

## **Self-Directed Personal Retreat** **“Who Am I?”**

**Time:** 3 hours or so. You can create your own time frame, making this retreat what you need it to be.

**Supplies:** photos of you and people who are/were significant to you from your life at various ages, old report cards, school papers, year books, important mementos, letters from the past, paper, paint, clay, pen, pencil, and/or paint brushes – supplies which allow you to be creative and open to the Spirit in you and around you.

**Scripture:** Psalm 139

Be intentional to create “sacred space” for yourself. Create space that is uniquely for you and that allows you to center yourself in the presence of God. (For some, music may be important, for others silence is better.) It should be space that is comfortable and inviting for you physically, spiritually and mentally.

As you prepare to enter your time of retreat, take some moments to be aware of your body, your breathing and the energy around you. Sit quietly and allow your body to relax. Allow your mind to let go of any thoughts, stresses, or things to do that you might have. Focus on the stillness, the quietness of your breath and the presence of God. Relax into this time that is yours in the presence of God.

When we go back through our childhood, our psyches and souls gain key learnings and we are able to better see and embrace who we are with intentionality – choosing what we keep and what we let go. Spend an hour intentionally going through the photos and memorabilia, pondering some these questions:

- Whom do I look like?
- From where do I come? Heritage? Nationality? Family size? Culture? Beliefs? Values?
- Who was important to me as a small child? As a young youth? Older youth? Young adult? Who is important to me now?
- What thoughts, feelings, words and/or emotions come up for me when I see photos of myself at different ages and stages? When I see photos of friends, other family members?
- What are some of the words that express some of the joy I feel when I see some of these photos and mementos?
- What are some of the words that express some of the pain and/or loss I feel when I spend time with these mementos and photos?
- What are some negative self-images I have that began in childhood? What negative self-images do I still carry with me? What are some ways I can transform my negative self-images into positive images of myself?
- Who is not with me today that I wish were still part of my life? What are some of my feelings around this situation?
- Whose departure from my life has affected my life in a positive way? (perhaps the ending of an unhealthy relationship) Whose departure from my life has affected my life in a negative way?

Spend some time in prayer around the joy and the pain. Embrace the affirmations of who you are and from where you come. Also, allow the Spirit to offer words of hope, healing and renewal where needed. Give yourself permission to “cry through” some painful memories, if necessary. Allow yourself to express your emotions in any way that is good for you: Draw, sketch, dance, paint, sculpt, or journal images, feelings, words, shapes, and/or colors that express your emotions – both the joy and the pain. Spend some time with these images.

Some possible questions for reflection during this time:

- How do these images and feelings connect to me and my life now?
- What emotion (joy, anger, hate, fear, hurt, grief) surprised me by showing up? What is something I can do to work through this emotion today, later this week?
- How have the people, events and situations of my life shaped me?
- How have these people, events and situations strengthened who I am now?
- How have these people events and situations hurt me?
- What images of myself am I holding onto that may no longer be (or never was) an accurate assessment of who I am?
- What are some ways I can begin to move beyond the pain into healing and newness of life?
- What are some ways I can allow the strength of my past to guide my future?
- Who have I become that “leaves behind” what I used to be? Who have I become that embraces the journey from where I’ve come?

With words on paper, verbal prayer, dance, clay, song, paint, chalk or other medium, begin to craft some possible images, feelings, colors, shapes which can represent some of the joy, the pain, personal healing, letting go and moving on.

Close your personal retreat with a ritual, prayer or action that has meaning for you. (possible examples: silent prayer; burning old photos or letters [in a safe container]; finding a rock that represents your pain and putting it somewhere that represents for you, laying your burden down; craft a poem, sculpture, painting, dance, or song that speaks of where you understand yourself to be now; create a symbol of your joy and gratitude for the journey you’ve had so far)

Possible closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for re-remembering me within myself. I am strong when I know who I am. And, I am wise when I connect with my being and my Being in You. Amen. So Be It.