

## JM Lenten Time Apart

April, 2020

We offer you a few guidelines and suggestions *before you begin* your personal JM Lenten Time Apart retreat:

- We encourage you to receive this gift of set apart time and space to simply be with God, as a means of soul care not only for yourself, but also for the sake of those with whom you may live with, work among, and serve.
- Plan to spend a minimum of two hours in this time for silent retreat. We highly encourage you to set aside 3-5 hours if you can. If you live with others, we suggest that you communicate your intention and desire to be left alone and in silence.
- As you take some time to physically prepare for this personal retreat, you may want to play some instrumental, soul settling music. We recommend the album [Dancing at the Gate by Dana Cunningham](#).
- Before you begin, choose a quiet, comfortable space within your home or outside if the weather permits. Have with you your Bible, pen and journal. You may also want to have a hot beverage and a glass of water available, a few prepared snacks or a meal in case you get hungry, a blanket for warmth, and any other items that will help you settle in place for the program portion of this retreat.
- We *highly* recommend that you print the materials you will need for the retreat. If you do not have access to a printer and want to use an electronic device, we encourage you to have your retreat materials downloaded and easily accessible. After you have downloaded your retreat materials, we suggest that you also turn off wifi access so you won't be interrupted.
- **Please listen to each of the retreat program elements in MP3 format on your favorite listening device. Find the recording here: [JourneyMates.org/Resources](https://www.journeymates.org/resources)** as well as a link to the Reflective Teacher [here](#). We encourage you to push pause between each recording of each retreat program element (Welcome/Guided Silence, Reflection, Lectio Divina, Closing Reflection and Blessing) and to follow or add to the Recommended Time Frame for each Retreat element.
- Lastly, as you settle into your quiet space with God, allow yourself to unhook from all that you brought with you physically, emotionally, and relationally. Open up to God's presence and invitation to you. Resist performing or producing. As best you can, simply enjoy being present to God and to your own soul.

## **JM Lenten Time Apart**

God is with you. As you begin this personal retreat time, we invite you to take a few moments and allow your heart, mind and soul to settle into the silence. As thoughts, distractions, and resistances arise, simply notice them and offer them to the Lord. You can return to them later, but for now, simply be with what is. Let go of any plans or agenda in your mind. For now simply be with God. Take a deep breath in, and out. Allow your body to relax. Rest in the presence of God. With God, you are safe. With God, you are loved. With God, you belong.

*"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace."*

Matthew 6:6 Message

## **JM Lenten Time Apart** PERSONAL RETREAT GUIDE

### **Recommended Time frame**

15 min	Welcome and Overview
	<i>The retreat program elements are offered as tools of transformation. We hope that you will engage prayerfully as you listen to the recordings and receive the Holy Spirit's gentle leading. Approximate time frames provided are suggested amounts of time to allow for each movement of this personal JM Lenten Time Apart. Feel the freedom to push pause on the recording and spend as much time and receive as much silence as you would like with each retreat offering. Find the recording <a href="#">here</a>.</i>
15 min.	Guided Silence and Prayer
25 min.	Reflection - <i>In the Midst: An Invitation to Stay with Lent</i>
20 min.	Prayerful Reading of Scripture/Lectio Divina: Psalm 23
	*See Lectio Passage, Lectio Divina Prayer, "Strong Arms" painting and Viseo Divina Guide on pages 5-8
90 min.	Individual Silence, Solitude and Reflection
	*See Prompts on page 4
10 min.	Retreat Reflection and Blessing
	*See Closing Prayer and Blessing on page 9

## Individual Silence, Solitude and Reflection Prompts

***Embrace these moments alone as a gift of unhurried time with God. You may want to let one or more of these prompts guide your reflection and journaling.***

~ Take the time you need to settle and become quiet, to simply be with whatever "is" in your life. You may find it helpful to simply sit in a quiet place for a while, 'download' in your journal or simply sit in silence for a few moments. Endeavor to open up to God's presence and invitation to you in this time.

~ When it seems right, gently and patiently move inward to your own soul. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you in your reflection. Notice and name whatever is happening in you now. Perhaps you are fatigued, energized, motivated, unfocused, anxious, numb, tearful, fearful, or hopeful. Simply be with whatever you are sensing, and allow the Spirit to reveal what you might need to ponder in your life today.

