

5 Things You'll Learn on A Silent Retreat *By Fr. Brenton Cordeiro*

Are you feeling low? Tired? Empty? Perhaps God is asking you to go on a silent retreat.

Retreats, particularly those done in silence, allow us to set time apart for God by disconnecting from the very connected world we live in. Retreats can be for as little as one day to as long as one month, going away by yourself to be alone with God. You can do this at a nearby retreat center, a cabin by a lake or any other place where you will be able to have some peace and quiet to pray. Your time can be used for reflection, prayer, meditating on Scripture or just being with God, especially sitting before Him in Adoration — allowing your heart and the heart of God to engage in a dialogue. When you pour out Your heart to Him, He will pour out His heart into yours.

If you have never done a silent retreat before — consider it. Whether you are coasting through life with no major complaints, or you are going through a difficult time or a major transition in your life, it is a great idea to give your spiritual life and relationship with God the space it needs to grow and deepen.

In the words of Venerable Bruno Lanteri, *“There is nothing in this world so valuable as spending several days peacefully occupied only with the great matters in life: God, the soul and eternity.”*

If you are married, and more so if you have kids, you might wonder how you would be able to carve out even a couple of days in your schedule. However, even if you do have a family, I will say this: the benefits of doing a silent retreat far outweigh the challenges that will arise from you leaving home for a few days. Given the demands of family life, you may need to start planning to go away on your retreat weeks or even months in advance, to ensure that your absence from home while on retreat will not lead to major disruptions/challenges at home.

Again, if this is a challenging season of life for you, then going on a silent retreat could make all the difference. The greatest blessing of going on a silent retreat will be that you will return from your retreat closer to God. And your newfound spiritual vigor will definitely flow into your marriage, family and everyday life.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta once said: *“We need to find God and God cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees and flowers and grass—grow in silence. See the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life.”*

And if the words from these great saints haven't convinced you, here are five more reasons a silent retreat may be exactly what you need in your life right now.

1. **Recharge your spiritual batteries:** No one plans to push God aside, but sometimes in the craziness of life, that's what happens. We know we need God, and we know we want God, but sometimes we get so caught up with the demands of life that the opposite of what we want actually happens. Spending some days on silent retreat helps you get perspective on the important things in life. Most significantly, away from the noise and busyness of life, it allows you to recognize the hand of God in your life. He loves you up on a retreat, strengthens you, and gives you hope if you're struggling.

2. **Clarity:** If you are currently wrestling with major questions or issues in your life, a silent retreat will clear your mind of the stuff that's muddying the waters. The prophet Isaiah said: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:21). In the solitude of your retreat, you can seek the will and voice of God most fruitfully, while you sit with Him in His light and peace.
3. **Kickstarting good spiritual habits:** It is best to have a silent retreat at a retreat center that is built for such spiritual exercises. Such retreat centers usually have trained lay people and priests available to serve as spiritual directors to guide you during your retreat. And if you find that experience helpful, consider getting a spiritual director after your retreat — someone with the spiritual maturity and wisdom to talk to on a regular basis so that you keep the fire of your faith life burning well beyond any one-off retreat.

At the same time, chances are that your retreat will involve attending Mass frequently, spending time in prayer and reading the Scriptures daily, and going to Confession at least once during your retreat. Reminding yourself of the joys and benefits of receiving the sacraments and nurturing spiritual disciplines will hopefully encourage you to continue some of the practices you first began while on retreat.

4. **Purge something that doesn't belong in you:** Sometimes people go on their retreats with a specific goal in mind — inner healing, or overcoming some sinful habit, fear or insecurity, and so on. A silent retreat allows you to bring God into whatever wound needs His healing touch. Often, God will surprise you and reveal even more areas of your life that you need to get rid of to grow in virtue and friendship with Him. So, drop that burden you are carrying, and let Your Heavenly Father hold you, carry you, heal you and love you.
5. **Rest:** "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). Those words from Jesus ring true in a very literal way while on silent retreat. A silent retreat allows you to get some much-needed sleep, along with a whole lot of spiritual and emotional rest as well. Walk into a silent retreat tired, with your mind fogged up with the craziness of life, and walk out refreshed and rejuvenated, alive in the Spirit and love of God.

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