



Rest Co-curricular Lab | *Practicing Rest and Leisure*

“I have often said that man’s unhappiness springs from one thing alone, his incapacity to stay quietly in one room.”

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670)

“Leisure is a form of that stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whoever is not still, cannot hear.”

Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1948)

Pieper challenges popular conceptions of rest as a mere interlude for the sake of productivity and suggests that true rest is a “basic power of the human soul” to experience and celebrate the “reality of creation.” Related, Pascal offers a critical diagnosis of humanity’s consistent desire for agitation, distraction, or occupation as a means to avoid our discomfort with solitude or stillness.

In this co-curricular lab, you are invited to practice rest. Such practice should include an intentional distancing from what Nancy Michael calls, “the types of environmental and social forces that draw us from our ability to sit with ourselves in quietude” (Michael, 2024.) This exercise should help you consider, or perhaps see anew, the ways in which you typically engage with “rest” and how Pascal’s observations integrate with your experience.

Guidelines

1. Spend at least 60 minutes practicing rest. For most, this should involve silence and solitude. It must involve an intentional absence of technology or digital connection. Do not do anything “productive” during this time or use it as a means toward an end. Rather, practice rest as an end. A list of potential actions is provided below.
2. In your commonplace book, beginning on page 232 (or later), summarize your experience, connect it to the text from the *rest* session, and apply it to your practice of living well.

You may wish to use the following examples to begin your practice. These examples are not exhaustive, but offer a glimpse into the kinds of actions that might spur “the power to step beyond the working world and win contact with those superhuman, life-giving forces that can send us, renewed and alive again” (Pieper). You are encouraged to try your practice without your phone or other electronic devices.

1. Pray or sit at the Grotto, the [Basilica](#), or one of the over [60 chapels on campus](#), perhaps the chapel in your residence hall.
2. Walk around the lakes or other natural areas.
3. Wander the [Raclin Murphy Museum of Art](#) or spend time with any of the dozens of statues and public works of art on campus.
4. Journal, write, or draw in silence.

5. Pray the Examen, the Rosary, or any of the [Ways to Pray](#) described by Campus Ministry.
6. Spend time in [Eucharistic Adoration](#) in the Coleman-Morse Center Chapel.
7. Practice and reflect on one of the [Ways to Restore](#) described by McWell.