

2025 Silent Prayer Retreat **Week #1, Part #1**

Overview and Instructions

A. Focus for Week #1 (Part 1)

The main body of our retreat is broken down into four periods of time (referred to by Ignatius as “Weeks”). This first “Week” is further broken down into two distinct parts. During week 1, the focus is all **on my needs** as I arrive here for retreat.

In the 15th century, when retreat founder Ignatius first wrote his “Spiritual Exercises” (upon which our template for retreating is based), he was very conscious that the attention of his retreatants not stray but rather keep their focus as they moved through the length of the retreat. (And in the early years, the retreats lasted 30 days.) So, Ignatius set forth for them “graces” that they ought to seek in each section of the retreat. He wanted to make very clear “what” they were trying to accomplish during each of the retreat periods. The following is a paraphrase of the “graces for Week #1, Part #1.

The “Graces I seek” in this Session...

- *To see and experience You once again, Lord...afresh and anew*
 - *In the beauty of Your Creation...*
 - *And in the examination of the many ways You have blessed me in the times past.*
 - *To be awed once again, Lord...overwhelmed with the magnificence of the You that is in You...*

B. Handouts/Exercises

The Handout/Exercises are provided to assist in accomplishing (entering into...experiencing) that which comprises the Focus for Week #1 (Part #1). Note again that everything presented during the retreat is “optional”. Feel completely free to utilize or ignore anything. In the end, it is God the Holy Spirit who is your *actual* retreat Director. A key for you on retreat is that

you somehow “connect” with the Spirit...get a sense of how He would have you spend your time...and then do that.

So, if the Spirit leads you in a different direction...by all means, follow that.

Handout/Exercise #1: “Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name”

For this exercise, spend some time in the texts that record statements Jesus made about Father God. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you understand what these statements reveal about God’s character and ponder what impact that has upon your relationship with him.

Handout/Exercise #2: “All Things”

For this exercise, begin to take an inventory of the “things” in the world around you that continually “speak” to you about the creativity and magnificence of God. Notice the large things (sun, ocean, universe...) as well as the small things (ants, coffee, dogs...).

C. Suggested Scriptures:

Below are various additional *Scriptures* that might be used for consideration/meditation/prayer as you proceed.

Ephesians 1:3-14

Romans 5:1-11

D. Week #1, Part #1: A Suggested Plan:

Some retreatants are not used to having such elongated blocks of time on their own...and as such, struggle. Below is a sample, sequential plan as to how one might use the time allotted for Week #1, Part #1.

Please note that retreatants are not advised to “automatically” utilize these suggested plans just because they are included...or because frustrations or struggles arise...or because they are bored and don’t know what to do, etc. Often “God is in” the frustrations and confusion and boredom...and the best thing may well be to ride it out, to take the time to see what God is up to, or, even just to sit alone and do absolutely nothing (just be with God) until God prompts you to something.

But if you sense a need for further structure, the following may be of help:

Get Ready

Read over this “Overview and Instructions.”

Review and work through Handout/Exercise #1

Take a break

Consider one or more of the “Suggested Scriptures.”

Take a break

Consider and work through Handout/Exercise #2

2025 Silent Prayer Retreat **Week #1, Part #2**

Overview and Instructions

A. Focus for Week #1 (Part #2)

The main body of our retreat is broken down into four periods of time (referred to by Ignatius as “Weeks”). During week 1, the focus is all **on me...on my** needs as I arrive here for retreat.

It is a “Week” to prepare myself for what retreat is really all about: *becoming more like Jesus* (Weeks #2-4). As indicated during the first session, Week #1 is further broken down into two retreat sessions. It’s the Second part that we will focus on now.

In the 15th century, when retreat founder Ignatius first wrote his “Spiritual Exercises” (upon which our template for retreating is based), he was very conscious that the attention of his retreatants not stray but rather keep their focus as they moved through the length of the retreat. (And in the early years, the retreats lasted 30 days.) So, Ignatius set forth for them “graces” that they ought to seek in each section of the retreat. He wanted to make very clear “what” they were trying to accomplish during each of the retreat periods. The following is a paraphrase of the “graces for Week #1, Part #2.

The “Grace I seek” in this Session...

