

SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONAL RETREAT

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.” (Mark 6: 30-32)

Reasons/Purpose for Retreat: Rest, Relaxation & Renewal - to return rejuvenated, reinvigorated for ongoing service and ministry.

What makes retreat different than a holiday?

The primary focus in retreat is on creating an openness to and awareness of God and one’s self. Thus a central component in retreat is an attitude of listening, quiet, prayer. One helpful book in this regard is *Opening to God* by Thomas Green. Your main role in retreat is **listening**.

Some suggestions for approaching your time of retreat...

1. Set aside your natural tendency to follow an agenda or follow a list of things to accomplish (books to read, letters to write, movies to watch, games to play, calls to make, etc.). See this as a rendezvous with your **Divine Lover** and try to create appropriate anticipation, space and leisure for this to happen.
2. Prayerfully be open to a passage of scripture (or other short text, like the *Prayer of St. Francis*), image or phrase to use as a meditative focus. This scripture or image or phrase may come to you with some sense of God’s leading. Or it may also be offered to you by another person such as a spiritual director as a form of direction for your retreat.
3. Other meditative aids can be used (prayer walks, journaling, singing, sentence prayers...)
4. Sleep in response to your tiredness, but not from a place of avoidance, or as a way to make the time go faster.
5. Slow down; adopt a leisurely approach to eating, walking, talking, etc.
6. Try to minimize human interaction.
7. Alternate times of walking and sitting.
8. Alternate times of being outside and inside.
9. Wear loose, comfortable, and weather appropriate clothing.
10. Listen with your eyes, ears, heart and mind.
11. When appropriate take time to express your thoughts, feelings, etc. to God. (*Pour out your heart before Him!* - Psalm 62:8)
12. Be honest with God and yourself. (*Worship in spirit and truth.* - John 4:23-24)
13. Use appropriate Psalms (or other forms of prayer) to give shape/voice to your expressions to God.
14. When you have said what you need to, adopt a listening posture, once again.

“Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts... and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-4)