

FRANZ JALICS

# CONTEMPLATIVE RETREAT

An Introduction to the  
Contemplative Way to Life  
and to the  
Jesus Prayer

The logo for Xulon Press features the word "xulon" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. A thick, black, curved line arches over the letters "u" and "l". Below "xulon", the word "PRESS" is written in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font.

xulon  
PRESS

Copyright © 2003 by Deutsche Jesuiten,  
Seestr. 14, München, Germany D-80802

*Contemplative Retreat*  
by Franz Jalics

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 1-594671-56-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the author.

Original Title: *Kontemplative Exerzitien*, published in German by Echter Verlag, Würzburg, Germany, 1994.

First English edition, *Called to Share in His Life*, trans. Sr. Lucia Wiedenhöver, OCD, published by St. Paul's Press, Bandra, Mumbai, India, 2000.

Edited for publication in the United States by Ruth A. Fox, Ph.D.

Except for scripture passages paraphrased by the original author, Bible quotations are taken from The New American Bible with Revised Psalms and Revised New Testament, copyright © 1987 by Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville.

To order one or more copies of this book, call  
1-866-909-BOOK (2665)  
or visit  
[www.Xulon Press.com](http://www.Xulon Press.com)

In Europe, order direct from either  
[www.gardners.com](http://www.gardners.com) or [www.bertrams.com](http://www.bertrams.com)  
(<http://www.bertrams.com>)

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

1. FROM PRE-CONTEMPLATIVE TO CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.....	4
2. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK .....	6
3. THE FRUIT OF EXPERIENCE.....	7
4. THE RETREAT MASTER.....	8
5. A WORKBOOK AS RETREAT MASTER .....	9
6. SACRED SCRIPTURE .....	10
7. AN ACTIVE SPIRITUALITY.....	10
8. MEDITATION OR CONTEMPLATION?.....	11
9. A REQUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING .....	12
10. FOR WHOM HAS THIS BOOK BEEN WRITTEN?.....	13
11. THE FORMAT OF THE RETREAT.....	14
12. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK.....	15
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION .....	17

## FIRST DAY

I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: WHAT IS A RETREAT?.....	19
1. THE POWER OF NATURE.....	19
2. ENCOUNTERING GOD AND SELF.....	20
3. AWARENESS, THINKING, AND DOING .....	23
4. THE FIRST TEACHER IS NATURE .....	25
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	26
III. DIALOGUES .....	27
1.1 Barbara / 1.2 Andrew / 1.3 Jennifer / 1.4 Felix / 1.5 Claudia /	
1.6 Jack / 1.7 Sabrina / 1.8 David / 1.9 Andrea / 1.10 Vera /	
1.11 Marcella / 1.12 Kevin / 1.13 Mary / 1.14 Lisette / 1.15 Martin /	
1.16 Vivian / 1.17 Ralph / 1.18 Toni	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE SECOND DAY .....	41

## SECOND DAY

I. INTRODUCTORY TALK:	
THE THREEFOLD RELATIONSHIP .....	45
1. I WAS SICK AND YOU VISITED ME.....	45
2. THE WAY OUT OF A CRISIS .....	47
3. THE BEST TRAINING FOR INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE.....	49
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	52
1. SITTING.....	52
2. BREATHING EXERCISES .....	53
III. DIALOGUES.....	56
2.1 Michael / 2.2 Esther / 2.3 Hugh / 2.4 Veronica / 2.5 Ken /	
2.6 Sandra / 2.7 Rudolf / 2.8 Clarence / 2.9 Jacob / 2.10 Greta /	
2.11 James / 2.12 Paula / 2.13 Gerard / 2.14 Tina / 2.15 Peter /	
2.16 Regina / 2.17 Edith / 2.18 Damian / 2.19 Travis / 2.20 Doris /	
2.21 Willie / 2.22 Ted	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE THIRD DAY .....	73

