

The Our Father Retreat: Part 1 – Our Father, Our Mother



In the prayer Jesus teaches us, he addresses the Creator of all that is as Father. He invites us into his relationship with God and into the mission God has sent him into our world to do. In addressing God as Father Jesus gives us permission to clothe God in our experience of our own fathers and grandfathers' tender, nurturing, and secure presence. If we bring positive experiences to the image of God as Father, our Creator God draws close, invites our company, delights in our gifts, and hears our words.

Father is not Jesus' only image of God. He also compares God to a determined woman who sweeps her house until she finds a lost coin and to a mother hen who wants her chicks safe beneath her wings. In fact, Jesus calls God Father only four times in Mark's gospel, the first gospel to be written, about 70 AD. Matthew's gospel, written about 10 years after Mark's, increases the number of times Jesus refers to God as Father from four to forty. John's gospel, written near the end of the first century and seventy years after Jesus' death and resurrection, shows Jesus referring to God as Father nearly 120 times. Since we have no video of Jesus actually teaching, the increase in the number of times the stories about him have him calling God his Father, have come from the prayer and reflection of the first Christian communities.

This image of God as father is basic to our faith and worship, but it can also limit us. Many people who recognize that God is not really a mighty fortress, as in the hymn, or a rock, as in the Psalms, still insist that God is our Father literally, that Jesus revealed God is father and male. In reality, Jesus' prayer reveals that God intimately cares for us, not that God is male. Father is only an analogy, a valuable one.

The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind are visions of our human purpose. But when we express them in sexist, excluding language, they include only half the human race. The Catechism of the Catholic Church cautions God is not male and female as we humans are. God is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the differences between the sexes. But the respective perfections of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband (#370).

Christians who address God as “Our Father-Mother” jar us into remembering that these images only hint at the Mystery that holds us in being. Our experience of our mothers and grandmothers is as important as fathers and grandfathers for describing God and discovering God present in our lives. If the language of our faith and worship draws only on male imagery to describe God, then many men and many women must disregard how their experiences reveal the holy.

Our language for describing God mirrors our experiences. We need analogies to open and reflect on the mystery in which we live. We can't help constructing images of God that are personal, cultural, and time bound. These images need correcting and expanding as we grow and our world changes.

Important as the image of God as Father is to faith and worship, we limit God if we take this image too literally and open no other doors to divine mystery. In addition, we dismiss the experience of half the human race and the rest of the cosmos as no help to disclosing the holy and to imaging God. For an important image such as Father to live, we must broaden and enrich its meaning, so we can approach our Father-Mother with the same expectation that we belong to God that Jesus did.

REFLECT

Use any of the questions to reflect on how you pray this prayer and how you image God as Father, Mother, Creator, Sustainer. What images of God do you inherit from your parents and grandparents? How important to your spirituality is the image of God as father? As mother? What images of God impel the way you live your life? What names or images of God from different cultures have opened Holy Mystery for you?

PRACTICE

Go for a walk. Call out aloud all the ways you see God alive in nature, in yourself, and in the people you see. For instance, Creator, Sustainer, Forgiving One, Helper, Laughing God, Mystery. Go on until you feel full of God's presence.

The Our Father Retreat: Part 2 – Hallowing God’s Name



A parent heard his son praying, “Our Father, who art in heaven, how’d you get your name?” The children substituted a familiar question for the unfamiliar word hallowed. But he was right. Hallowing is about naming, about finding words for our experience of God present and active within, beyond, around, among, between us.

To hallow is to keep holy. To hallow God’s name is to bless or praise God, to recognize God’s awesome presence and appreciate the gift of being alive. It is the work of finding words for what God, who has acted in our history, is doing in us and our world today. Hallowing is naming grace.

