

Dear Mercy Auburn Retreatant,

We are writing to alert you to changes in this year's retreat. Living with the pandemic has prompted us to explore how to support each other in going deeply into prayer, and we have decided to offer this **retreat online using Zoom**. Because we are new to serving a retreat this way, we felt we needed to simplify as much as we could. We have therefore decided to split the different tracks into two different retreats. **The September retreat will offer Post Intensive and a new track, Advanced Intensive, and will be open only to people who have done the retreat with us in the past.** The Advanced Intensive will have videos, but at 30 min or less they are shorter than the Spiritual Journey videos for Intensive I and II. **Intensive I and II will be offered March 18-26, 2021 and will be open to people new to the retreat.**

Another noteworthy change is that because of family commitments that have arisen during current travel restrictions, Marty cannot be on staff in September. He plans to be on staff in March. In September, Leslee Terpay will join us on staff. She has served retreats in New York and Colorado for many years.

- **September 24 - October 2, 2020: Advanced and Post Intensive — on Zoom**
 - Pre-requisite: Prior participation in our 8/9 day Centering Prayer Retreats
 - Centering Prayer periods are 30 minutes
 - Staff: Fr. Bill, Susan, Leslee
- **March 18 - 26, 2021: Intensive I and II — on Zoom**
 - Pre-requisite: At least 6 months of daily centering prayer practice
 - Centering Prayer periods are 20 minutes
 - Staff: Fr. Bill, Susan, Marty

The Mercy Center is beginning to open to individual retreatants and groups on a limited basis, but at this time they don't know when they will again have full group retreats. Some of our staff and participants are not comfortable traveling to Auburn and staying at the retreat center, while others are comfortable and do want to come to Auburn.

To meet these disparate needs, **we are also planning to offer the online retreat with choices of residence.** While the retreat sessions will be conducted via Zoom, you will be able to participate either from home, or from Mercy Auburn as an

individual retreatant. You could actually go to any place of your choice. We expect that all of the retreat staff will be remote, facilitating sessions using Zoom. The Mercy Center staff have all safety protocols in place to minimize the risk of contagion. **If you would like to know specific measures they are taking, please call Robin Lionello at Mercy, (530) 887-2019.**

Wherever you are, you will want to consider how to provide yourself with silence and solitude. It won't be the same as our in-person retreats, but we are planning to have essentially the same schedule, including the prayer time, teaching, and individual conversations with staff as we've had the last four years. We will be having some gatherings on Zoom before the retreat, to get some practice praying together on Zoom, to begin to get to know to each other, and to discuss what we need to support ourselves in a silent retreat with these new circumstances.

Each participant will need a device to use Zoom—phone, tablet, or computer that has both a camera and microphone and is connected to WiFi. **Whether you are at home or at the Mercy Center, everyone will be using Zoom to participate in the retreat sessions.** During the retreat sessions, you can be wherever you wish at Mercy, as long as you have a wifi signal for your electronic device. We will be sending instructions on how to participate using Zoom. To prepare, you'll need to download the Zoom app on whichever device you wish to use. You do not need a Zoom account, but you can open a free Zoom account with login if you wish, which will save your settings.

The residential fee for the retreat, \$650, remains the same. If you are going to participate from home or other lodging, we are asking **non-residents to choose an amount between \$350 and \$650.** We want to support Mercy during this difficult time, so that they will be there with their beautiful, quiet setting and wonderful food when we are all able to return. The Sisters of Mercy have continued to pay Mercy Center staff throughout the pandemic. While they may not have the expense of food and overnight accommodations for non-residential participants, they need to maintain revenues so that the retreat ministry will remain sustainable into the future. They are committed to honoring the stipends of all of their facilitators, and the extraordinary safety protocols, supplies, and online administration of programs continue to increase operational costs. Please give what you can.

These retreats are designed to be deep, prayerful practice. The staff and the videos are there to support you in your practice. For this reason, as for our residential retreats, we are capping participation at 32 so that your staff can be available to you throughout the retreat.

Please feel free to contact any one of us to talk about your considerations as you decide whether you want to participate in these retreats and how you might want to participate. We may have suggestions, but not answers, as we're all exploring this new terrain together.

Peace and all good to each of you,
Your retreat staff— Fr. Bill, Marty, Susan, and Leslee

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