## THIRD DAY

I. INTRODUCTORY TALK:	
SELF-CENTEREDNESS & GOD-CENTEREDNESS .....	75
1. THE ORIGINAL HUMAN CONDITION AND THE FALL .....	75
2. THE EXPERIENCE OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS .....	76
3. FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS TO GOD-CENTEREDNESS .....	78
4. THE PIOUS EGOIST .....	79
5. SELF-CENTEREDNESS IN THE EUCHARIST.....	80
6. SELF-CENTEREDNESS IN MEDITATION .....	81
7. THE PRACTICE OF BEING THERE FOR GOD.....	82
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	82
III. DIALOGUES .....	85
3.1 Catherine / 3.2 John / 3.3 Maria / 3.4 Oliver / 3.5 Steffi /	
3.6 Christine / 3.7 Richard / 3.8 Sharon / 3.9 Luke / 3.10 Hannah /	
3.11 Helma / 3.12 Oswald / 3.13 Anne / 3.14 Frances / 3.15 Louis /	
3.16 Adrian / 3.17 Gregory / 3.18 Walter / 3.19 Leo / 3.20 Fanny	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE FOURTH DAY .....	103

## FOURTH DAY

I. INTRODUCTORY TALK:	
CONTEMPLATION & SELF-EMPTYING.....	105
1. LIFE AND DEATH.....	105
2. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD .....	107
3. THE DIFFICULTY OF TALKING ABOUT THIS THEME .....	109

4. RENUNCIATION IN HUMAN LIFE .....	110
5. VOLUNTARY SELF-EMPTYING .....	112
6. EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTARY SELF-EMPTYING .....	112
7. CONTEMPLATION AND SELF-EMPTYING .....	114
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	115
III. DIALOGUES .....	116
4.1 Elias / 4.2 Patrick / 4.3 Lucy / 4.4 Agnes / 4.5 Sara / 4.6 Frank /	
4.7 George / 4.8 Bridget / 4.9 Timothy / 4.10 Jon / 4.11 Jerome /	
4.12 Ronald / 4.13 Dick / 4.14 Christopher / 4.15 Stella / 4.16 Sue /	
4.17 Rita / 4.18 Judith / 4.19 Charlotte / 4.20 Conrad	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE FIFTH DAY .....	135

## **FIFTH DAY**

I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: REDEMPTION .....	137
1. ABDUCTION .....	137
2. CONFRONTED BY THE POWER OF DARKNESS IN THE DESERT .....	140
3. SIN .....	141
4. THE GOOD CORE, THE DARK LAYER, AND THE OUTER RIND .....	142
5. PRE-CONTEMPLATIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE BEHAVIOR .....	143
6. IN THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST .....	145
7. CONCRETE DESCRIPTION OF THE REDEEMING PROCESS IN MEDITATION .....	146
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	148
III. DIALOGUES .....	149
5.1 Olga / 5.2 Danielle / 5.3 Margaret / 5.4 Gabriel / 5.5 Victor /	
5.6 Arnold / 5.7 Manulea / 5.8 Ben / 5.9 Tanya / 5.10 Herbert /	
5.11 Basil / 5.12 Norbert / 5.13 Angela / 5.14 Alphonse /	
5.15 Michelle / 5.16 Juan / 5.17 Harold / 5.18 Nicky / 5.19 Max /	
5.20 Laura / 5.21 Cornelia	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE SIXTH DAY .....	171

## **SIXTH DAY**

I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER .....	173
1. CONDITION FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST .....	173
2. TWO MEMORIES .....	174
3. WHAT DO WE HAVE TO SUFFER? .....	175
4. KEEPING THE WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER ALIVE .....	176
5. TO SUFFER OR RETALIATE? .....	177
6. BECOMING MORE AND MORE CHRIST ON EARTH .....	180
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	181

