

Retreat on getting back to a New Normal - Examen

As measures are being released whilst we are still hearing news about the global pandemic, here are a few tips as you retreat to adjust to a new normal.

Things needed for the retreat:

1. **Plan half an hour** to go through these questions/reflections. Consider the fact that you are going through a lot of changes once again and take these changes into account to find a suitable time. Consider whether you are a morning person or would prefer some time to unwind after a day's work or maybe you are capable to reflect more, exactly before going to sleep. Also, consider the time that you need to travel either by car, on foot and maybe without a rush to go back for a meeting so that you'll be more at ease. Therefore, **slot a time from a day before.**
 2. **Think of a comfortable place without too many distractions.** Is it your room, a chapel in the vicinity (if the measures to enter a chapel make you anxious, think of an alternative), nature (keep in mind that throughout this period/season, people are seeking the seafront more, so think of somewhere without too many people or go in the afternoon for example when people are usually eating or resting), the roof maybe, a quiet room at your place of work during your break, or plan a walk if you'll be listening to the retreat without the
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need to write?

3. **Journal** – If you are a person that processes better when having a journal or a piece of paper to write on, prepare your personal journal and pen to take with you.
4. **Mobile/headphones** – If you're going to listen to this retreat, rather than reading take your mobile and headphones with you as well.

Congratulations! You've managed to make time to retreat yourself from many ongoing things in your life. Well Done! So now you're set for your retreat. First of all, I encourage you to

1. Find a **comfortable position** that will keep you focused on your prayer rather than on whether you're sitting well or not.
 2. Take a few minutes to **jot down or put aside all the thoughts** that are keeping you distracted from focusing on prayer... You have them written now or you have put them aside and can get back to them afterwards. You might come back to them throughout this retreat as well.
 3. Pens and thoughts down. Take a **deep breath** in, and breathe out. **Relax** your muscles, your face, your shoulders and hands, your feet touching the ground, your toes; relax your whole body. Breathe in, and out 3 more times, keeping your muscles relaxed. This breath is the breath of God being given daily to you. It's a gift!
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4. **Give thanks!** For the past 3 to 4 months you have been breathing this breath of God. He has given me life and has worked through me. Deciding to make another day count, is praise and thanksgiving in itself. Recognising that these times were needed for me to rest physically or socially is also an acknowledgment that I am human and have limits. What are those things that I am grateful for where I feel that I have allowed God to use me to be an instrument? Maybe a good word to a friend? A positive attitude? Maybe during a video chat? Having done chores for my family or vulnerable persons? Having been a voice for others through social media? Maybe I have acknowledged a person? Or while driving gave way to someone or who was crossing the road? Helped someone in an assignment? Or prepared daily meals for myself and/or my family? **Give thanks to the Lord for all these tiny gestures through which you were an instrument in His loving hands.**

5. **Ask for Forgiveness** – These times have been challenging to many. I too have had my own challenges even if I am aware that others might have gone through worse situations than I have. But I am also a child of God and I also have my own story. It's not that I want to pity myself. It's that I am aware that I have had my challenges and have reached certain limits. However, there may have been situations to which I could have acted or reacted better to. Therefore, let me think about three instances where I acknowledge that I was in the wrong and I will ask forgiveness to the Lord...
Take another deep breath in and as you breathe it all out, offer all your limitations to God!

6. **Resolutions** – Change is stressful in itself BUT it gives us so many beautiful things to look forward to. This period has surely taught me many things which I

wish to keep and apply in my daily life. Maybe I've been able to eat more healthily as I've had more time to cook, or kept committed to exercising as I had more time at hand, or kept more contact with a friend or used the car much less or had more time to read or more time to pray. Certain things which I wish to keep daily might not be realistic as my daily life is changing yet again. However, let me take some time to think about realistic resolutions that I would like and would be able to keep. Let me stick to 1 to 3 mostly and not more, so that I won't expect too much out of myself and I will put all my efforts on these three things only.

7. **Closure** – I have looked back at the past 4 months; thanked God, asked for His forgiveness and asked Him to be present with me in what is to come. I will close this retreat with Psalm 32 which reminds me that God has been with me, is here in this present moment with me and will continue to accompany me.

Psalm 32

- ¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
 - ² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
 - ³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
 - ⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.^[b]
 - ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."
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And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

⁶Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.

⁷You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸**I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.**

⁹Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.

¹⁰Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him.

¹¹Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!
