

# **“Take-home Retreat”**

## **in preparation for celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.**

*Can you take ten or fifteen minutes each day, just to sit and pray with your God?*

*Can you stop – turn off the radio, the TV, the phone, the computer and anything else that might distract you?*

Here are some helps for this time of prayer. While we are suggesting just 10 – 15 minutes, you may be able to take a longer period, or more than one period each day. You may be able to attend the Eucharist on one or all of these days. You are still going about your normal daily activities, but you have decided to make this a special time of Retreat – at home – even though you have not gone away to some Retreat Centre, and have not entered into a prolonged period of silence. You just look for some time to be more attentive to God’s presence and action in your life. You may take some of the suggested Scripture texts for prayer and reflection, or you may decide to be more aware of God as you focus on the beauty of nature and God’s creation.

### **LISTENING:**

Wherever you are, in your favourite chair at home, at the beach, in the park – LISTEN! Notice the sounds around you – small sounds, perhaps a bird, a distant voice.

Listen, be attentive!.

This helps us to become contemplative, which simply means noticing, being helped to notice where my God is present and perhaps is speaking to me.

### **GOD’S PRESENCE:**

Be aware of your breathing, and as you do remind yourself of the presence of God. God is still being creative every minute of every day. God is as close to you as your own breath. As you breathe be aware that God is loving life into you.

### **HOLY SPIRIT:**

Pray for understanding, for light, for the gift of the Spirit. St Paul reminds us that the “love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5). Pray for that Spirit that you might be open to experience the love of God for you.

### **SOME HELPS FOR PRAYING SCRIPTURE**

**PASSAGE:** Select one passage from those that are suggested for each day.

**PLACE:** Decide on the place where you want to pray. A room in the house, in the garden, in the park, at the beach, in the church.....

**POSTURE:** There is no set posture for prayer. We find the one that is most helpful for us. A favourite chair, on the floor, a posture that is not too comfortable nor uncomfortable; the posture that will assist our prayer and reflection.

**PRESENCE OF GOD:** This is an important part of our preparation – in fact it could be our prayer. Even if we did nothing else, our prayer would be fruitful. Be with your God! As you commence your prayer each day, you may find one of the following helpful:

- I pause for a moment, aware that God is here. I think of how everything around me, the air I breathe, my whole body, is tingling with the presence of God.
- To be present is to arrive as one is and open to the other. As I arrive here, God is present waiting for me. God always arrives before me, desiring to connect with me even more than my most intimate friend. I take a moment and greet my loving God.
- I pause for a moment and think of the love and the grace that God showers on me, creating me in his image and likeness, making me his temple.
- As I sit here, God is present, breathing life into me and into everything around me. For a few moments, I sit silently, and become aware of God's loving presence.
- God is with me, but more, God is within me giving me existence. Let me dwell for a moment on God's life-giving presence in my body, my mind, my heart, and in the whole of my life.
- As I sit here, God is here. Around me in my sensations, in my thoughts and deep within me. I pause for a moment, and become aware of God's life-giving presence.

*(These suggested helps for being aware of God's presence come from "Sacred Space". Jesuit Communication Centre, Ireland)*

**PASSAGE:** I now return to the Scripture passage I have selected for my prayer.

### **DAY 1: Our Journey with God**

Our life is a journey WITH God, not a journey TO God. God chose to personally join with God's people and live as one of them so they could know that God wasn't just watching them from afar, with no involvement in what was happening to them. God was close to God's people. You may like to imagine that God has sent you these 'postcards'. What is it like for you to have God speak so personally to you? Can you share with your God as you listen and reflect on these messages of love?

"Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine."  
(Isaiah 43:1-5)

"Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, .... Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you. Look, I have engraved you on the palm of my hands,..." (Is 49:15-16)

"I have loved you with an everlasting love and so I still maintain my faithful love for you."  
(Jeremiah 31:3)

#### **Other Scripture texts for prayer:**

**1 John 4:7-19** God's love for us...

**Romans 8: 35-39** Nothing can separate us from God's love.....

*"Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.. Mary said, ..'Let it happen to me as you have said."* (Lk 1:26-38)

*May the blessing of Mary's unwavering faith be upon us,  
may her spirit of prayer live in our hearts and our lives.*

## DAY 2: Jesus shares Our Journey

“The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, ..., full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

In Jesus God became a pilgrim who journeyed with us, sharing our human life to the full, for in him we have someone “..not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us, ..” (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus “..did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; ... he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)

**Looking at the human Jesus:** Was Jesus always calm, cool, collected? (Does this Jesus appeal?) He chooses disciples as friends – he needed people around him as friends, companions. He showed annoyance, anger, he wept, he rejoiced, he felt sorry for people who suffered..... How do I see him? How have I experienced him? What do I share with him now as he invites me into a personal relationship with him?

“Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

### Other Scripture texts for prayer:

**Mark 2:15-17** Jesus eats with sinners...

**Matthew 13:53-58** Jesus rejected by his own

**Luke 5:12-14** Jesus cures a leper....

“He is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel... and a sword will pierce your soul too..” (Luke 2:34-35)

*May the blessing of Mary's union with Jesus be upon us.*

*May her courage and patience find a home in our lives.*

## DAY 3: Jesus lives in us through his Spirit

Jesus suffered, died, and rose from the dead. He now lives among us – lives within us – through his Spirit. We are called now to be that one community of Jesus' followers, united together through his Spirit, and working to change our world.

“This is my commandment, love one another as I have loved you. No one can have greater love, than to lay down (their) life for (their) friends.” (John 15:12-13)

St Paul tells us that “..the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 5:5) Jesus risen, living within us, desires that we experience his love. In his life he showed great compassion and love, especially towards those who struggled and suffered. Three questions that we find in the Gospels Jesus now puts to me:

*Who do you say that I am?*

*What do you want me to do for you?*

*Do you believe that I can do this for you?*

### Scripture for prayer:

**Jeremiah 29:11-14:** I have plans for peace....

**Luke 24:13-35:** Journey to Emmaus

**Colossians 3:12-17:** put on love....

As I come to the end of these days, I give God thanks for what has been, for how my God has been present to me? What were any gifts I received from God during these days? I may like to pray Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55) I seek her intercession, and that of St Catherine Laboure, for the journey ahead.

*May the blessing of Mary's loving service be upon us.  
May her spirit of praise be on our lips and in our hearts.*

(Words from song : "As Mary did", Michael Herry, fms)

*Retreat prepared by Fr Kevin Canty CM*