III. DIALOGUES .....	182
6.1 Ursula / 6.2 Adam / 6.3 Terri / 6.4 Miriam / 6.5 Roman /	
6.6 Caitlin / 6.7 Henry / 6.8 Gerald / 6.9 Daniel / 6.10 Emily /	
6.11 Cecilia / 6.12 Javier / 6.13 Felicity / 6.14 Nora / 6.15 Thomas /	
6.16 Tillie / 6.17 Philip / 6.18 Maureen / 6.19 Ernest / 6.20 Alfred	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE SEVENTH DAY .....	205
<b>SEVENTH DAY</b>	
I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: ORIENTATION TO GOD .....	207
1. EYE CONTACT AND DISTRACTION .....	207
2. THE VINE BRANCHES AND THE PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE .....	208
3. SADNESS OVER OUR SINS .....	210
4. ORIENTATION OF THE HUMAN BEING TO GOD IN SACRED SCRIPTURE .....	212
5. THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS .....	213
6. THE MOST FREQUENT MISTAKE IN MEDITATION .....	213
7. THE DESIRE FOR IMMEDIACY .....	214
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	215
III. DIALOGUES .....	216
7.1 Betty / 7.2 Fred / 7.3 José / 7.4 Clare / 7.5. Simon / 7.6 Dennis /	
7.7 Maurice / 7.8 Sonia / 7.9 Joseph / 7.10 Joyce / 7.11 Caroline /	
7.12 Verena / 7.13 Kurt / 7.14 Geoffrey / 7.15 Paul / 7.16 Jason /	
7.17 Lena / 7.18 Joan / 7.19 Stephen	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE EIGHTH DAY .....	237
<b>EIGHTH DAY</b>	
I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: FORGIVENESS .....	239
1. A MEMORY .....	239
2. THE NECESSITY FOR FORGIVENESS .....	240
3. THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST .....	241
4. FROM THE HEART .....	242
5. HURTS FROM OUR PARENTS .....	243
6. ANOTHER MEMORY .....	245
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....	247
III. DIALOGUES .....	248
8.1 Emil / 8.2 Matt / 8.3 Doreen / 8.4 Robert / 8.5 Felix / 8.6 Luis /	
8.7 Amy / 8.8 Charles / 8.9 Helen / 8.10. Susan / 8.11 Lorraine /	
8.12 Emma / 8.13 Rosa / 8.14 Ruth / 8.15 Alan / 8.16 Mario /	
8.17 Inez / 8.18 Freddy	
IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE NINTH DAY .....	267

## **NINTH DAY**

### **I. INTRODUCTORY TALK:**

THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST .....	269
1. TWO DECISIONS .....	269
2. FROM JESUS OF NAZARETH TO THE RISEN CHRIST.....	272
3. "BECOMING ONE" IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN .....	273
4. THE "MYSTERY" IN THE PAULINE LETTERS .....	275
5. THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST .....	275

### **II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....** 276

### **III. DIALOGUES .....** 277

9.1 Mark / 9.2 Lilian / 9.3 Jimmy / 9.4 Harry / 9.5 Rosalind /	
9.6 Bernard / 9.7 Carrie / 9.8 Edward / 9.9 Katie / 9.10 Larry /	
9.11 Gaby / 9.12 Helen / 9.13 Tobias / 9.14 Albert / 9.15 Ambrose /	
9.16 Beatrice / 9.17 Clemens	

### **IV. REVIEW & TRANSITION TO THE TENTH DAY .....** 296

## **TENTH DAY**

### **I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: RETURN TO DAILY LIFE.....** 297

1. ALTERNATING BETWEEN RESTING AND ACTIVITY .....	297
2. CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AFTER THE RETREAT.....	298
3. CONTEMPLATION OUTSIDE OF PRAYER.....	301

### **II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION .....** 304

### **III. FAREWELL DIALOGUES .....** 304

10.1 Dominic / 10.2 Erwin / 10.3 Eugene / 10.4 Carmen / 10.5 Eric /	
10.6 Debra / 10.7 Jerry / 10.8 Sophie / 10.9 Irene / 10.10 Roland /	
10.11 Fabian / 10.12 Miguel / 10.13 Sebastian / 10.14 Benedict /	
10.15 Lina / 10.16 Yvonne / 10.17 Brian / 10.18 Nellie	

