Franciscan Holy Week retreat

Before the retreat:

Try to get to confession prior to the retreat! Lent is traditionally the time for fulfilling your annual obligation for making it to confession. Plus, prayer often comes more easily when we’ve been reconciled with God.

Take at least 20 minutes to plan for the retreat

* Is the weekend totally free? If so, when will you do each reflection? Where will you pray? How will you make sure the weekend remains prayerful? Will you step away from your usual routine? How?
* If you have something (or multiple things) scheduled, how will you fit the retreat around them? How will you maintain a spirit of prayer and devotion during the retreat?
* Where will you attend Mass on Sunday (if you can)? Is it possible to attend a Saturday Morning Mass?
* Will you do the retreat alone, or with others? How will you arrange for times of shared prayer and reflection? (communal recitation of psalms is awesome, but also can be very frustrating, so brace yourself!)

During the retreat:

* If you haven’t made it to confession, can you find time on retreat?
* Spend at least 30 minutes on each reflection
* Say a rosary on Saturday and Sunday (if you prefer you can substitute a chaplet of divine mercy or a Franciscan Crown or some other chaplet prayer…)
* If possible do at least one of your reflections before the Blessed Sacrament. Preferably, do all of them before the Blessed Sacrament.
* Pray each of the offices at a set time! Having a regular schedule makes it easier! That said, if you get off schedule, don’t freak out.
* Spend a little time outside, weather permitting. Try and get at least some (moderate) exercise.
* Get enough rest. Eat enough food. Taking time out for prayer can be intense, and being rested and well fed can make a big difference. If you want to do extra fasting while on retreat check in with your spiritual director or pastor first.
* Please don’t watch TV or movies or engage in other forms of (mindless) entertainment.

If you are interested in continuing to pray with St. Francis’ Office of the Passion, you can find it here: <http://www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Preghiera&id=451>

Please note that we adjusted the schedule of Psalms somewhat, and the official instructions include schedules for praying 2,3, and 7 times in the day.

Schedule for retreat:

Friday:

Evening prayer, first reflection

Saturday:

Morning Prayer, second reflection

Midday Prayer

Evening Prayer,

At any time of the day say a rosary/chaplet/etc.

Sunday:

Morning Prayer, third reflection

Midday prayer, fourth reflection

Evening prayer, end

At any time of the day get to Mass and say a rosary/chaplet/etc.

The Office of the Passion

Saint Francis of Assisi

PRAYERS SAID BEFORE THE LITTLE OFFICE AT ALL HOURS

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

PRAISES

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,

who is and who was and who is to come

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Lord our God, you are worthy to receive

praise and glory and honor and blessing

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

The Lamb who was slain is worthy to receive

power and divinity and wisdom and strength,

and honor and glory and blessing

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Let us bless the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit:

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Sing praise to our God, all you his servants

and you who fear God, the small and the great.

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Let heaven and earth praise him who is glorious

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

And every creature that is in heaven

and on earth and under earth

and in the sea and those which are in them.

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit:

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Let us praise and glorify him above all forever.

Let us pray

All-powerful, most holy,

most high, and supreme God:

all good, supreme good, totally good,

you who alone are good;

May we give you

all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor:

all blessing, and all good things.

So be it. So be it.

Amen.

*Then before beginning the appropriate psalm, the following antiphon is recited:*

Antiphon

Holy Virgin Mary, among women,

there is no one like you born into the world:

you are the daughter

and the servant of the most high and supreme King and Father of heaven,

you are the mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, you are the spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for us

with Saint Michael the Archangel

and all the powers of the heavens and all the saints

to your most holy beloved Son, the Lord and Master.

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

PSALMS OF SAINT FRANCIS

Friday Evening\*

PSALM 1

God, I have told you of my life

you have placed my tears in your sight (Ps 55:8b-9).

All my enemies were planning evil things against me (Ps 40:8a)

and they have taken counsel together (cf. Ps 70:10c).

They repaid me evil for you

and hatred for my love (cf. Ps 108:5).

In return for my love they slandered me

but I kept praying (Ps 108:4).

My holy Father (Jn 17:11), King of heaven and earth, do not leave me

since trouble is near and there is no one to help (Ps 21:12).

