Confirmation Retreat Talk: Seeing God Through Creation

By Madeline Mauro | March 29, 2025

Note to Readers:
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Good Afternoon,

What a great time to have a retreat.

During this Lenten Season, we take time to turn away from the busyness of life and look inward, quieting ourselves to receive the silence that awaits each of us.

Did you know God speaks not only to us—but also through every living creature?

Each of us has a unique way of honoring our Creator.

Did you know you are made of stardust?

That's right. Science has proven that the very elements in our DNA were once part of stars that exploded long before we were born. Pretty cool, huh? You are literally made of the dust of the heavens.

My name is Madeline Mauro, and I have the privilege of walking with others on their faith journeys as a Spiritual Director. I'm also deeply involved in the healing ministry of Jesus, which focuses on healing heart wounds.

But today is not about me—it's about you and your journey with God.

Today, I want to share ways of seeing and encountering God through His creation, and why it's so important to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was given to you at your Baptism and stays with you forever.

It's up to each of us to get to know Him, the One who lives within us.

And we can recognize Him by the gifts He gives, which are stamped in His love.

Just like you and I have a personality, God's Holy Spirit does too. Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church tell us what that looks like.

I'm sure you've been studying these past two years and know them by heart.

But would anyone like to share them? Or should I?

The Gifts are: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Awe and Wonder (also known as Fear of the Lord).

That's not all. There are also the Fruits of the Spirit that help us know if we're walking in the Spirit of Love.

Want to name them together, or would you like me to do it?

There are 12: Charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

You and I can examine ourselves using these Fruits to gauge how well are we living in the Spirit.

These are the blessings Father God wants to give each of us.

This is why Jesus came: to share Himself totally with us.

Sharing His Spirit reminds us we're never alone.

We are children of the Most High God. That's our identity.

Our journey is to be more in Jesus than in the world.

That's why having retreats, especially during Lent, is so important. It gives us time to step away from the hustle and focus on our friendship with God.

Since I only have an hour with you, I ask that you open your hearts and minds to God.

Pay attention to how the Holy Spirit moves within you.

I don't want you to just listen—I don't want you to just see, I want you to *feel* creation around you.

To do that, we have to step away from distractions.

That takes practice.

As you can see while one of you was trying to concentrate, someone is working on distracting you with interruptions. That's a perfect example of what happens in our spiritual life, too. We want to go into the silence to meet God, but others can pull us out of it. That's why Jesus often went away to be alone with His Father—so He could hear clearly.

That's why daily prayer is so important.

We have to check in with God, just like calling a parent or friend.

And when we call to God, we need to combine our heart and mind. That's prayer.

Today, you're learning something many adults still haven't grasped. Today, God is giving you a special gift—a preview of all He has planned for your life.

It amazes me how connected we are to creation.

HAND OUT JOURNALS AND PENS

As I hand out these journals—they're for your eyes only—take a few deep breaths (slowly, from your belly), and write down:

- When was the last time you felt truly connected to nature?
- How did it make you feel?
- Can you see God's loving hand in that moment?
- Did you even notice if he was there?

(REPEAT THE QUESTIONS AGAIN)

This will help you recall God's movement in your life.

St. Francis of Assisi was able to do this.

He recognized God in everything: creation, people, even in suffering. He didn't see the world as separate from God, but as a reflection of His love.

St. Francis observed with all five senses and internalized what he experienced. He pondered it in light of God's goodness and noticed how God speaks to all creation.

St. Bonaventure said Francis saw creation as a ladder to God. He looked at the world and saw traces of the Creator everywhere.

Which gift of the Spirit do you think St. Francis was expressing?

WAIT – PAUSE

Awe and Wonder—also known as Fear of the Lord.

Have you ever watched a flock of birds fly in harmony, never colliding?

It's like they respond to invisible signals.

That's how God created us to be—in harmony.

But then came sin, and selfishness disrupted it.

It's like when a flock suddenly scatters—we lose rhythm with God.

But here's the good news: that wasn't the end.

Jesus, the Word of God, became man and walked among us to restore that harmony.

Without Jesus, we can't call God our Father.

Jesus not only saved us—He invites us into His kingdom and mission.

St. Francis embraced this. He gave up his wealth and became known as the Poverello (the poor one).

You probably know his story—how he was a prisoner of war and had a deep conversion.

He walked away from his father's textile business and started what became the Franciscan order.

