

Rendezvous with God

Resurrection Life

Note: This guided retreat doesn't focus on one Scripture passage, but on the sequence of four major events at the end of the gospel story which are remembered in the church calendar every spring: the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost.

Pack: a Bible and a journal; old journals from the past year or semester (optional: paper and crayons, colored pencils, or other art supplies; a blanket; walking shoes.) With warmer weather, it's a good time to plan a portion of your rendezvous outdoors, if you can. You may want bug spray, or sunscreen, and a water bottle. If you can't go to a retreat center, try a local park.

Welcome and Settling In – about 15-30 minutes

Take time to prepare the space, locate bathrooms, coffee and other essentials; welcome your retreat partner; set up emergency contacts and any other business. (You may want to post a "Silent retreat in progress; please do not disturb" sign). Pray for each other, together, before you enter into silence. Keep your conversation brief!

Come into the Lord's Presence – 10 minutes

Take 5 to 10 minutes in silence to consciously settle yourself with the Lord. Turn off your cell phone; lay down the burdens, issues and distractions you brought with you, at Jesus' feet. Settle your body, mind and spirit in the Lord's presence. Bring your hopes and fears for the day to the Lord, remembering that He loves and welcomes you as you are. You could use as a breath prayer this from Psalm 23, "Good Shepherd, restore my soul" – or even "Lord, make me to lie down in green pastures".

Greet the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit with this prayer, or your own:

"Be the Gardener of my Soul"

Spirit of the Living God, be the Gardener of my soul. For so long I have been waiting, silent and still – experiencing a winter of the soul. But now, in the strong name of Jesus Christ, I dare to ask:

*Clear away the dead growth of the past,
Break up the hard clods of custom and routine,
Stir in the rich compost of vision and challenge,
Bury deep in my soul the implanted Word,
Cultivate and water and tend my heart,
Until new life buds and opens and flowers. Amen. "*

Come into the Courts of the Lord with Praise – 20 - 30 minutes

Take at least 20 minutes to worship. Begin by praising God with this hymn or other hymns, songs or Psalms:

At The Name Of Jesus (Words by Caroline Maria Noel (1817-77) Copyright has expired.)

1) At the name of Jesus Every knee shall bow, Every tongue confess him King of glory now: 'Tis the Father's pleasure We should call him Lord, Who from the beginning Was the mighty Word.	2) At his voice creation Sprang at once to sight, All the angels faces All the hosts of light, Thrones and Dominations, Stars upon their way, All the heavenly orders, In their great array.	3) Humbled for a season, To receive a name From the lips of sinners Unto whom he came, Faithfully he bore it Spotless to the last, Brought it back victorious, When from death he passed:
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4) Bore it up triumphant With its human light, Through all ranks of creatures, To the central height, To the throne of Godhead, To the Father's breast; Filled it with the glory Of that perfect rest.	5) Name him, brothers, name him, With love as strong as death, But with awe and wonder And with bated breath: He is God the Saviour, He is Christ the Lord, Ever to be worshipped, Trusted, and adored.	6) In your hearts enthrone him; There let him subdue All that is not holy, All that is not true: Crown him as your captain In temptation's hour; Let his will enfold you In its light and power.
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7) Brothers, this Lord Jesus
Shall return again,
With his Father's glory,
With his angel train;
For all wreaths of empire
Meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him
King of glory now.

Then try something creative to express your love and worship to Jesus. Choose activities that will draw you into God's presence, and enjoy your time with Him. Here are some ideas:

- If you are outdoors, stand or sit in one place and thank God for every detail you can notice about his creation; or go on a “God hunt” seeking signs of the Creator’s hand as you walk.
- Use art supplies to draw or create an image that reflects a truth to praise God for.
- Let the Holy Spirit lead you to worship with dance, or other creative expression.

Meditate and Reflect on God’s Word

There are four parts to today’s reflection, based on the events of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In the course of four meditations, you will be invited to look back over the semester or the year, and to look ahead to where the Lord is leading you.

Meditation #1 – “What is being put to death in me?”

Read and meditate on Romans 6:1-23

Prepare yourself for this special time with God by determining to be as honest as you can be with yourself, and let down any defenses and self-protection that stands between you and God’s merciful love. Then take a walk with Jesus through your recent history. (You could read through old journals or your date book, or imagine sitting with a scrapbook and discussing recent events with Jesus.)

