



Embracing Winter's Grace

A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group □ 40-50 min.

Designed for Deacons

God's Grace in Winter

Leader: As winter settles across the land, we gather with our brothers in service -- men ordained to carry Christ's compassion into the cold places of our world. In this winter season when the earth seems barren and silent, We are reminded that beneath the frozen ground, new life quietly waits. Within the silence of our hearts, God works unseen, stirring the embers that never truly die, while embracing God's winter's grace

Winter invites us to slow down, to listen, and to trust in God's steady warmth even when we cannot feel it. We come to this retreat not to escape the cold, but to encounter Christ within it to rediscover and embrace His fire at the center of our vocation.

All: Lord Jesus, As I enter this winter retreat, open my heart to Your living flame. When my service grows weary, renew my zeal. When my compassion cools, rekindle my love. When shadows lengthen and joy fades, remind me that even the smallest spark of faith can light the darkest night. In the stillness of winter, help me to recognize the warmth and embrace Your grace.

Grant that my diaconal service may bring warmth to others -- to the lonely, the forgotten, and the poor. Melt the frost of indifference within me and teach me to serve not from duty alone, but from a heart burning with Your mercy. I offer this retreat to You, Lord, trusting that every moment spent in Your presence kindles new life in my soul.

Guide me, Lord, by your grace, to be less concerned with my own winter's chill and more intent on sharing Your warmth.

When fatigue settles in like snow upon my spirit, cover me with Your strength. Help me to recognize You in those who shiver -- in the homeless, the burdened, and the weary. Let my presence be a cup of warmth, my words a flame of comfort, and my actions a living sign of Your enduring care.

A Deacon's Call Amidst the Cold

Leader: *Isaiah 58:10 -- "If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday."*

John 13:34–35 -- "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Galatians 6:9 -- "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Take this time to reflect upon how God calls you, as a deacon, to bring light and warmth into a cold and restless world and to teach others to embrace His grace, not only in winter, but year-round.

- ❖ How do you serve others when your own heart feels cold or tired?
- ❖ How do you embrace and share God's grace in the winter, when others stand in the frost of doubt or despair?

Reader 1: Winter tests us, not by what we lose, but by what we hold onto -- hope, faith, and love. The cold reminds us that God's winter's grace adds warmth and must be chosen, nurtured, and

shared. In our diaconate, we are called to be firekeepers for the Church, tending to the coals of compassion even when the world feels frozen. May our service be a hearth for others -- a place where the lonely find comfort, the weary find rest, and those chilled by despair rediscover the warmth of Christ's grace and love.

Reader 2: *Psalm 46:10 – “Be still and know that I am God.”*

In the hush of winter, the world grows quiet -- but silence is not emptiness. Stillness allows deacons to hear the whispers of God's grace between acts of service. When we pause, we make room for God to speak and embrace his grace. When we rest, we allow Him to restore the warmth we have given away.

Meditate and Share:

- ❖ How does silence strengthen my ministry?
- ❖ When do I confuse stillness with idleness?
- ❖ What parts of my soul need to embrace God's grace and the healing warmth of quiet prayer?

FAITH IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS

Reader 3: *John 1:5 – “Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

There are seasons in ministry that feel like the long nights of winter, when hope is distant, the light feels far away, and God's grace feels absent. But a deacon is called to hold the candle steady, even when the flame flickers. Faith is not the absence of darkness, but the presence of light in the midst of darkness.

Meditate and Share:

- ❖ How have I persevered in faith when the light felt dim?
- ❖ Who around me is walking through darkness and needs the light of encouragement and how can I minister to them?
- ❖ What helps me to believe that God is still working even when I cannot see the results?

Reader 4: *Romans 12:11–12 “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”*

Winter invites meditation -- a time to gather what has grown cold and bring it back to the fire. As a deacon, we must continually examine our spirit: Have we grown brittle in compassion? Have we allowed routine to numb the flame of ministry?

Meditate and Share:

- ❖ What parts of my vocation need rekindling this winter and how can I get back on track?
- ❖ How can I balance prayer and ministry so that one feeds the other?
- ❖ Have I ignored God's grace, instead of embracing it and sharing it with others?

All: We commit ourselves, O Lord, to bring warmth where there is cold, light where there is darkness, and hope where there is despair. As deacons, may we serve with hands that heal and hearts that burn with Your love. May this winter be not a season of slumber, but a season of deep renewal and rekindled service.

Lord, melt the frost within us. Let our words be gentle fires, our service a steady glow, our hearts a refuge for all who seek You. Teach us to embrace the chill of winter without losing heart. When the work is heavy and the world grows cold, remind us that You walk beside us, with your grace. Help me to be a beacon for others -- a steady flame of faith and charity. Let my ministry burn bright not for my glory, but for Yours, that all who draw near may feel the nearness of Your love. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.