



Pearls from Day 1: Retreat Opening

We all desire fulfillment. God gave us that desire and wants to satisfy it with happiness in this life and Heaven in the next.

Thus, our ultimate goal is Heaven. We achieve that goal by following God's plan for our life. Following that plan will lead to living a holy life and that brings happiness, because for the Christian, holiness is the same as happiness.

Our primary way of communicating with God and following His plan for our life is *mental prayer* (silent, meditative prayer).

You can see how this flows – daily mental prayer with God will lead to holiness in this life, which is the same as happiness in this life. And holiness in this life will lead us to Heaven in the next.

In this retreat, we will be using the imagery of journeying through a jungle to a far-off mountain. That far off mountain is Heaven. Traveling through a jungle, unaided, is treacherous. But with the right Guides it can be beautiful and exciting. Prayer is how we communicate with God so that the Holy Trinity becomes our guide through the spiritual jungle.

Recommendations on Setting

It is best to start the retreat on a Saturday. That way each week of the retreat begins on a Sunday (the first day of the retreat is the "Retreat Opening", the second day of the retreat is the start of Week 1).

Some specifics – the setting should be a quiet place without loud noises, distractions nor disruptions. It may help to have a few holy objects, perhaps a lit candle, for recollection. People often create a small *oratory* (place of prayer) in their home – all it requires is a peaceful area with a comfortable chair, a crucifix and any other devotionals or religious items that help you raise your mind and heart to God.

You should participate in these sessions at the same time each day. We are creatures of habit and order. We have schedules for when we eat, sleep, work and recreate. Our prayer should be just as well ordered. It should also be at a time when we are able to be fully present with God. Can you do this on your lunch break? If there is no other option, then yes. But it's usually best to start your day with God in the morning, or to be with Him at the close of your day.

You may find it practical to separate the daily reflections from your time of silent prayer (weeks 1 and 2) and meditation (weeks 3 and 4). That is perfectly fine.

Pay particular attention to weekends. Most of us run into trouble maintaining our schedule on the weekends. The rigor and routine of our weekday schedules helps us lock in a prayer routine – but this often gets disrupted on the weekend. Make every effort to use the same prayer time and prayer place for weekdays and weekends. If that is not possible, then just make sure you have a consistent weekend routine.

Keep in mind that you are on retreat for the next 30-days. This is a special time for you and the Holy Spirit, Who has a specific purpose for you being on this retreat and specific graces for you.