



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A THREE-DAY SELF-DIRECTED GUIDE

Into the Silence and the Sacred

Drawing from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the living Word of Scripture, this guide invites you into three days of intentional, prayerful encounter with God.



A Self-Directed Silent Retreat Guide

Before You Begin

Foundations from St. Ignatius · Preparation & Posture

THE IGNATIAN VISION

What is this retreat?

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) designed his Spiritual Exercises as a structured encounter with God — not a course of ideas, but a lived experience. His method invites us to engage Scripture with imagination, to notice where God moves in our inner life, and to grow in freedom. These three days adapt his wisdom for a self-directed, silent retreat accessible to anyone of Christian faith.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE & FOUNDATION

Why are we here?

Ignatius begins with this: we are created to praise, reverence, and serve God — and by this means to save our souls. All other things on the face of the earth are created for us to help us attain the end for which we are created. This retreat is an opportunity to return to that foundation.

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

— Psalm 46:10

WHAT TO BRING

Your only essentials

A Bible. A journal and pen. An open heart. Consider leaving your phone in another room or on silent. You are not escaping the world — you are meeting the One who holds it.

IGNATIAN POSTURE

The disposition of a retreatant

Ignatius asks that we approach prayer with magis — a desire for more, for greater love. He teaches indifference: not cold detachment, but a holy freedom that allows God to move us in any direction. Bring both the longing and the openness.

DAILY RHYTHM

How each day is structured

Each day includes morning prayer, three scripture-based prayer periods, a midday examen, afternoon reflection, and an evening review. Meals and rest are built into the flow. You are not racing — you are resting into God’s presence.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

— Matthew 11:28

Day One: Gratitude & Mercy

Theme: Who I am before God · Ignatian Week One

Ignatius begins the Exercises with an honest look at ourselves: our belovedness, our brokenness, and the mercy that bridges both. Today is not about guilt — it is about truth in love. We stand before a God who knows us fully and loves us still.

MORNING · 20–30 MIN

Opening & Preparation

1. Settle into silence: Sit comfortably. Take ten slow breaths. Notice you are held. Light a candle if it helps mark the sacred nature of this time.
2. Pray: Ask God for one grace today: that everything in this retreat be directed toward His praise and service. This is the Ignatian preparatory prayer — it orients the whole day.
3. Journal: Write one sentence: what do you hope to receive from God in these three days?

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me... Where shall I go from your Spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence?”

— Psalm 139:1, 7

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The God Who Knows You

Read Psalm 139 slowly, twice. After the second reading, close your Bible and sit with one phrase that stayed with you. Let it become your prayer. Ignatius calls this repetition — returning to where God moved, not moving on for novelty’s sake.

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”

— Psalm 139:14

Journal prompt

Where do I most resist being fully known? What would it feel like to be completely seen and completely loved?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Honest Confession & Tender Mercy

Ignatius invites us to a general examen of conscience — not as shame, but as a gift of honest self-knowledge. Read Luke 15:11–24 (the Prodigal Son). Use the Ignatian method: place yourself in the scene. Which character are you? What does the father’s face look like?

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”

— Luke 15:20

Journal prompt

What have I been carrying that I need to bring home? What does it feel like to be embraced rather than judged?

THE DAILY EXAMEN OF ST. IGNATIUS

Five movements at midday

4. Give thanks: Name three specific gifts from this morning, however small. Gratitude opens the heart.
5. Ask for light: Pray: ‘Show me, Lord, what you want me to see about myself today.’
6. Review the morning: Walk through your morning prayer. Where did you feel drawn toward God? Where did you feel resistance or distance?
7. Express sorrow & receive love: Acknowledge anything that felt like a turning away. Receive God’s mercy without self-condemnation.
8. Look forward: Ask for grace in the afternoon. What one thing do you want to carry into the next hours?

THIRD PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Receiving What You Cannot Earn

Read Romans 8:1–17 slowly. Ignatius believed we should pray with our whole selves — intellect, memory, and will. After reading, use your memory: when in your life have you most experienced being loved freely?

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

— Romans 8:1, 16

Journal prompt

What would my life look like if I fully believed I am God’s beloved child — not because of what I do, but because of who God is?

Evening

Read Psalm 23 aloud, slowly. Conclude with a short evening examen — just three questions in your journal:

“He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.”

