



SPIRITUAL FORMATION



EMBODYING CHRIST'S MISSION

Spring 2023 National Quarterly Retreat

Embodying Christ's Mission

Table of Contents

Introduction – p. 2

Introduction and retreat background – 5 minutes

Come Away – p. 3

Settling In and Opening Prayer – 55 minutes

Walking With God – p. 4

Connecting with God and Creation in our Bodies – 40 minutes

Imaginative Prayer – pp. 5-7

Luke 10:1-9, 16-20, NRSV – 20 minutes

Break – p. 7

Suggestions - 60 minutes

Music Reflection – pp. 8-9

"All Things New" – 10 minutes

Visio Divina – pp. 9-11

Make All Things New – 30 minutes

Closing – pg. 12-14

Closing Reflection, Closing Prayer, Benediction, Endnotes – 20 minutes

Suggested Schedule

Hour 1: Introduction and Come Away

Hour 2: Walking With God and Imaginative Prayer

Hour 3: Break (enjoy unstructured time with Jesus)

Hour 4: Music Reflection, Visio Divina, and Closing

Supplies

Retreat guide, journal for writing, pen or pencil, art journal or blank paper, colored pencils, paints if desired, earbuds or headphones, and a device for listening to guided walk and music.

[Playlist](#)

Introduction

Dear beloved one called and sent by God,

Welcome to “Embodying Christ’s Mission,” the third in a series of four **Forming Leaders Retreats** on **Intimacy, Character, Mission, and Abiding**. We pray this will be an opportunity for you to be restored in God’s presence and reinvigorated by the Spirit as you consider being called by God into MISSION, going forth with Jesus into MISSION, and being empowered by the Holy Spirit for MISSION. Jesus is with you because this is HIS MISSION!

Mark Buchanan puts it beautifully in his chapter on listening in *The Rest of God*.

All our authority is derived. Either God gives us words, or we are only giving opinions. Either God vouches for us, or our credentials are forged. If anyone ever stops to listen to you or me, this had better be solidly in place: Our speaking comes out of our listening. What we say comes out of what we hear. We have to be people who listen, day and night, to God. Our utterances ought to be as Jesus’s were: an echoing of the Father, an imitation of him. They ought to be a holy ventriloquism, a sacred pantomime. Peter puts it this way: “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). That verse should be paired with Jesus’s statement: “He who has ears, let him hear.”ⁱ

“Our speaking comes out of our listening.”

As you prepare, you are encouraged to:

1. Set aside four hours for retreat, but an entire day is even better.
2. Find a restful, set-apart location for the retreat.
3. Go on retreat with your team or a colleague if possible, or plan to meet with a spiritual director during retreat if going on your own.
4. Print off this guide and gather supplies per the list above, leaving all else behind.
5. Ask your prayer intercessory team or a close friend to hold you in prayer as you retreat.

May you experience waves of God’s love and mercy washing over you as you get away with Jesus on retreat. May the Holy Spirit draw you deeper into the flowing wellspring of God’s endless resources for your sustenance. And may your Abba Father surprise you with extravagance and goodness as the beloved who is the apple of his eye.

With joy in you,

Julie Meissner
Assistant Director of Spiritual Formation

Come Away

Rendezvous with Jesus

"The apostles then rendezvoused with Jesus and reported on all that they had done and taught. Jesus said, 'Come off by yourselves; let's take a break and get a little rest.' For there was constant coming and going. They didn't even have time to eat. So they got in the boat and went off to a remote place by themselves" (Mark 6:30-32, MSG).

Whether in nature, a quiet room, retreat center, or silent sanctuary, let this retreat day become a sacred space of silence and solitude for you. Let this be your soul's space for emerging and exploring in the safety of God's love. Take nothing except the recommended supplies to enhance your retreat experience. Be present to the holy by leaving all else behind.

Once you arrive, give your whole being ample time to settle in. Walk around and explore, sit and relax, eat and drink, draw in the dirt, wade your feet into water, close your eyes and listen to **peaceful music (see playlist)**—whatever brings a sense of calm to your whole being. Your God is the most gracious host. Enjoy the day and place prepared for you.

"He brought me out into a spacious place...
because he delighted in me."
(Ps. 18:19)

Opening Prayer from Iona

In the beginning O God
You shaped my soul and set its weave.
You formed my body and gave it
breath. Renew me this day in the
image of your love.
O great God, grant me your light.
O great God, grant me your grace.
O great God, grant me your joy this day;
And let me be made pure in the well of
your health.

