

The Heart's Hunger

Listening to our deepest longings

Thank you for ordering this retreat package from Heart in Pilgrimage. Please take a few minutes to read this short guide as it will offer some suggestions on how to make the most of this retreat.

The Material

- This retreat is in seven parts (the seventh one is a chance to review and look back on the journey you have taken).
- Each part has an audio reflection — the link for the audio page will be sent to you by email.
- The ‘printed material’, sent by post or as PDFs by email, has a full text of each audio reflection and a document which contains a collection of **reflective material** on the theme. This might typically include poetry, pictures, Scripture and other writing. (There is no additional material for Part 7 as that is an invitation to go back to what has been meaningful for you in the first six parts.)
- The material is designed to be flexible, so it could be used, for example, over seven days on a residential retreat, or over a longer period in daily life. Please feel free to move through the material at your own pace, perhaps spending longer with anything which has been particularly meaningful.

How to use the material

- It's a good idea to listen to the audio reflection first. They are usually between 15 and 20 minutes long. Ideally, find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed. Each audio reflection includes a ‘stilling’ exercise, to help reach a place of quiet reflection amid the busyness of life.
- In subsequent times of reflection, you might like to return to the audio reflection, or dip into the other material on the print document.

- It can be helpful to set aside both a physical space (a particular chair or corner) and a time for prayer. Going to the same space for each reflection time helps us prepare mentally as well as physically, and helps us to ring-fence time to be quiet. Some people like to mark the time by lighting a candle.
- Begin each reflection by taking some time to be still. Make sure you can sit quietly and comfortably, and put your phone on silent if you can. Each audio reflection starts with a stilling exercise. In other times of prayer, you might use a body awareness exercise, focussing on the tips of the toes then moving the focus gradually up through the body, a breathing exercise, or the quiet repetition of a word or phrase. Remember, being still rarely comes naturally, and we need to be gentle with ourselves if we get distracted.
- Don't feel under pressure to get through everything. As a general rule of thumb, it is usually best to go deeper with a few things than trying to cover everything. Stay with what you feel drawn to, and if something is not suiting you, feel free to put it to one side and move on. That said, if something is disagreeing with you in a way which feels productive, it might be worth examining!
- Art and poetry can be helpful in shining fresh and unexpected light on a subject. It is worth spending a few minutes just looking at a image — you will notice more the longer you look — or reading a poem over several times. Sometimes, a detail or mood or even a colour in a painting, or a line or two in a poem will offer a new direction for reflection. Again, notice what is standing out, and ask where it might be leading you.
- Each week's material includes a ‘Page to Ponder’ which features a quotation, an image and a question. It's designed as a page to sit with. Perhaps any one of the elements, or a combination of two, or all three, will spark a thought worth pursuing.
- You might find it helpful to make a few notes on each time of reflection in a notebook or journal. What have you noticed? Have there been fresh insights? Is there anything you would like to go back to?

May you be blessed on the journey!