

Retreats

Virtually any teaching from the [Beginner](#) Program, the Intermediate Options - [A Book](#) or the [Group Discussion](#) Topics can be used to give a **Retreat**.

What's important is that Carmelite prayer, the prayer of the heart, is being presented. Let's remember what Pope John Paul II said in 1982: 'More people than you would think would be capable of practicing silent prayer but **no one taught them**. And without an interior life, the baptized run out of breath, their actions become noisy gongs and even their religious practice, when it exists, dries up.'

The **mission** of the **retreat** and the **school of prayer** is one and the same. It is to help Christians develop through the **practice of silent prayer** a taste for a more concrete spiritual life that overflows into their relationships with others.

The Retreat follows the same [three-part format](#) as the school of prayer session:

1/ **Small Group Discussion**: the participants are invited to briefly introduce themselves within their small groups. They explain what motivated them to attend the retreat and if they have any experience with silent prayer. To break the ice, experience has shown it best to begin the retreat with a small group discussion. The tone of the gathering becomes quickly convivial often resulting in group cohesiveness important for the participant to feel safe sharing his/her prayer testimony. The testimony is very important in Carmelite prayer because Teresa of Avila didn't leave us a method but rather a **way of prayer**. She simply shared her prayer experience with her sisters and now us, the Baptized, to encourage us to believe that we too could come to know God as she did. Teresa shared her **testimony**!

2/ **A Doctrinal Teaching**: the teaching is short (approximately 30 minutes) and relates to some aspect of Carmelite prayer, the prayer of the heart. The participants are encouraged to **ask questions** following the presentation and before the **break**.

3/ **Silent Prayer together as a Group**: this time of [guided](#) communal prayer allows participants to realize that this prayer is not about individual piety but is an act of the Church allowing each Christian to meet the heart of God in our world on fire that has all too often lost the notion of the sacred. If it is a half-day retreat it might be advisable to entertain comments/questions before dismissal. If however, it is a full-day retreat that breaks for lunch, it might be best to suggest that comments/questions be addressed during the small group discussion after lunch to allow the participant to savor the silence.



