

Trusting God



Diocesan Retreat Day. May 4, 2020

Greetings to you all,

In lieu of the retreat I have prepared a Quiet Day form of retreating that can be done at any time and in a number of ways if you so desire. There are three options:

1. Lectio Divina (a Benedictine method)– with supplementary options included.
2. Contemplative (for the Ignatian minded) – exercises for those who prefer nature and less structure. Although they can be amended for indoors use.
3. A homiletical exercise for those not inclined to either of the above, and, loosely, coming from the preached retreat tradition.

There are explanatory notes where necessary.

The options have a suggested timetable to help gage the process, but it is merely a hint. You will find your own rhythm and times. You can work with a half or a whole day, or spread the material over two or more days.

The material can be broken down to whatever you want, you can mash it up, or do your own thing, it's purely up to you. Make it your own.

Pax,

Paul

Trusting God**Introduction:**

This resource is for Lectio Divina and can be used at any time across the week of what would have been our annual clergy retreat. This material can be used as you choose.

It contains:

- A suggested retreat day timetable to guide the frame of your day if needed.
- The lection for Holy Communion, Monday, May 4, but can be used on any day for the purpose of Lectio.
- There is a poem included for those who would prefer to work with that form, simply approach it as you would a scripture lectio.
- A work of art relating to the gospel reading for those who prefer a visual approach.
- Brief notes on the lection.
- Two forms of questions are included to help if you get stuck.
- A sheet explaining how to do Lectio Divina.

The Day could be:

- Half day (9.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.) two segments of Lectio.
- Whole day (9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.) four segments of Lectio.
- Or, you may want to honour the whole week using the method of Lectio with a selection of readings across the week.

A Suggested Guide to Lectio for a Day.

Times	Activity
9.00 a.m.	Daily Office (whatever form you use)
9.30 a.m.	Begin Lectio
10.30 a.m.	Morning tea
11.00 a.m.	Continue Lectio
12.30 p.m.	Lunch (or conclude for the Half Day Option)
1.30 p.m.	Continue Lectio
3.00 p.m.	Afternoon Tea. (or conclude for the three-quarter day)
3.30 p.m.	Continue Lectio
5.00 p.m.	Evening Prayer (and conclude Lectio)
8.00 p.m.	Compline

The Readings

Psalm 42.1 - 11 (NRSV)

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?
3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”
4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help
6 and my God.
My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.
8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
9 I say to God, my rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”
10 As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Acts 11.1 - 18 (NRSV)

1 Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, 3 saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” 4 Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. 6 As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ 8 But I replied, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ 9 But a second time the voice answered from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ 10 This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. 11 At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. 12 The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 13 He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14 he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘**John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**’ 17 If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” 18 When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”

John 10.11 – 18 (NRSV)

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Brief Notes

Psalm 42.1 – 11: If you love that chorus “As the Deer Pants for the Water” you will have also noticed a little romanticising of the text. Psalm 42 is about desperation, that God has abandoned the psalmist, and gives us the psalmist’s response, where in a brief moment his cries and confession bring a glimpse of God. The Psalm speaks of trials and trust.

Acts 11.1 – 18: Peter recounts what happened at Caesarea where the gentiles received the gospel and the Spirit. Peter was criticised by those in Jerusalem, but Peter makes it clear that God poured his Spirit on the Gentiles, so who would dare stand in the way?

John 10.11 – 18: There is a flow of imagery throughout John 10. Jesus starts with the Gate and entering the sheepfold, then Jesus becomes the Door, and finally, Jesus becomes the shepherd. He is no ordinary shepherd, he is the Good Shepherd a reference to fulfilling the promises of the prophets (e.g. Ezekiel 34.11 – 16). Jesus draws a sharp distinction between himself and the Pharisees. The Pharisees judge, condemn and reject the sheep, but the Good Shepherd defends and cares for the sheep, while entering into a relationship with them where there is a mutuality of knowing.

Lectio Divina

Some suggestions for reflection:

(A) Read through the passages slowly.

Is there a word or image that strikes you?

Sit with that word or image and listen to what it is saying to you.

Do you hear God's voice speaking to you?

Who is God for you today?

What is God calling you to?

Or

(B) Sit with these passages and reflect on one or more questions:

1. Reflect on Psalm 42.1 - 11: Which part of the Psalm speaks to you? What is your response to God? What might this mean for you?
2. Reflect on Acts 11.1 – 18: What speaks to you in this reading? Where is God moving in your life?
3. Reflect on John 10.11 – 18: What does it mean to be a sheep in Jesus' flock? Do I trust the Good Shepherd to watch over me? Who do I listen to, and do I know, the voice of the Good Shepherd?
4. These readings speak of how God is faithful, and that when we trust in God, things happen, not necessarily how and when we want, but certainly for our benefit, even when we can't even appreciate that. What have these readings awakened in you about the nature of God?
5. Sit with these questions and let God speak to you.

