

Welcome:

Congratulations! You have made an important decision to make a Busy Person's Retreat. There are many other things that you could do this week, and there are many things that you will do in addition to this retreat.

You have chosen, however, to spend a portion of each day "to come away for a while to an out of the way place" to retreat—to pray and reflect, to talk and share, and to grow in God's love for you. You have made a great decision!

Everything about this retreat is intended to help deepen your awareness of your faith relationship with God. The two most important elements of this retreat are the commitments you make to spend time in personal prayer and reflection each day and to meet with a spiritual companion to discuss your journey and the fruit of your prayer and reflection.

Your spiritual companion this week will accompany you on this retreat journey. He or she will not tell you what to do, how to pray, or what your experiences mean. Instead, he or she will listen attentively and help you discover the movement of God in your life.

This booklet offers some suggestions to help you get started in the retreat. Your spiritual companion will have other suggestions as well. If there are other practices that help you encounter God's love for you more deeply, please feel free to incorporate them into your daily prayer.

More than any other kind of retreat, a directed retreat depends on your effort, and of course, God's grace. Know that the retreat team will keep you in prayer each day. It is our prayer that you may experience a great spiritual reward for your efforts during this Busy Person's Retreat.

How to make this retreat:

In order to get the full benefit of this retreat, you need to commit to the following things:

1. Set aside 1/2 hour each day for four days to pray privately. You may pray any time during the day, but should have your prayer time completed before you meet with your spiritual companion each day.
2. Meet with your spiritual companion for 1/2 hour each day for four days.

Your spiritual companion is: _____

Discovering God

*To discover prayer, we have first to discover God.
And this means turning ourselves inside out.
It means we have to let God be our God -
not just Lord of the Universe, majestic and remote,
but Lord of our lives.
We must get out of the limelight,
vacate the stage,
and make our hearts God's royal throne.*

Necessary Elements of Prayer – Even For Busy People:

This retreat is an opportunity for you to learn to recognize God in your daily activities, to pray with scripture, and to become a better disciple of Christ. This retreat will focus on three important elements of prayer for Christians.

- Scripture
- Quiet time for God
- Having a Spiritual companion.

These elements will help us to be open to hearing God in our heart and learning and growing as disciples who know and follow God's love.

Scripture

We have to pay careful attention to God's word in Scripture. To take scripture and read it is the first thing we have to do to open ourselves to God's call. Reading the scriptures is not as easy as it seems, since in our academic world, we tend to make everything we read subject to analysis and discussion. But the word of God should lead us first of all to contemplation and meditation. Instead of taking the words apart, we should bring them together in our innermost being; instead of wondering if we agree or disagree, we should wonder which words are spoken to us and connect deeply with our personal story. We should be willing to let them penetrate the most hidden corners of our heart, even those places where no other word has yet found entrance. Only then can we hear and understand God.

Quiet time for God

We simply need quiet time in God's presence. Although we want to make all of our time for God, we will never succeed if we do not reserve a minute, an hour, a morning, a day, a week, or whatever period of time for God and God alone. This asks for much discipline and risk taking because we always seem to have something more urgent to do and "just sitting there and doing nothing" often disturbs us more. But there is no way around this. Being useless and silent in the presence of God belongs to the core of prayer. In the beginning, we often hear our own inner noises more loudly than God's voice. This is sometimes hard, but slowly we discover that time with God makes us quiet and deepens our awareness of God and ourselves.

Having a Spiritual Companion:

Having the opportunity to meet individually with a person who will listen attentively is a great gift. Your spiritual companion is not going to tell you how to live, or what decisions to make, or what your experiences mean. He or she does not have all of the answers. Your companion will, however, sit beside you and work with you in deepening your faith relationship.

There are some things that will make the experience of spiritual companioning more worthwhile. We ask you to:

1. Pray before meeting with your companion.
2. Take the initiative in the meeting. Prepare some areas you want to talk about. Don't expect your spiritual companion to ask a lot of questions. He or she does not know what you need to talk about nearly as well as you do.
3. Work at trust. Sometimes that takes time. Remember that the spiritual companion's main goal is to help you in your spiritual journey. Your meetings with your companion are confidential.

Prayer Styles:

Option I: Praying with the Scriptures

1. Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted.
2. Sit quietly for a few minutes and ask God to help you clear your mind of worries and your busy schedule.
3. Praying with scripture involves a few steps:
 - Slowly read the passage once—Try reading it out loud if it helps.
 - What is happening in the passage?
 - What is God saying to me in this passage?
 - What is my response?
 - Reread the passage—Pause at a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves you to think more. If you find the passage for the day particularly hard to reflect on, switch to a suggested alternate passage. Do not use all suggestions.
 - Pray to God—That means talk directly to God about the passage or phrase on which you are reflecting. Speak to God as a friend. Ask for strength to understand and learn. Praise God, thank God and listen for God. Do not be embarrassed to be honest with God about any of your thoughts, concerns, or needs
 - Continue reading the passage—Pause at all of the pieces of the reading to which you feel drawn. First reflect, and then pray with them also. Do this until you have been praying for at least a ½ hour.
4. If you finish the passage before the ½ hour is up, continue to sit silently in God's presence, journal about your reflections and feelings.