### **BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.....** 331

## **FIFTH DAY**

### **I. INTRODUCTORY TALK: REDEMPTION**

#### ***1. Abduction***

During a long abduction I underwent an important inner development, which may help us understand how redemption takes place during retreat. It was the time of the civil war between the extreme right-wing and left-wing groups in Argentine society. The university students were very agitated by the events of this time. The pressure to join the guerillas was great. I was living at the time with a fellow Jesuit at the edge of the slums of Bajo Flores in Buenos Aires. We were theology professors at two different universities. We wanted to bear witness to the fact that, while wretched life conditions existed, it was possible to take the part of the poor by peaceful means. We had received an express mission from the official Church and from our superiors to live among the poor. In spite of this, our presence in the slums was a thorn in the flesh to many people whose political stance was the extreme right. These people interpreted our presence there as support for the guerrillas, and planned to denounce us as terrorists. We knew which way the wind was blowing, as well as who was responsible for the malicious talk, so I went to this particular person to tell him that he was playing with our lives. The man promised me he would

communicate to the military that we were not terrorists. According to later statements by an officer, and the testimony of thirty documents that eventually came into my hands, it became irrefutably clear that he had not kept his promise but, on the contrary, had given false information about us to the military. This account should be sufficient background for the story that follows.

On 23 May 1976, a Sunday morning, 300 heavily armed soldiers with police vans surrounded our shack on the edge of the slum. After cutting off all access from outside, they invaded our house, brutally tied our hands behind our backs, pulled narrow hoods over our heads (which made us choke), and abducted us. For five days, almost without food, I lay on the stone floor with the hood over my face and hands tied behind my back. My fellow Jesuit fared much worse. He was given drugs in order to extract from him information he otherwise would never have given. As we later learned, he had—against all expectations—talked about God and Jesus Christ. The military were deeply impressed. Until then they had been convinced that we were terrorists.

On the fifth day they brought us to a private house. They replaced the hoods with eye bandages which gave us relief from the choking fits. They fastened the handcuffs in front, which was a relief when we were lying down. On this fifth day an officer came and told us we were innocent, and that he would ensure that we could return to the slum as soon as possible. These were the last words we heard regarding our abduction for five months, during which we remained handcuffed. We each were chained by one leg to a heavy canon ball. Our eyes were blindfolded until our liberation.

We had both long before begun to meditate with the simple repetition of the name of Jesus. Day after day, from morning to evening, we kept to this simple prayer.

After the officer had told us on the fifth day that we would be freed, he evidently said the same thing to the eight subordinate officers who guarded us. One of them said to us the same evening that prisoner releases always took place on Saturdays. I rejoiced since it was Friday. But Saturday came and went, and we were not released. I became extremely enraged. The injustice of being kept under arrest in spite of our proven innocence evoked helpless rage and great anger in me. My rage was more and more directed against the man who had given false witness against us. After a

day of helpless rage, I was overcome by great fear of what would happen, including the thought of execution. The fear, together with an inner shaking, lasted a day and a half. After that I got very depressed: all was lost. (My fears don't seem exaggerated to me even today. After several years, when a court case was prosecuted against the commanders involved, there were no surviving witnesses from the 6000 people whom this particular group had abducted. Only we two survived. All the others had been killed.)

On the fourth day after that I sank into indescribable sadness. Another day had to pass before I could weep for hours. Only then could I feel relieved and become calmer. I waited for the next Saturday full of hope. It wasn't far off, for my inner process took several days. When again we weren't released, the whole process began again: Rage, fear, depression, sadness, and then weeping. I passed through all these emotions over three or four days, until hope again flared up at the approach of the next Saturday. This inner process repeated itself in the same form week after week, for three and a half months. All the time, I continued to meditate on the name of Jesus. In spite of inner rebellion and violent feelings, I constantly tried to forgive. I also constantly prayed for our persecutors and the people who caused our abduction. After three and a half months, the cycles of the process became shorter, but repeated themselves every day until the day of our release: rage, fear, depression, sadness, weeping. Occasionally there were more quiet days.

After our release, my friends urgently counseled me to stay for a while outside the country, and so I spent more than a year in the United States, hoping to return soon to Argentina. When, after a year, my return was still thought to be inadvisable, I came to Germany. I began to give retreats, and I also noticed that a great change had taken place in me. A kind of depression, which had always been in me under the surface, and a certain aggressiveness were completely gone and never returned. The months of abduction, imprisonment, and closeness to death, along with the constant repetition of the name of Jesus, had brought about in me a profound purification.

