



I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE RETREAT

Walter R...

INTRODUCTION

Jesus desires a relationship with you. You can come to know him through his Word in Scripture and in the Eucharist. This self-guided retreat has five meditations to help you do this. Each meditation can be prayed for one holy hour. Let your conversation with God fill your mind, heart, and soul. May the peace of Jesus be with you!

IN THIS GUIDE

Each meditation has a:

1. *Passage of Scripture on the Eucharist*
2. *Lectio Divina (divine reading)*: Prompts for how to pray with the passage.
3. *Words of Wisdom*: Teaching from a saint to give you more to think about on the Scripture's meaning.
4. *Reflection Questions*: Help you encounter Jesus by responding with your heart and mind to what you've read and prayed about. Note: As you develop a habit of prayer, journaling becomes a priceless treasure to know what God has said to you on your journey and is saying now.
5. *Closing Prayer*: Seek new grace from God as a result of your prayer time.

HOW TO START A PRAYER TIME

If you're new to a holy hour here are some recommendations to help you.

1. *Quiet Your Heart*: Spend some minutes in quiet. Free your mind from worries or distractions by surrendering them to God. Jesus, I surrender to you.
2. *Enter the Throne Room of God*: Make the sign of the cross and mark the time for prayer. Say an opening prayer. Keep it simple and from the heart. Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Holy Spirit. Reveal your Heart to me.
3. *Begin the Meditation*: Pause in the places where you feel God giving you encouragement to rest, speak to him, or listen. God usually speaks in the quiet.
4. *Talk to God*: Sometimes it's awkward to have a conversation with God if you've never done it, or haven't done it in a while. Just speak from your heart. God already knows what's happening in your life. He wants to hear from you and wants to speak to you.



MEDITATION ONE

"If we paused for a moment to consider what takes place in this Sacrament, I am sure that the thought of Christ's love for us would transform the coldness of our hearts into a fire of love and gratitude."

- ST. ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

THE BREAD OF LIFE

JOHN 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Lectio = Read

Read the passage. Listen with the ear of your heart first and then read it again, underlining or circling the words or phrases which stand out to you.

Meditatio = Reflect

Reflect on the text you circled and put yourself in the story. What do you taste, touch, hear, see and smell. Do you identify with someone in the passage. What is God saying to you?

Oratio = Respond

Speak directly to God about what you've just reflected on. You can question, praise, ponder, complain, wonder, argue, grieve, rejoice, etc. Be authentically you.

Contemplatio = Rest

Rest in the Lord. Quiet your heart, slow down your thoughts and let God speak back to you. How does God want this message of Scripture to impact your life?



MEDITATION ONE

WORDS OF WISDOM

St. John Vianney

All creatures have need of food in order to live, that is why God has made the trees and plants. It is a table well served where all the animals come to take the food which suits each one. But the soul also must be fed. Where then is its food? When God wished to give food to our soul to sustain it in the pilgrimage of this life, He looked over all the creation and found nothing worthy of it. Then He fell back and resolved to give of Himself. How amazing a mystery that my soul can only be truly satisfied by my God! The food of the soul is the Body and Blood of God! What beautiful nourishment! Nothing other than God can suffice. Only God can satisfy its hunger. It needs God absolutely.

With these two kinds of food - that of the soul - and that of the body which the earth brings forth. Our body which is only dust lives on the earth, but the food of the soul is the Body and Blood of our God. Bread is not made to only be put in a cabinet or kept in a storage container, but to be food, and daily food. The greatest compliment you can pay good bread is to eat it, isn't it?

O man, how happy should you be! You are made to adore, to love and to receive God! The bread of souls is in the tabernacle. He chose for instituting the Eucharist bread and wine, the food of all, both rich and poor, of strong or weak, to show us that his heavenly nourishment is for all Christians - little and great, subjects and kings: "Come to me all you who wish to preserve the life of grace and to have strength to fight the evil spirit. Come to the feast I have prepared for you. I exclude no one."

Oh, how wonderful it is my children when the priest holds up the Host and you can see It. Pray for the grace for your soul to say: "there is my food!" Oh, my children, we are well off but we shall only fully understand it in heaven. What a pity! If we could conceive a little of the glory of Communion, we would desire life only to have the happiness of making Jesus Christ our daily bread. All created things would be as nothing. We would despise them in order to cling to God alone, and all our actions would tend only to make us more worthy to receive it. When one can have a divine banquet every day, is it not bad manners not to eat from it?



MEDITATION TWO

"It is not to remain in a golden ciborium that He comes down each day from Heaven, but to find another Heaven, the Heaven of our soul in which He takes delight." - ST. THERESE OF LISEUX

COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN

JOHN 6:41-51

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

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WORDS OF WISDOM

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But if we speak of the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, we can say that here is the prodigy of the love of a God for us; it is here that His power, grace, and goodness shine in a marvelous manner. Here is the bread come down from heaven, the bread of Angels which is given to us to be the food of our souls; the bread of the strong to comfort and sweeten our sorrows; here is the bread of the wayfarers; it is the key which opens heaven for us; so said the Savior: "whosoever will receive Me will have life eternal." To give us this bread, Jesus multiplies miracles, inverts the order of nature and suspends its laws.