Poem

Primary Wonder by Denise Levertov

Days pass when I forget the mystery.
Problems insoluble and problems offering
their own ignored solutions
jostle for my attention, they crowd its antechamber
along with a host of diversions, my courtiers, wearing
their coloured clothes; cap and bells.
And then
once more the quiet mystery
is present to me, the throng's clamour
recedes: the mystery
that there is anything, anything at all,
let alone cosmos, joy, memory, everything,
rather than void: and that, O Lord,
Creator, Hallowed One, You still,
hour by hour sustain it.

Denise Levertov (1923 – 1997) was born in England to a Welsh mother and a Russian Hasidic father. Her father, who had emigrated to the UK from Leipzig, converted to Christianity and became an Anglican priest. She moved to the United States in 1948, and in 1955 became an American citizen. By the time she died in 1997, Levertov had published nearly fifty volumes of poetry, prose, and translations. Levertov taught at Brandeis, MIT, Tufts, Stanford, and the University of Washington. It was at Stanford, where she taught for 11 years (1982–1993) in the Stegner Fellowship program, and where her papers are now housed, that Levertov converted to Christianity at the age of sixty. After moving to Seattle in 1989, she joined the Catholic Church.

Lectio Visio



Image: 'Christ The Good Shepherd' by Maria Laughlin, Scratchboard, commissioned by the Archdiocese of Seattle. For more go to marialaughlin.blogspot.com

What do you notice? There might be a word, phrase, or image that arises from this. Note what arises. Reflect on this.

Four steps of Lectio Divina:

What is it?

Lectio Divina is the intentional, prayerful reading of scripture in silence and stillness, in order to hear God in our hearts. It is sacred reading. The process is now used in reading poetry and viewing art or other visual material as well as taking in music and film.

Origins of Lectio

There are antecedents in scripture, but Lectio came to be defined during the 4th and 5th centuries when the desert fathers and mothers began to practice it. John Cassian took the practice back to Europe. And then Benedict of Nursia developed and incorporated Lectio into his Rule of Life. Lectio has since spread everywhere, but its true home is the Benedictine community. It is a primary tool in the contemplative tool box.

How do you do it?

You will need:

- A quiet place to sit, read, pray, reflect and journal.
- Time

Process:

1. (Lectio) Sit quietly, compose yourself and ask God to be present and to speak to you. Read the passage slowly out loud. As you read, note any words, phrases, or images that catch your attention. Try not to stay with one thing yet. What do you notice? Write down as many as you want to.
2. (Meditatio) Read the passage again slowly and gently. Which observation is calling for attention? Which word, phrase, or image stands out? Don't think. Simply observe, trust, and choose one. Say the word. Reflect upon it.
3. (Oratio) Read the passage a third time. Pray for blessing and insight. What message does that word, phrase, or image have for you? What might God be saying to you?
4. (Contemplatio) Read the passage a final time. Rest, breathe, feel your body, and sit with what you heard. Listen to what this word might mean for your life. You might like to journal your response, which might include writing, painting, drawing, collage, crafting, creating.

Additional Step for Visio Divina – Working with images.

1. (Lectio) Study the image. What do you notice? There might be a word, phrase, or image that arises from this. Note what arises.

Steps 2 – 4 as above but as for an image.

“From the first we should be resolute in prayer.” St. Theresa of Avila

Introduction:

For those who have a garden or an outdoor area or are inclined to walk. If the weather is forbidding, then a veranda/covered area would suffice.

Note: God’s “green scriptures” is a reference to creation speaking into our lives just as scripture and people do (following the work of the mystics).

A suggested guide	
9.00 a.m.	Daily Office
9.30 a.m.	Wandering Exercise 1
10.45 a.m.	Morning tea
11.15 a.m.	Reflection time and response
12.30 p.m.	Lunch (Half Day finish)
1.30 p.m.	Wandering Exercise 2
3.00 p.m.	Afternoon Tea
3.30 p.m.	Reflection and response
5.00 p.m.	Daily Office and conclude
8.00 p.m.	Compline

Contemplative Wandering Exercise 1

Introduction: This exercise is best outside but can be done inside looking onto a garden or plants, if needed. The idea is to walk, wander in some space where nature is evident (garden, nature reserve, walk trail).

