

INTRODUCTION TO THE ONLINE EASTER RETREAT

Hello, and welcome to our Online Easter Retreat. This is the first time we are doing an Online Easter Retreat. We are happy to create this space and opportunity to spend this Easter Triduum together in prayer and in community, so needed in this historical time of the pandemic. Thank you for joining us and journeying together.

Some of you have asked me, what is this retreat about? How will this work? You might wonder, what is an online retreat?

This online retreat wants to offer you a space to pray, by listening and participating in guidelines for prayer, Easter Triduum liturgies and Stations of the Cross and Stations of the Light. We will connect via Zoom and we'll send the link and details to you in an attached file and email. The majority of the sessions will be live streamed in Zoom. But we will be also uploading the material in a webpage which you will be able to access with a password that we will send you in an email. The uploading will be gradual, after each live streaming session and according to UK time. At the beginning of this webpage, you will be able to see the schedule of the retreat and another video inviting you to build up an altar, as a preparation for this retreat. Do have a look at the schedule and it would be very helpful if you could try to connect 15 minutes before the sessions so we can all be ready to start on time.

These days, we are available to help you with your connection and to listen to you, if you'd like to share on a personal level. Contact us at ukverbumdei@gmail.com, please, and we'll get back to you. Ah, and do send us an email with the prayers that you'd like us to include in the bidding prayers of our liturgies and masses.

Now a bit about the retreat itself...

A couple of weeks ago, when the coronavirus situation was starting here in the West, Bishop Barron, cited a phrase from Pascal, the philosopher: "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quiet in a room alone, wrestling with the great questions of life." And Bishop Barron continued, instead of sitting quiet and alone, dealing with the great questions of life, we sought distractions. But now, this situation of isolation we are all in, all shut down, away from life's distractions, waiting for the coronavirus to pass, gives us an opportunity to face the great questions of life buried within us: Does God exist? What's the purpose of life? Who am I? Who are we? Why am I here? Is there any meaning in suffering?

A retreat gives us the opportunity to make space and time to bring to God so many questions we may find within us. Jesus, there are many things I don't understand, and I need you to explain me... Jesus, I feel afraid, anxious with the uncertainties of life, and I come to you, we come to you. We ask Jesus to help us to journey with Him, who in His Passion, at the end of his life, also passed through so many of the uncertainties of life. Yet he knows and can help us live this time of global human vulnerability in hope.

We want to invite you to try to make time and silence in order to live this Easter Triduum in prayer. We know that praying at home or in your room is different and it can be challenging. Yes, it is different than if you were in a retreat centre, but our invitation is try to make more time to pray and to live this time in prayer, even when you have to cook, do house chores or attend to your family. Try to live it in prayer mode. Also if you were in a retreat, we would advise you to switch off your internet. We understand that this is difficult during this time, as it is the only way we have to be in touch with our loved ones and the world, so we'd say try to reduce your engagement with the internet during these three days of retreat, to what is really needed, so as to foster more of an inner connection with God.

Let your focus be to contemplate and learn from Jesus, pouring out your heart to Him and listening to His Words of hope. *Lord, help us understand the mystery of life and suffering, but also the victory and greatness of love and truth above all: love and truth are at the very centre of the gospels, of Jesus' life, from the beginning to the end.*

Yes, the coronavirus is an invisible enemy, but let's connect with and ask our invisible friend, the Holy Spirit, to guide us as we journey with Jesus, accompanying Him in His way to Jerusalem and to Calvary, in the hope of the resurrection.