



TRANSITION RETREAT: FACING CHANGE

GETTING STARTED

Find a quiet, comfortable place to experience this retreat -- at home, outside, or at a local place of worship. Call to mind a challenging transition that you are currently facing.

Now, settle into the moment...

- ☐ *Close your eyes and breathe deeply*
- ☐ *Recognize that God is with you*

PRAYER

God, your love is constant and steadfast. You cause the autumn leaves to turn the colors of fire and gold, children to blossom and grow, and new planets to be made from dying stars. But you, God, never change. In times of transition, give us faith in your constancy. Help us to trust in your unceasing goodness. Teach us to hope in you -- the one who was, is, and is to come.

Pray: What transition(s) or major life changes are you experiencing? Offer God any anticipation, anxiety, and excitement you may be feeling.

READING: Psalm 139:1-18

LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You sift through my travels and my rest;
with all my ways you are familiar.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
LORD, you know it all.
Behind and before you encircle me
and rest your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
far too lofty for me to reach.
Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?
If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
if I lie down in Sheol, there you are.
If I take the wings of dawn
and dwell beyond the sea,
Even there your hand guides me,
your right hand holds me fast.
If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,

and night shall be my light." --
Darkness is not dark for you,
and night shines as the day.
Darkness and light are but one.
You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works!
My very self you know.
My bones are not hidden from you,
When I was being made in secret,
fashioned in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw me unformed;
in your book all are written down;
my days were shaped, before one came to be.
How precious to me are your designs, O God;
how vast the sum of them!
Were I to count them, they would outnumber the
sands;
when I complete them, still you are with me.



TRANSITION RETREAT: FACING CHANGE

THOUGHTS ON THE READING

Our family has [moved](#) five times in the past six years. Setting off on the road to a new home in a new city can sometimes make us feel uprooted and out of sorts. Clinging to something constant has helped us forge new roads together as a family. The unknown is scary, but we cling to what we know: We love each other, we love God, and God loves us. Wherever life takes us, we go together and we go with God. Even though we often hear the psalms spoken at Mass or church services, they are hymns -- spiritual songs inspired by the Holy Spirit to give voice to our praise, thanksgiving, and lament. In this particular hymn, the psalmist sings of a God who is ever-present and all-knowing. There is nowhere we can go where God is not already present. There is nothing in our hearts -- no burdens, no hopes, no shortcomings, no desires -- that God does not discern completely. There is no twist or turn that our life's journey brings that God has not foreseen before all time. No matter the transition that lies before us -- whether it's a new job, a new city, a new relationship, a new baby -- God is with us. God knows us. God has plans for us. When everything around us seems to be changing, God is unchanging. In a time of uncertainty or upheaval, the Holy Spirit invites us to sing along with the ancient psalm, boldly proclaiming (though our voices may be wavering and our hearts may feel unsteady), "How precious to me are your designs, O God!"

REFLECTING ON THE READING

Take a few moments to think about (or even write down) your responses to the following.

- ☐ *Transitions often remind us of how fragile our sense of security is. They remind us of our vulnerability, which can make us feel uncomfortable. How can being pushed outside our comfort zone be spiritually fruitful? Could this be a new opportunity to grow? Could this be a challenge that teaches me something about myself?*
- ☐ *God made us and knows us. In fact, God knows us better than we know ourselves. How does God's intimate knowledge of us help us to trust in a time of change?*
- ☐ *The psalm tells us that God encircles us, God is before us and behind us. The hand of God lovingly rests upon us. God is with us in the present moment, God is with us in the midst of change, and God waits for us in the future. In what ways can you already recognize God as a companion on this journey? How can your life reflect this companionship? What might you do to rely more upon the presence of God in every aspect of your transition?*



TRANSITION RETREAT: FACING CHANGE

PRAYING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Eternal God, you are infinite and intimate. We give you praise for your greatness. We give you thanks for your closeness. You made each person in your own image. We are -- all of us -- wonderfully made. Reassure all of your children swept by the winds of change that you go behind them, within them, and before them. We offer you our sisters and brothers displaced by war and famine. We offer you those who are unemployed and in search of means to support themselves and their families. We offer you those who wait to give birth and those who wait to be born. We offer you those who embark on a new academic endeavor. We offer you those who near death and their journey home to you. We offer you those preparing to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. We offer you those preparing to begin their lives as priests, deacons, and religious sisters or brothers. We offer you those who are imagining their lives anew after battling addiction or surviving domestic violence. Claim and encircle your people, God. Rest your loving hand upon us when we feel uncertain. Lead us. Give us strength to help bear each other's burdens in times of transition. Give us courage to face the future with trust in your goodness. Amen.

MAKE A COMMITMENT NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS

Using your reflection responses as a guide, make a personal commitment to embrace the transition(s) that you face with trust in God's goodness.

Ideas: Sometimes reaching out to help someone else can help put our own anxiety into perspective. As you pray your way through your own transition, reach out to help others in the midst of a big change. Call your local pregnancy center or domestic violence shelter to see if they're in need of toiletries, household items, or other supplies. Send a new student you know -- whether they're a preschooler or first-year seminarian -- a care package or a simple note to say you're praying for them. Leave a friendly note with words of encouragement for a neighbor who lost their job (and, if you can afford it, a gift certificate for a local restaurant or grocery store). Call a relative who recently retired or who lost a significant other to let them know you're thinking of them.

CONCLUSION

St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away; God never changes." As you prepare to finish this retreat, spend a few moments prayerfully repeating her prayer until it becomes your own. These words were written on one of the saint's bookmarks. Write these words some place you'll see them every day this week. Pray them whenever you feel anxious.

Retreat and Reflections by [Caitlin Kennel Kim](#)