

A Retreat for Individuals or Families LISTENING to GOD

This retreat is designed for you to do alone or with family. You may want to share your responses with another or journal them. You can do this retreat indoors or outdoors. It can take as little as 20 minutes or a half day, depending on the time you want to take. You may even choose to do the different components at different times and/or repeat them later. The outline is based on the Quaker Godly Play Story called, "Listening to God".

God is never far away. The Spirit is always near, closer than our breath. But we often don't notice unless we stop and listen. We practice listening. We listen with our whole selves: our bodies, minds, hearts, imaginations and souls. The Spirit comes to us in many places and in many ways: in nature, in Scripture, in the stories and words of others, in our recognition of Christ in another or in a community. In these and in other ways we sense the Spirit's presence and we know how to love, what to do and who to be.

LISTEN TO GOD IN THE GIFTS OF CREATION

Practice the 5-4-3-2-1 Prayer for Listening to God in the Present Moment by Using our Senses

- Stop and be still, sitting comfortably with feet flat on the ground. Do equal ratio breathing. Breathe in 4 counts, hold 4 counts and then exhale 4 counts. Repeat several times.
- What are 5 things you see with your eyes?
- What are 4 things you touch?
- What are 3 things you hear?
- What are 2 things you smell?
- What is one thing you taste?

LISTEN TO GOD IN SCRIPTURE & PRAYER

Read this Psalm slowly using the Lectio Divina Method.

Psalm 119:18-24

Open my heart's eyes, that I may see
The wondrous blessings of creation.
I am a sojourner on earth;
May I know myself also as a spiritual being.
My soul is consumed with an intense longing

To be blessed and sustained by You,
O Divine Lover.
May I not be a bearer of disharmony,
one who is arrogant and greedy;
Teach me to stand firm
when faced with injustice and oppression
To be fervent in my stance for truth!
Even though fears rise up,
may my eye remain focused on You.

–Nan C. Merrill, from *Psalms for Praying*

Pray aloud or silently for those on your heart and mind, including yourself. After naming each person say, “Lord, hear my prayer.” End by saying the Lord’s Prayer.

Read this story of Jesus healing the blind man in John 9:1-41 Use your imagination and picture yourself in the story. Who are you and where are you in the story? What do you see, hear, touch, smell, taste? How do you feel? What part of the story is your favorite? What part is most important for you today?

Response: How has God given you new eyes to see yourself, others, God, the world during this pandemic? What are you seeing?

How might you do something to respond? How is the Spirit showing you how to love, what to do or who to be? Make some art, go for a walk, journal, reach out to someone in love.

LISTEN TO GOD IN OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERS

Prayer of Examen for the close of your retreat or the end of your day. Use some or all of these questions to help you reflect on your day. Ask God to give you eyes to see as you do this exercise from John O’Donahue’s *At the End of the Day: A Mirror of Questions*:

- Where did my eyes linger today?
- Where was I blind?
- Where was I hurt without anyone noticing?
- What did I learn today?
- What did I read?
- What new thought visited me?
- What differences did I notice in those closest to me?

- Whom did I neglect?
- Where did I neglect myself?
- What did I begin today that might endure?
- How were my conversations?
- What did I do today for the poor and excluded?
- Did I remember the dead today?
- Where could I have exposed myself to the risk of something different?
- Where did I allow myself to receive love?
- What dreams did I create last night?

LISTEN TO GOD IN MUSIC & POETRY

Sing or read the words to this favorite hymn by Clara H Scott:

Open my eyes that I may see
 Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
 Place in my hands the wonderful key
 That shall unclasp and set me free.

*Chorus: Silently now I wait for Thee,
 Ready, my God, Thy will to see;
 Open my eyes, illumine me,
 Spirit Divine!*

Open my ears that I may hear
 Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
 And while the wave notes fall on my ear,
 Everything false will disappear.

Open my mouth and let me bear
 Tidings of mercy everywhere;
 Open my heart and let me prepare
 Love with Thy children thus to share.

And/Or Read these words of poet, Mary Oliver

Poem (the spirit likes to dress up)

The spirit
 likes to dress up like this:

ten fingers,
ten toes,

shoulders, and all the rest
at night
in the black branches,
in the morning

in the blue branches
of the world.
It could float, of course,
but would rather

plumb rough matter.
Airy and shapeless thing,
it needs
the metaphor of the body,

lime and appetite,
the oceanic fluids;
it needs the body's world,
instinct

and imagination
and the dark hug of time,
sweetness
and tangibility,

to be understood,
to be more than pure light
that burns
where no one is –

so it enters us –
in the morning
shines from brute comfort
like a stitch of lightning;

and at night
lights up the deep and wondrous
drownings of the body
like a star.