

What is a Retreat?

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"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 45:10

No one can go full speed all the time. It wears you out. Always rushing ahead can be dangerous. Sometimes you have to stop to get your bearings. A retreat is an opportunity to step away from the stress and pace of the world, to withdraw from the ordinary activities for a period of time to commune with God in silence, prayer and reflection. Jesus spent 40 days in prayer and fasting before He began his public ministry. And the Gospels record many times how Jesus went away from preaching and healing to commune with the Father in prayer and in solitude.

In the early Christian era, the desert, mountains and other remote areas became places of prayer. Later, people sought solitude in monasteries and convents. In the 16th century retreat houses were established and continue to operate all over the world today.

Above all, a retreat is a time to rest in God, in whom "we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17; 28) It might be designed around a particular theme from Scripture or a spiritual topic that appeals to the needs of individuals or groups. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, may be one type of retreat; another might take up a charismatic, or Franciscan or Cusillo retreat or utilize the Lectionary or the RCIA or a Small Christian Community process. Many of these types of retreats concentrate on deepening our lives as disciples of Christ and strengthening community. All of our thematic retreat experiences are posted on our website.

Jesus said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile." Mark 6:31

(Over)

There are 3 general formats for retreats: preached, directed or guided and private. They are available for individuals or a group:

1. In a **preached retreat**, there is a leader who offers conferences each day, leads prayer and is available for private sharing with the retreatant.
2. In **directed retreats**, individuals meet with a spiritual director who may suggest scripture passages for prayer and reflection. Guided retreats follow the same format as a directed retreat, but usually include an experience of individual or communal faith-sharing and processing at the end of each day. During direction sessions, directors trained in Spirituality reflect back to the retreatant what they observe is happening in their lives and their prayer, and assist the retreatant in clarifying where God is in the midst of their experiences and where God seems to be calling them. Most people on directed or guided retreats maintain silence and have minimal interaction during retreat except for their meetings prescribed for Liturgy, direction or faith-sharing.
3. **Private retreats** depend on the resources of the individual or a group and are made without a leader or a director. Individual private retreats are just that...individual and private. They may involve spiritual reading, participation in the Liturgy of the Hours and Mass, enjoyment of nature or any activity that ensures their privacy. Meals are eaten in silence and interaction is kept to a minimum. The length of the retreat may be a day, a week or longer, depending on the retreatant's wishes and the accommodations of the Center.

In many retreats, silence is the rule of the Center and there is an emphasis on a healthy lifestyle with regard to food, exercise and relaxation. Many come to retreat in order to make serious decision or commitment or to take the opportunity to examine the quality of their spiritual lives. All of these types of retreats are offered here at the Nazareth Retreat Center as well as the possibility for individual spiritual direction through the year.