What was the cause then of the resurrection of Lazarus? It was because he had often received Our Lord into his house. The Savior loved him so much that He shed tears when He saw that he was dead. How then could He leave in the humiliation of the grave, those whom He has honored by His visit in Holy Communion, who have longed for Him and who have received Him into a pure heart inflamed with love. He has said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood shall live eternally, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Holy Communion is for us the pledge of eternal life, so that it guarantees heaven to us. It is a pledge sent from Heaven to tell us that it will one day be our dwelling place. Oh, if only we could really understand how much Jesus Christ loves to come into our hearts! Once He is there, He would wish never to leave it. He can no longer separate Himself from us during our life nor after our death. Jesus Christ will raise up our bodies as much more glorious as we shall have more often and more worthily received Him. There is nothing we do which adorns the body more for Heaven than Holy Communion.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What struck you most in your prayer time?
2. What did you learn about Jesus and the depth of His love?
3. How does this passage apply to your own experience/life?
4. How is God inspiring a deeper conversion of mind/heart for you in understanding the Eucharist?
5. What is one concrete thing you can do to respond to that deeper conversion?



MEDITATION THREE

"This is the food and drink that transforms man's life and opens before him the way to eternal life. "

- ST. JOHN PAUL II

ABIDE IN ME

JOHN 6:52-59

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

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MEDITATION THREE

WORDS OF WISDOM

St. John Vianney

When one has received Communion, the soul revels in the embraces of love as a bee in the flowers. He who receives the Eucharist loses himself in God as a drop of water in the ocean. They cannot be separated.

“He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood”, said Jesus Christ, “abides in Me and I in him”. “My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed”; so that by Holy Communion, the adorable Blood of Jesus Christ flows in our veins, His Flesh is truly mingled with ours. We are united to His Person as food is to our flesh.

St. Paul expressed this union very well when he says: “It is no longer I that live, but Jesus Christ Who lives in me.” It is no longer I who act, who think, but it is Jesus Christ who acts and thinks in me. If we receive Him often and worthily, our thoughts, our desires, and also all our actions and our proceedings have the same end as Jesus Christ had while He was on earth. If we love God, we do not attach ourselves to any of the things here below. Our hearts and minds aspire only for heaven. O what happiness! No, no, it will only be in heaven that we shall understand it. O my God, to be a creature enriched by such a gift.

He who receives Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, is so united to Him that they are like two pieces of wax that are melted together, and end by becoming only one. When you have received Our Lord, you feel your soul purified and bathed in the love of God.

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MEDITATION FOUR

“When you have received Him, stir up your heart to do Him homage; speak to Him about your spiritual life, gazing upon Him in your soul where He is present for your happiness; welcome Him as warmly as possible, and behave outwardly in such a way that your actions may give proof to all of His Presence.”

- ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

SOME OF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE

JOHN 6:60-69

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

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MEDITATION FOUR

WORDS OF WISDOM

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Some mothers there are who give their children to strangers to be nourished. Our Lord does not act this way. He feeds us with His own Blood and unites us to Himself in every way. By His Incarnation He has willed to be born of our race, to come to all. By the Eucharist He comes to each one of us, and gives us life and allows us to feed on Himself. It is without a doubt very humiliating for the good God to come into our hearts. He does so to find there a soul that He loves, that He has bought at the cost of His own Blood. Do not let us then be indifferent since we have been favored with such love and such glory. Have you ever noticed how eagerly an infant feeds at his mother's breast? Let us come with the same eagerness to this Holy Table where we draw spiritual food and drink. Let us draw with greater strength still than the little ones, the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us have only one regret — to be deprived of this heavenly nourishment.

My children go, then, to Jesus with love and confidence. Go, to live by Him in order to live for Him. Do not say that you have too much to do. Has not the Divine Savior said: "Come to Me all you who work and are heavily laden; come to Me and I will comfort you"? Can you resist an invitation so full of tenderness and friendship? You work each day. Be in communion with God then each day. Do not say that you are not worthy. What nonsense! It is true you are not worthy, but you are in need. If our Savior had had our worthiness in mind, He would never have instituted His beautiful Sacrament of love, because no one in the world, not even the Saints nor the Angels, nor the Archangels, not even the Blessed Virgin, are worthy of it. Since He wishes to abase Himself to our misery, let us work then to merit and receive Him every day. This is what the Christians did in the early Church. Be like them.

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MEDITATION FIVE

"When you look at the Crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now." - ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA

THIS IS MY BODY GIVEN FOR YOU

LUKE 22:14-23

And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

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MEDITATION FIVE

WORDS OF WISDOM

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Before instituting this sacrament of love, Jesus knew very well how much scorn and contempt He was exposing Himself to. Jesus Christ has chosen for Himself the humiliations and at this price has assured to us forever the happiness and benefit of His presence.

What love is there like to that of Jesus Christ? He chose for the institution of the Eucharist the eve of the day on which He was to be put to death! At this moment all Jerusalem is in a fever. The whole people are angry, and all conspire to bring about His death, and it is precisely at this moment that He prepares for them the most ineffable pledge of His love. Men weave the darkest plots against Him, and He thinks only what is the most precious gift He can give them!

They think only of lifting Him on an infamous cross to die. He thinks only of raising an altar on which to immolate Himself each day for us. They prepare to shed His Blood, and Jesus Christ wishes this same Blood to be for us the wine of immortality for the consolation and happiness of our souls. Yes, we can truly say Jesus Christ has loved us and has exhausted the wealth of His love, sacrificing Himself in every way that His wisdom and His power could inspire. O tender and generous love of a God for vile creatures like us, how unworthy we are of it!

When Jesus Christ worked this great miracle (of the Consecration) He lifted His eyes to heaven, and gave thanks to His heavenly Father, showing us thus how this happy moment for us was desired by Him. Yes, my children, this Divine Savior seems then to say: My Blood is impatient to flow for you; My Body burns with desire to be wounded to cure your wounds; the thought of My sufferings and death fill Me with joy, because through them you will find a remedy for all your ills. O, what a love of a God for His creatures!

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OUR LADY
OF GOOD COUNSEL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



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