

## Session 2

Tenebrae, directed by Nigel Short, sing the Magnificat from Rachmaninov's Vespers.

### Stillness Exercise:

At the beginning of the prayer, spend a minute letting God look at you or be with you in any way that God wants. Take your time to settle, listening to the sounds that you can hear around you. Listen to all the sounds around you. Spend some time focusing on the sounds nearest to you. As the sounds gradually fade away, notice the sound and rhythm of your own breathing. As you inhale, breathe in God's love . . . as you breathe out, give to God anything you want to hand over: any tension, concern, desire . . . take three deeper breaths, breathing in God's love. Focus on the pattern of your breathing, calming yourself as you breathe deeply and calmly. And from this quiet centre, hear the words of the Gospel of Luke telling of the arrival of Mary to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

### Reflection:

This beautiful piece of Scripture reflects the meeting of two relatives overcome with joy. Both are unexpectedly pregnant, one young and one old: one a virgin and one past child-bearing years. Both are pregnant. But they both seem to greet these unexpected events with joy - they both rejoice in what God has done for them. They each recognise the presence of God in the unlikely events which are unfolding around them. Imagine being with Mary and Elizabeth in Zechariah's house. How do you imagine the scene? What is the house of Elizabeth and Zechariah like? How big or small? Is it neat and tidy, are there plants or perhaps any animals? Try and make yourself comfortable in their home.

How do you see Mary react to the site of the pregnant Elizabeth? How does Elizabeth look at Mary? Can you see their joy?

Can you sense the humility and gratitude they feel in their behavior? What does it look like? How does it find expression? Can you rejoice with them as they praise God for His goodness - even though they do not understand His ways? Have you experienced something similar - being able to praise God, even though you don't understand how or why something has come about? Can you see the hope they have in God, the God who looks with favour on the lowly, the God who comes to turn the values of the world upside down.

How does it feel to be part of Mary and Elizabeth's 'spiritual' conversation? What effect does it have on you? Do the things you say to others, or the conversations you have sadden or offer hope and joy?

As you listen again, what aspects of the story strike you most?

In these last few moments of this section of the Retreat, bring to God whatever has most touched you, and perhaps enter into a conversation with Mary about how you can respond,



how you can grow in faith from this Retreat.

Our Lady of the Journey, show me the way to reach the Father, at the side of your Son. Amen.