— Psalm 23:2–3

EVENING EXAMEN QUESTIONS

- 9.** Where did I feel most alive in prayer today?
- 10.** Where did I feel most resistant or distracted?
- 11.** What one word or phrase from today do I want to carry into sleep?

Day Two: Encounter & Following

Theme: Who Jesus is, and who I am called to be · Ignatian Week Two

Having rested in mercy, we now turn to the living person of Jesus. Ignatius's second week centers on the life and person of Christ — not as historical figure only, but as the one who calls us by name. Today we pray with the Gospels using Ignatian imaginative contemplation: placing ourselves inside the sacred scenes.

MORNING · 20–30 MIN

Opening & Entering the Word

12. Return to silence: Sit quietly for five minutes. Notice your breath. Recall last night's word or phrase. Let it be the threshold you cross into today.
13. Pray: Ask for a grace: 'Lord, give me an intimate knowledge of you, that I may love you more and follow you more closely.' This is the heart of Week Two in the Exercises.

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Imaginative Contemplation: The Call

Read John 1:35–51. Then close your Bible and enter the scene. Ignatius instructs us to use all five senses: What do you see? What does the water smell like? What does Jesus's voice sound like when he says 'Come and see'? How do you feel when he looks at you?

"Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' ... He said to them, 'Come and you will see.'"

— John 1:38–39

Journal prompt

What are you seeking? If Jesus asked you this today — not in a challenging way, but with genuine curiosity — how would you answer honestly?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The Two Standards

This is one of Ignatius's most distinctive meditations. He invites us to see two contrasting ways of living: one marked by wealth, honor, and pride; the other by poverty, humility, and freedom. Read Matthew 6:19–34. Which voice do you hear more loudly in your daily life?

“No one can serve two masters... Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.”

— Matthew 6:24, 34

Journal prompt

What am I most attached to that may be keeping me from greater freedom? What would it feel like to hold it loosely?

THE DAILY EXAMEN OF ST. IGNATIUS

Five movements at midday

- 14.** Gratitude: What has moved you in prayer this morning? Name it with thankfulness.
- 15.** Consolation & desolation: Ignatius distinguishes between consolation (movements toward God: peace, warmth, tears of joy) and desolation (movements away: restlessness, dryness, discouragement). Which did you notice?
- 16.** The person of Jesus: What has struck you most about Jesus in today’s prayer? What surprised you?
- 17.** A desire: What do you most want from Jesus right now? Tell him plainly, as a friend speaks to a friend.

THIRD PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Imaginative Contemplation: The Beatitudes

Read Matthew 5:1–12. Then imagine you are in the crowd on the hillside. You have walked a long way. You are tired, perhaps uncertain why you came. And then you hear these words. Which beatitude lands most deeply in you today? Sit with it for the full period.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

— Matthew 5:3, 8

Journal prompt

Which beatitude describes where I am right now in my life? Is it a comfort or a challenge? What does Jesus seem to be saying to me through it?

AFTERNOON WALK · 30–45 MIN

Contemplation in Nature

Ignatius believed God is found in all things — en todo amar y servir. Take a slow, prayerful walk outside if possible. Carry one question: Where do I see God's goodness in what surrounds me right now? Do not solve anything. Simply observe and receive.

Evening: Lectio Divina

Read John 15:1–9 using the four movements of Lectio Divina: Lectio (what word draws you?), Meditatio (what does this stir in you?), Oratio (respond to God), Contemplatio (rest in silence).

“Abide in me, and I in you... I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.”

— John 15:4–5

Day Three: Surrender & Sending

Theme: Love, freedom, and return to the world · Ignatian Week Four

The final movement of the Ignatian Exercises is the Contemplation to Attain Love — a meditation on God’s love active in all creation, and an offering of the self completely back to God. Today we move from receiving to responding, from silence to sending. We do not leave God behind when we leave the retreat; we carry what we have found.

MORNING · 20–30 MIN

Opening: Love in Action

Ignatius reminds us that love is shown in deeds more than words, and that there is a mutual sharing between the lover and the beloved. Begin today by slowly reviewing your journal from Days One and Two. Where did God speak? What has shifted?

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The Resurrection: Joy and Peace

Read John 20:1–18 — Mary at the empty tomb. Use Ignatian imaginative contemplation. You are there in the early morning dark, the grief still heavy. Then: your name. How does Jesus say your name? Remain in the moment of recognition.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned and said to him in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ — which means Teacher.”

