

# A RETREAT GUIDE

## for your time at a hermitage

### WHO COMES TO A HERMITAGE?

- Individuals who are in transition in their lives and discerning the next step in their journeys;
- Those searching to deepen their faith life with extra quiet time.
- Religious women and men, lay and ordained ministers, rabbis, people in healing professions, educators, writers and others who need time away from their very busy lives of service.
- Persons who feel something is missing—or are experiencing emptiness—and want to explore ways to live a more caring and fulfilling life.
- Persons who like to meditate in peace.
- Artists who are looking for a time of creativity without interruptions.
- People who do not know what they are looking for but know they need more silence and space to discover what they are seeking.



### HOW TO DO A RETREAT

Welcome! We have been preparing for your arrival. Now that you are here, what's next? If you clearly know why you are here and what you wish to be and do on your retreat, you may not need any help. For those of you who are less sure, or perhaps are making a retreat alone for the first time, we have some suggestions garnered from our own experience.

#### GETTING SETTLED

It is often helpful to begin by creating for yourself a comfortable space. Bring in your belongings, situate them in a way that feels familiar, and look around so as to be able to claim it as "home." You may feel like doing the same with the outdoor space – identifying the location of the Main Chapel, (always unlocked) the small Kiva Chapel near the atrium, Stations of the Cross along the road, the Rosary Walk and the Labyrinth near the main Chapel. You can walk anywhere on our property, and either direction for miles along the irrigation canals.

Most persons who come need to be intentional about "letting go" and becoming fully present here. It means consciously putting on hold the demands and responsibilities "back home." We give you permission to do just that! It is likely you may be experiencing about now a desire to rest, maybe even taking a nap. Do so, and give in to the tendency to want more than the usual amount of sleep you get. Give yourself that gift -- you deserve it.

## **GETTING STARTED**

It might be helpful for you to consider a rhythm for your day or days in the hermitage, and consider when you would like to take time to pray, to read, to walk, to eat or fast, to write, or whatever is helpful.

When you are ready, find a comfortable spot, equipped only with a pen and notebook for “journaling.” Journaling is a fine way to make your experience one of both “action” and “reflection.” Each moment of life has much to teach us, but unless we reflect on what is happening, the meaning is likely to pass us by. Use your notebook throughout your stay, continuing to ask “what is happening?” You might begin by getting in touch with why you came ... really. Was it to get away from something or someone? Was it to gain clarity about an issue or problem? Was it to sort out things in order to set priorities? Was it for an “attitude adjustment” to gain a better perspective on life? Was it to search for God? Was it to read some of the things you brought, or find some new reading by which to be fed? Was it to find yourself? Was it to sort through the clutter in a desire for greater simplicity? Was it curiosity? Was it something you thought you “ought” to do? Was it someone else’s idea or recommendation? Was it a yearning inside you that you can’t quite name? Was it the desire to feel closer to God? Are we getting close? By getting in touch with why you are here, you can better discern the what, how, and where that you need in order to open yourself to the gifts of this time apart.

## **EMBRACING THE SILENCE**

Above all, throughout your retreat, taste deeply the silence. You have been freed from the constant noise that bombards our busy lives -- liberated from TV, radio, telephone, traffic, airplanes overhead, and people. Turn off your cell phone. Now quiet your mind, letting go and freeing yourself of any internal “chatter” that may be going on in your head. Breathe deeply and receive thankfully this rare and marvelous gift of silence. Taste it deeply, let it speak, and permit it to enter your very being, content for the time being to let the world turn without you.

## **EXPLORING AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

You may find it helpful to look at some of the books. Don’t feel like to have to finish anything, but if a portion is helpful, let it speak to you. Be careful not to fill all your time. If you did not bring some with you, we invite you to peruse our carefully chosen selection in the bookshelf. Please leave them there before you leave. You are welcome to write something in the journal book that stays at the hermitage. It can be a source of meditation for others. If you would like some spiritual guidance, contact the retreat office.

Take plenty of time to listen, to appreciate the Sacred Silence.

Above all, at the end of your retreat you will probably conclude that what happened here was less what you had planned and more that into which you were led. May your time be blessed.