In the Our Father, Jesus speaks as one of us humans and calls us to hallow God’s name, keep it holy, appreciate God’s presence and gifts transparent in our lives and worlds. Many commentators stress how unique Jesus is in addressing as Father and imagine God as a belloved, trustworthy parent. In reality, Jesus is a practicing Jew, formed by the language, prayer, and scripture of his people. The Old Testament frequently draws on the language of both fathering and mothering to name and describe Israel’s relationship with God. In Exodus 4.22, God has Moses tell Pharaoh, “Israel is my firstborn son. Let my son go that he may serve me.” On the road to the Promised Land, Moses complains to God, “Did I conceive all this people. Did I bring them forth?” (Numbers 11.12-14). In the Song of Moses, the conclusion of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, Moses asks the people, “Is not God your father, who created you, who made you and established you?” and continues with a comparison of God to the mother and father eagles who teach their young to fly by fluttering their wings to stir them from the nest and spread their wings to catch them (Deuteronomy 32.6-12).

These paternal and maternal images continue throughout the teachings of the prophets until in the last centuries before Jesus’ time, a new kind of writing called Wisdom literature arose. Books such as Wisdom, Proverbs, and Sirach personify Wisdom as a woman who is with God from the beginning in all the work of creation, a world-pervasive spirit who finds a dwelling place among the people of Israel. Like the faithful wife in Proverbs 31, so often read at the funerals of wives and mothers, Lady Wisdom provides rich food, choice wine, and warm clothes for her household. Creation is Wisdom’s table, set in abundance for all.

Applied to Jesus, the Wisdom imagery loses its origins in woman's experience. However, Jesus continues Wisdom's work welcoming all to his table, providing gallons of the best wine at Cana and loaves to feed multitudes.

In Christian tradition we name God Trinity. We understand that Father, Son, and Spirit are names that express the interrelatedness of the three persons in one divine nature, three persons in one love. The relationships within God are like a circle dance, full of life-giving and love-giving movement. God is dynamic, with and for us in our becoming all we can be. We hallow God as Trinity: Father, Son, Spirit. Lover, Beloved, Love between them. Birther, Baby, Breath of Life.

In the Our Father Jesus invites us free and conscious humans to hold holy the mystery of divine love and partner in its unfolding. God gifts us with a capacity to love and the power and promise of Jesus' self-giving. The Our Father is a prayer of faith that we come from God and go to God, that we live in a creative love that buoys us up like water and pervades our lives unseen, but is as present and vital as the air we breathe. We live in the promise that we matter, in a holy whole greater than our small parts.

REFLECT

When and where have you experienced awe? Describe the experience. What of the holy have you glimpsed in your life during the last 24 hours? Find God's holiness in the signs of spring around you. Birds building nests, water streaming, warm sunlight, flowers appearing.

PRACTICE

Make a commitment to recall before you go to sleep 10 experiences of God that day. Remember your experiences of beauty, your meetings with mystery in yourself and others, your communion with nature, your moments of insight. Thank God for them.

The Our Father Retreat: Part 3 – God’s Kin*dom Come



In the Our Father we pray that God’s kin*dom come and God’s will be done. These simple parallel phrases invite the consummation and fulfillment of all things in God and the transforming social vision this implies. This retreat writes the word kingdom as kin*dom to trouble the word for our time as Jesus troubled it for his time when he died in shame and powerlessness. Removing the ‘g’ in kingdom frees the word from its reference to kings, governing, and conquering and transforms it into a vision of human beings actualizing our potential for common bonds.

As God’s kin and kind, we mirror in our desire for expanding wholeness and lasting love the image of God who is not far away and self-contained but irrepressibly loving and creative, caring as deeply for us as parents for their children. God’s life is an ongoing, outgoing, life-giving intercommunion of three persons in one. God’s being is love. The fire in which we live and which lives inside us is love.

God’s love for us is our common ground. We all exist in this relationship. As God’s kin and kind we are made for relationship with each other. We are social. We flourish in families, friendships, marriages, teams, choirs, tribes, communities. Like God, we live in interdependent love with one another. God did not make us for gated and guarded isolation but for holy communion.

Jesus tells parables about the kin*dom to open the mystery in which we live, to reveal our capacity for community and how it grows among us and in us. The kin*dom of God is like seed that a farmer plants and that sprouts and grows while he sleeps. The kin*dom of God is also like a mustard seed that grows into a tree of life, a home where birds build nests in its branches. Jesus himself embodies the kin*dom and brings it among the people in his actions of healing the sick, freeing the possessed, and welcoming the poor and outcast into his company.