Let my enemies be turned back

on whatever day I shall call upon you; for now I know that you are my God (Ps 55:10).

My friends and my neighbors have drawn near and have stood against me

and those who were close to me have stayed far away (Ps 37:12).

You have driven my acquaintances far from me

they have made me an abomination to them, I have been handed over and I have not fled! (Ps 87:9).

Holy Father (Jn 17:11), do not remove your help from me (Ps 21:20);

my God, look to my assistance (cf. Ps 70:12).

Come to my help

Lord, God of my salvation (Ps 37:23).

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

Saturday Morning\*

PSALM 3

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me

since my soul places its trust in you (Ps 56:2a).

And I will hope as I stay under the shadow of your wings

until wickedness passes by (Ps 56:2b).

I will cry to my most holy Father, the most high,

to the Lord, who has done good to me (cf. Ps 56:3).

He has sent from heaven and delivered me

He has disgraced those who have trampled upon me (Ps 56:4a-b).

God has sent his mercy and his truth

He has snatched my life (Ps 56:4c-5a) from the strongest of my enemies

and from those who hated me since they were too strong for me (Ps 17:18).

They have prepared a trap for my feet

and have bowed down my soul (Ps 56:7a-b).

They have dug a pit before my face

and themselves have fallen into it (Ps 56:7c-d).

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready

I will sing and recite a psalm (Ps 56:8).

Arise, my glory, arise psalter and harp,

I will arise at dawn (Ps 56:9).

I will praise You among the peoples, O Lord,

I will say a psalm to you among the nations (Ps 56:10).

Since your mercy is exalted even to the skies

and your truth even to the clouds (Ps 56:11).

Be exalted above the heavens, O God,

and may your glory be above all the earth! (Ps 56:12).

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

Saturday Noon\*

PSALM 9

Sing to the Lord a new song

for he has done wondrous deeds (Ps 97:1a-b).

His right hand and his holy arm (Ps 97:1c-d)

have sacrificed his beloved Son.

The Lord has made his salvation known

in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice (Ps 97:2).

On that day the Lord sent his mercy,

and his song at night (cf. Ps 41:9a-b).

This is the day the Lord has made

let us rejoice and be glad in it (Ps 117:24).

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

the Lord is God, and he has given us light (Ps 117:26a, 27a).

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice,

let the sea and all that is in it be moved

let the fields be joyful

and all that is in them (Ps 95:11–12a).

Give to the Lord, you families of nations,

give to the Lord glory and praise

give to the Lord the glory due his name (Ps 95:7-8a).

Sing to the Lord, O kingdoms of the earth,

sing to the Lord (Ps 67:33a).

Chant praise to God who ascends

above the heights of the heavens to the east (Ps 67:33b-34a).

Look, he will give his voice, the voice of power;

give glory to God!

Above Israel is his greatness,

and his power is in the skies (Ps 67:34b-35).

God is marvelous in his holy ones

the God of Israel himself will give power and strength to his people.

Blessed be God (Ps 67:36)!

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

Saturday Evening

PSALM 6

O all of you who pass along the way

look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow (Lm 1:12a-b).

For many dogs have surrounded me

a pack of evildoers has closed in on me (Ps 21:17).

They have looked and stared upon me

they have divided my garments among them

and for my tunic they have cast lots (Ps 21:18b-19).

They have pierced my hands and my feet

they have numbered all my bones (Ps 21:17c-18a).

They have opened their mouth against me

like a lion raging and roaring (Ps 21:14).

I am poured out like water

and all of my bones have been scattered (Ps 21:15a-b).

And my heart has become like melting wax

in the midst of my bosom (Ps 21:15c).

My strength is dried up liked baked clay

and my tongue clings to my jaws (Ps 21:16a-b).

And they have given gall as my food

and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Ps 68:22).

And they have led me into the dust of death (cf. Ps 21:16c)

and they have added grief to my wounds (Ps 68:27b).

I have slept and have risen (Ps 3:6)

and my most holy Father has received me with glory (cf. Ps 72:24c).

Holy Father (Jn 17:11), you have held my right hand

and you have led me with your counsel (Ps 72:24).