~How is the soil of your soul? Are you ready to get down on your hands and knees with the Holy Spirit and explore together any work God might be wanting to do as the Expert Gardener? Is there sifting that needs to be done? Are there weeds that need pulling? What Life affirming elements might need to be added? What might need greater attention and nurture in your life?

~If you are led to spend time with the lectio passage read today, or the images offered, notice how open, defensive or resistant you may be feeling. Be curious; stay with God in that awareness, allowing him to gently be with you and guide you deeper into his will for your life. As you sit with the passage, these questions may be helpful in your exploration of this text with the Lord: Where in my life have I gotten away from God? What might coming home look like? What might returning to the truth that God is our Good Shepherd look like in these days of Lent? Be curious and stay with God in what surfaces as you sit with this familiar psalm and your life as it is today.

~ You may want to engage with the painting "Strong Arms". Find it and a Viseo Divina Guide on pages 8 and 9 of this guide.

~ If you feel led to sit with the unique circumstances we find ourselves in, allow the Spirit to help you name any feelings or experiences of consolation or desolation that surface around your present experience. As you hold those feelings and emotions before the Lord, what do you sense Him saying to your heart and soul? Do you sense a promise or invitation he is offering you?

~What might God be calling you toward as you continue in your Lenten journey, especially in the midst of this unusual space and circumstances we find ourselves living with? Is there an invitation? Are you aware of any particular longing? Listen for God's voice and journal God's heart for you today.

## Lectio Passage

### Psalm 23 NIV

**1** The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
**2** He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
**3** he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.  
**4** Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.  
**5** You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
**6** Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.

### Psalm 23 MSG

**1-3** God, my shepherd!  
I don't need a thing.  
You have bedded me down in lush meadows,  
you find me quiet pools to drink from.  
True to your word,  
you let me catch my breath  
and send me in the right direction.  
**4** Even when the way goes through  
Death Valley, I'm not afraid  
when you walk at my side.  
Your trusty shepherd's crook  
makes me feel secure.  
**5** You serve me a six-course dinner  
right in front of my enemies.  
You revive my drooping head;  
my cup brims with blessing.  
**6** Your beauty and love chase after me  
every day of my life.  
I'm back home in the house of God  
for the rest of my life.

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\*\*\*"Lectio divina (pronounced "lec-tsee-oh di-vee-nah"), Latin for "sacred reading", "divine reading", or "holy reading," is a spiritual practice that has been in use for over a thousand years. It was originally practiced by monks who spent a large portion of their days praying and reading Scripture. While reading they noticed that at times individual words, phrases, or verses seemed to leap off the page with a special personal importance. Have you had the same experience? These special words or verses can give a sense of encouragement, comfort, thankfulness, or conviction that often applies to present situations and can draw us closer to God. Lectio divina is an intimate way of communicating with the Lord. All too often in prayer and worship, we talk to God, but don't give him a chance to communicate back to us. Lectio divina employs God's own words to have a personal conversation with him."  
<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/lectio-divina/home>

\*Background music in recording of scripture reading is from "20:17" by Olafur Arnalds, Nils Frahm

## Lectio Divina Prayer

*The Prayer of Lectio Divina is composed of six different movements that together draw us to God. If you don't have electronic access to the MP3 JM Lenten Time Apart recording of the lectio readings, or if you prefer to read the passages, you may choose to use the following prompts for each reading of the Lectio Divina Prayer/Prayerful Scripture Reading.*

**Preparation:** In silence I prepare my heart for God to speak to me. I relinquish myself and my agenda to God. I become present to the moment and to whatever God has for me in this time.

**First Reading: Receiving** I listen to the chosen text as I read it, or in a group setting, as it is read to me. The reading is followed by an interval of silence and private prayer. As I listen, my intent is to hear God's personal communication to me in, through and "around" the text. I look for what most impresses me, what stands out; and I move toward those things in prayer. The movement of my prayers is toward simplicity. I look for the one image, the one word, the one impression from the text that God has for me.

**Second Reading: Meditation** After the passage is read a second time, I hold before and within my own heart whatever word or impression comes to me. I allow what I have been given to interact with my thoughts, my hopes, my memories, my fears and my emotions as those things arise within me. I allow God to continue to guide me. I ponder, and perhaps wrestle with God's Word to me. I notice what happens when I do these things. I engage my whole self with the text, so that it can speak to me in the real circumstances of my life and my being.

