

### III. Preparation of Self for Retreat

Page No.

Preparation of Self for Retreat

III-1

III-0

### III. PREPARATION OF SELF FOR RETREAT

A very major part of retreat leadership is preparing oneself for the event. It is not likely that one can walk into the moment of retreat without having taken time to quiet one's soul and experience any great degree of success. Obviously, there will be variations among individuals in regard to the intensity of the preparation and the amount of time devoted to it. This preparation is not to be confused with content preparation which is equally important and will also be addressed, but is concerned with being emptied and cleansed and prepared for whatever work the Holy spirit will do through you during retreat.

The following suggestions, authored by Bill Vamos, will be helpful in getting you ready, emotionally and spiritually, for retreat leadership.

#### APPROACH TO RETREAT - Your Own Preparation

A. Remind yourself of the purpose of retreat - to help deepen our communion with God, with each other, and with ourselves in order to be set free for compassionate, life changing, world changing ministry. (Review the passages in Luke 3 and 4 which we have seen as a model for retreat.) Do your content preparation in the light and by the challenge of our purpose.

B. Pray for your retreatants, your co-leaders, and yourself on a regular basis prior to retreat. A list of retreatants usually is available 7 to 10 days prior. I find it helpful simply to lay before God each person's name, "In Jesus, name." Prior to the retreat which you are leading, gift yourself with a mini retreat (between 24 hours and 3 hours.) This is a time for you to rest, sleep, pray, journal (if

you wish.) Lean into silence yourself, and center yourself in God's presence in Solitude. This also is an opportunity to let go of your own performance and success worries, and turn the retreat and the people coming to it over to our Lord. God's presence is manifested in people on retreat. There is nothing you can do to keep the Lord away, including your mistakes and failures as a retreat leader. In fact, there is no way you can fail when you lead retreat - it is not possible. God in Christ is the leader of retreat. The Lord knows what to do with it and will give each person what he or she needs. As you imagine the retreat ahead of time, see the Risen Christ as the Hand that leads the retreatants and see yourself as one of the gloves he wears while he is leading.

1. I find the following dialogue prayer helps me:

"Lord, I willfully turn over to you the retreatants, the retreat process, my co-leaders, and myself. Your love be done. Your will be done." I then let myself mentally hear God responding, as follows: "Bill, I take what you have given me. I will take care of the people and the process. trust me and trust yourself. Whatever happens, I will take care of it. You just relax and enjoy yourself. That is all you have to do. I will take care of everything else."

C. Set preparation schedule for readying your leadership input. Target the deadline one week before retreat so you can have time to be familiar with your content, to have your own mini-retreat, and to practice aloud your particular leadership part. Thorough preparation builds your confidence and is likely to provide inspiration for your retreatants.

D. Be gentle with yourself – practice this often during the week before retreat; you’re going to need to do it often on retreat.

E. When you prepare Retreat Presentations (the inputs preceding the times of Solitude and Prayer) work from your own experience and/or your growing edge. Work from Scripture passages that really nurture you. Be sure to study a commentary on your passages. (I recommend The Daily Study Bible by William Barclay or the Cambridge Bible Commentary – both are good.)

Once you have done the background work, prepare your presentations as personal sharing. Your study is the roots. Where God has led you is the fruit. Illustrations from other people’s lives or from stories you have read are also very effective, so long as they keep continuity with your presentation.

The important thing is Truth (Christ Jesus) comes through persons and not words. (Words are tools. Use too many and you’ll build a monster.) As Reel Howe has put it: “Truth (Christ Jesus) comes in relationship. Truth happens to us between us.” When you finish your presentation preparation, try it on someone whose judgment and maturity you trust, and ask for feedback.

Presentation themes will be dealt with in more detail later. See Section V for examples