— John 20:16

Journal prompt

Jesus calls you by name. What does it feel like? What do you want to say to him in this moment?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The Contemplation to Attain Love

This is the great culminating prayer of the Exercises. Ignatius asks us to see how God labors in all of creation for our sake — in the sun, in bread, in each breath. Read Romans 8:35–39. Then sit in silence, and slowly pray the Suscipe — the prayer Ignatius gave us (included below).

THE SUSCIPE — Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola



Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will — all that I have and call my own.

You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

Journal prompt

What feels hardest to place in God's hands? Can you name it? Can you offer it, even imperfectly?

THIRD PRAYER PERIOD • 45 MIN

Sent in Love

Read Isaiah 43:1–7 and John 21:15–17. Jesus, having risen, asks Peter not 'What have you learned?' but 'Do you love me?' The answer to love is always service — not performance, but joyful participation in what God is already doing.

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

— Isaiah 43:1

"He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' ... Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'"

— John 21:17

Journal prompt

What has God stirred in you this retreat that connects to how you are called to serve? What is one concrete step you will take when you return?

THE DAILY EXAMEN OF ST. IGNATIUS

Five movements at midday

- 18.** Review the whole retreat: Slowly read back through your journal from all three days. Do not analyze — simply notice. What recurring themes, images, or words emerge?
- 19.** Name your graces: Write three specific gifts God gave you in this retreat. These are yours to keep.
- 20.** Name one resolution: What is one specific, small, concrete way you will live differently because of these days?

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- 21.** Write a letter to yourself: Write a brief letter to be opened in three months. What do you want to remember? What do you want to hold onto from this time?

A Closing Blessing

Go gently from this place. The silence does not end when the retreat does — it lives now within you. Return to the ordinary world as one who has been found, and sent, and loved.

The God who met you here goes with you.

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

— Numbers 6:24–26

Core Practices

Ignatian methods · How to pray · What to do when prayer is difficult

IGNATIAN METHOD

Imaginative Contemplation

Place yourself inside a Gospel scene using all five senses. You are not a spectator — you are a participant. What do you see, hear, smell, taste, touch? What emotions arise? Where do you find yourself in the scene? After imagining, simply notice what God stirred in you, and journal it.

IGNATIAN METHOD

Consolation & Desolation

Consolation: any interior movement toward God — peace, warmth, tears of gratitude, an increase in faith, hope, or love.

Desolation: movements away — dryness, restlessness, discouragement, feeling abandoned.

Ignatius teaches: do not make important decisions in desolation. In desolation, hold the course. In consolation, receive freely and give thanks.

IGNATIAN METHOD

Repetition

When a scripture passage or a moment in prayer felt especially alive — return to it. Do not rush forward to new material. Ignatius believed that God often speaks most deeply in the second or third visit to the same passage. Less is more. Depth over breadth.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

If prayer feels dry or difficult

- 22.** This is normal. Do not leave prayer — simply change your posture (sit, walk, kneel).
- 23.** Return to a scripture passage from earlier that moved you.
- 24.** Simply repeat the name 'Jesus' slowly, as a prayer itself.
- 25.** Write in your journal even if you feel nothing — the act of writing is prayer.
- 26.** Rest. God is present in rest. Sleep is not failure; it is sometimes surrender.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Silence & technology

True silence is not the absence of sound but the quieting of the self. Consider phone-free prayer periods. If music helps you enter prayer, choose instrumental or chant. If you must check your phone, do so at a set time outside of prayer periods — and return to silence intentionally.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

A treasury for free time

- Psalm 62 — Waiting on God alone
- Isaiah 55:1–3 — Come to the waters
- Luke 10:38–42 — Mary and Martha (choosing the better part)
- Zephaniah 3:17 — God rejoices over you with singing
- 1 Kings 19:9–13 — Elijah and the still small voice
- Ephesians 3:14–21 — Paul’s prayer for the fullness of God
- Hosea 2:14–15 — The wilderness as a place of speaking
- Revelation 3:20 — Behold, I stand at the door and knock

FOR THE JOURNEY HOME

Carrying the retreat forward

Ignatius designed the Exercises to change how we live, not just how we feel. Consider sharing your retreat with a trusted friend, spiritual director, or pastor. Schedule a monthly examen in your calendar. Return to your journal in three months and open the letter you wrote to yourself.

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

— Philippians 1:6