

A SHORT RETREAT FOR HOME



How to shape your retreat

beginning settle somewhere to read the opening blessing, scripture and reflection

middle spend your time with the suggestions, for as long as you have

close settle somewhere to look back on your retreat with the closing reflection

refreshment a retreat can look after us body, mind and soul:

let activity and food & drink be meaningful parts of your retreat time

Try to clear space for your retreat, but if there are necessities at home you have to meet during this time, how might you integrate them into your time?



Beginning

Peace to this house;

to those who enter; to those who dwell here; to those who depart –

Peace.

Retreat House blessing

Make this prayer for your own home, and for yourself. Take some time to become still.

reading The Unexpected Guest

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. *Luke 19*

reflection

Zacchaeus is a helpful character for us as we make a retreat at home. Concerned with limited worldly things, he wants to catch a glimpse of Jesus. We don't know why, but we do know that he feels drawn enough to see him that he climbs a tree to do so. We can imagine

the crowds and their jostling and swarming, and Zacchaeus trying to find his own place amongst them. Maybe we can imagine his desire to find out more about this man who was passing through, to see him for himself. Perhaps it was no more than just wanting to be part of what was going on, to see the passing celebrity. What we know is that he climbed a tree to do this, and the man passing by – Jesus – spotted him and became an unexpected visitor to his house, an unexpected guest in his home. And that visit was transformational for Zacchaeus.

It has been said of this story that it shows us that Christ does not need us to tidy up before he visits (*Sacred in the City*, by Margaret Silf). The welcome he seeks does not depend on pristine surroundings. How easy it is for us to fall into thinking that we are only ready for God once we have tidied ourselves up. And yet – this story tells us that what matters is the warmth of the welcome, not careful preparation (Zacchaeus had no time for that) but ready willingness. It seems to matter, too, that Christ is an unexpected guest: that our encounter with God may well not be what we expect.

Like Zacchaeus, in a retreat we seek Christ. Like Zacchaeus, though we aren't climbing a tree, in a retreat we do something different in order to find Christ, who is here in the midst. Like Zacchaeus, we are asked to welcome Christ into the real circumstances of our lives – our home. And like Zacchaeus, as we open ourselves in welcome, however cautious, we are met with a God longs for us and who embraces us with open arms.

silence Keep silence for a while for the scripture and reflection to come home to you.



Middle

Time to be spacious...

We pray in many ways. Here are some of the ways in which you could spend this time, though you may have other ways too... (Slow down: just one or two will be enough.)

Use the story

Re-read – slowly - the story of Zacchaeus, letting yourself dwell imaginatively in its telling. Maybe this story can inspire you to consider gently and slowly wonderings such as these:

Zacchaeus knows Jesus is passing through Jericho. *Where is God in my experience?*

Zacchaeus cannot see because of the crowd. *Where am I?*

Zacchaeus runs ahead. *How do I make myself available to God?*

Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was. *What is it that I desire most deeply?*

Zacchaeus has to climb a tree. *What do I need to do differently in seeking my desire?*

Jesus looks at Zacchaeus and recognises what he wants and needs. *Let Christ look at me.*

Jesus comes to Zacchaeus' home. *If Christ came to my home, where would that be?*

Imagine the conversation when Jesus visits Zacchaeus. *What is my own conversation
with Christ?*

Zacchaeus rejoices in this encounter. *Give thanks as you end your time with this story.*

Use simple reading

Read the simple texts offered for reflection at the end of these pages. If a particular word or phrase speaks to you, bring it home to yourself – maybe by repeating it over and over again to yourself, maybe by writing it down... Let God speak to you through it.

Read the simple texts offered for reflection at the end of these pages. Choose one or more and reflect on what they bring to mind – perhaps something from your own life. Consider how they resonate with you. Create your own prayer, reflection or meditation in response, in words or art.

Use where you are

Go for a slow walk, or spend time in different parts of your home. Just as monastic way involves a rhythm of stopping for prayer throughout the day, stop for short moments to observe and give thanks. What do you find you are thankful for? Where your treasure is, your heart will be (Matthew 6v21) – your home.

Zacchaeus found Christ in a busy place. Look around you. What do you notice? What surprises you? There is plenty to see, outside and in! What draws your eye and appeals to you, inviting you in? Use your senses to let God speak to you through your surroundings.

Stay inside. How is a home a sacred space? What is the relationship between the spiritual and the secular in your life? Maybe make something special for your home today, or make a special place of prayer in your home.

What does it mean to welcome Christ into the real circumstances of your life?

Use resources

On our Retreat House retreats we love to offer all sorts of things to help with reflective time – books, images, craft... Maybe spend some time today with what you have at home to help you sit with this time you have set aside.

Receive the blessing of the moment.



Close

Take some time to become still.

St Anselm helped to establish the Benedictine Abbey that is now Chester Cathedral, back in the eleventh century, and we use his words as we begin to look back over our retreat time:

*O Lord my God,
teach my heart this day where and how to see you,
where and how to find you.*

from the Prayer of St Anselm

In the silence of your heart, take time to consider where and how you might have found something that matters today - what there might be to give thanks for, where there might have been something of surprise..., or recognition..., where you have met Christ...

silence

At the end of a retreat it's good to embrace the circumstances to which we return, maybe with a lighter heart than we came with. It's good too to bring to mind that we don't retreat only for our own sake, but that what we experience on retreat can affect others – a ripple effect... So take some time to consider silently the circumstances you return to, and where, in those real circumstances of life, you might see anew...

silence

And the closing prayer is for Peace, as we began

*Peace to this house;
to those who enter; to those who dwell here; to those who depart –
Peace.*

Retreat House blessing

Simple texts for home

“Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land...”

Genesis 28v15

Will you, God, really live with people on earth?
Why, the heavens and their own heavens cannot contain you.
How much less this house that I have built... *1 Kings 8v27*

O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? *Ps 14 (15) v1*

...while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms round him and kissed him. *Luke 15v20*

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” *Luke 19 v5*

Jesus looked around and saw [the two disciples] following. “What do you want?” he asked them. “Sir,” they replied, “where do you live?” “Come and see,” he said. So they went with him to the place where he was staying and were with him from about four o’clock that afternoon until evening. *John 1v38-39*

“Live in me as I live in you.” *John 15v4*

Finding sacred space begins with the recognition of the sacred in your daily living.
Fr Christopher Jamison OSB, Finding Sanctuary

When you come home and stay home, you will find the love that will bring rest to your heart.
Henri Nouwen, The Inner Voice of Love