

THE OUTER LIFE AND THE INWARD SANCTUARY

End of semester QUARTERLY RETREAT 2024

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Suggestion:

- *If you are doing this alone...* reach out to a colleague and suggest doing the retreat “together,” even if in separate places. Choose your day and length of time. Call each other at the start, to share how you are coming into the day. Pray for one another. Decide when you will connect at the end of the retreat. When you connect later in the day, ask what the highlights were, what was your sense of what God said, etc. End with prayer together.
- *If you are doing this as a team, or group, whether together or remotely...* decide together if you will be in-person (and so choose where) or remote. Set parameters, as in the scenario above. And follow the same format. Some groups may choose to eat lunch together, but keep the time limited, and perhaps, even try eating in silence.

Introduction

Endings are good markers. We want to do something special. Who wants to eat Thanksgiving dinner and forego the pie! In the movies, a kiss at the end of the perfect first date. Graduation at the end of four (or maybe five?) hard years of study. Some people use their birthday as a good time for me to reflect on the year that has been completed. What have I learned? How have I grown in my faith? What graces have I received?

The end of a semester can be that for us as well. Look back over these last 3-4 months—what has happened? How have I seen God at work? Are there any mid-year corrections that I see a need to make for next semester?

That’s what I want to lay out for us in this Quarterly Retreat. So, whether you have half a day or a full day, or you are doing this alone or with a group, let’s invite the tender, loving gaze of Jesus to be upon us as we take a look back over Fall 2024.

Entering in - connecting to Jesus

I was introduced to a brief 10 minute practice by Dan Kane (Associate Director of Spiritual Formation). I’ve re-written it as God might speak to us. It’s called, *Let Me Love You*.

Sit in a place where you will not be distracted. It can be inside or outside, but sit comfortably, and begin by becoming aware that God is present with you. Read each of these prompts very slowly as if God were speaking to you. Set a timer for 10 minutes.

Be quiet...

Be still...

Before me.

There's no need to say anything.

No need to ask me anything.

I'm here.

With you.

Let me look at you.

That is all.

I know.

I understand.

I love you

With an enormous love.

And I only want

To look upon you

With that love.

Quiet now.

Just.

Receive.

Let me

Love you.

Scripture Engagement Psalm 27: 1-14

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
²When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.
³Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.
⁴One thing I asked of the LORD;
this I seek:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.
⁵For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.
⁶Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent

sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.
⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!”
Your face, LORD, do I seek.
⁹ Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off; do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
¹⁰If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.
¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
¹²Do not give me up to the will of my
adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.
¹³I believe that I shall see the goodness of the
LORD
in the land of the living.
¹⁴Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

Read this psalm over a couple of times slowly.

- What rings true to you about these words? Look back over the semester and recognize where God has made these words true to you.
- What encourages you from these words?

You have likely not had “evil doers devouring your flesh” or an army encamp against you this semester. But you have likely faced opposition or disappointment or a plan that went awry. Try using the themes of this psalm to create your own psalm that reflects some of what you have experienced this semester. For instance, vs 5 speaks of a future time that God will hide me and protect me. Look back on a time where you felt God’s coming through for you, comforting you, or protecting you this semester.

As you read back over Psalm 27 and the psalm you have written, what is God’s invitation to you?

Taking a Look Inside

"Something of God's universal love has rubbed off on Mother Teresa, giving her homely features a noticeable luminosity. It was impossible to be with her, to listen to her, to observe what she was doing and how she was doing it, without being in some degree converted." Malcolm Muggeridge

"The world is cold. Someone must be on fire so that people can come and put their cold hands and feet against that fire...The English word 'zeal' usually means intensity of action. But real zeal is standing still and letting God be a bonfire in you." Catherine Doherty, *Poustinia*

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."

Take a look with Jesus—who loves you with an enormous love - into the quality of the fire inside you. Where was that fire evidenced this semester? When did you feel like something had doused the flame?

When did you sense your light becoming brighter? Or your fire burning hotter? What contributed to both?

Ask Jesus how he would like you to tend that fire in this coming semester.

"Often it is very hard for me to realize that I am one. The outer life seems utterly outer. It seems a part of separate order. It is made up of the things I do, of my relationship of one kind or another with work, play, job, people and things. The standard by which the outer is judged tends to be an artificial standard, made up of that which is convenient, practical, expedient. The outer seems public, it seems ever to be an external net of physical relationships.

The inward sanctuary is my sanctuary. It is the place where I keep my trust with all my meanings and my values. It is the quiet place where the ultimate issues of my life are determined. What I know of myself, my meanings; what I know of God, His meaning; all this and much more, is made clear in my secret place. It seems strangely incongruous, often, to bring into my secret place the rasping, gritty noises of my outer life. Again, this may be for me merely an alibi. For I know that in the searching light of inward sanctuary all the faults, limitations and evil of my outer life stand clearly revealed for what they are.

I determine to live the outer life in the inward sanctuary. The outer life must find its meaning, the source of its strength in the inward sanctuary. As this is done, the gulf between outer and inner will narrow and my life will be increasingly whole and of one piece. What I do in the outer will be blessed by the holiness of the inward sanctuary; for indeed it shall all be one.

~Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*

What has your "outer life" looked like this semester? How about your "inward sanctuary"? What is the relationship between the two in your life? Talk to Jesus about that.

What would it mean for you to "determine to live the outer life in the inward sanctuary"?

Where is God inviting you to pay attention to your "inward sanctuary"? And in what specific ways? In other words, how might God be inviting me to live differently next semester?

Is there someone that comes to mind whom you'd like to talk to more about this?

Closing

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Come down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at this wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hands and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. Jeremiah 18: 1-6

Take a walk picturing yourself in the loving hands of the potter.

Pray these words - but read them first -- as your own offering to God and intercession for InterVarsity.

"Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being, so utterly, that our lives may only be a radiance of yours. Shine through us, and be so in us, that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus! Stay with us, and then we shall begin to shine as you shine; so to shine as to be a light to others. The light, O Jesus will be all from you. None of it will be ours; it will be your shining on others through us. Let us thus praise you in the way that you love best - by shining on those around us. Amen." John Henry Newman