I have kept the description of the events very brief, in spite of the months of imprisonment and so many impressions and profound experiences. It's sufficient to describe how I was incredibly transformed in the silence of meditation. Stillness can set a great deal in

motion in the human person. Attention to Jesus Christ connects us to his healing power, and I'd like to describe in more detail this purifying process that takes place in an extensive stillness—and so also in retreat.

*2. Confronted by the power of darkness in the desert*

road possible.

## *6. Another memory*

In Part V of this book I recounted my abduction in Argentina in 1976. I would like to add a further experience. During the months of my abduction, I underwent a profound purification of which I only became aware after almost two years. I also experienced a sequel which has to do with forgiveness.

Although denounced as terrorists at that time, my fellow Jesuit and I have been shown to be completely innocent of those charges. We

knew that a certain person had spread the rumor about us and, because of his authority, had made the accusation credible in wide circles. According to later testimony by witnesses, this person had denounced us—in front of the officers who kidnapped us—as having been active in terrorism. Only shortly before the abduction, I had said to this man that he was playing with our lives. He must have been aware that his denunciation would mean our certain death. I don't need to say more; I often thought that our story was so incredible that I would not have believed it myself if somebody had told it to me.

My feelings of helplessness, rage, and resentment towards this person and his clique during our captivity might easily be imagined. But I prayed the whole time for him and his accomplices. Many things cleared up during those months, but the rage itself only partially dissolved. Day after day I prayed for these men and asked God that my way of the cross might be for their good. I did this resolutely and with the intention to forgive them, even though my feelings were completely opposite.

After my release, I went to North America. For two years I tried to make the facts public in order to be rehabilitated, for our cause and reputations to be restored. I had more than thirty documents in my possession which proved in black and white the human rights offences that had been committed against us.

Nothing doing. All doors remained closed.

After one and a half years, I abandoned my intention to return to Argentina and went to Germany. From that moment on, I asked all who were working on this matter not to continue to engage themselves in clearing up of the injustices. I no longer needed it. Rage and helplessness had lessened and only returned sporadically. My dealing with these feelings remained the same. I faced them again and again and prayed to God for the guilty persons. Distance—and the fact that I no longer needed rehabilitation in the public eye—also helped. It was nonetheless very painful that in spite of distance, lies, calumnies, and unjust actions against me did not cease.

Four years after my abduction, my Order asked me to lead the so-called Tertianship for a group of young Jesuits. Tertianship is the last phase of the young priests' spiritual formation. By way of preparation, I made a thirty-day retreat. On the last day, during a

walk in the forest, I asked myself what corrections or changes I was due to make in my life. I was suddenly struck by the realization that I had forgiven my persecutors, yet I was still carefully guarding the evidence against them in a closet. Apparently, the thought of being able to use these documents against them one day was still in the back of my mind. I went home and burned them. This was an important step.

During those times I often thought of St. John of the Cross, whom I generally held in high esteem. He had been kept imprisoned for months by his brothers. I also knew that Jesus Christ had never been rehabilitated in his day. His apostles and the faithful recognized the truth, but for the general public, he remained a criminal executed for his misdeeds. Eight years after my abduction I had to go to Rome to take part in a three-day conference of directors of our Tertianship courses for Europe. During a break, the Superior General of our Jesuit Order asked me if everything was now in order. Asked in this way, I took it that he was personally interested in me. I told him everything—or nearly everything—and stressed my desire that he should not do anything more to repair injustice. I had my work, was contented, and free of the need for any clarification of those former events.

During this conversation, a very deep pain, probably worse than I had ever experienced before, rose up in me for the last time. It was no longer anger, but pain. I could not hold back my tears in front of my Superior General. From then on, I feel truly free and can say that I have “forgiven from my heart.” Since then, I no longer feel resentment, anger, or pain regarding those events. On the contrary, I feel only gratitude for this experience that is part of my life. That process of purification lasted fully eight years. At the end, even the last remnants of resentment were taken away. Perhaps this can serve as encouragement for those who have been through similar experiences and who find it hard to forgive.

## II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDITATION

We have only three more days. This is the moment when retreatants direct their eyes toward the future. Return to normal life approaches, and the cares and interests of the coming weeks make themselves felt. Unnoticed, the impression creeps in that the retreat