The kin*dom of God demands the same decisions about values that we make every day when we buy and sell. It is like selling all one has to buy a field with a treasure in it. It is like a woman kneading leaven into flour, trusting her work will transform the ingredients into nourishment for her family. The kin*dom requires faith in the Spirit of God loose among us. It requires making sure the least among us has food, clothing, shelter, company, health care, for Jesus identifies with the least of his kin.

Jesus raises the question “Who are my kin” when a crowd tells him his mother and brothers are outside asking for him. He looks at all the people gathered around him and insists, “Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3.31-35). The community who hears and does the word and will of God is the kin*dom.

What then is God’s will? Sometimes we assume we know. People often say, “It’s God’s will” when they accept something they can’t change: a death, an illness, a tragedy of nature. Accepting God’s will can express a hope that in the larger picture of God’s plan things will turn out, that the suffering or tragedy will have a reason. We want to trust Someone has a plan in the unfurling history in which we live. Jesus accepts God’s will when he prays just before his arrest to be spared the cup of suffering he sees unfolding ahead.

God’s will for Israel was expressed in the Ten Commandments: becoming a people who worship God and reveal God to other nations; who respect one another’s lives, relationships, reputations, and property; who make community with one another. As a good Jew, Jesus kept the Commandments. But Jesus expands on God’s will for us in calling to love one another, to forgive each other seventy times seven times, to love even our enemies, and to insure the poor and the least among us can live.

Today science helps us recognize that creation itself reveals God’s will. The new science finds God’s plan in the cosmic energy that drives toward greater complexity and consciousness. Science finds an inner law in every life form that drives it to become all it can be. The will of God in this context is not obedience but becoming, not conformity in a closed system but generous creative participation in giving birth to all we can become as a vast, holy whole, evolving toward Spirit.

Kin*dom describes the world as interconnected and open toward mystery. In this context we live our few moments. How do we participate in bringing God's kin*dom from heaven to earth? We bring the kin*dom when we go beyond ourselves in love, in hospitality, in justice, and weave those among whom we live and work into community.

REFLECT

How does taking the 'g' out of kingdom help you reflect on Jesus' meaning in this part of the prayer he gave his disciples? How does seeing humans as part of the cosmic whole make us more aware of what God's will is for us? Tell your own stories of going beyond yourself in love, hospitality, or justice to make kin and community of strangers.

PRACTICE

Use 'Thy kin*dom come' as a prayer today. Pray it whenever you see a person bringing Jesus' kin*dom of community and justice to our world. Use newspapers, the internet, and television to extend your recognition of kin*dom building to communities beyond your own.

The Our Father Retreat: Part 4 – On Earth As In Heaven



When we pray the Our Father at bedtime, it is usually a personal and individual prayer. When we pray the Our Father with other Christians, it is the common prayer we all know. At Eucharist, the Our Father is our table prayer before Communion.

People in congregations who join hands to pray the Our Father often act prophetically in the efforts they make to link everyone together to pray. Hands stretch across aisles and pews, out to people in wheelchairs and to those who come to church alone. In these efforts people act out in gesture the kin*dom coming from heaven to earth, of our human community of love mirroring the divine community of love.

The Our Father expresses Jesus' transforming vision of wholeness for humankind and challenges us to bring heaven down to earth. In Luke, Jesus inaugurates his ministry during a Sabbath service at the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth. Jesus reads the prophet Isaiah's promise that the Spirit of God will anoint a prophet to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to captives, liberty to the oppressed (Luke 4.16-19).

Jesus' sermon on this passage is short. He says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." With these words, he announces that he is the promised herald of God's jubilee. His ministry begins the time of God's favor and blessing that is good news, especially for the least among us.

In the gospels Jesus brings good news wherever he goes. He heals, gives sight and hearing, forgives, shares meals, raises the dead to life, and casts out the evils that possess people. When the imprisoned John the Baptist sends messengers to Jesus they ask, on John's behalf, whether Jesus is the one God has promised, the Messiah. Or should John look for another? "Go and tell John what you hear and see," answers Jesus. "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news preached to them" (Matthew 11.2-6).

