

# SOW-REAPP™ at the Foot of the Cross

*“Behold how the Cross stands revealed as the Tree of Life!”*

In the Eastern liturgy of the Church, perhaps more so than in the West, there is a focus on the spiritual senses of Sacred Scripture. This focus is unique in that it engages the senses and takes the soul on a relational journey through identifying one’s own life in the context of both Old and New Testament. It opens the traveler to see the guiding hand of the Father, the life-giving breath of the Spirit, and the incarnation of the Word. One of the most beautiful liturgical expressions of this prayer form is found in the Eastern Rite Liturgy of the Hours specifically during the third week of Lent.

This prayer invokes the Providence of God as it shows us the tree of life in Genesis 2, first revealed as the Cross of Christ, and yet again as the tree of life in Heaven. SOW-REAPP™ can assist with entering into this mystery through each step of the two-stage discernment and formation process; Silence, Openness, Waiting—Receive, Examine, Assimilate, Pray, Plan.



SOW-REAPP can bring greater understanding of the Easter Exultet, “O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!”

## SILENCE

**(S)ilence-** Time to clear away the distractions of the world from our minds.

If I have not spent time reflecting on who I am, I cannot know where I am going, what my purpose is, or why it matters. In silence, I begin to see myself as I really am. If I am honest, I come to know my wants, needs, joys, sorrows, and the deepest longings of my own heart. In this time of silence I must come to terms with my own nakedness, woundedness, and weakness and also be clear about the gifts and virtues which are my strengths.

*In silence, name what comes to mind. Note where you are at this moment (time and place). How/Why did you come to this place? Who are you as a person? What are your hopes, dreams, desires? Examine your conscience. What are your virtues and failings?*

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With the increased self-awareness discovered in silence, I can interact more honestly with others. Perhaps in this time, I hear a still small voice. Am I open to listening? From

**(O)penness-Vulnerability to the other.**

where does it come? Am I willing to be vulnerable in this moment, to invite the other into my innermost heart, into my nakedness and woundedness, to see me as I really am? Ultimately, the deepest and most intimate relationship I can seek in life is relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ has given himself to me on the cross, as complete gift, naked, wounded, broken.

## OPENNESS

Am I prepared to receive him intimately and completely in a way that is *Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Communicative,* and *Emotional (SPICE)?*

*You may be open in some areas and not in others. What are the walls you are aware of in this moment?*

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Intimacy develops over time. Sacred Scripture is filled with times of waiting for God to come to his people. He comes and goes at his own appointed time, often waiting for his children to be properly prepared for his coming. This period

**(W)aiting-** Preparation for an intimate encounter with the other.

of waiting offers time for growing in wisdom, confession and restitution for sin, letting go of grudges and making peace with myself. What I am waiting for here is a recognition that there is something better, something more, awaiting me. This awareness prompts a readiness for change and greater capacity to receive Him as He chooses to reveal himself to me.

*What is the experience of waiting, of purification, like for you? Do you have a sense of being prepared to receive something or someone in a new way? What part of yourself will you need to let go in this time? What amazing new things might God have in store for you?*

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## WAITING

# RECEIVE EXAMINE ASSIMILATE PRAY PLAN

Having completed the SOW stage with time committed to self exploration, you are now invited to begin the REAPP stage of the process. We know from the writings of the saints that receiving the other has much greater meaning when intentional time is given to reflecting on the experience so as to enter a relationship with Jesus Christ more fully. The REAPP stage of the process builds on the teachings of the saints to help you grow in holiness.

## **(R)eceive- Openly encountering the other.**

At this point in the process, I prepare to receive the mystery of the Cross and the Tree.

*Reflect on the image on the front of this page. This Crucifix hangs in the Center for Family Life Formation and is etched with the following Scripture verses. Prepare yourself to receive from them in a new way:*

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Genesis 2:9, 3:22-24</i> | <i>Luke 23</i>          |
| <i>Song of Songs 2:3-4</i>  | <i>John 19</i>          |
| <i>Sirach 24:16-32</i>      | <i>Acts 5:30</i>        |
| <i>Isaiah 60:13</i>         | <i>Gal 3:13</i>         |
| <i>Ezekiel 17:22-24</i>     | <i>1Peter 2:24</i>      |
| <i>Matthew 27</i>           | <i>Rev 2:7, 22:2-14</i> |
| <i>Mark 15</i>              |                         |

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## **(E)xamine-Time to reflect on what is received.**

Taking time to examine what I have received is an important part of the process. While experience is a great teacher, her lessons are typically forgotten without time spent reflecting on the experience.

*Place yourself in the presence of God. Aware that He is with you now as he was in the midst of reading the scriptures. Even a painful experience can be a moment of grace where God is intimately with me. Remember the experience with gratitude. Ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in going more deeply in the examination of the experience. Remembering your emotions during the experience may reveal something about yourself and help clarify where you responded or were moved to respond during this examination. Emotions can help you more fully experience the moment of encounter with God.*

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## **(A)ssimilate- Understanding and integration of one's own story with the story of salvation history.**

In Christianity, the term *metanoia* is often used to express what is meant by assimilate. This involves an intentional

turning away from the darkness in my life and turning toward the light of Jesus Christ.

*Encountering the Cross of Christ in a new way is just such an opportunity for metanoia in your life. What difference does this mystery make in your life? Will you follow Jesus more closely? How might that happen?*

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## **(P)ray- Modeling and practice of prayer**

Prayer helps me discern the next right step in the presence of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and with the power of the Holy Spirit. Giving voice to the desires of my heart and mind in prayer may not come easily.

*It is important to pray alone and in community. Prayer alone can be as simple as opening your heart and mind to God, while communal prayer tends to be more formal. What is prayer alone like for you? Prayer in community? Consider the resources available to assist you with prayer including clergy, friends, family and the Center for Family Life Formation.*

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## **(P)lan- Develop practical steps to change one's life in accord with this new experience.**

No change in direction can take place unless you actually take steps to make that happen. The Gospels tell us it is easy to begin on a new path, but difficult to complete the journey. A good plan, grounded in prayer, discipline and accountability, is helpful in overcoming any obstacle in your life.

*Consider the next steps you want and need to take on your journey toward the Cross. Who can help you? Ask Jesus to help you now.*

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