Option II: Use of the Imagination on a Gospel Story about Jesus

This method is sometimes called Ignatian contemplation or Guided Imagery on Scripture or the Method of Gospel Contemplation. Some people simply call this method "Contemplation" as shorthand.

In this method, we enter into a life event or story passage of scripture. We enter into the passage by way of imagination, making use of all our senses. The concrete details of the Gospel story serve as a guide to our imagination. Thus one enters the story as if one were there:

1. Watch what happens; listen to what is being said; feel the actions with your body.
2. Become part of the mystery either by being yourself or assuming the role of one of the persons in the story.
3. A person enters the mystery imaginatively either through one's feelings or through one's picture-making powers or through one's hearing. Some persons can even use two or all three of these imaginative powers.
4. Allow yourself to interact with the other individuals in the event by being present; look, listen, taste, smell, feel, watch what happens, interact with the persons, enter into dialogue with them, listen to their conversations.
5. Allow the event to unfold itself through your imagination. Be as passive as possible to allow this to take place. At the same time, this method encourages you to remain more or less within the ambience of the gospel story.
6. Respond authentically and spontaneously as in a dialogue with Jesus. Ignatius of Loyola suggests we end with such a prayer.

Option III: Savor the Word

Read over the passage, slowly, several times and see if any word or phrase stands out for you, and stay with that phrase for as long as you like before turning your attention to any other.

The process is a bit like sucking a hard candy. Do not try to analyze the phrase, just as you would not normally break up a hard candy and subject it to chemical analysis before tasting it.

Often a phrase from the Scriptures will catch the attention of our subconscious. As you linger with the phrase it most likely will reveal the reason for your attraction. That is why it is good to remain with the phrase for as long as possible without trying to analyze it.

You may find all sorts of distractions running through your mind, but some thoughts, far from being distractions, can become the substance of your prayer.

It is as though the phrase of Scripture is a searchlight which plays upon your stream of consciousness, thoughts, memories, reflections, daydreams, hopes, ambitions, fears, and pray out of the mixture of God's word and your inner thoughts and feelings.

Think about the piece of scripture you have just read:

- What part of it strikes a chord in you?
- If so, does the story throw light on what the Scripture passage may be trying to say to you?
- Is there something that is revealing itself to you? Like a longings of your heart?
- Is there some meaning to the reading for you now? What is that?
- What do you want to do with this new information? Write it down? Savor more?

Option IV: Lectio Divina:

The Benedictine tradition provides a way of praying called **Lectio Divina**, or sacred reading, in which God's word can change our hearts. The method leads into a deeper encounter with the Word of God through four steps:

1. **Lectio** - Read the text with openness.
2. **Meditatio** - Meditate on what you have read by pausing where something strikes you. Repeat a word or phrase that is meaningful to you. Ponder what you have read.
3. **Oratio** - Pray in your own words. The text may remind you of some situations or matters needing prayer.
4. **Contemplatio** - Be present to God. No words are necessary.

A Review of the Day:

The Christian spiritual tradition has always stressed the importance of making a **Review of the Day**. The two methods suggested have been quite detailed or rather simple. The value of this habit of daily reflection is that it keeps us in touch with what we do each day and why we do it. It helps us to notice and then to name the connections between our faith and our daily routine.

This **Review of the Day** can be an instant replay of what happens with you throughout the day:

---- Go through the morning...the afternoon...the evening.

---- Recall the persons you met, the places you went, the conversations that took place.

---- What were the major events of the day? Where did you find stress and/or a lack of peacefulness? Where did you find hope, peace, and a sense of joy? When were you at your best? When were you at your worst?

---- Reflect on the contrasts and patterns of behavior that you notice in your thoughts, emotions, and actions both the good and/or the bad.

---- Give thanks to God for these insights. Praise God for the strengths and even the shortcomings of the day.

---- Ask pardon for the failures and omissions of the day.

---- Speak to God from your heart.

JOURNAL AS A REVIEW OF THE DAY

Some people find it helpful to keep a journal as part of the **Review of the Day**. Take the opportunity to write down any particular graces you receive and any patterns of thinking and acting that you notice. If you make entries in your journal on a regular basis, reading the entire journal each month will present a meaningful overview of how God moves in your daily life. The journal will show just how you have responded to the Spirit's invitation to use your talents, to reach out to others, and how actively God loves you constantly.

Retreat Schedule:

Name of my spiritual companion: _____

Day	Prayer Time	Meeting Time	Meeting Room
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			

For the Future:

Through this retreat, you have begun to learn the ways in which God is part of your daily life and to develop patterns of personal prayer for yourself. Strive to continue some form of these patterns in the future so your relationship with God may continue to grow. Here are some suggestions...

- 1) Get a copy of the daily Mass readings. Use them every day in your prayer in a way similar to this retreat i.e. www.usccb.org/dailyreadings; app for hand held devices: Missal or Laudate.
- 2) How did the Word of God come alive to me today in prayer, interaction with people, Mass....?
- 3) Reflect on some of the following questions each night to get a sense of the presence of God you experienced or are challenged with each day.
- 4) How has God come to me today and how have I responded?
- 5) Did I feel drawn by God anytime today through a companion, an event, art, music, a book....?
- 6) How did I meet God in fears, joys, misunderstandings, sufferings, temptation, work?
- 7) In what ways have I been the sign of God's presence and love to my brothers and sisters, to my friends, my classmates....?
- 8) What happened today that I should be thankful about?