



A LENTEN RETREAT

LENT begins with the placing of ashes on our foreheads reminding us that we are dust and unto dust we shall return. It is a reminder of our mortality and the hope that comes from the faith of our baptism that if we have died with Christ we will also rise with him. We journey through the weeks of Lent preparing ourselves to enter once again into the Paschal Mystery - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The journey culminates in the renewal of our baptismal promises on Easter Sunday.

RETREAT is an opportunity to step away from our normal routine and spend some quiet time in prayer with God. A typical retreat invites us to begin by reflecting on the love that God has for us and then inviting us to reflect on certain elements of our relationship with God. A retreat can be for a day or two, a week, or some people even make retreats that last 30 days!

Most of us don't have this luxury to take time out of our busy lives to sit in silence for a few days connecting with God at a deeper level. So I will attempt to bring the retreat to you during the next five weeks of Lent. Each week there will be the usual homily at Mass that will set the theme for our prayer that week. In the bulletin will be an insert each week with Scripture readings to help us reflect on the theme for the week. Some weeks will ask us to keep praying with the Sunday Gospel. You may be able to find time to pray each day with one of the Scripture readings or you may only find time to pray with only one of them. The opportunity will be there and you can take advantage of whatever your schedule may allow.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE: Some of you have had some experience praying with Scripture, some of you may not have any experience praying with Scripture. I will share with you three possible ways to pray with Scripture *Lectio Divina* and two forms of Contemplation. (Don't be scared by the fancy name - it is just a name). If you don't have time for the whole process of these prayer forms, just read the scripture passage two or three times and sit in silence reflecting on what God is saying to you in this passage.

Lectio Divina Process: (flexibly adapt the following steps, as needed)

- 1. Reading (lectio) – read the text out loud in order to hear God’s Word in the Bible. What does the biblical text say?**
- 2. Meditation (meditatio) – read the text again reflecting on the meaning of the text. What is God saying to me through this text?**
- 3. Prayer (oratio) – speaking with God in praise, thanksgiving, contrition, and petition
What do I say to God in response to this text?**
- 4. Contemplation (contemplatio) – listening to God more quietly in the silence of my heart
How does this text make me feel in my relationship with God?**
- 5. Action (actio) – letting the encounter with God concretely affect my daily life and work in the world. How will I change what I do today in response to hearing this text?**

A Brief Introduction to Biblical Meditation (using rational reflection):

This method is appropriate for any biblical text.

- 1. Begin: be seated comfortably for your time of prayer. Consider how God looks upon you and loves you; become aware of being in God’s presence.**
- 2. Preparatory Prayer: offer to God all your will and actions, especially in this time of prayer; ask God for a specific grace that you need and desire right now (peace, consolation, hope, etc.).**
- 3. Meditate on the Biblical Text that you have selected:**

Read the biblical text through slowly, recalling what it is about; then let it come alive for you!

Reflect on the truths that God wants to teach you in this text.

Ponder the meaning of each word, phrase, and sentence in the text.

Focus on two or three points (words, phrases, images, ideas) that stand out to you.

Embrace what God is saying to you; let your heart be moved with love and desire.

Notice what is going on inside you as you pray: joy, sorrow, peace, confusion, love, anger, etc.

If you get distracted or your mind wanders, gently return to the biblical text and your focal points.

4. Colloquy: enter into a short personal conversation with Jesus (or God the Father, or the Holy Spirit); speak heart-to-heart, as if conversing with a close friend.

5. Closing Prayer: conclude by praying the Our Father, Hail Mary, or another familiar/favorite prayer; you might stand, kneel, bow, raise your hands, or adopt another posture to mark the end of your prayer.

Afterward, briefly review what you experienced during this time of prayer (maybe journal about what happened), and look forward to your next prayerful encounter with God (when? where? which biblical text will you use?).

Ignatian Contemplation – The Process:

This method is especially appropriate for scenes from the Gospels, but also possible with other biblical narratives.

- 1. Begin: be seated comfortably for your time of prayer. Consider how God looks upon you and loves you.**
- 2. Preparatory Prayer: offer to God all your will and actions, especially in this time of prayer; ask God for a specific grace that you need and desire right now (peace, consolation, hope, etc.).**

3. Contemplate the Biblical Story that you have selected:

Read the text slowly and carefully; recall what it is about; then let it come alive for you!

Place yourself inside the story, using your imagination; become one of the characters in the scene.

Participate in the dynamics of the scene, dialoguing & interacting with Jesus and other characters.

Observe what is going on around you in the scene: What do you see, hear, feel, smell, taste, touch?

Dialogue with the other characters: What do they say or ask you? What do you say or ask them in reply?

Notice what is going on inside you as you pray: joy, sorrow, peace, confusion, love, anger, etc.

If you get distracted or your mind wanders, gently return to the biblical text and re-enter the scene.

4. Colloquy: enter into a short personal conversation with Jesus (or God the Father, or the Holy Spirit); speak heart-to-heart, as if conversing with a close friend.

5. Closing Prayer: conclude by praying the Our Father, Hail Mary, or another familiar/favorite prayer; you might stand, kneel, bow, raise your hands, or adopt another posture to mark the end of your prayer.

Afterward, briefly review what you experienced during this time of prayer (maybe journal about what happened), and look forward to your next prayerful encounter with God (when? where? which biblical text will you use?).