Walking With God

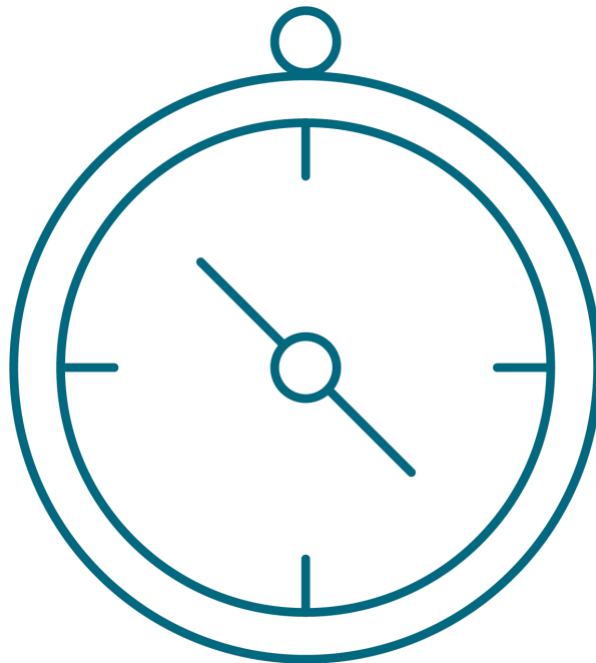
Engaging Creator and Creation with our Bodies

Using the following audio guide from “Pray As You Go,” take a walk with God. This is an opportunity to be embodied as you pray. We are more than merely brains. Our physical bodies are as much a part of who we are as our minds. For overall thriving, it’s good to pray with our whole being at times. Get outdoors or in a comfortable place where you can spend time walking, talking, and listening. Bring your earbuds or headphones along, as well as your phone, for this exercise (and put them away afterwards).

If you are not able to walk, find what feels most comfortable and inviting for you to engage this exercise, maybe in a cozy chair looking outdoors or a chair on your back porch. You could even pull up nature videos with serene music on YouTube and sit in the comfort of your home if that works best for you! (One of our IV staff enjoyed [this virtual nature walk](#).)

Walking with God

(Listen to the introduction, then choose either the female or male voice walking guide)



Imaginative Prayer

Modeled after Ignatian Spiritual Exercises

Settle into a posture of listening to God by using your imagination to pray scripture. Read through the whole text three times, using the guidance provided below. Journal about each stage of this prayer experience.

Begin with several deep, cleansing breaths. Inhale for a count of four, hold for a count of seven, and exhale for a count of eight. 4-7-8

First, **observe the scene**. From a broad vantage point, observe the scene taking place in this Gospel narrative. Notice the big picture overall, then gradually focus in to notice the details. Seek to gain insight into the heart and mind of God through what you observe.

Second, **enter the story**. Imagine yourself in bodily form, moving about within the narrative. Where are you in the story? What is going on between you and the others present? How does Jesus interact with the disciples? How do the disciples respond to Jesus? What is Jesus saying to you? Use your imagination to be physically present within the story.

Third, **apply your senses**. What do you hear, smell, see, feel, and taste as your body moves through this story? Engage all your senses in the setting and notice what you are experiencing through these physical sensations. Take note of how your body may begin responding physically in the present as you imaginatively move through the story. How do your senses “incarnate” the narrative for you? Enter more fully into the mystery of this story through your senses. Let your whole being worship and experience Jesus’ mission, empowerment, and invitation to you.

In this text, we encounter Jesus while he is addressing his disciples, appointing and empowering them to go before him and work miracles of healing, casting out evil spirits, preaching the message of God’s kingdom, and bringing God’s shalom to people’s hearts and homes. Let’s listen and enter into the story with Jesus and his growing following of disciples.

Luke 10:1-9, 16-20, NRSV

¹ After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers

into his harvest. ³ Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶ And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

¹⁶ "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" ¹⁸ He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹ Indeed, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Reflection questions:

1. Where did you locate yourself in this story?
2. Where was Jesus in proximity to you?
3. What do you notice as you look upon Jesus' face in this scene?
4. When have you sensed being empowered by Jesus, have had a word come to you for yourself or others, or have experienced the help of the Holy Spirit?

5. As you hold this awareness in your heart, is there anything you would like to express to God or ask of God? Take some time to do so now.
6. As you consider the month ahead, where do you anticipate needing to know that Jesus turns up? Talk to him about that.

Now let the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, in its unique expression from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, flow from your heart to the Father to bring this exercise to a close.

"With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are.

Set the world right; Do

what's best— as

above, so below.

Keep us alive with three square meals.

Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.

Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.

You're in charge!

You can do anything you want!

You're ablaze in beauty!

Yes. Yes. Yes." (Mt. 6:9-13, MSG).

Break

Go for a walk, enjoy a meal or snack, take a nap...whatever feels inviting and refreshing. Spend an hour simply savoring the presence of Jesus and keeping company with him. Return when you are relaxed and ready to continue.

Music Reflection

"All Things New" by Andrew Petersonⁱⁱ

(Rise up, oh you sleeper.)

