

8. Nature Walk

Take a very slow walk, looking for God, who is reaching out to you in all you pass. Listen and look for signs of God's presence and love. Is there a symbol you want to take back with you (in your mind or in your hand)?

9. Talk

...with others. Often our own thoughts and feelings take on new clarity when we share them with others.

10. Dialogue with your Body

Get yourself in a comfortable position in a quiet space and ask yourself, "What am I feeling in my body at this time?" Let your awareness go to whatever place seems to call it (a tight throat, tension in your back, a heaviness in your stomach...). Focus on that feeling and let it reveal itself to you.

11. Life Inventory

Ask yourself: "When have I been happiest in my life?" Write down these answers. Then: "When have I been saddest?" Write these too. "When have I felt most alone? When have I felt most confident? Least confident?" List your questions first and leave spaces for the answers. Taking the questions one at a time, let the answers come. Focus on the questions and see what comes to you. Take your time with these.

12. Journaling

Journaling is a good practice anytime, but especially during a retreat. There is a time and place for review of your life and remembering, but it is also very important to be in the present moment. "Where am I right now in my life?" Be especially attuned to feelings and write them down. Journaling after a time of prayer can be helpful. Always include "What am I feeling?" If you need a pen and paper, stop and ask.



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Productive Pauses: What to Do While on Retreat

We'd like to invite you to a productive pause. Perhaps you have some free time... perhaps you are on a retreat. This is sacred time, and maybe it is rare in your life. If you are wondering, "now what?", following are a few suggestions.



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1. Slow Down and Rest

Most of us live at a running pace, never having enough time to do all the things we want to do. It takes a while to unwind, to let ourselves “be here, now”. Instead we find we’ve carried in the retreat all those concerns we meant to leave at the office or at home. When we stop and try to be still, the mind engines start whirring rapidly, and the chatter can be discouraging and exhausting.

Sleep is one way to help yourself really be in this environment, alert and aware of what’s happening within. You may need to give yourself permission to sleep before you can do anything else. Or perhaps you will find it relaxing just to take a leisurely walk, letting nature help your body feel its way to a slower pace, where the demands of every day can be put on hold for a while.

2. Do Nothing

This is a real challenge, but it is a form of prayer and can be immensely rewarding. You may begin by sitting in a comfortable but alert position (back straight, feet on the floor) and paying attention to your breathing. Notice how it comes in and out with no effort on your part, a gift of life. You can use your breath to draw in peace and let go of all the obstacles, all the negative energies in your life. Breathing in God’s spirit, letting out whatever is in the way. Stay with this for a while. When distracting thoughts come, notice them and let them

pass as well. It’s all part of your life, the gift of your life.

3. Prayer

Prayer may be one of those things you wish you had more time for back home. Give yourself over to the experience and let what happens, happen. As you listen to Scripture, maybe a phrase or an idea will speak to you and you can “hold onto it”, taking it with you to hold in your heart, listening to what it might say to you today.

Try reading a psalm or a familiar prayer very slowly, letting its message be absorbed by your soul. Read it standing, kneeling, sitting, and walking: each way may bring out new learnings.

4. Write Yourself a Letter

“Where am I at this point in my life?” Or “How am I feeling about myself, about my relationships?”, or maybe for you the letter could be written to a wisdom figure, to an ancestor, to God, to yourself as a little child, an as older person (“to myself in 10 years”). Try to let the letter write itself, letting the words come rather than thinking about it a lot. Some people write a letter to themselves once a year, putting it aside to read the next year and seeing how differently they may feel by then.

5. Reflect on the Sessions

There may have been something said (or that you said in a small group) that is worth further reflection. Spend time with the biblical story being presented and see if further connections arise in your life story.

6. Life Review

Some retreats are a good time for a life review. Divide your life into decades. Give a descriptive name to each one. Jot down life-challenging events or encounters that come to you. Discover how you feel about these now. What would you like to be in the next chapter? Another way to review your life is to list all the persons who have loved you, and all the persons you have loved. Pay attention to how it feels to look over these lists.

7. Make a List of your Values

Take a look at what you most value by listing what really is important to you. Put this in a column down one side of a sheet of paper. Then, in a second column, write where this value came from (your mother, a childhood experience, church...). Looking at this list, are there some you want to let go of? Some you want to reinforce? How have these helped and hindered you on your journey? Are there some that seem to have faded over time?