- *To have it made clear to me my sinfulness...I want to see it “all” ...
(“Don’t spare me the details, Lord, for I know that it is often the
“small” stuff that makes for holiness.”)*
- *To see whatever it is that still holds me back from becoming all that
You desire me to be...*
- *To see, in all honesty, where I “really” stand with You today,
Lord...help me not to lie to myself...I desperately need to come clean
as to all manner of selfishness and sin in my life, the worldly
attachments I yet cling to, and the lies and addictions that keep me
from You.*

E. Handouts/Exercises

The Handouts/Exercises are provided to assist in accomplishing (entering into...experiencing) that which comprises the focus for Week #1 (Part #2).

Note again that everything presented during the retreat is “optional”. Feel completely free to utilize or ignore anything. In the end, it is God the Holy Spirit who is your *actual* retreat Director. A key for you on retreat is that you somehow “connect” with the Spirit...get a sense of how He would have you spend your time...and then do that.

So, if the Spirit leads you in a different direction...by all means, follow that.

Handout/Exercise #3: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done”

Through Spirit-led self-evaluation, the goal of this session is to deal with things in our lives that are out of step with the life that God is calling us to.

Handout/Exercise #4: We ALL have room for improvement

For this exercise, take some time and read the words that Jesus taught just after his encounter with Peter (Mark 8:34-38). Read the text slowly and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart about any ways that you are currently misunderstanding truth.

Handout/Exercise #5: “I Still Do”

For this exercise, we have provided a standard marriage vow. Use the phrases of this vow to evaluate your current marriage relationship. If you find there are areas that need attention, use this opportunity to ask Jesus how you could do better.

F. Suggested Scriptures:

Below are various additional *Scriptures* that might be used for consideration/meditation/prayer as you proceed.

Psalm 139:1-18

Psalms 51

Luke 5:1-11

Luke 7:36-50

G. Week #1, Part #2: A Suggested Plan:

Some retreatants are not used to having such elongated blocks of time on their own...and as such, struggle. Below is a sample, sequential plan as to how one might use the time allotted for Week #1, Part #2.

Please note that it is not advised that retreatants just “automatically” utilize these suggested plans just because they are included...or because frustrations or struggles arise...or because they are bored and don’t know what to do, etc. Often “God is in” the frustrations and confusion and boredom...and the best thing may well be to ride it out, to take the time to see what God is up to, or, even just to sit alone and do absolutely nothing (just be with God) until God prompts you to something.

But if you sense a need for further structure, the following may be of help:

Get Ready

Read over this “Overview and Instructions” ...carefully considering how you might best spend your time

Consider one or more of the “Suggested Scriptures.” and briefly consider before going to the Exercises.

Consider Handout/Exercise #3

Take a break

Consider and work through Handout/Exercise #4 and/or #5

2025 Silent Prayer Retreat **Week #2**

Overview and Instructions

A. Focus for Week #2

A fundamental shift in focus occurs in Week #2. In Week #1, all of the focus was on *our* needs: to be reassured of the Lord's love for us; on our desire to see and move past our sin; and on our deep desire to know that God is where we are...with us in our brokenness, our sinfulness, and our desperate need.

But in Week #2, the focus now changes. Now we explore the public life of Jesus...en route to better understand how we might live out our own "call" to become more like Him as we move into the future.

The "Graces I seek" in Week #2...

- *To experience an interior, intimate, personal knowledge of and connection with You, Lord. I want to love You more passionately and follow You more closely than I have in years past. Especially during this period, I want to better understand how Your public life, O Lord, foreshadows my own future.*
- I just want to be where You are...I want to totally immerse myself in You: to know You, embracing all that You were during your time on earth. My deepest desire, Lord, is to become more like You. As I now focus myself on the ordinariness of Your public life, make clear to me how I might become more like You in my own day-to-day life going forward.

Whereas Week #1 allows us first to revel in the great Glory of God...and then identify, experience conviction for, and then deal with our sin (past and present) the remainder of the retreat is "future" oriented. Now I look to the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus and attempt to draw from them a "picture" of what God intends my own

future to be. It is no longer a time for conviction --- for how can I be convicted regarding something that's yet to take place? Rather, I look to the Lord in Weeks #2, #3, and #4 to encourage and bolster me as to all He plans for me in my life going forward.

B. Handouts/Exercises

The Handout/Exercises are provided to assist in accomplishing (entering into...experiencing) that which comprises the Focus for Week #2

Note again that everything presented during the retreat is “optional”. Feel completely free to utilize or ignore anything. In the end, it is God the Holy Spirit who is your *actual* retreat Director. A key for you on retreat is that you somehow “connect” with the Spirit...get a sense of how He would have you spend your time...and then do that.

