Hello

My name's Roger.

I'm a psychologist who works at the Centre for Positive Health Sciences at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

I spend a lot of my time thinking about what lifestyle and what kind of practices lead to wellbeing in the fullest sense of the word. How can we live in a way that brings health to body, mind and spirit.

So it is my delight to join with Renew:all for National Retreat Week and offer a thought on how you might find replenishment in God today.

In the first chapter of Mark's gospel we are told Jesus entered Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

This simple phrase is the distillation of everything Jesus came to teach. It is the essence of how he viewed the world. The singularity from which a new universe can explode. It tells us how we, you and I, can know God right now, in this moment.

Jesus offers us two movements of the spirit.

He tells us to repent. Because the world is not the way we often think it is. God is not absent. We tend to think that we are here and God is elsewhere. But it is actually the other way round. God is here and we are elsewhere. Distracted, self-absorbed, preoccupied, worried.

God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. He is within us, but we are outside of ourselves.

But at any moment in the day we can repent, we can turn. At the kitchen sink, in front of the monitor, driving the car, dressing the children, walking the dog. We can turn our attention from wherever it has become lost and be aware in this moment of the presence of God. We can be lovingly attentive to the one who is lovingly attentive to us.

And if to repent is to 'turn from'; to believe is to 'turn to'.

When Jesus tells us to believe that the kingdom of God is at hand, he isn't inviting us to conceptual certainty. He is simply inviting us to rest in the reality of the way things are. Because when we believe something, when we trust someone, that faith is often invisible to us. Our minds simply settle in viewing them as reliable, truthful, dependable.

And this the kind of God Jesus presents us with. Not a capricious, volatile, inconsistent God. But an utterly constant, exquisitely attuned, unflaggingly available God. A God

who hugs the outline of our lives as the sea hugs the shore. A God who is willing to endure any indignity, to overcome any offence, to close the distance between us and Him.

These are the two movements of retreat. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whenever you wish to You can turn from the thoughts that disturb and agitate; and turn to the life of God in the here-and-now. You can make yourself present to The Presence in the present.

Let's finish with a prayer, based on Psalm 46, that I take from Jim Finley.

Repeat after me:

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be Still

Be