty of an icon is gentle. It does not force its way. It asks for time spent before it in stillness….gazing. More importantly it invites the one praying to be gazed upon by it. One is invited to enter into the icon and come closer to the Holy One portrayed. Icons are a reminder of God’s unconditional love

To pray with icons, one needs to be comfortable, quiet and attentive. The process of Lectio divina (Holy reading) can be used.

The 5 key steps are

1. **Ready –** Sit comfortably and still the body. Focus on breathing.
2. **Read** – Take time to look closely at the icon. What do you see? See ‘the more”. Take time.
3. **Read and Reflect** – What is the icon calling you to be? What is the message for you? What do you hear?
4. **Read and Respond**- Read the icon once more by gazing on it. Respond in prayer. Write/draw thoughts and prayers if you journal....
5. **Read and Rest**- let the image of the icon rest in your heart.
6. **BE..... Give time for this to happen!!!**

Another simple way to pray with an icon would be the use of the Y Chart.

What do you see?

 What do you hear?

 What do you feel?

Icons can lead us into the inner room of prayer.

**In busy times it can be just a glance at the icon or a ritual where one touches the icon gently either before a challenging task or at the end of a day.**

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