So, if the Spirit leads you in a different direction...by all means, follow that.

Handout/Exercise #6: “Give us this day our daily bread”

For this exercise, take some time to read the words Jesus spoke to his disciples (Matthew 6:25-34) just following his teaching on prayer. Use this time to allow him to bring to the surface worries you are carrying, and allow him to remind you that he truly is the provider of your “daily bread”.

Handout/Exercise #7: “And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”

For this exercise, you have time to examine your life and evaluate if 1) there are any areas that require repentance or 2) there are those you need to forgive, including yourself. Jesus’ invitation to his disciples in repentance is for a relationship, the same as it is for you today. Remember, the Lord delights in being with you today.

Suggest Scriptures:

Below are various additional *Scriptures* that might be used for consideration/meditation/prayer as you proceed.

Mark 1:32-42

Mark 8:1-10

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 4:1-13

C. Week #2: A Suggested Plan:

Again, some retreatants are not used to having such elongated blocks of time on their own...and as such, struggle. Below is a sample, sequential plan as to how one might use the time allotted for Week #2.

Again, please note that it is not advised that retreatants just “automatically” utilize these suggested plans just because they are included...or because frustrations or struggles arise...or because they are bored and don’t know what to do, etc.

Often “God is in” the frustrations and confusion and boredom...and the best thing may well be to ride it out, to take the time to see what God is up to, or, even just to sit alone and do absolutely nothing (just be with God) until God prompts you to something.

But if you sense a need for further structure, the following may be of help:

Get Ready

Read this Handout over...carefully considering how you might best spend your time in Week #2

Take Handout/Exercise #6 and slowly begin to work your way through one of the Gospels.

Take a break, get a snack, etc.

Take Handout/Exercise #6 again, moving slowly as you continue through the Gospel you selected.

Take a break, walk the grounds, etc., and meditate on the Scriptures you’ve prayed/worked through.

Consider and work through Handout/Exercise #7

2025 Silent Prayer Retreat **Week #3**

Overview and Instructions

A. Focus for Week #3

In Week #3, we continue the process of looking at the “picture” of our own future life as one of becoming a better imitator of the life of Jesus...but now the focus is specifically on the Passion and Death of Jesus...on His (and your) suffering and all that He went through.

The “Graces I seek” in Week #3...

- *Lord...my desire is to “experience” what you went through in your passion. Help me to “see” and “feel”.*
- *Lord...give me also a heightened sense of sorrow, regret, and confusion (how could all of this possibly be?) because You are going to Your passion for my sins.*
- *Lord...give me such compassion for You that I also suffer as I meditate through Your passion and death.*

B. Handouts/Exercises

The Handouts/Exercises are provided to assist in accomplishing (entering into...experiencing) that which comprises the Focus for Week #3.

Note again that everything presented during the retreat is “optional”. Feel completely free to utilize or ignore anything. In the end, it is God the Holy Spirit who is your *actual* retreat Director. A key for you on retreat is that you somehow “connect” with the Spirit...get a sense of how He would have you spend your time...and then do that.

So, if the Spirit leads you in a different direction...by all means, follow that.

Handout/Exercise #8: “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”

For this exercise, we encourage you to turn to one or both of the referenced texts (Gethsemane - Matt 26:36-46, Wilderness - Matt. 4:1-11) and place yourself in the story. Notice the aforementioned things that Jesus did to overcome temptation, and also look for additional things he did to help him overcome.

Handout/Exercise #9: “He died for ME”

For this exercise, slowly read through the crucifixion story (Mark 15:21-39). Do your best to “experience” the events as written. Realize that you’re watching this happen to your Savior and friend. Linger in each scene.

C. Communion Opportunity After Dinner:

There will be no “formal” Communion Service this evening. Rather, you’ll be given the opportunity to take Communion privately. You’ll note that the meeting room will be closed after the Week #3 Talk, during which time the communion table and elements will be prepared. From 7:30 pm through 8:30 pm, the room will be reopened and made available to you for Communion. The candles will burn and the music will play during this time. Retreatants should feel free to come and go during this period, entering into *adoration* (the quiet side of worship) of the Lord...praying and taking Communion however and whenever you so desire.

D. Suggested Scriptures:

Below are various additional *Scriptures* that might be used for consideration/meditation/prayer as you proceed.