**Third Reading: Prayer** In the silence that follows this reading, I allow my whole being to become prayer, the honest expression of my deepest thought, feeling and desire in dialogue with God. My longing is to move past conversation with God towards communion with Him as I offer Him myself and my experience. In the process He transforms what I have given Him and gives back to me both Himself and a new understanding of life and myself.

**Fourth Reading: Contemplation** I move from active listening and praying to simply being present to the One who is always with me. I let go of my words, my thoughts, my emotions, the impressions and images I carry within. I simply rest quietly in the presence of the One who loves me and knows me.

**Incarnation:** Part of God's invitation to me is to take this time of quiet, of listening, of giving all of myself into God's care back with me into the real life that is mine. Therefore, I ask the Holy Spirit to take this experience of and with God and use it to shape, direct and empower all I am and do. I allow myself to be and to become the person God is inviting me to be. I respond to God's invitation and do what He is calling me to do. Step by step I discover who I am in Christ and express God's purpose in the way I live my life in this world.

*On the following pages, you will also find an image of the painting, "Strong Arms" and a Viseo Divina Guide.*



'Strong Arms' artwork by Patrick Dominguez. Used with permission to JourneyMates™ copyright 2020, [PatrickDominguezArt.com](http://PatrickDominguezArt.com) To download and print your own copy just click [here](#).  
\*This print is for your own personal use and may not be distributed, sold, or copied.  
Please see page 12 for purchase options.

## Viseo Divina Guide

As you consider today's scripture reading, we invite you to prayerfully consider the painting "Strong Arms", by Patrick Dominguez. As you do so, you may want to consider your responses, using the following prompts.

**As you gently gaze on the image, immerse yourself in the scene within the painting.** Listen with your imagination and with your senses as you consider the questions below. Take time with each question, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in your prayer:

- What do you see.... darkness, light, expressions, images within the image, etc
- What do you hear?
- What do you smell?
- What do you taste?

**Rest your gaze on the image.** Open your awareness to any detail of the image that may bring lightness to your soul or in some way disturb you. Notice what seems to stand out to you, inspire you, draw you in, or challenge you. Close your eyes and bring those responses to God. Allow the Holy Spirit to interact with you with it. Slow down and stay with the good Shepherd of your soul as he guides you.

**When it feels right look again at the image** Listen. Continue to simply be with God as he draws you deeper into the scene.

- Where do you find yourself in the scene, who do you identify with, or do you?
- What stands out to you?
- Pray; 'What are you inviting me to Lord?'
- Open yourself to what you notice emotionally or what physical responses you might become aware of in this time. Notice and name whatever you are experiencing. Offer those responses to God and listen for an invitation. Rest in the Lord's embrace. What do you feel?



## Closing Prayer/Blessing

I abandon myself into your hands;  
Do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you;  
I am ready for all, I accept all.  
Let only your will be done in me  
and in all your creatures.  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.  
Into your hands I commend my soul;  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,  
for I love you, Lord,  
and so need to give myself into your hands,  
without reserve and with boundless confidence.  
For you are my Father.

In Christ's name, Amen.

*Charles de Foucauld, circa 1890*

## Take it With You

As you complete this JourneyMates Lenten Time Apart, we encourage you to be kind to yourself and re-enter your day with as much ease as is possible. You may want to consider journaling about your experience with God during this retreat within the next 24-48 hours. In doing so, you may notice shifts and/or changes in perspective. Simply offer your reflection to God, and wait for him.

You're also invited to consider the following spiritual practices as you spend time with God in the days ahead. These types of soul care exercises assist us in making space for God's work of transformation throughout our day-to-day lives.

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### The Practice of Gratitude

With each JM Retreat, we offer suggestions for incorporating the practices used in JourneyMates into your life with God. These exercises assist us in making space for God's work of transformation. In this Lenten season, we look to the Practice of Gratitude.

