

## February 2023 Retreat Guide — Loving Self in God's Presence

by Julie Meissner



### Prepare

Be intentional about your time with God. Set aside the day, time, and location for the two of you to commune together. Print out this retreat guide and gather any needed supplies. GET A GOOD NIGHT OF REST to begin your retreat.

### Watch

[Trauma-Informed Ministry: Self-Care Practices](#)

### Arrive

Arrive at your planned retreat location (retreat center, empty church, outdoor preserve, guest house, etc.) Bring only this guide, your Bible, journal, comfortable clothing, food, drink, and art supplies if desired. You may have a device available for music as guided but set aside otherwise.

### Settle

Get into a comfortable place and position; become quiet, gently inviting your whole self into a restful posture. Take several deep breaths, then let your breathing slow to normal. "Be still and know that I am God." (Ps. 46:10)

### Grounding exercise by former staff Amy Drennan

Find a comfortable position to sit in and then take a deep breath, in through the nose and out through the mouth. On the next breath, notice the feeling of the chair or whatever is holding up your body. Take a moment to notice the temperature of the air on your skin.

This exercise is called grounding, using the five senses and the world around you to bring yourself to the current moment. During this exercise, it is normal and okay if thoughts or feelings come in and take you away from the task. When a thought comes to your mind or a sensation is noticed, name the thought or feeling without judging it, and imagine it flowing out and away from you on your next exhale. Come back to the sound of your breath any time you

notice your attention goes to something else, and remember not to judge any thoughts or sensations that go through your mind and body.

#### 5-4-3-2-1

5—name 5 things that you can see around you

4—name 4 things that you can touch around you

3—name 3 things that you can hear around you

2—name 2 things that you smell around you

1—name 1 thing that you can taste around you or in your mouth

Close with a long, deep breath.

### Opening Prayer

Jesus, help me fully accept and embrace your invitation to retreat with you, receiving the good gifts you freely offer me of rest, respite, and renewal. “Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.” Thank you for this life-giving invitation. I love you, Jesus. Amen. Scripture quote—Matthew 6:6, *The Message*.

### Reflect

Remain in silence for a few minutes or as long as you desire. Then journal your responses to the following questions based on the video (linked above). It’s okay if nothing comes up for a particular question. Take your time. Be led by God.

Considering Cynthia’s guidance on these five key areas of Self-Care Practices, what resonates with you as being helpful, what has worked well for you in the past, or what are you intrigued to try in the future? What is the Holy Spirit inviting you to explore?

1. Regulation: Parasympathetic and Emotional
2. Reflection
3. Relationships
4. Rest and Respite
5. Remember: Meaning and Purpose

Jesus knew the importance of self-care practices, regularly inviting his disciples into them and taking them himself. We are human, and our bodies need proper care. They will tell us much if we listen to them. What is your body telling you right now? How might you honor your body by caring for it during this retreat? Come home to yourself by recognizing you are a body in need of care which Jesus knows from personal experience.

“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16, NIV).

## Lectio Divina

Read the scripture four times, using the reflection guide to allow Christ's words to deepen within you.

### Matthew 11:28-30, MSG

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

## Reflect

1. Silencio ("silence"). Sit in silence for as long as you need to come to inward stillness and tune the ears of your heart to listen to Jesus.
2. Lectio ("read"). Read the Scripture passage. Sit with what you have read.
3. Meditatio ("meditate"). Read it again. What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you or seems to be highlighting to you? Meditate on that.
4. Oratio ("pray"). Read it again. Enter into the Scripture passage. What do you feel, see, notice, hear, wonder? Is there a specific situation in your life that comes to your awareness? Journal a prayer of response, draw your prayer, or pray quietly.
5. Contemplatio ("contemplate"). Read it again. What is God's personal invitation for you from this Scripture? Rest quietly in God as you thank Him.

## Visio Divina

*Holding the Flame of Fire, Jyoti Sahi*

Take your time and sit with the painting below, representing love and gratitude to God.<sup>1</sup> When you are ready, engage the following questions as you find helpful.

What are your eyes drawn to?

What do the colors speak of?

Which of your senses are piqued?

What emotion stirs within you?

How might this painting feel if you could touch it? What is the texture?

What meaning does it have for your life?

What else is God inviting you to ponder, notice, pray?



Jyoti Sahi (Indian, 1944–), *Holding the Flame of Fire*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 36 × 36 in. Painted as a design for a stained glass window for the entrance of Paripurnata Halfway Home in Kolkata, India.

### Poetic Reflection

Untitled poem by Theodore Roszak (in *Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society* by Theodore Roszak, Doubleday, 1972)

Unless the eye catch fire  
    The God will not be seen  
Unless the ear catch fire  
    The God will not be heard  
Unless the tongue catch fire  
    The God will not be named  
Unless the heart catch fire  
    The God will not be loved  
Unless the mind catch fire  
    The God will not be known

### Closing Prayer

Jesus, Father, Spirit, thank you for this time apart with you for respite, rest, and renewal. You have graciously given me this time for my holistic thriving, my wellbeing in Christ, my self-care. You taught us to love you, the Lord our God, with all our being, and to love others *as ourselves*. Thank you for the reminder and the opportunity to love myself well. In doing so, now send me forth to love others well. In Jesus' empowering name. Amen.

### Benediction

"The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you." Amen.

2 Corinthians. 13:14, MSG

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://artandtheology.org/tag/jyoti-sahi/>