Praying with an icon is a new experience for me, but since the days of early Christians, people have created representations of God and the saints for use during prayer. These symbolic images are often called "windows to heaven." Their purpose is to draw the person into prayer, raising the mind and heart to God. Christian iconography expresses in images the same gospel message that Scripture communicates by words.

The Good Shepherd icon is very ancient and was commonly used by early Christians. Indeed, it was found in the Roman catacombs. The icon of the Good Shephard leads me to reflect on two scriptures. The first is John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd; a good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." The second is Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside still waters, he restoreth my soul."

Gazing at the icon, I find that I focus on the lamb gazing with complete trust at the shepherd. The shepherd has such a peaceful and loving expression. In praying with an icon, it is important to simply look and notice the various details and colors. An icon is often called a "theology of colors" and can show a great deal about Christian Faith. Listening is critical to hear the word of God as reflected by the icon. Notice the eyes. Often, they seem to look back at us. This type of prayer requires a contemplative heart, one that slows down, taking a break from the fast-paced world in which we live. After spending time with the Good Shepherd icon, my prayer is for growing trust as my life's journey continues on its twisty-turny, up-and-down path. I feel greater peace after spending time with the Good Shepherd.

Reference: "How to pray with Icons: A brief guide" by Philip Kosloski (09/12/2018)

Are there some reflections/prayers in your life that bring you closer to God? If you are willing to share these with others on their spiritual journeys, please send your thoughts to...