

# September, 2017 — #1

Dear Sisters,

In a letter from Rome on November 18, 2016, Sister Monica Joseph invited us to participate in a series of celebrations taking place throughout the Bicentennial year. The first of these will begin in Agra, India on October 6, 2017, commemorating the first missionary expansion of the Congregation outside of France. The closing will be in October, 2018, in Lyon, the birthplace of the Congregation.



As a special focus of our Bicentennial, we are encouraged to enter into a collective prayer experience of the Spiritual Exercises throughout the Congregation and in many languages, “to deepen and revitalize our lives as consecrated women.” Many will recognize this form of prayer as *The Exercises in Daily Life* or *The Exercises in Ordinary Time*.

It is the hope that all of us can be united in this prayerful experience, along with the members of the Family of Jesus and Mary, as well as our former Sisters, colleagues, friends, and parishioners whom we invite to join us.

The format for this retreat is flexible and can be used in a variety of ways and adapted to wherever we are. It engages both the intellect and imagination. You can be as creative as the Spirit inspires!

Appended to this letter are the timelines we foresee for the ‘Weeks’ of the Exercises, as well as what we hope are helpful suggestions for ways you might organize your own experience of them.

Engaging in this retreat will frame both our personal and communal prayer and continue as preparation for the bicentenary year and beyond. It will also help us enter into gratitude for our beginnings, as well as the foundations that followed. We pray also that it will invite us into God’s future with the hope and resolve that are a part of our heritage as daughters of Claudine Thévenet.

As we travel together on this spiritual pilgrimage, let us beg for the grace to grow in union as ONE apostolic body in the Lord.

In Jesus and Mary,

Sr. Sile Crowley, RJM [Delegation of Africa]

Sr. Janice Farnham, RJM [United States]

Sr. Rosemary Mangan, RJM [United States]

Sr. Helen Scarry, RJM [United States]

# *Retreat in Daily Life* — *Proposed Timelines 2017-2018*

*The material will be sent from Rome in a timely way, i.e., at least 10 days before the designated section of the retreat is scheduled to begin. Additionally, resource material relevant to that part of the retreat will be available on the Congregational Website.*

## **Preparation Days (Dispositions, Principle & Foundation) 4 weeks**

Week of: October 22<sup>nd</sup>  
October 29<sup>th</sup>  
November 5<sup>th</sup>  
November 12<sup>th</sup>

## **First Week of the Exercises 4 weeks**

Week of: November 19<sup>th</sup>  
November 26<sup>th</sup>  
December 3<sup>rd</sup> (beginning of Advent)  
December 10<sup>th</sup>

## **Second Week of the Exercises 10 weeks**

Week of December 17<sup>th</sup>  
January 7<sup>th</sup>  
January 14<sup>th</sup>  
January 21<sup>st</sup>  
January 28<sup>th</sup>  
February 4<sup>th</sup>  
February 11<sup>th</sup> (Ash Wednesday is February 14<sup>th</sup>)  
February 18<sup>th</sup>  
February 25<sup>th</sup>

## **Third Week of the Exercises 4 weeks**

Week of March 4<sup>th</sup>  
March 11<sup>th</sup>  
March 18<sup>th</sup>  
March 25<sup>th</sup> (Holy Week)

## **Fourth Week of the Exercises 5 weeks**

Week of April 1<sup>st</sup> (Easter)  
April 8<sup>th</sup>  
April 15<sup>th</sup>  
April 22<sup>nd</sup>  
April 29<sup>th</sup>