For what is there in heaven for me

and besides you what do I want on earth (Ps 72:25)?

See, see that I am God, says the Lord

I shall be exalted among the nations

and I shall be exalted on the earth (cf. Ps 45:11).

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel (Lk 1:68a),

who has redeemed the souls of his servants

with his very own most holy Blood

and who will not abandon all who hope in him (Ps 33:23).

And we know, for he comes,

for he will come to judge justice (cf. Ps 95:13b).

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

Sunday Morning\*

PSALM 10

Cry out to the Lord with joy, all the earth!

Speak praise to his name

give glory to his praise (cf. Ps 65:1-2).

Say to God:

How terrifying are your deeds, Lord,

in the vastness of your strength

your enemies shall fawn upon you (Ps 65:3).

Let all the earth adore you and sing praise to you

let us sing praise to your name (Ps 65:4).

Come, listen, and I will tell all of you who fear God

how much he has done for my soul (Ps 65:16).

To him I cried with my mouth

and sounds of music were on my tongue (Ps 65:17).

And from his holy temple he heard my voice

and my cry reached his ears (Ps 17:7c-d).

Bless our Lord, you peoples

and make the voice of his praise be heard (cf. Ps 65:8).

And all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed in him

all the nations shall proclaim him (Ps 71:17c-d).

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel

Who alone does marvelous and] great deeds (Ps 71:18).

And blessed forever be the name of his majesty

and may all the earth be filled with his majesty. (Ps 71:19).

Amen! Amen!

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

Sunday Midday

PSALM 11

May the Lord hear you on the day of distress

may the name of the God of Jacob protect you (Ps 19:2).

May he send you help from his sanctuary

and from Zion may he sustain you (Ps 19:3).

May he remember all of your sacrifices

and may your burnt offering be fruitful (Ps 19:4).

May he grant you what your heart desires

and may he fulfill your every plan (Ps 19:5).

May we rejoice in your victory

and may we be victorious in the name of the Lord our God (Ps 19:6).

May the Lord fulfill all of your requests (Ps 19:6)!

Now I know that (Ps 19:7a-b) the Lord sent his Son Jesus Christ

and he will judge the peoples with justice (Ps 9:9b).

And the Lord has become the refuge of the poor,

a stronghold in times of distress

Let them trust in you who know your name (Ps 9:10-1 la).

Blessed be the Lord my God (Ps 143:1b)

since he has become my stronghold and my refuge

in the day of my distress (cf. Ps 58:17c-d).

My helper, I will praise you,

for you, God, are my stronghold

and my God, my mercy! (Ps 58:18).

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

Sunday Evening

PSALM 7

All you nations clap your hands

shout to God with a voice of gladness (Ps 46:2).

For the Lord, the Most High

the awesome, is the great King over all the earth (Ps 46:3).

For the most holy Father of heaven,

our King before all ages,

has sent his beloved Son from on high

and has brought salvation in the midst of the earth (Ps 73:12).

Let the heavens be glad

and let the earth rejoice,

let the sea and all that is in it be moved

let the fields and all that is in them be joyful (Ps 95:11—12a).

Sing a new song to him

sing to the Lord, all the earth (cf. Ps 95:1)!

For the Lord is great and highly to be praised,

and awesome is He beyond all gods (Ps 95:4)!

Give to the Lord, you families of nations,

give to the Lord glory and honor,

give to the Lord the glory due his name (Ps 95:7-8a).

Offer up your bodies and take up his holy cross

and follow his most holy commands

even to the end (cf. Lk 14:27; 1 Pt 2:21).

Let the whole earth tremble before his face

say among the nations

that the Lord has ruled from a tree (Ps 95:9b-10a).

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now,

and will be for ever. Amen.

REFLECTIONS:

For Friday Night, Psalm 1:

*God, I have told you of my life*

*you have placed my tears in your sight*

In this first psalm – both in number and in the plan for our retreat – we see one of the basic types of prayer, supplication (remember that acronym from childhood catechesis: “ACTS” Adoration-Contrition-Thanksgiving-Supplication?). We cry to the Lord with our sorrows and sufferings and the Lord responds. He sees us in our time of need. He is moved to have mercy on us. Jesus also prayed in this manner, particularly in his Agony in the Garden. He placed his anguish in his Father’s sight and his Father heard him.

