



# TRUSTING IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE: A RETREAT FOR THOSE FACING SERIOUS ILLNESS

## GETTING STARTED

Find a quiet, comfortable place to experience this retreat – at home, outside, or at a local place of worship. If you are confined to bed, consider having someone open the blinds or curtains to brighten your room. Imagine the love of God as bright, warm light. Picture that light coursing through your veins with every beat of your heart, filling your lungs with every breath, and radiating from the nucleus of every cell in your body.

Now settle into the moment:

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

## PRAYER

God, you look with tenderness on the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. You tend hatchlings nestled in their mother's down and cause rain to quench the parched roots of wildflowers. Before you formed me in my mother's womb, you knew me. You watch over me. You are always closer than my next breath. My life is precious to you. Give me trust in your providence and comfort in your loving plan for my life. When I am afraid, nurture hope in me. When I am angry, grant me peace. When I am overwhelmed, be my shelter. You order all things to draw me to yourself who is my refuge, my joy, and my salvation forever.

*Pray: Where can you see God's loving care for you as you navigate your illness? Using your own words, offer a prayer for trust in God's loving plans for your life and courage to live with joyful gratitude.*

## READING ([Jeremiah 29:11-14a](#))

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the LORD.

## THOUGHTS ON THE READING

**NEWSFLASH:** You are not in control. This is one of the most terrifying realizations we face on our life's journey. For those of us who hope in a loving God, it is a realization that calls us to trust in God's goodness even (read: *especially*) when we find ourselves in distress. When we're facing a diagnosis of serious illness, our lack of control over even the most basic aspects of our lives can become painfully obvious. The reading from Jeremiah has the prophet sharing God's words of hope to a community that is enduring upheaval and unrest. These words are for us, too. God is asking us to trust. To trust that God loves us infinitely and wants what is best for us. To trust that even in pain and uncertainty God is drawing us closer. To trust that when we seek God, we will find that God is already with us. To trust that even when we feel lost and alone we are being shepherded with love by the One who made us, died for us, and dwells within us.



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## REFLECTING ON THE READING

Read the passage from Jeremiah again, remembering that these words are addressed to you. Using the guided imagery from the beginning of the retreat, imagine that God's love surrounds and fills you with warm light. Allow yourself to sit quietly with this imagery for as long as you like, breathing deeply.

## PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNITY

Loving God, you ask us to trust in you when the future seems unclear. You alone see all things. You have carved a path for each of us ... a path that leads us to your very heart. We give you thanks for your loving care of our lives. Give us the grace to walk our paths with childlike trust in your goodness. Reassure all of your children facing serious illness or injury that you go behind them, within them, and before them. We offer you their loved ones who walk with them. Bless them with courage, bring them to the fullness of hope, and grant them peace. We offer you those who have committed their lives to caring for the sick and elderly ... doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Bless their hands so they may be instruments of your healing and bless their hearts so they can perceive the sanctity of every life in their care. We offer you those whose illness hastens their death and their journey home to you. Bless them and welcome them into your heavenly kingdom where illness, suffering, and even death are no more. You are the Divine Physician. Lord, have mercy on us. Amen.

## CONCLUSION

St. Thérèse of Lisieux wrote:

*For me, prayer is a movement of the heart; it is a simple glance toward Heaven; it is a cry of gratitude and love in times of trial as well as in times of joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus...I have not the courage to look through books for beautiful prayers...I do like a child who does not know how to read; I say very simply to God what I want to say, and He always understands me.*

As you prepare to end this retreat, heed the words of St. Thérèse. Spend some time talking to God. Don't worry about saying the right words. Say the words that come naturally. If you're having trouble finding the words, trust that God knows exactly what you need. Rest quietly for a few minutes in the knowledge that you are a child safe in the loving arms of God.