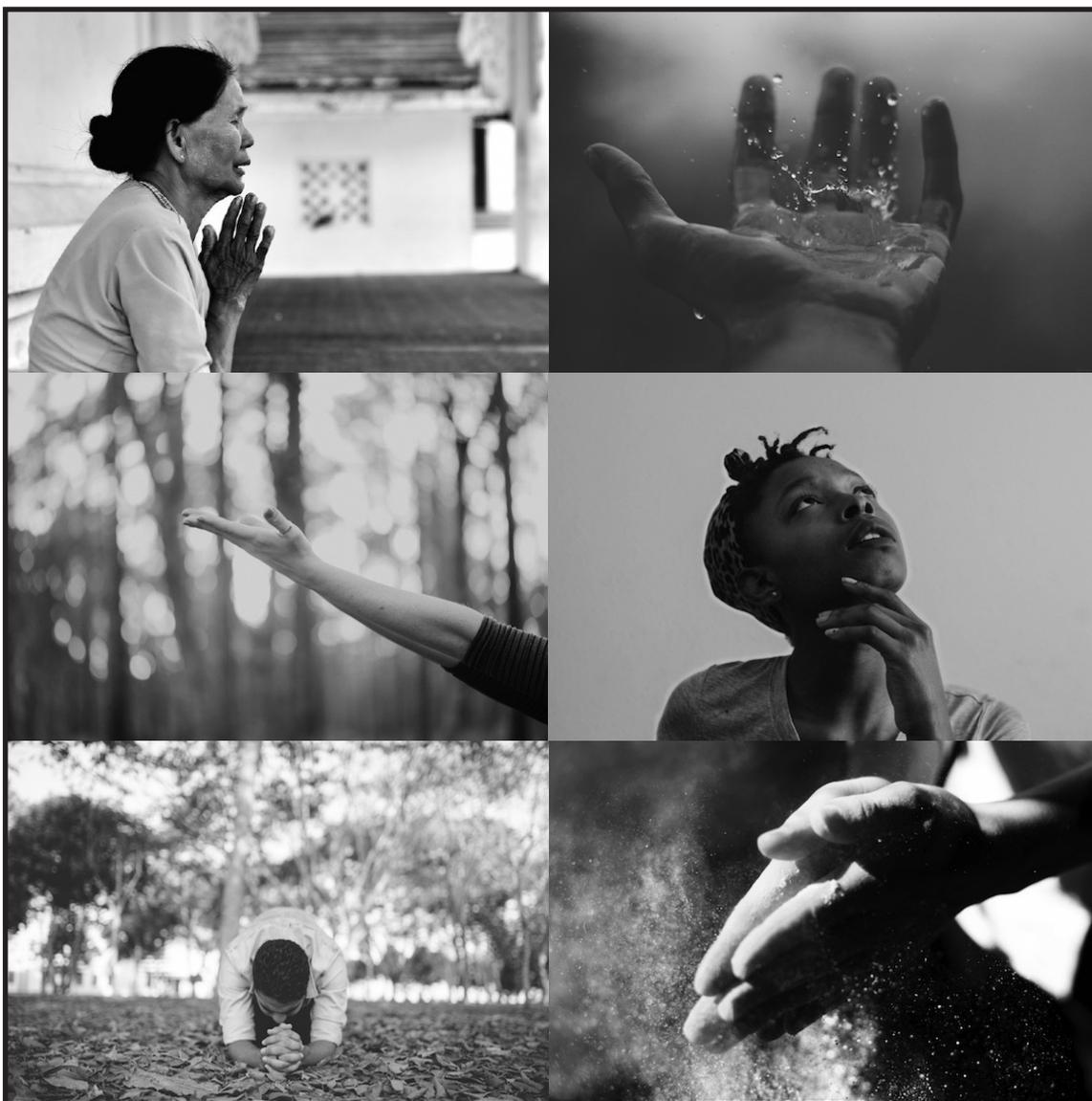
# *Retreat in Daily Life* — *Commitment & Accountability*

## **Commitment of Retreatants**

At the heart of the resolve to make the Exercises in Daily Life is a commitment to:

- a regular practice of daily prayer;
- a daily examen in which I reflect on my day in light of the grace for which I am praying;
- a weekly reflection on my retreat experience.

A daily prayer time of between 30 minutes and an hour will support the dynamic of the retreat, together with at least 10 minutes of examen at the end of the day.