Until December 8, 1965, contemporary Catholics identified more with Jesus' suffering than with his jubilee mission. We accepted suffering in this world and knew it promised eternal reward in heaven. The second Vatican Council, which ended on that date, called us to stand in solidarity with the poor and to transform the injustice in our world.

The opening sentence of the council's most innovative document, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, called us to continue Jesus' mission of healing, freeing and raising people up. "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in anyway afflicted, these, too, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Jesus Christ."

Human beings are social, made to live together, incapable of flourishing without parents, partners, and community. Each of us lives in relationships with husbands, wives children, siblings, friends, in-laws, members of our parish, coworkers, fans in the same stand, parents in the same school.

The U.S. Constitution guarantees every individual life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the freedom to make it on our own. Our Constitution does not obligate us to make certain that even the least among us have food, health care, education, and work. In fact, we American citizens are of a political temper these days to blame those who don't make it on their own rather than to create new ways to lift them up.

Catholic social teachings hold different standards by which to measure ourselves. Catholic social teaching understands each person's human right to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment, as every other person's duty. For example, each person's right to shelter is every other person's obligation to provide affordable housing. When we act in solidarity we bring God's reign among us.

REFLECT

How did Vatican II change your idea of what it means to be Catholic? St. Basil the Great wrote in the AD 300s: "The garment hanging in your wardrobe is the garment of one who is naked. The money you keep locked away is the money of the poor." Do you agree with Basil? Which of the following do you agree with most?

- I have faith in free enterprise and competition to generate an economy that is best for the most people.
- I have faith in the communitarian teaching of the Church that calls us to solidarity with the poor.

PRACTICE

Think of the images of God you surfaced in part one of this retreat. Read Matthew 25.31-46, the parable of the Last Judgment. Can you also image God as the homeless woman, the hungry family, the sex offender in prison, the man dying of AIDS?

The Our Father Retreat: Part 5 – Daily Bread for All



In asking for daily bread, the Our Father turns from hallowing God's name and anticipating God's kin*dom and turns toward our human needs. Bread in this prayer means literally food, the sustenance every human needs to continue being, growing, working, loving. Implicitly we are asking for all that people need to live and thrive?food, water, shelter, clothing, education, and health care. We pray for bread, not steak or lobster; for what we need, not all we desire. Jesus' prayer has a hungry edge, for it asks for bread one day at a time. It commits us to daily prayer for daily food.

The early Israelites in their desert wanderings lived on the edge of hunger, on what they could gather to eat in the desert. God sent them manna each morning, which they gathered and ate each day. Every sixth day God provided an overabundance and the people gathered enough for two days. They rested from gathering on the Sabbath. During their 40 years in the desert the people lived off the land, one day or two away from hunger. Israel's history remembers these 40 years as an idyllic time when the people ate from the hand of God. In Luke's gospel (14.15-24) Jesus tells a parable about a great dinner to which the invited guests refuse to come. What does a host do whose guests refuse a sumptuous meal? He invites the poor to the table. In Matthew's gospel the same parable becomes a wedding banquet for the king's son, a wedding feast for Jesus the messiah. In this allegory, accepting the invitation to the feast means believing in Jesus. The feast is an image of the messiah's kin*dom, which provides food and a place for all, a relationship both to the host and to the fellow banqueters.

Although we often pray the Our Father individually and privately, its words never permit us to pray as individuals. Its pronouns insist we pray as us, as all of us who need food to live. The word us makes our prayer more than a petition; it commits us to the well being of others. As a Christian, it is not enough that I receive daily bread if others do not. It is not enough to pray that others eat without also working towards the goal of everyone feasting at the table of God's creation.

We see in the news every day that people are hungry. Harvests fail, economies dive, war threatens, refugee families search desperately for food and safety. These problems usually affect the poorest first and most especially children.

The word daily in the Our Father translates the Greek word *epiousios*. The scriptures use this word only here. Scholars argue this Greek word can also mean tomorrow. If we pray that God give us bread for tomorrow, our prayer begins to ask not only for toast and muffins, but for hope. It looks beyond our immediate needs toward the tomorrow when God's kin*dom will come.

