

Lenten Retreat in Daily Living
Prayer Material for Week 5 of Retreat

Grace: To know, love and follow Jesus more closely. To gain an interior knowledge of this person who calls me so I can love and follow him more closely.

Day 1: *Matthew 5:1-12 – The Beatitudes*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us his way of life. He reveals to us both the inner attitudes and outer behavior that are needed to follow him more closely and to live in the light.

Prayerfully reflect on the attached sheets, striving to personalize the Beatitudes. Reflect on each beatitude in light of your own experience and relationship with others.

Linger with two or three Beatitudes which are speaking to your heart and life most vibrantly.

Ask Jesus for those “attitudes” in the Beatitudes which you feel you lack.

Day 2: *Matthew 9:18-26 – Healing of the Hemorrhaging Woman and Jairus’ Daughter*

Contemplate these two events that occur together.

Notice the emotional and physical pain of the woman, who has hemorrhaged for twelve years. Be present with the woman, Jesus and the crowd. See the healing power that comes from Jesus, simply by the hemorrhaging woman touching his cloak. How does she feel as she experiences this healing power and immediately stops bleeding? How does Jesus feel? How do you feel? Dialogue with Jesus or the woman as you feel moved.

See Jairus, his wife, and their friends and family as they grieve the loss of their daughter. Feel the atmosphere of mockery when Jesus says she is not dead, but asleep. Notice Jesus’ tenderness as he takes the girl by the hand and says: “Get up, child.” See the breath of life come back into her. Watch the astonishment and joy of her parents and the crowd. Where are you in this scene? How do you feel as you contemplate this scene? Dialogue with Jesus or anyone else in the scene, as you feel moved.

Day 3: *Luke 8:22-25 – Calming of the Stormy Sea*

Contemplate this event, seeing the storm erupt, feeling the terror of the apostles, watching Jesus in a deep sleep. Notice him sleeping through the storm, possibly

exhausted from the hard work of preaching, teaching, and healing. Place yourself in the boat. What are your feelings as the storm suddenly arises?

See Jesus awaken and “rebuke the wind and the tumultuous waves.” See the apostles being “filled with fear and admiration.” How do you feel as Jesus calms the storm? Are there any storms in your life that need Jesus’ calming presence?

Converse with Jesus, sharing with him your feelings and desires and being attentive to his response.

Day 4: *Luke 6:12-13 – Jesus’ Need to Pray*

During his public ministry, Jesus often went off to the mountainside to pray. He spent the night in prayer before any major decision or event. Jesus needed the strength and nourishment that came through personal prayer in order to continue to heal and preach with power.

Spend time contemplating Jesus as he spent time in prayer dialoguing with his God. Be attentive to what goes on in his mind and heart, and share with him what emerges in you.

Jesus also invited his apostles to go off with him and pray. “Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest awhile.” Allow Jesus to speak these words to you personally. Share with him whatever comes to your mind and heart.

Day 5: *Mark 10:17-31 – Surrendering All to Follow Jesus*

Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me.”

Jesus invites the rich young man to give up all and to follow him completely. Enter into this scene with your imagination and inner senses. Notice the desire in Jesus’ heart, and the reaction and response of the rich young man.

What is Jesus inviting me to give up or surrender in order to follow him more closely? How do I feel about the invitation? Can I let Jesus know how I feel?

“For human beings it is impossible but not for God. With God all things are possible.”

What seems impossible for me to surrender in order to follow Jesus more closely? What particular grace do I need from Jesus to make it possible? Can I ask Jesus for what I need? Share with Jesus your reactions and feelings, and listen to Jesus’ response.

Day 6: *Mark 9:2-13 – The Transfiguration*

Two significant and seemingly opposite realities take place at this moment in Jesus' life. One is that Jesus experiences the epitome of consolation, a peak experience, overwhelmed again by God's special love for him: "This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him." Peter, James, and John are so overcome by this event that they want to preserve it by building three tents.

However, they also experience a valley experience as they come down the mountain and Jesus explains again that he must suffer much and be despised.

How similar to our journey with God: at times we experience deep consolation and at other moments we experience the deep desolation of seeming separation from God because of our own suffering, darkness, or sinfulness.

Contemplate this passage. See, listen to, feel what was going on in Jesus, God and the disciples. As you enter into and relive the experience, share with Jesus any feelings that arise within you and be attentive to his response.