## Modes of Accountability

Accountability in prayer can lessen the distortions to which we are all prone, and open us to, as Ignatius says, “permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature...” (Annotation 15)

Because we envisage and encourage welcoming lay friends and associates to join us in this experience of the Exercises, and are aware that retreatants will be in widely differing circumstances, various modes of accountability are suggested here. A trusted spiritual director is an invaluable asset in making the Exercises, but the lack of availability of such a person should not be a bar to entering into the experience of the retreat.

1. One may invite a trusted and respected person to be one’s director for the retreat.
2. Two exercitants may meet with one another every week in order to engage in spiritual conversation about the Exercises and to share how God has been leading them in prayer. The two agree to be accountable to one another.
3. Small groups may agree to meet regularly so as to share with one another what is happening in their prayers. They may choose a coordinator or leader from among themselves, or they may invite a trusted and respected person to assume that role.
4. A person may make the Exercises privately, setting aside time each week to review the graces of the retreat, and keep some record of the various movements experienced.

N.B. Technology (e.g., e-mail, SKYPE, ZOOM, phone) could be a help in forming a group or connecting with a director.



# *Retreat in Daily Life* — Preparation Days

## **Week of October 22<sup>nd</sup>: Overview Session**

*If you are making the retreat in a group, it will be important to have an initial session in which you begin sharing, and work out practical details.*

**A. Decide on the day and time and place for the weekly gatherings of the Retreat Group.**

**B. Take time to reflect on the questions below, and share with the Retreat Group:**

—What prompts you to make this retreat?

—Do you foresee any limitations on your participation, e.g., missing a session, illness affecting prayer, planned travel?

—What are your feelings about this opportunity to share in this prayer experience?

—What do you believe will be a helpful plan for you for incorporating the retreat process into your life:

What seems to be the best time for you to pray daily?

Where will you pray, and for what length of time?

—As you look at the grace suggested for next week, reflect, and perhaps share on how it relates to your current and actual situation.

**C. Close the session with prayer to the Holy Spirit for each other, and for all those making the retreat at this time.**

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Be still, and know that I am God! Ps. 46:10

### **SPIRITUAL EXERCISES #5:**

The most important quality in the person who enters into these Exercises is openness and generosity. As a retreatant, my one hope and desire is that I can really put myself at the disposal of God so that in all ways I seek only to respond to that love which first created me and now wraps me “round with total care and concern.” D. Fleming, SJ *A Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises*

## JM TRADITION:

“... I, your unworthy child..., filled with the desire of promoting your glory, my salvation, and that of my neighbor, determined to live in future for you alone, and to depend absolutely on the guidance of your grace ....” Vow Formula

## CONTEMPORARY:

Prayer has far more to do with what God wants to do in us than with our trying to “reach” or “realize,” still less “entertain” God in prayer. This truth eliminates anxiety and concern as to the success or non-success of our prayer, for we can be quite certain that, if we want to pray and give the time to prayer, God is always successful and that is what matters.... What we think of as our search for God is, in reality, a response to the divine Lover drawing us to himself. There is never a moment when divine Love is not at work.... This work is nothing other than a giving of the divine Self in love. The logical consequence for us must surely be that our part is to let ourselves be loved, let ourselves be given to, let ourselves be worked upon by this great God and made capable of total union with God.

Ruth Burrows, *Essence of Prayer*



# Retreat in Daily Life — Preparation Days

**Week of October 29<sup>th</sup>**

## **THEME:**

As I enter this time of grace, I want to open myself to experience the loving God in the way God so deeply desires for me.

## **GRACE:**

A more profound experience of God's love for me, a deeper awareness of how I might respond, and a greater freedom to make this response.

## **SCRIPTURE:**

Psalm 23	Luke 12:22-34
Isaiah 55:1-11	Isaiah 43: 1-7
Psalm 139: 1-18	Hosea 11: 1-9

Choose a Scripture Text to pray through again. Note how you were moved during the previous prayer. Return to some word, image, desire, insight, feeling, attraction, resistance, or other interior movement that was particularly strong when you first prayed that exercise.