(Rise up, oh you sleeper.) Come
 broken and weary.
 Come battered and bruised. My
 Jesus makes all things new, All
 things new.
 Come lost and abandoned.
 Come blown by the wind. He'll
 bring you back home again,
 Home again.
 Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.)
 The light of the dawn is upon you.
 Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.) He
 makes all things new.
 All things new.
 Come frozen with shame.
 Come burning with guilt. My
 Jesus, he loves you still, He
 loves you still.
 So, rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.)
 The light of the dawn is upon you.
 Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.) He
 makes all things new.
 He makes all things new.
 The world was good, the world is fallen, The
 world will be redeemed,
 The world was good, the world is fallen,
 The world will be redeemed, So
 hold on to the promise.
 The stories are true that Jesus makes all things new.
 (The dawn is upon you.)
 Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.)
 The light of the dawn is upon you.
 Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.) He
 makes all things new.
 Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.)
 The light of the dawn is upon you.
Rise up, oh you sleeper, awake, (Rise up, oh you sleeper.)
 He makes all things new.
 He makes all things new.
 All things new. (All things new.)
 All things new. (All things new.) **He**
makes all things new.

Simply be still in the presence of this Resurrection Love. Allow the words and impressions from this song to linger. When you feel ready, gently move into the Visio Divina exercise.

Visio Divina

Make All Things New

Visio Divina, Latin for “sacred seeing,” is an ancient form of Christian prayer in which we allow our hearts and imaginations to become aware of God’s presence with us, movements towards us, and invitations to us as we ponder nature, an image, a work of art, or really anything visual, to see what God might be wanting us to know.

We will engage James Janknegt’s colorful work of art Make All Things New for this spiritual exercise.ⁱⁱⁱ Let the meditation on this painting hold sacred space for you. Allow your inner noise to settle, placing yourself in God's loving, holy presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer as you contemplate the image.

- Gaze at the painting with openness, asking the Holy Spirit to help you see with God's eyes.
- What do you notice as you contemplate the scene? What details stand out to you and draw you deeper? Ask “I wonder” questions about those details (e.g., “I wonder why the buildings above Jesus’ head are upside down”). Listen for any response God offers.
- Allow your eyes to be drawn to a particular portion that invites further pondering. Sit with that portion of the painting for a few minutes. Write down all you are noticing, wondering, and becoming aware of.

- As you gaze upon this scene, how does it connect with your Imaginative Prayer exercise and reflections from Luke 10?
- What might God want to say to you as you behold this image? Take your time.
- Respond to God from this experience. Let your ongoing contemplation of this scene lead you to gratitude and worship.



Closing

Closing Reflection

["Christ Has No Body" Attributed to Teresa of Avila \(1515-1582\)](#)

Christ has not body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the
eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Closing Prayer

["Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me," by Howard Thurman^{iv}](#)

Open unto me, light for my darkness
Open unto me, courage for my fear
Open unto me, hope for my despair
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow
Open unto me, strength for my weakness
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness
Open unto me, love for my hates Open
unto me, Thy Self for myself Lord,
Lord, open unto me!

Benediction

["Peace \(A Communion Blessing from St. Joseph's Square\)" by Rich Mullins^v](#)

Though we're strangers, still I love you
I love you more than your mask
And you know you have to trust this to be true
And I know that's much to ask
But lay down your fears
Come and join this feast
He has called us here
You and me
And may peace rain down from Heaven
Like little pieces of the sky
Little keepers of the promise
On these souls, this drought has dried
In His Blood and in His Body
In this Bread and in this Wine
Peace to you
Peace of Christ to you
And though I love you, still we're strangers
Prisoners in these lonely hearts
And though our blindness separates us
Still His light shines in the dark
And His outstretched arms
Are still strong enough to reach
Behind these prison bars
To set us free
So may peace rain down from Heaven
Like little pieces of the sky
Little keepers of the promise
Falling on these souls, the drought has dried
In His Blood and in His Body
In this Bread and in this Wine
Peace to you
Peace of Christ to you
And may peace rain down from Heaven
Like little pieces of the sky
Like those little keepers of the promise
Falling on these souls, the drought has dried
In His Blood and in His Body
In this Bread and in this Wine
Peace to you
Peace of Christ to you Peace
to you
Peace of Christ to you

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!
Thanks be to God!

ⁱ Mark Buchanan, "Listen: Stopping to Hear God," *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 2006), 177 (Kindle).

ⁱⁱ Centricity Music, "All Things New," from *Resurrection Letters*, Vol. 2. Written by Andrew Peterson, Andy Gullahorn, Ben Shive. Performed by Andrew Peterson. Produced by Andrew Gullahorn and Ben Shive. October 21, 2008. © 2010 Centricity Music. © 2010 Centricity Music.

ⁱⁱⁱ James B. Janknegt, *Make All Things New*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 48 × 96 in.
<https://artandtheology.org/2016/04/21/a-sweeping-vision-of-all-things-made-new/>.

^{iv} Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

^v Reunion Records, "Peace (A Communion Blessing from St. Joseph's Square)," from *A Liturgy, A Legacy*, and *A Ragamuffin Band*. Written by Beaker and Rich Mullins. Performed by Rich Mullins. January 1, 1993. © 1993 Provident Label Group, LLC.