Day 7: *John 11:1-44 – The Rising of Lazarus*

Contemplate this event, seeing, listening, touching, entering into the feelings and thoughts of those present. Be especially sensitive to Jesus' feelings. Let God draw you into this special moment, an event leading up to Jesus' own death and resurrection.

There are many ways you might go in your contemplation of this scene. Here are some possibilities points to consider.

Linger with Jesus' deep love for Martha, Mary and Lazarus, for you, for others. How do I feel as I absorb Jesus' love?

Be with Martha and her sadness about her brother's death...and her disappointment in Jesus for not coming sooner. Are there experiences in your life that allow you to relate to her feelings?

Listen to Martha's profession of faith in Jesus when he asks if she believes? What does that mean to her...and to Jesus?

Jesus instructs Lazarus to come out from his grave and directs the people to untie him and let him go free. From what binding reality does Jesus want to free me? Into what area of darkness does Jesus want to bring light?

[Portions of these prayer materials were taken from Maureen Conroy, *Giving the Retreat in Everyday Life* and from Joseph Tetlow, *Choosing Christ in the World*]

A PARAPHRASE OF THE BEATITUDES
(Mt. 5:1-12)

Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter, those for whom the riches of this world just aren't important. The kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and their smallness, knowing themselves and being true to themselves. They shall have the earth for their heritage.

Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow. For they too shall receive comfort.

Blessed are those who are hungry for goodness, those who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness. For they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others. For they too shall receive God's mercy.

Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth. They shall see God.

Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence. For they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who have been tried like gold, in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine and lasting, those who have lived their belief out loud, no matter what the cost or pain. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

... Sr. Macrina Weiderkehr, O.S.B. SEASONS OF YOUR HEART

SPIRITUALITY OF THE BEATITUDES
QUESTIONS FOR PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

1. What is it like to be "poor in spirit"? to experience my own inadequacy? to realize my total dependence on God? Is it a comfort or a challenge?
2. What in my life makes me feel most inadequate? most in need of God? Is it a blessing or a curse?
3. What are some concrete ways that I need to change my attitude in order to become "poor in spirit"?
4. How have I experienced poverty of spirit in times of transition?

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

1. How has sorrowing/mourning been a positive experience in my life? a negative experience?
2. How has my heart been broken? Did I find comfort in my relationship with God?
3. In my life, what sorrow and pain have I given up on that I am now willing to re-examine and be comforted?
4. What sorrow and pain did I experience during a major time of transition in my life?

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

1. Meekness, gentleness, means letting go and letting God. How difficult is this for me? Why? How can I change it?
2. In a time of transition, how has it been difficult for me to surrender, to let go?
3. This week I will reflect on some of the ways I have used violence (not the physical kind) to get my way. What form has that violence taken, eg: silence, social pressure, sanctions, first impressions?

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness, for they shall be filled.

1. What are some of the hungers and thirsts in my life? How would I name them? How do I experience them? How do I satisfy them?
2. What are some of the ways I try to block out or escape from my hunger for God?

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

1. How is mercy and forgiveness related? Is my experience of being merciful also one of being forgiving?
2. Is there someone I am finding it hard to forgive? why? What can I do this week to help myself move closer to forgiving this person?
3. The Hebrew word for mercy, "Rahamin," means "Womb of God." How have I experienced the tender patient, warm, compassionate love of God?
4. How has God's merciful, tender love helped me in times of transition?

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.

1. What inhibits me from being pure of heart? fears? situations? being too tied down by things?
2. I will think of some of the choices I made in life. What were they based on? How might I need to change some of them?
3. In making one particular decision this week, I will try and make it from a viewpoint of purity of heart.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

1. Why is it so hard to be at peace with oneself, others and God? What are the obstacles?
2. Why do I so often see peace as the absence of something bad rather than the presence of good?
3. I will strive to make peace with someone I have been at odds with, hurt, withdrawn from, rejected, ignored. Why have I avoided that person?
4. How can I remain at peace, keep a sense of well-being, in times of transition?

Blessed are those who suffer persecution because they do what God requires, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

1. Are most of my "persecutions" self-inflicted rather than because of the gospel? and truth? If so, why? How do they show themselves?

2. Are there times I compromise my beliefs in order to be accepted? Why?

3. How do I share in the cross of Christ? Give examples. What is my attitude to it? What is my response?

4. Is there some injustice at work or elsewhere that I have been ignoring? Am I willing to confront it even if it costs me?

(Many of the questions are taken from: "Happy Are...:
A Small Group Faith Sharing Option," Catholic Diocese of Biloxi,
Box 1189, Biloxi, MS 39533.)