## **SPIRITUAL EXERCISES #2:**

For what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly. G. Ganss, *Spiritual Exercises, Translation & Commentary*

## **JM TRADITION:**

Called to follow Christ as the one necessity and drawn by the irresistible power of His love, we respond freely by the total gift of ourselves to God.... C13



## CONTEMPORARY:

Time after time I came to your gate  
with raised hands, asking for more and yet more.

You gave and gave, now in  
slow measure, now in sudden excess.

I took some, and some things I let  
drop; some lay heavy on my hands;  
some I made into playthings and broke  
them when tired; till the wrecks and  
the hoard of your gifts grew immense,  
hiding you, and the ceaseless expectation  
wore my heart out.

Take, oh take – has now become my cry.

Shatter all from this beggar's bowl;  
put out this lamp of the importunate  
watcher; hold my hands, raise me from  
the still-gathering heap of your gifts  
into the bare infinite of your uncrowded  
presence. Rabindranath Tagore



# *Retreat in Daily Life* — *Preparation Days*

## **Week of November 5<sup>th</sup>**

### **THEME:**

Spiritual freedom liberates me to accept myself, with my gifts and limitations, and to discern God's working in my life..

### **GRACE:**

To grow in interior freedom, and increased awareness of what hampers that freedom.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Luke 1:26-38

Mark 10:17-27

Psalm 40

Psalm 16

Jeremiah 18:1-5

Philippians 3:7-16

Repetition (see note at conclusion of Scripture texts for Week of Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>)

### **SPIRITUAL EXERCISES #21:**

The structure of these exercises has the purpose of leading a person to a true spiritual freedom. We attain this goal by gradually bringing an order of values into our lives so that we make no choice or decisions because we have been influenced by some disordered attachment or love. D. Fleming, SJ, *A Contemporary Reading of the Spiritual Exercises*

### **JM TRADITION:**

The motto "Praised forever be Jesus and Mary" expresses the desire of the religious to live their commitment to the redemptive work of Christ in a spirit of praise, "in joy of heart, freedom of spirit, confidence and generosity." C11

### **CONTEMPORARY:**

It is true to say that for me sanctity consists in being myself and for you sanctity consists in being yourself, and that, in the last analysis, your sanctity will never be mine and mine will never be yours, except in the communism of charity and grace. For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and of discovering my true self. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

# *Retreat in Daily Life* — *Preparation Days*

## **Week of November 12<sup>th</sup>**

### **THEME:**

I am intimately related to God and to all of God's creation, and I praise God by being who God made me to be and honoring the uniqueness of all other creatures.

### **GRACE:**

A deepening awareness of my fundamental vocation to love and serve God and others; a willingness to embrace who I am before God.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Psalm 104

John 3:22-30

Ephesians 3:14-21

Philippians 4:13

Wisdom 11:21-12:2

Psalm 63

Repetition

### **SPIRITUAL EXERCISES #23:**

The goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit. All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal. In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or failure, a long life or short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God. Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening his life in me. Ignatius, paraphrased by D. Fleming, SJ

## JM TRADITION:

For Claudine Thévenet, the greatest misfortune was to live and die without knowing God. The lot of those thousands of poor little children, deprived of this world's goods, who were destined to grow up perhaps without ever hearing the name of God, made her tremble. *Positio*, 540

## CONTEMPORARY:

The mystic's cry has sounded through the ages. This is the cry of the desire of every person who has ever sought God, however unconsciously. .... Often, we do not know this cry within ourselves. We do not recognize it. Therefore, we cannot understand it, recognize it within the context of the desire for God. Much, much more, we cannot understand the cry of the poor, the cry of the earth as the signal that it is. Yet the desire for God is everywhere crying out. The miracle: the contemplative cry of the people of the whole earth community, and it's no longer invisible and silent. It is prophetic and revolutionary. It rings through the universe, and we must not lose the thread of desire from the depths of a disfigured world.  
Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, "The Desire for God and the Transformation Power of Contemplation"