We ask for the bread of faith and hope we need to journey toward the culminating of all things in God. It is the bread of promise we share and eat at every Eucharist. It is bread enriched with love that empowers the same self-giving that animated Jesus, the bread of life that is Jesus and his Spirit really and abundantly present with us that all may have life. At every Eucharist the Our Father with its petition for daily bread is our meal prayer. It is a prayer that commits us to the poor and to the coming of God's kin*dom.

REFLECT

When and where have you experienced hunger? Who do you know who is hungry? What is causing the problem? Young people need mentors to engage them in the work of charity and justice. Who can you help learn the value and practice of noticing and aiding the poor among us?

PRACTICE

Does your parish or workplace have ways you can contribute to alleviating the hunger of others? If not, gather a group of friends and start something: collect food for a food shelf or shelter, invite a speaker to tell about world hunger, challenge parishioners or co-workers to contribute to an ark of animals from Heifer International, send letters to Congress through Bread for the World.

The Our Father Retreat: Part 6 – Forgiving Debts



Forgiveness lies at the heart of Jesus' prayer and his teaching. In the two versions of the Our Father in the gospels, the gospel writers make a parallel between forgiving sins and forgiving debts. They connect a spiritual act and an economic act.

Matthew's version of the Our Father stresses forgiving economic debts. We pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (6.12). The word for debts in Greek is *opheilemn*, which means what one is owed, one's economic due. However, in the verse immediately following the Our Father, Matthew adds a parallel saying about forgiving sins (in Greek, *hamartias*). "If you forgive people their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you" (6.14).

Luke's gospel deliberately mixes the spiritual and economic senses of forgiveness within its version of the Our Father. The first half of the forgiveness petition talks about forgiving sins (*hamartias*); the second half about forgiving debtors (*opheilonti*). "Forgive us our sins as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Luke 11.4).

Imagine a monthly bill arriving that lists charges for our sins and credits us for debts we have forgiven others. The Our Father wants us to live our faith in our everyday world, to do the work in our lives of bringing heaven to earth. The Our Father calls us to live the values Jesus heralds as his mission in Luke's gospel: to bring sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, good news to the poor. In the economy of God's kin*dom, the bottom line is forgiveness, mending and extending the bonds among us who are God's kin and kind. Jesus' prayer calls us to restore our human community to wholeness both through restoring relationships and restoring economic capacity for life.

The forgiveness the Christian community is to practice seems illogical compared with getting even and settling the score. When a tragic murder is in the news, common logic asks, "Isn't this the sort of person who ought to be put to death to keep our families safe?" Common wisdom assumes execution will free the victim's family from their loss.

In her work with death-row prisoners and the families of their murder victims, Sister Helen Prejean reports that only forgiveness eases a family's grief. When family members seek revenge or payback, they themselves become victims of the murder, just like the family member they have lost. Getting even puts a person in the service of a hurt, rather than in the service of human thriving. Only forgiveness allows us to start over anew. This is the uncommon wisdom of Jesus. In forgiving one another, we participate in God's own life-giving, healing power.

Family, the primary cell of society and Church, is the first school of Christen forgiveness. We learn to forgive by being forgiven. We learn to apologize when we are wrong from watching our parents acknowledge their mistakes. We learn reconciliation from parents who let their children know they have worked through a disagreement. We learn to ask forgiveness from those who ask ours, from brothers and sisters who regret destroying our favorite possession or getting us in trouble.

The Our Father calls us to remember all those in whose debt we stand, especially those who have invested their very selves in us. It also calls us to remember who has forgiven us and to do the same for people in our lives. Forgiving reclaims energy we waste fueling hurts and obvious injustices and frees us for investing ourselves in the people and work we love.

REFLECT

Who has invested in you? How have they invested? In money? In mentoring? In love? What difference has the investment made? How can you thank these people? What hurts do you need to forgive and let go? What unpaid economic debts do you need to forgive and let go? Who has forgiven debts you owed? What relationships do you need to mend and revive? What person that you devalue should you give a chance?

PRACTICE

The churches in the United States and Canada have led the way in the work to overcome hunger and poverty in our country and in the world. Visit the websites of any of the following. Consider putting some of your discretionary funds to work with them, to even out the debt we all owe each other.