It might seem like this isn’t true. The Father allowed the Son to drink to the dregs the bitter cup of his passion, the bitter cup the Son had begged so earnestly to be spared. But the Father did rescue Christ from the grave. It can often seem that the Lord is not listening to us when we cry out to him and tell him of our sorrows. Like Christ, it can seem like the Father has decided not to help us in our need. But we must place our trust in him and recognize that this may just be our time in the grave, awaiting resurrection.

One of the most refreshing things, in praying with scripture, is the realization that we never have to have ourselves pulled together and prettied up before we approach God. The psalmist often prays things that seem inappropriate, laying his feelings and experiences and misunderstandings our before the Lord, even when they are ugly thoughts. God can handle our stories – even the ugliest parts – and he sees our sorrows and sufferings.

Even when we feel most alone, God is with us. He is faithful, when we are faithful and when we are not. St. Francis draws our attention to this in his first psalm. During this weekend, do not be afraid to ask the Lord into the difficulties in your life. He sees your tears and listens to your heartaches. Ask for his aid, and he will give it.

*Holy Father, do not remove your help from me;*

*my God, look to my assistance.*

*Come to my help*

*Lord, God of my salvation*

Sr. Colette Marie Jaros

For Saturday, Psalm 9:

In this psalm St. Francis invites us to reflect with our whole mind, to feel with our whole heart, to believe with our whole beings, to contemplate with our whole life, and to praise God with our whole soul because He has proved his wondrous love for us, poor sinners. That love is brought to us through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. God’s right hand lifts up his beloved Son on the cross at Calvary where Jesus displays his ultimate love for His Father, completely surrenders to Father’s will, and makes salvation known to the whole creation. At that very moment God suffers with His Son to defeat sin and death, and to obtain everlasting life for those who believe.

… Can you feel the pain of God?

… What is your heart telling you as you are standing at the foot of His cross?

… Do you know any love like that?

… Could you measure how much you are loved by God?

However, God never wants us to remain mourning over his death and our sins. Rather, He fulfills His “wondrous deed” by raising Jesus from the dead, exalting him, embracing him with the same right hand, and reconciling with His creatures forever.

… Can you see the joy of that reunion?

… Can you hear the heavenly sounds of resurrection celebration?

… Can you smell the freshness of new life?

… Can you taste the sweetness of salvation?

… Would you wipe out the joyful tears in God’s face as He receives us – His adopted son and daughter back to Him?

… Would you rest your head and contrite heart in Father’s arms and receive His comfort?

… How do you feel as you being made whole and reborn again in Spirit?

… How do you feel as you are now cloaked in Light, no more in darkness?

… Would your heart be dancing and your lips singing?

Only in that Light and new life our spiritual senses will awaken. We, then, will be touched by the greatest breadth and width of God’s love for us. Only then will we be able to sing a new song and join with the whole creation to glorify our Creator and Redeemer:

*Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice,*

*let the sea and all that is in it be moved*

*let the fields be joyful*

*and all that is in them (Ps 95:11-12a).*

Consistently contemplating on this heavenly joy will keep our hearts unified with our Lord’s and harmonized with our brethren and all creation. In his salvation the whole creation comes to fullness and harmony.

*Give to the Lord, you families of the earth,*

*sing to the Lord (Ps 67:33a).*

*Chant praise to God who ascends*

*above the heights of the heavens to the east (Ps 67:33b-34a).*

There is no more room for earthly desires and selfish achievements. God is now our everything as we are always His. The gift of salvation is our treasure which we hold so dearly to our hearts until one day we arrive Home safe and sound. God knows we need His Divine assistance, so we are entrusted to the care and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We will have strength and wisdom to follow the only way going Home which Jesus has shown us.

Keep our eyes on the above because:

Look, he will give his voice, the voice of power,

give glory to God!

Above Israel is his greatness,

and his power is in the skies (Ps 67:34b-35).

We are not alone in our trials. If we ever fall again, we can stand up right away with His merciful power. Then reside in His healing love and truth, and go forward only with grace.

