

Retreat of Silence, Do Not Fear! (Is 44:1–8)

By X. Nader Sahyouni, DMin, LPC

Introduction

This guide will lead you through a retreat of silence from one to three hours long. But it can also be used for longer periods. It is intended to work within the parameters of social distancing currently in place.

Getting Ready

Before sitting down to pray:

- Minimize distractions as much as possible.
- Consider putting your phone in airplane mode.
- Make sure you have some paper, a pen, and your Bible.
- Divide the time you have set aside into four equal periods.
 - For example, if you have set aside two hours, each period will be 30 minutes long.
 - Feel free to be flexible and change the time allocated for each period as you go.

Period 1: Thanksgiving and Worship

- Take five minutes to express gratitude to God for the many blessings in your life.
- Take your phone off airplane mode.
- Listen to and pray with the following meditative Taizé chant:
 - [“Nada De Turbe”](#) (with subtitles in English)
 - If time allows, also listen and pray with [“Bless the Lord.”](#)
- If you are having trouble connecting with the Taizé chants, choose one or two songs to worship along with.
 - If you play an instrument, consider playing along.
- Turn on your phone’s airplane mode again.
- Times of uncertainty remind us of what is most basic and foundational in our lives. God is our foundation; nothing and no one comes close.
 - In your life, what has it meant to believe that God is enough?
 - When was the last time you felt that?
 - Stay with the memory of that time until you feel some of the closeness to God you felt. If it takes longer than five minutes, consider moving onto the next period.

Period 2: Lectio Divina

Read: Read [Isaiah 44:1–8](#) slowly and see where the Holy Spirit draws your attention (a word, theme, or image?).

Reflect: Read the text again, focusing on what drew your attention and letting it sink in. Try not to slip into analyzing. Do you sense any invitations from God in the text?

Respond: Read the text a third time. Now respond to God in prayer about what he has invited you into.

Rest: Take the remaining time in this period to simply rest in God and allow him to deepen those themes within you. Be attentive to what the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart.

Period 3: Processing with God

Pay attention to what feelings arose for you during the previous period. Take time to talk to God about them. Here are some optional prompts:

- What do you feel God is encouraging you to not be afraid about?
 - Write out his encouragement to you in a sentence, paragraph, or whole letter that starts with God addressing you by name.
 - Pray that he would give you what you need to not be afraid.
- What comes to mind when God says he is the only Rock?
 - What other rocks have you leaned on for security?
 - Pray for grace to let go of those and for God to be your Rock.
- What new life do you feel God may have for you as “water in a thirsty land”?
 - Pray for it.
 - If you desire new life in any other area of your life, pray for that too.
 - We know that God is always working to redeem. He will bring redemption out of current circumstances and other difficult areas of your life. Consider taking some time to give thanks for that. Thanksgiving helps build our faith and trust that God is at work even when it’s hard to see.
- Pray for other pressing personal concerns.

Period 4: Play Prayer

Take the remaining time to do something fun with God by yourself. Consider activities like drawing, painting, coloring, making music, knitting, writing, etc. Whatever you do, aim to cultivate an awareness of God’s presence in these moments.