- Bread for the World
- Catholic Relief Service
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development

The Our Father Retreat: Part 7 – What Tests Us?



The whole Our Father has what scholars call an eschatological cast. This means that it looks toward the end of time and culmination of all things in God. The first half of this prayer Jesus gave us ends with the hope God's kin*dom come, God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. To conclude the second half, we ask deliverance from the great battle between God and evil that many early Christians and many present Christians envision will happen before the coming of God's kin*dom.

Early Christians expected the risen Jesus to return in glory and usher in the new age within their lifetimes. They looked forward to deliverance from persecution. What tests us as Christians in our time? What tempts us to abandon Jesus' mission? What makes us cynical and despairing rather than hopeful in the life-giving capacity Jesus insists we share? These are questions we must reflect about individually and with others as we deliberate the Spirit's promptings in our present experience. Use the following five realities of our lives to launch a conversation with yourself and friends.

CONSUMING

How much do we need? Why do we want so much? A woman seeking to downsize puts out a bag of 'stuff' for the trash collector every week for a year and still hasn't made a dent in her crowded house. On the other hand, a couple beginning second marriages for them both ask their guests to contribute to Habitat for Humanity or Heifer International to celebrate their marriage. "We don't need any more crystal," they say. What is the relationship between being a Christian and being a consumer?

MEDIA

Talk radio. Sitcoms. Tweets. Smart phones. How much do these dominate our lives? Do you veg? Do you believe the untruths you hear? Do you make choices about the amount of time you spend texting or checking your email? Do you know why you spend the time you do? Like any great good, all the forms of media at our disposal have the capacity to dominate us.

INDIVIDUALISM

The self-made person is the American myth, telling us any of us can make it if we try. Our individualism blinds us to the village and extended families that raise and support us. It distances us from solidarity with the least among us in our world who most need a leg up. The United States is a nation founded on self-interest, where free citizens benefit from what we earn, a great good. However, as citizens, we are also called to solidarity with each other. We cannot let people go unfed, uneducated, with jobs. But the thought of responding individually to the needs we see around us overwhelms us, and we often shut our doors and our hearts.

DIVERSITY

In our global society people of every color and culture have become neighbors. The crescent joins the cross and star of David on religious buildings. At the same time racial and ethnic differences often divide and separate us rather than enrich our community. Most black people have watched others cross the street rather than meet them on the sidewalk. Most people of color experience stereotyping. Families flee the city and work extra jobs to secure safer neighborhoods and better schools, forgetting how vital good schools are to the well-being of the entire country. How is the diversity of our country or just your neighborhood challenging you?

OUR WEALTH

Very few of us say we are wealthy, yet most people making this retreat are in the wealthiest 10% of United States taxpayers. Being in this top bracket means we have enough financial security to live predictable and rational lives. We save for education, family vacations, and retirement. We take advantage of tax breaks. We pay off credit cards rather than incur whopping amounts of interest. We drive to work, get there on time, look nice, have a good day, and return home to a solid meal and TV. We have little idea that we aren't the struggling poor when our monthly bills and statements arrive. We have no idea everyone isn't or couldn't be like us unless we visit their world to listen and learn.

Our Father, like our fathers and mothers and guardians and coaches and teachers, does not leave us alone with our fears and feelings. To pray Jesus' prayer is to invite his Holy Spirit into your life.

The Spirit does not work alone or in hiddenness. The Spirit is in every good impulse, in every small action of reaching out, encouraging us in our capacity for greater wholeness. The Spirit is in the companions with whom we find heart in working for the common purpose of the inclusion of all in our society. Together magnifies what we can do alone. Commitment encourages commitment. Conversation among us enlarges our world.

REFLECT

What tests you? What encourages you? What do you to be delivered from? Your possessions? The shallowness of your friendships? Your fear of anyone different from you? The nagging feeling that going to church and praying the Our Father is asking more of you?

PRACTICE

Make a commitment to follow what encourages you in bringing Jesus' prayer alive in our world. Is it a person who helps you see potential you have missed before? Is it a group who work on a project you can believe in? Is it a time to yourself each day to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to you? When you have discerned what this commitment is for you, keep at it long enough to test it, and go from there.