

AS YOU BEGIN

You might find it helpful to reflect on one passage of Scripture to move you into the prayer of the retreat. You may wish to pick one of the following passages that first catches your attention - it doesn't matter if it is very familiar, or if it's a passage which is new to you.



Psalm 139

The wonder of your being.

Isaiah 55:1-11

Listen, and your soul will live.

Luke 11:1-13

Ask, and you will receive.

Luke 18:1-8

Don't lose heart.

Have a notebook in which to jot down your thoughts and feelings during the retreat.

AS YOU END

Be aware that it may take several days to readjust to your normal routines. The retreat experience does not stop when you leave. God continues to work in your thoughts, feelings and life circumstances.

Many people find it helpful to continue meeting with a guide on a regular basis. One term for this is 'spiritual direction'. It may be helpful to talk about this with your guide at the end of your retreat.

*"An old Latin word for a retreat is 'vacation Deo':
emptiness before God,
idleness for God,
a holiday or vacation.*

*You have come away from your usual preoccupations
and concerns so as to be in some respect:*

*idle,
empty,
available to God.*

What you have come with is just:

*yourself,
your time,
your availability.*

If you are going to be less busy, and even idle, this suggests that God is the main actor in this retreat; the main agent is God. This retreat is meant to be God's agenda: God wants to be the busy one."

(Fr Finbarr Lynch)

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Preparing for Your Retreat



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Making the most of it

Come Away, Rest and Listen

It takes time to enter into a retreat whether it is for one day, a weekend or longer. Life is often busy and stressful leaving you feeling God is distant and your prayer life routine or hard work. It takes time to begin to allow yourself to feel at home in new surroundings. Time to adjust to the change of pace. Time to let your deeper hopes and desires come to the surface. Time to meet God in this place.

The good news is that there is all the time in the world available. Even on the shortest of retreats, there is time enough to relax and let God do everything that God wants to do.



It is beneficial to rest from:

- using the phone, including text messaging.
- using your computer and other electronic equipment.
- listening to the radio.
- catching up with your reading material - work-related or otherwise.

A certain amount of listening to music or reading may be helpful. You will find such resources available at Katafiyio.

WHAT TO EXPECT - or not!

A retreat is a response to God's invitation to come aside and rest with him. God is the host, the one who plans what will happen. There will always be an element of the unexpected on retreat - but it will be in the context of an encounter with a loving and gracious God.

It is not:

- A time of in-depth Bible study.
- A time of extended intercessory prayer.
- An endurance test - you can opt out at any time (but talk it over first).
- A time of over-zealous introspection.

A retreat may well have some element of all these, but it is **your** retreat, with **your** concerns, and is best helped by coming with a willingness to be totally open and honest before God.

Don't expect too much of yourself:

- Give yourself an easy timetable initially.
- Include, possibly, a couple of (shortish) prayer periods.
- Build in times of rest - early nights, siestas. Feeling sleepy is normal!
- Get plenty of gentle exercise.
- Possibly try an art suggestion.
- Deliberately slow down, spend more time on everything you do. Consciously relax, breathe more deeply, walk more slowly.

LISTEN

For those who have elected for an individually guided retreat (IGR) the retreat guide is there to help you listen to and find God's presence in the circumstances of your life. You will usually have a daily morning meeting together.

Please see the leaflet "Preparing for Spiritual Direction" for more information.



For those who have chosen to lead their own time of retreat, it is suggested that you try to centre your reading and listening around one theme you are being led to consider. Put some structure in your day - times when you will read, pray, walk, do something creative, etc. Ask yourself the questions:

- What am I asking God for?
- What gift or help do I need at this time?

Meanwhile, try to become aware of everything around you - sounds, sights, the feel of things, scents carried through the air, the taste and texture of your food. Notice God speaking to you through your senses.