But did you know his real name wasn't Francis?

His name was Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone.

His dad loved France, so he nicknamed him Francis.

And yes, Francis was fluent in French!

St. Francis teaches us that real wealth comes from God. He had nothing materially, but was rich in grace.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:13 that the Spirit teaches spiritually.

That's how we return to harmony.

Each of us will wrestle with the flesh, but we're not alone. We have the sacraments.

When we fall short, the Sacrament of Confession gives us grace to get back up. And when we receive the Eucharist, Jesus strengthens our weakness. He is with us.

Father Marreddy will talk more about this later today.

Now I want to teach you Heart-Centered Prayer.

It is something I came up with to help those I minister to.

HAND OUT THE SONG AND EXPLAIN.

Take three fingers and place them over your heart.

As you pray, I want you to take notice how your heart responds.

We'll each take a stanza and pray it out loud, slowly, feeling each word.

That helps bring us into the present moment with God.

By the way, St. Francis wrote this poetically, and I have included a copy of it in your envelope.

Since we are easily distracted, pulled into the

past or future thoughts,

This prayer technique anchors us in the Now.

It connects our mind and heart—and that's true prayer.

If you need help, raise your hand. I'll come over.

You will have to feel your heart receiving the words so it is not to be done fast, like this, (read the first line in a rush) but slowly like this (heartfelt words)

Are you ready, we will go down the line with each of you reading a stanza.

PRAY THE CANTICLE OF THE SUN SONG BY Marty Haugen

Now that we've prayed this way, what did you get from it? Did you notice a difference?

Next we are going to move into exploring our surroundings.

Look at the trees, the way the leaves move, how the clouds form in the sky. You might spot a little creature and find yourself fascinated by how it acts in its natural rhythm.

Whatever grabs your attention, observe it. Get engrossed in it. Then write about it. What does it reveal about God, who created it?

You can ask Him:

Lord, how did you come up with those colors?

Lord, how did you know birds needed feathers to help them fly?

Lord, your thought of everything. Even having trees rooted to stay in one place and give us shade, oxygen, and show us the wind?

Lord, your designs are way above me. (Awe and Wonder)

Take it all in and write to God about it.

Each of you will experience this differently.

That's good.

No two relationships with God are the same.

Ask Him why you're drawn to what you noticed.

What is He showing you?

What is He sharing with you about yourself?

Last words before I let you go and explore:

St. Francis didn't just read about God—he found Him in nature, silence, people, and daily life. You can, too.

If we open ourselves to learning from life, not just books, we'll discover how much God is already within us.

You will have about 15–20 minutes to sit with God and admire His creation with the intent of talking to Him about it. If any of you need me, raise your hand and I will come over.

STOP 15–20 MINUTES

Now that you've spent time quietly observing, what gifts or fruits do you think you received today?

Did you notice some new insights about yourself? About God?

Would you like to share? You don't have to. Just give me a nod if something touched you today.

It's important to unplug from the world now and then and reconnect with God through nature.

Some people like to hike, and others like to fish.

Whatever draws you away from the noise of life—that's a good place to find God.

Jesus often told His disciples to go off and pray.

Lent is the perfect season to do that.

Before we close, I want to give you something I brought back from my pilgrimage. I went to Italy earlier this month.

This is a Tau Cross from Assisi, where St. Francis lived.

It reminds us to let go of the flesh and live in the Spirit.

It's a powerful sign of Lent—a call to penance and deeper connection with God.

I also visited Blessed Carlo Acutis's resting place and brought back prayer cards for you.

Lastly, I have a love letter from Father God—words from Scripture, straight from His heart to yours. I placed it in the envelope.

Father God desires your wellness. He wants you to be filled with peace and His Spirit of Love.

Later this week, take this letter and pray it using the technique of the Heart-Centered prayer I taught you today.

We'll end with a song of worship that ties everything together.

It's called So Will I and here are the lyrics for you to sing along.

(7 Minutes)

Before I play the song, I want to ask you: did you have fun today?

What are your Confirmation Saints and why did you choose them?

Remember: You are not ordinary. You are made for the heavens.

Over the next few days, I encourage you to continue practicing what you learned today.

Let it become natural to you.

I'd love to hear how this retreat touched you.

Feel free to share with your teacher or even write me a short note.

Thank you for inviting me to your retreat.

May you know how deeply loved you are and how

God's love is always surrounding you in His Creation.

Play the song now.

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