

May, 2026

I love the month of May for the simple fact that even without us doing a thing, new life is bursting out all around. As we said on Easter “Christ is risen; He is risen indeed!” and with him, all the earth rises as well in a process of continuous resurrection. In the words of the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God . . .”

Finding God in all things is a cornerstone of Ignatian spirituality; and May is a perfect month for finding and recognizing God everywhere by taking a contemplative walk in nature. All you really need for this exercise is a half hour or so of solitary time and a desire to spend that time with God. If you're unable to get outside to walk, perhaps you can sit near a window or anyplace that you find soothing and where your five senses are easily stimulated.

Begin your walk as you would any period of prayer by becoming consciously aware of God's loving presence in and around you. Take a deep breath of fresh air and reflect on how that breath, this invisible gift from God, sustains your whole life; and how through it, God is continually creating you. With each breath, whisper a prayer of thanks to God for the gift of your own unique life.

As you continue your walk, consciously focus on each of your five senses, one by one:

Sight: Use your eyes to delight in whatever you see around you. Do you see people, flowers, trees, birds, squirrels? Notice colors, shapes and movements — imagine how enriched your life is because of the gift of sight and express your thanks and praise to God.

Taste: As you walk, sip some water or eat a piece of fruit. Savor the flavor and the feel of it and consciously connect this ability to taste with the words of the Psalmist — “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Smell: Breathe deeply and notice the variety of fragrances around you. Do you smell the jasmine or the roses? Maybe you smell fumes from trucks or fertilizer. Notice how your sense of smell affects your mood or maybe conjures up certain memories, happy or sad. Take another deep breath and thank God for this gift of smell.

Hearing: Pause for a few minutes and consciously listen. What sounds do you hear? Even what seems like silence is alive with sound. Do you hear the rustling of a breeze? Name some of the things that fill you with gratitude because you can hear; perhaps the sound of human voices, birds, bugs. Savor those sounds and thank God for this gift of hearing.

Touch: Touch is a sense to which we often pay little notice. Stop for a moment and feel the various textures that are all around; the softness of a flower or the grass between your toes; the smoothness of a stone or the roughness of tree bark. Feel also the sun on your face and the air as it touches your skin. Imagine how much poorer life might be without this sense of touch, and thank God for it.

Finally, conclude your walk by simply resting in a deep awareness of the gifts God continually showers on you through your senses — and thank him for the resurrection that is taking place in you, in each new moment of each new day.

Elizabeth Goodine — *Spiritual Director*