Matthew 26:36-46

Matthew 26:47-50

Isaiah 53:2-9

Mark 15:33-38

E. Week #3, Session #1: A Suggested Plan:

As in the previous two weeks, some of you are not used to having such elongated blocks of time on your own...and as such, struggle. Below is a sample, sequential plan as to how one might use the time allotted for Week #3.

Let me repeat again that it is not advised that retreatants just “automatically” utilize these suggested plans just because they are included...or because frustrations or struggles arise...or because you are bored and don’t know what to do, etc. Often “God is in” the frustrations and confusion and boredom...and the best thing may well be to ride it out, to take the time to see what God is up to, or, even just to sit alone and do absolutely nothing (just be with God) until God prompts you to do something.

But if you sense a need for further structure, the following may be of help:

Get Ready

Read this Handout

**Take Exercise #8, and enter into the meditation as presented.
Take your time.**

Take a break

Consider one or more of the “Suggested Scriptures.”

Take a break

Consider and work through Handout/Exercise #9

Taking your journal, you might want to summarize the progress of the retreat so far...or even revisit any of the Scriptures or Handout from Weeks #1 or #2.

2025 Silent Prayer Retreat **Week #4**

Overview and Instructions

A. Focus for Week #4

As in Weeks #2 and #3, the focus continues to be on *Him*...on Jesus...and on how the events of His life and the words spoken by Him enlighten and challenge us in our own lives going forward. Again, while on retreat (and in particular these last three “Weeks”), we want to remember that God is trying to display for us that “picture” of what our life can look like going “into the future”. In Week #4, the meditations on the life of Jesus now focus specifically on His Resurrection.

Furthermore, during Week #4, we try to bring everything together and into perspective from the days of retreat and get ready to again enter the “now” of my everyday life. During this, the final and briefest week, Ignatius directs us to enter into the joy of...and experience the grace of the Resurrected Christ. We have just last night contemplated the total surrender of Jesus in His Passion during Week #3...so now we proceed to contemplate Jesus as He shares the joy of His Resurrection with His friends (and, of course, with us). And in doing so, we attempt to let the reality of the joy of His Resurrection permeate our own lives as we contemplate leaving the retreat.

The “Grace I seek” in Week #4...

- *To experience true human gladness and joy...and to rejoice intensely because of the great glory, the joy, and the hope the Resurrected Christ gives me.*
- *To see clearly the change You yet plan for me in my own life as I venture forward from this time of retreating. Make clear, O Lord, the “picture” of what my life ought to look like going forward: how I might see and take upon myself all of the grace You intend for me.*

B. Handouts/Exercises

Again, the Handout/Exercises are provided to assist us in accomplishing (entering into...experiencing) that which comprises the Focus for Week #4.

Everything presented is “optional”. You can feel completely free to utilize or ignore anything. In the end, it is God the Holy Spirit who is your *actual* retreat Director. A key for you on retreat is that you somehow “connect” with the Spirit...get a sense of how He would have you spend your time...and then do that.

So, if the Spirit leads you in a different direction...by all means, follow that.

Handout/Exercise #10: “For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory”

For this exercise, slowly read through John 21, placing yourself in Peter’s place. Try to imagine what the encounter with Jesus would have been like. Pay attention to how you feel, what emotions you experience.

Handout/Exercise #11: “My 5%”

For this exercise, ask yourself what the “critical 5 percent” is in your life. Examine what things you give your energy and attention to, and ask this simple question: If I had one year to live, what things would I choose to give my time and attention to?

Suggested Scriptures:

Mark 16:1-8

John 20:19-23

Luke 24-13-35

John 20:24-29

C. Week #4: A Suggested Plan:

Again, a suggested plan is offered for using the hours available for your meditations in Week #4. Please do not automatically utilize this plan simply because it is here. (If you have used these Suggested Plans for each of the first three Weeks, you might want to at least experiment with “going it alone” in Week #4.)

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As indicated previously, God is often in our frustrations and confusions while on retreat. He wants to take us out of our comfort zones...and have us trust in Him alone. Remember, retreat is all about “hearing from God”...and not about completing any Exercises that might be presented.

But if you sense a need for further structure, the following may be of help:

Read this Handout

Consider Handout/Exercise #10

Take a break, get outside, and wander... think about what you’ve been about these days of retreat, etc. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak about the “why” He has had you here this year.

Consider Handout/Exercise #11