Take the time you need, to be present to something you will encounter on your wander:

- Remind yourself that you're being open to God's Spirit as you begin your walk.
- Remind yourself that you're entering into God's "green scripture."
- Be prepared to offer a gift: a poem, a song, a prayer, a desire you bring.
- Choose a place, a threshold, to intentionally "cross over" into a sense of sacred space. This might be crossing the road to a nature reserve, moving from the patio to a lawn or garden area, or simply from inside to outside. If you are with someone maintain silence.
- Let yourself just wander, releasing your right-brain judgement of things, your tendency to label or pigeonhole things into pre-arranged categories. Be open.
- Sit, stand or lie down with something that draws your attention. Notice it carefully and appreciatively with all your senses.
- Take time to look and listen deeply. Be still, allowing the "other" to speak in any way it chooses. Notice what's happening inside you as well as outside you, where your intuition may taking you as you remain the presence of this other.
- Stay just a little longer than you think you should.
- As you choose to leave, express gratitude in some way, offering your gift if you didn't do so earlier, offer a prayer.
- Return back through the threshold where you intentionally crossed over and return to ordinary time and space.
- Take time journal (write, paint, draw, create) what you have experienced.

Contemplative Exercise 2

Introduction: This exercise can be done outside or indoors. The idea is to spend some time in silence while contemplating the poems and quotes. You can be walking or stationary.

Poems and Quotes for Contemplation

'I Go Among Trees.' by Wendell Berry

I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.
Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.
Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it,
and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.
After days of labour,
mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last,
and I sing it. As we sing,
the day turns, the trees move.

"God's soul is the wind rustling plants and leaves. The dew dancing on the grass, the rainy breeze making everything grow." Hildegard of Bingen 'Book of Divine Works

".... I look out at everything growing so wild and faithfully beneath the sky and wonder why we are the only terrible part of creation privileged to refuse our flowering" David Whyte

"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in." John Muir

"They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves will never wither, and they prosper in all they do." Psalm 1.3

"Pray, even if you feel nothing, see nothing. For when you are dry, empty, sick or weak, at such a time is your prayer most pleasing to God, even though you may find little joy in it. This is true of all believing prayer." Julian of Norwich

"As soon as you are really alone you are with God". Thomas Merton

‘The Summer Day’ by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean the
one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down who
is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Some suggestions in working with this material:

- Read through the poems and quotes, what draws you?
- Sit with this awhile and reflect on what has caught your attention, what is it God speaking into your life right now?
- What is your response to God?
- Offer a prayer for whatever has arisen.
- You might like to journal your reflection and response. Journaling includes writing, painting, craft, creating

I am the Good Shepherd

Introduction: This option is about engaging with the text as if it were a preached retreat day. The exercises are intentionally simple so as not to be too cerebral, but are aimed at providing a study/homiletical engagement to reflect upon. They can be done in half a day, or be spread over a full day.

Suggested Timetable

9.00 a.m.	Daily Office
9.30 a.m.	Exercise 1
10.30 a.m.	Morning tea
11.00 a.m.	Exercise 2
12.30 p.m.	Lunch (conclude for half day).
1.30 p.m.	Exercise 3
3.00 p.m.	Afternoon tea
3.30 p.m.	Exercise 4
5.00 p.m.	Daily Office (conclude).

Reading: John 10.11 – 18 (NRSV)

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Exercise 1: Looking at the text

1. How does Jesus describe himself in John 10:7, what does He mean?
2. What promise does Jesus make to those who believe in Him?
3. How does Jesus contrast himself with “the thief?”
4. How does Jesus compare himself to “the hired hand?”
5. Who are the other sheep?
6. What does Jesus emphasize that He will do for His sheep?

Exercise 2: Going Deeper

1. What do these images/key words mean for you?
2. What is good in this?
3. What draws you most in this text? Say why?
4. What least draws you? Say why?
5. What can you say about Jesus as a shepherd?
6. How is Jesus shepherd to you?
7. What response does this text draw from you?

Exercise 3: Developing thoughts

1. How would you share the images of this text with others?
2. How would you share your response to this text?
3. What action, if any, has it inspired?
4. How does it inform your vocation?

Exercise 4:

1. If you were to prepare this for a sermon, what would the **core** of the sermon be?
2. How would you illustrate it?
3. What would you be asking the sermon to say?

A brief view from George Beasley-Murray

“The parable in essence depicts a shepherd as one having authorised access to his flock, in contrast to a thief, who must steal clandestinely into the fold; the shepherd, unlike the thief, has an established relationship with the sheep – he knows them, and they recognise him, and so they follow him as he leads them out to pasture, whereas they run away from a stranger.”
(Word Biblical commentary 36)