

Half-Day Retreat

Suggested schedule

A certain amount of direction is helpful as you go into a retreat. That said, I offer the suggestions here tentatively – please do not feel any need to use this prescriptively, feel at liberty to adapt it and skip over sections if it feels ill-fitting or burdensome. You’ll notice “pauses” are littered throughout – allow the pace of the retreat to be unhurried and restful, don’t race to ‘complete’ the exercise, it really doesn’t matter if you do everything included here or not. The heart and intention behind this is that you have time to connect with God, who loves you dearly and delights in you spending time in the presence of the Trinity.

Introduction: time of centring

Find a quiet spot and sit comfortably. Become attentive to your breathing, relax your muscles.

*“Rest assured O my soul,
for the LORD has been good to you”*

Psalm 116:8

Allow yourself to notice God’s presence with you
– God’s delight in you and grace for you in this moment.

Rest in this space.

Reflection

Consider these questions and note down your responses in your journal:

How am I doing now at this point in time?

What is it I desire as I go into this time of retreat?

Ask God for the grace you desire today.

Pause

As you find beneficial, spend some time with this poem by Mary Oliver. Try reading out loud a couple of times, pausing between each reading.

Today by Mary Oliver

*Today I'm flying low and I'm
not saying a word.
I'm letting all the voodooos of ambition sleep.
The world goes on as it must,
the bees in the garden rumbling a little,
the fish leaping, the gnats getting eaten.
And so forth.*

*But I'm taking the day off.
Quiet as a feather.
I hardly move though really I'm traveling
a terrific distance.
Stillness. One of the doors
into the temple.*

Walk

Allow half an hour or so for this time outside.

I invite you to spend time outside: either sit or go for a walk. In this time be attentive to what you are grateful for. As you notice things by sight or from memory, express a short prayer of thanks for each. Repeat this through out the time.

Pause

Find somewhere to sit still and rest with God.

Meditation

Allow about half an hour for this next section.

I invite you to spend some time engaging in the prayer practice known as Lectio Divina – “sacred reading”.

Enging with this meditative practice

With Lectio Divina we engage with the bible in the presence of God, with an openness to receiving what he has to say to us today. Do this in prayerful and meditative way. The intention is to go *deep* not wide. We are ‘sipping on scripture’ as one writer put it – savouring the flavour – like a fine wine.

Overview

During this time of prayer I suggest you read the first few verses from a Psalm – if tyou are unsure which passage to use today, perhaps use Psalm 27.

Go through 4 stages as you do this. They will be: *read, reflect, respond, rest*

Read

First I will read the text and invite you to listen to the text – listen as if hearing it fresh, hearing the sounds,

Reflect

Then read a second time and invite yourself to focus on the one word or phrase which draws your attention today. Give yourself plenty of time to reflect & meditate on – ponderer it and mull it over.

Respond

Following that read the passage a third time – and respond to God in prayer.

Rest

Finally *rest* – a key feature of lectio and of contemplative prayer in general. We resist the urge to race through on to the next thing. We give ourselves time to simply ‘be’ – to treasure what you have been given with God.

Psalm 27:1,4-6

The LORD is my light and my salvation
– whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the refuge of my life
– of whom shall I be afraid?

One thing I ask from the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the
LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and
to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble he will keep
me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his
sacred tent and set me high upon a
rock.

Pause

If you feel there is time, consider spending time outside, find somewhere comfortable to sit or go for a walk.

Drawing to a close

Allow half an hour to an hour for this last section

Examen

Engage in a prayer of examen. The examen is a prayer practice that comes to us through the Ignatian tradition. It provides us with a way to reflect on our day with God. Use this time to reflect on the last few hours, with these five stages of the examen.

1. Ask God for grace

Allow yourself to be open and attentive to the presence of God. Slow your breathing and settle yourself, become still and centred. Ask God to shed light on your day.

2. Give thanks

Ask the Spirit to help you remember the past hours with thanks. Allow one or two moments to be brought to your attention. With gratitude treasure this with God.

3. Review

Be attentive to your inner movements and emotions from the last few hours. What has drawn you to God? Where have you noticed difficult feelings?

4. Pray

Talk to God about what you have noticed. Perhaps you have noticed shortcomings; ask for the grace to receive God's forgiveness and mercy. Perhaps you have noticed new invitations; ask God to help you to respond with wisdom and courage.

5. Looking forward

Look toward to the coming day with hope. Ask God for what you need as you move forward into the coming day.

Journal

End with a time of journalling. What has been significant from this time that you would like to treasure?