…. Would you love him above all else?

… Would you give him the highest priority in your life?

… Would you allow him to guide you through every single decision?

To faithfully and honestly examine these three questions might help you along as you strive to sanctify every single day of your life. Sing as loud as you can with your mind, your heart, your soul, and your surroundings that:

*This is the day the Lord has made*

*let us rejoice and be glad in it (Ps 117:24).*

 Sr. Lan Chi, LHC

For Sunday, Psalm 10:

 These Psalms of St. Francis were written for the simple lay person to pray each day. They are teeming with the spirit of St. Francis whose rule of life was to live the Gospel. *The Gospel, the life of Christ, is filled with the prayer of the Jewish people. The Psalms of the Old Testament Scriptures played a major role in Jesus’ prayer.* These words that crossed the lips and overflowed from the heart of Jesus became those of Francis of Assisi. He wanted his followers to become imitators of Jesus just as he had become. In imitation of Jesus, they would pray these psalms each day. Few books were available and these few psalms, 15 in total, could be memorized. These clips of the entire 150 Psalms had to be some of Francis’ favorites. Francis’ life was one of a living passion with Jesus. We pray these psalms with Francis as we carry our cross with Jesus.

Psalm 10 comes mostly from Psalm 65 which is a psalm of thanksgiving and praise. He begins “Cry out to the Lord with joy.” Joy is a primary Franciscan Virtue. All life and every moment of life is filled with joy if it is filled with Jesus. What more is there to want, to possess than Jesus. Even amid troubles and sorrow, loneliness and suffering of all kinds, the imitator of Christ is joyful. Not necessarily happy about the situation but joyful in heart because this moment, this circumstance is the will of God and will bring him to a closeness in following Jesus and preparing for eternal life with Him. Upon the cross in the midst of pain, excruciating pain, and humiliating words and action on the part of His adversaries, Jesus’ heart was full of joy because He was doing the will of His Father. The result of this pain would be the restoring of mankind, His brothers and sisters in this world, to Paradise. The gates of Heaven would be opened and the sins of all would be forgiven. In imitation we carry our crosses of illness, anxiety, fear, temptation, suffering and all that life casts upon us with joyful hearts. *In praise of God’s goodness and promise of eternal life, Francis rejoiced in the fact that Jesus shared our human nature and modeled for us life as it can be, joyful despite suffering.*

 Francis longed to be a martyr, to give his life for Christ in imitation of Him. He had heard the stories of the virgin martyrs who would rather suffer death than to give themselves in any way to anyone other than Jesus. If those innocent children could give their lives joyfully so could Francis. In order to share the unfathomable wealth of Jesus’ life and resurrection with others, he sought out the Sultan and had no dread of torture and death that this might bring. *The Sultan to the surprise of Francis and his companion Illuminatus was open to listening to Francis as he proclaimed the Gospel by word and personal conviction. It was not [Francis’] words that impressed the Sultan but rather his unflinching belief in Jesus as the Son of the one God who came to earth, died, and rose from the dead to save the souls of all people, saints, and sinners alike. Because of the depth of Francis’ conviction and his unquenchable joy, the Sultan released him to continue to spread the love of Christ to others. It was not God’s will that Francis be a blood martyr.*

Today the martyrs are many, giving all for Christ rather than deny their faith in Jesus. Some have literally been crucified like Jesus. *With joy let us face the sufferings laid before us by God in our daily lives. With joy in our hearts and the praise of God on our lips let us pray with Francis*

“Blessed forever be the name of His majesty.

And may all the earth be filled with His majesty.”

Sr. Connie Boulch

How to reflect on a Psalm (if you are getting stuck in prayer):

1. Slowly read through the Psalm. Is there a theme?
2. Underline the words that St. Francis used to suggest this theme
3. Ponder what these words mean. Is there any particular significance in the way St. Francis is expressing himself?
4. What picture(s) come to mind as you meditate on the words?
5. Using your own words, what is the Lord saying to you in this Psalm?
6. Ponder the words you chose. Is there any deeper meaning in them?
7. Try writing a Psalm yourself. Like Francis you can borrow freely from scripture, or you can compose it from your heart.

Sr. Sharon Giemza