

ANNUAL RETREAT – HOLY SPIRIT SEMINARY

INTRODUCTORY POINTS

Images for the retreat:

1. The Holy Spirit leads Jesus out into the wilderness (Mk 1:12), "among wild beasts" (the beasts within and beasts around us) - to be alone with self, with God, in prayer, in silence.
2. Jesus asks his disciples to go with him "to a lonely place by themselves" (Mk 6:30- 32). A spiritual recuperation is important before a re-insertion into work. A picnic with God. Go "apart" to become "a part" of Him. Jesus invites, "Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28-30).
3. The *disciple* sits at the feet of the Master, Jesus. Samuel said, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:10). Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). The disciples ask, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1-13). The Lord promises the Holy Spirit Jesus alone is the master, the retreat preacher. Ignatius says, "The Creator and Lord himself should communicate to the retreatant and 'act immediately' with him," me & my God - "Alone with God."
4. Sit beside Mary, the *disciples* par excellence, who bore him from the womb to the tomb, and ask her to show you the heart of her son, Jesus. Sit with her like the disciples sat with her before Pentecost, praying (Acts 2-4) that you might receive "God's gift" the Holy Spirit to make of you a 'new creation.'

Attitudes required for the retreatant:

1. **Generosity and 'great spirit'**- to surrender all. "The measure you give will be the measure you get" (Lk 6:38). We offer up our freedom so that it might be taken up into God's freedom. Generosity in prayer, spending time with Him. Beware! Entering into a relationship with God is risky. Once you lay your hand on the plough, you cannot turn back.
2. **Openness and Emptiness** - Let God's Spirit blow where it wills. Put no conditions, set no limits. Mother Teresa's letter to a priest: "Dear Father, You have said 'yes' to Jesus and He has taken you at your word." God cannot fill what is full, he can only fill emptiness..." Thus, Ignatius says, "get rid of all inordinate attachments (people, things, jobs) to seek and find the divine will".
3. **Sensitivity** - this spiritual journey is not a mental exercise, neither a course that will fill you with knowledge. Don't make it a study. It ought to be an 'experience.' Not to know *about* God, but a coming to *know* God. What we ask for is a "sentire" (feeling with the senses) and a "gustare" (interior tasting and relishing). Thus, more than the mind and intellect, we feel with the heart and spirit
4. **Flexibility and Patience** - Follow your own rhythm. Retreat not meant to find solutions to a particular problem, nor to make a good confession. Do not be anxious about what is coming next
5. **Silence** - Outer and inner. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). "Deep calls to deep" (Ps 42:7). Descend into the depths of your being, the "cave of the heart": that deep, dark unknown that is truly "me" devoid of masks and pretenses, defenses and disguises. There the Lord knocks (Rev 3:19-22). Am I ready to open?