- Romans 1 ties our ability to notice God through his creation with our willingness to give thanks. This month, start a thank you list. Each night as you go to bed, make a list of 5 specific things you saw in the circumstances of your life, in another person, or in creation that spoke something about God to you. As you make your list, say thank you to God for each of these noticings.
- As your Lenten reflection continues and creation begins to show signs of spring, take a slow walk outside. Let these changes in creation speak to you. Engage your senses of sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch. Where is your attention drawn? Journal what you notice in yourself and in the world around you. How do you notice God's presence? What do you sense within your soul as you respond?
- In Acts 14 Paul testifies to people with little knowledge of the true God: "Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." Sit with your own story. Are you aware of places in your own life where God has satisfied you with gladness? Briefly write out that story. Ask God if he wants you to give what you have written to someone this Lenten season, or to share it verbally with them.

*"Sanctification is an awakening, the rousing of our souls from the dead sleep of sin into the fullness of their capacity for life."*

*-The Sacred Romance, Brent Curtis and John Eldredge*

## Retreat Facilitators and Contributors



**Jonathan Noel** - offered the retreat's guided silence. Jonathan participates in the Central Raleigh Coed JM Community and is the Director of Worship Arts at Raleigh's Church of the Apostles. He and his wife, Amanda, have spent nearly three decades leading in worship and sharing their music through recordings and live events. Originally from Vermont, Jonathan and Amanda now live in Rolesville, NC with their two children. [jonathanandamandanoel.com](http://jonathanandamandanoel.com)



**Janise Matyas Smith** - developed the retreat and offered the retreat's reflective teaching. Janise participates and facilitates in Midtown Raleigh's JM Community for women. She is a Presbyterian pastor, retreat leader and [spiritual director](#). Janise, who grew up in California, is married to Derek. They live in Durham, NC with their four children. [JaniseMatyasSmith.com](http://JaniseMatyasSmith.com)



**Raquel Rogers** - offered the retreat's Lectio Divina reading. Raquel participates in Central Raleigh's Coed JM Community. She is a spiritual director, seminary student, and mother of three. Raised in Washington, DC, Raquel and her husband, Joshua, live in Raleigh, NC. [raquelrogers.com](http://raquelrogers.com)



**Patrick Dominguez** - offered the retreat's painting, "Strong Arms". Patrick is an Anglican pastor and professional artist. Raised in the US, Egypt and Venezuela, Patrick and his wife, Susan, live in Raleigh, NC. [patrickdominguezart.com](http://patrickdominguezart.com)  
See more detailed description of "Strong Arms" on the last page of this guide



**Mary Vandel Young** offered the Retreat Welcome, Closing Reflection and Blessing. Mary is the Executive Director of JourneyMates. She also serves as a spiritual director, teacher and retreat leader. Raised in Cheyenne, WY, Mary and her husband, Jason, live in Raleigh, NC with their two teenage sons. [JourneyMates.org](http://JourneyMates.org)

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JourneyMates™, a locally accessible Christian soul care and spiritual formation ministry, opens time and space for Christians to simply be with God. As JourneyMates, we seek to notice and respond to God's presence and invitation within and around us.

Learn more about JM by visiting our website, [journeymates.org](http://journeymates.org) and by liking our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

\*We are grateful to be able to offer this *JM Lenten Time Away* guide as a free gift to you. Please share this resource with those in your life who would be blessed to receive it. Thank you!



*"Strong Arms"*  
Artwork by Patrick Dominguez  
[PatrickDominguezArt.com](http://PatrickDominguezArt.com)

*This depiction of a shepherd holding a lamb in his arms was inspired by the famous account of Jesus' compassion for the children of Israel as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 9:35-36. As he looked on the crowds he saw that "they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." A strong reminder of God's love in times of trouble.  
Watercolor and pencil.*

To download and print your own copy just click [here](#).

*\*This print is for your own personal use and may not be distributed, sold, or copied.*

If you would like to purchase the original or a high quality giclee print on archival paper, canvas, or metal please visit my [website](#).

Click [here](#) to view a video of the making of this painting along with a brief meditation on the passage of scripture that inspired it.

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**Guided Silence included "The Good Shepherd" by Fernando Ortega, sung by [Jonathan Noel](#).**

[Find it here](#) sung by Fernando Ortega

*I Am the Good Shepherd;*

*I lay down my life for you;*

*Enter in.*

*I Am the Good Shepherd;*

*As the Father knows me,*

*I know you.*

*And no one can take you away.*

*You are the Good Shepherd;*

*You lay down your life for me;*

*Enter in.*

*You are the Good Shepherd;*

*As the Father knows you,*

*You know me.*

*And no one can take you away.*