1. Ask God to show you, by the light of His Holy Spirit, the progress you have made in grace (since your conversion, or this year, or this semester). As we grow in Christ, some things that were huge battles in the past are no longer so tempting, because of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Can you see areas of your life where you have indeed counted yourself “dead to sin”? Rejoice with the Lord Jesus in this miracle of His work in your life.

2. “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so you obey its evil desires” (v. 12). Ask Jesus to show you the next step in counting yourself dead to sin. What is it that He wants to put to death in you, to free you to be alive in Christ?

Take a break.

Meditation #2 -- “What is being brought to new life in me?”

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Quiet your heart in prayer and ask the Lord Jesus to converse with you on these two questions:

1. What is the new creation that You have formed and are forming in me? What do You see in me, and how does that make You feel?

2. In what specific areas in me (or in my family, my relationships, my ministry, my world) are you growing new shoots, and bringing New Life into being? What do you want to show me about that?

Take time to journal about your conversation and what the Lord is showing you, and give Him thanks.

Take a break.

Meditation #3 – “What am I being asked to let go of, for Christ’s glory?”

Read John 20:10-18, and meditate particularly on v. 16-18

Additional Resources for Spiritual Formation and Prayer can be found at:

The Ascension is a major feast day in the Christian calendar, and yet it gets very little attention in the Church and can be neglected in our theology and spiritual reflection. What does it mean to you that Christ has bodily ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God? (See Acts 1:9-11; Colossians 3.) How does that truth impact your prayer life, and your sense of your identity in Christ?

Having discovered that her Lord was no longer dead, but very much alive, Mary Magdalene wanted to hold on to Jesus where He was, instead of allowing Him to move on to finish the work. Where are you tempted to “hold on” to Jesus in the present, out of fear of the future?

What is Jesus asking you to let go of, now, for the sake of His glory? (Activities, projects, dreams, relationships, possessions?) Take time to grieve with Him, and to ask for His help in letting go.

Take a break.

Meditation #4 – “Where do I need the power of the Holy Spirit?”

Read and meditate on Acts 1:6-8, 2:1-13

At the time of His Ascension, Jesus told the disciples that they should expect to “receive power when the Holy Spirit comes,” power that would equip them for the work He had given them to do.

1. Where and when have you experienced the Holy Spirit empowering you, this past year or semester? What spiritual gifts seem to be used by God for His glory, in your life? What evidence of growing fruit of the Spirit can you see in your life? (Gal. 5:22) Give praise to God for His work in and through you.

2. Where do you see or feel a need for the Holy Spirit’s empowerment for the next steps in ministry the Lord is calling you to do? Ask the Lord for that empowerment now, and wait for Him to provide. Give thanks for His promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

Closing

As you end your Rendezvous with God, take time to give thanks for your time with Him. Also ask yourself, when will you plan another Rendezvous with God? What worked well, and what would you do differently?

In the last ten minutes, meet with your fellow retreatant(s) and share your experience as you feel comfortable. Take care to honor each other’s quiet state and the privacy and intimacy of the day. Together, give thanks to God and pray for protection as you go back to the “real world.”

Benediction Hymn (Text: Thomas á Kempis; tr. Benj. Webb, J.M. Neale, alt.)

1) O Love, how deep, how broad, how high,
how passing thought and fantasy,
that God, the Son of God should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake.

2) For us baptized, for us he bore
his holy fast and hungered sore.
For us temptations sharp he knew,
for us the tempter overthrew.

Additional Resources for Spiritual Formation and Prayer can be found at:

3) For us he prayed, for us he taught,
for us his daily works he wrought,
by words and signs and actions,
thus still seeking not himself but us.

4) For us to evil pow'r betrayed,
scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed.
He bore the shameful cross and death,
for us gave up his dying breath.

5) For us he rose from death again;
for us he went on high to reign;
for use he sent his Spirit here
to guide, to comfort and to cheer.

6) All glory to our Lord and God
for love so deep, so high, so broad;
the Trinity whom we adore
forever and forevermore!

7) O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
how passing thought and fantasy,
that God, the Son of God, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake.