

Private Day of Recollection

A Private Meditative Retreat for One Person

What is a Day of Recollection?

A *Day of Recollection* is sort of a mini-retreat, often a half-day or a day in length. A *retreat* is a time of prayer and reflection. One withdraws from the distraction of day-to-day activities to commune with God. We follow the example of Jesus, who spent forty days in the desert in prayer and fasting before entering his public ministry. A retreat may be any length of time, but it usually includes an overnight. A retreat might be *preached*, that is, led by a speaker. It might be *directed*, meaning that one takes direction from a leader at different times during the day and accomplishes certain tasks. The third type is a *private* retreat that may be self-determined or may follow a certain theme or template. This third form is what you will do today. As did Jesus, you will spend private time in prayer and reflection without being distracted by everyday life.

What to bring

- ✓ Your Catholic bible
- ✓ A notebook or journal
- ✓ Pens or pencils
- ✓ A subject or subjects on which to meditate, examples:
 - ✓ The nativity of Jesus: Luke 1:26-38,2:1-20
 - ✓ The temptation of Jesus: Matthew 4:1-11
 - ✓ Jesus feeds the 5000: John 6:1-14
 - ✓ The Last Supper: Matthew 26:17-46
 - ✓ One or more of the mysteries of the Rosary
- ✓ A DVD movie on which to meditate, examples:
 - ✓ The Nativity Story (92 min)
 - ✓ The Passion of the Christ (120 min)
 - ✓ Pope John Paul II (180 min)
 - ✓ The Reluctant Saint (104 min)
 - ✓ A Man For All Seasons (120 min)
 - ✓ Peter (197 min)
- ✓ A portable DVD player on which to watch your movie
- ✓ A lunch, a snack, and drinks – make it healthy
- ✓ A great attitude plus an open and willing heart and mind

Itinerary

Mass at church of your choice – arrive a few minutes early to pray	3
Prayer before Mass	
Mass	
Prayer after Mass	
Proceed to your place of quiet	3
Lunch	4
Vocal prayer	4
Meditative prayer	4
Short break after each meditation, then meditate again as time allows	
Contemplative prayer	5
Meditate on a movie	5
Snack during movie, if desired	
Closing Prayer	5

Prayer before Mass

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I come into your presence in communion with my brothers and sisters that I may receive your healing grace. May this Mass refresh me and sustain me. May your words uplift me and inspire me. Open my ears that I might understand them and live them in witness to others. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mass

As you attend Mass this morning, reflect closely upon the readings and the homily. Listen as you have never listened. Ponder as you have never pondered. Find peace and strength in the Lord. Look for the patience to commit yourself to this day of prayer and reflection. You might wish to attend Mass alone, to sit apart from your family to begin your journey.

Prayer after Mass

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As I enter this special time with you, O Lord, quiet my mind, quiet my ears, and quiet my heart, that I may fully enjoy this communion with you. Speak to my heart, that your words may become your works in the flesh and keep me ever mindful of the opportunities you place before me. Through Him who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Proceed to your place of quiet

As you begin this private Day of Recollection, you may experience an overwhelming need for the stimulation that you experience in everyday life. You may decide that you are “bored”. This is normal. If you feel the need, get up and go for a walk. If you are in a church, you may wish to walk through the sanctuary and reflect upon the signs and symbols of the Catholic Church. If you are in the right setting, you may walk outside to commune with God. The important thing is to allow yourself to think, to listen for the Holy Spirit. Take the time to write down your thoughts in a journal.

Lunch

Be sure to say your favorite meal prayer before you eat. Think about your food as a blessing from God. Think about where it came from and who prepared it for you.

Vocal prayer

Prayer is talking to God with mind and heart, and often with the voice. It is a response to God's invitation to seek Him. There are many different kinds of prayer that a Catholic does regularly. Traditional prayers like the Rosary, Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be, Nicene Creed, Lord's Prayer, etc. Liturgical prayers during Mass. Musical prayers like hymns. Spontaneous prayers of petition, blessing, or gratitude. These are all vocal prayers, though they may be recited silently. Do this series of exercises:

- ✓ Compose a prayer of gratitude for your lunch. Write it down.
- ✓ List in your journal 5 people you know that have special needs.
- ✓ Compose a prayer asking for God's blessing upon these 5 people. Write it down.
- ✓ List in your journal 10 things or people that you are thankful for.
- ✓ Compose a prayer thanking God for these 10 things. Write it down.

Meditative prayer

There are two special kinds of prayer that you will examine today, *meditative* and *contemplative*. In some religions, meditation is considered clearing or quieting the mind, trying not to think about things. In Catholic meditation, your mind is actually very active. Whereas vocal prayer uses speech, whether aloud or silently, meditation uses the imagination. It is a mental prayer in which a person arrives at or strengthens a resolution to live a better Christian life.

Step 1: Choose a comfortable posture, perhaps in a comfortable chair. It is easier to not have the distraction of discomfort. Close your eyes so you can see what is in your mind.

Step 2: Choose a topic for meditation. It might be from the gospels, the Christmas story for example, or it might be a mystery of the Rosary or a Station of the Cross.

Step 3: Place yourself in God's presence. Think of yourself being watched over, of not being alone.

Step 4: Ask for God's help. The benefits of meditation are God's gift, not the result of your own thoughts. You cannot do it alone. Also ask for the help of the saints or of a particular favorite saint, and ask the Blessed Mother to intercede in gaining God's help in your meditative prayer.

Step 5: The actual meditation. This has two parts. First, you must imagine the scene on which you have chosen to meditate. Read the subject of your meditation as appropriate. Reread it if needed. Think about the environment, the sounds, and the smells. The more details you can add, the better. Picture the people, what they look like, and what they are doing. The second part is to place yourself in that scene. Imagine yourself interacting with the people. Imagine what you would have said to them and what you would have done. Talk to them and listen to what they say. Spend as much time on this as you wish.

Step 6: Give thanks. After meditation, first thank God. Then thank the others you asked for help in step 4.

After your meditation, write down in your journal about the experience.

Contemplative prayer

Contemplation, too, is mental prayer. In meditation, you actively seek to understand your relationship with God. You exert effort in meditation, but contemplation is relief for your effort. St. John of the Cross described the difference by saying: "The difference between these two conditions of the soul is like the difference between working, and enjoyment of the fruit of our work; between receiving a gift, and profiting by it; between the toil of traveling and the rest of our journey's end." Meditation is the foundation of a contemplative life. Contemplation isn't performed, it happens.

Your meditation may or may not lead to a contemplative state. Don't feel badly if it hasn't yet happened. Don't read anything into it. Just accept it as a gift if it happens.

Meditate on a movie

You have chosen a movie to watch. It could be about a biblical event, the life of a saint or some other influential person, or it could be some other worthy subject. Now that you have learned to meditate, lose yourself in this movie. You might be ready for a snack at this time, but don't let the snack distract you.

Closing prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank You, Lord, for this communion with You. Help me to go forward with renewed faith and commitment to Your will. Send the Holy Spirit to guide me in the path of your Son, Jesus Christ. Let His example through me be a beacon to all others.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.