

What is this week all about?

This week of guided prayer is based on what is sometimes called a **retreat in daily life**.

A traditional retreat means withdrawing from everyday life for a while. It's a wonderful experience, but it's difficult to take the time, it can be expensive, and sometimes it is just not possible.

This is not a new problem!

The idea of making a retreat in daily life comes from St Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish priest of the 16th century. Ignatius was passionate about experiencing God and serving God. He was also keen to encourage and teach others to do the same. He recognised that in his century as in ours, it's not always feasible to withdraw from every day commitments to seek God, so he devised this way of paying attention to God while continuing to be engaged in our ordinary lives.

This actually fitted very well with his theology and his spiritual practice because Ignatian spirituality places great emphasis on discerning God's presence in the everyday activities of ordinary life.

Ignatius recommended working with another person - a spiritual director or prayer guide who will help you listen to God, notice where God is active in your life and discern how God is inviting you to respond. What we do in this week is a simplified and abbreviated form of the Retreat in Daily life devised by Ignatius.

You are taking a week to focus on God. Each of us makes a commitment to spend a half hour a day in prayer. That means finding a space and a time that you can guard from interruptions.

This could be an alarming thought. You may wonder how on earth you will fill the time.

Prayer can be much more than sitting or kneeling with your eyes closed and speaking in words to God. Your prayer this week may include writing, walking, singing, reading scripture, imagining, quietly listening - and also talking to God. Your first prayer time tomorrow could include time to reflect on what happens today. You might use a journal or notebook, or your computer to record your experience.

Whatever you choose to do, remember that this is primarily a time when God is inviting you just to be present. You don't have to be a saint or even very good at praying. God your maker, redeemer and lover is waiting for you and that's all that matters.

As well as prayer you're also making a commitment to meet with a prayer guide, also for about half an hour a day.

Why do this?

It's been the experience of many people that reflecting on and talking about your prayer helps to deepen and enrich it. Your prayer guide is not going to instruct you or boss you around, rather just walk beside you for a few days and notice with you what God is doing in your life. And this is completely confidential.

May God bless your journey this week.

What is A Week of Guided Prayer all about?

"Listen to your life,
See it for the fathomless
mystery it is.

In the boredom and pain of it,
no less than in the excitement
and gladness:

touch, taste, smell your way to
the holy and hidden heart of
it,

because in the last analysis
all moments are key moments
and life itself is grace."

Frederick Buechner

