



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A RETREAT FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Two Becoming One — Again

A three-day retreat for husbands and wives who long to reconnect — spiritually, prayerfully, and truly — with each other and with the God who brought them together.



Sacred Paths Retreat Series

Before You Begin

Who this retreat is for · How couples use this guide · The Ignatian foundation

Marriage is the longest and most demanding spiritual formation program on earth. It asks two people with two entirely different interior lives to build one shared life — and to keep choosing that life through seasons of joy, tedium, misunderstanding, grief, and renewal.

This retreat is not marriage counseling, and it is not a romantic getaway. It is an invitation to bring your marriage into the presence of God — together and individually — and to let the silence do what conversation alone cannot.

HOW THIS RETREAT WORKS

Shared and individual prayer

Each day includes both shared prayer moments and individual prayer periods. During individual periods, each spouse retreats separately — to their own corner of the hermitage, their own chair, their own silence. You bring what arises in individual prayer back to the shared moments. You do not have to share everything. The retreat will guide you.

If you have come to Pacem in Terris, you have the gift of physical space — the hermitage, the woods, the lake. Use it. The shared moments are precious. The individual silence is equally so.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

— Genesis 2:24

BEFORE YOUR FIRST PRAYER PERIOD

Two questions — each spouse writes separately, then shares

- What is the honest state of my heart toward my spouse right now — not the ideal version, but the actual interior weather?
- What is one thing I have been carrying in this marriage that I have not yet said aloud?

Day One: The Covenant

Theme: Why we chose each other · Returning to the beginning

Every marriage begins with a promise. Over time, the weight of daily life — work, children, finances, fatigue, accumulated misunderstandings — can quietly bury the original covenant beneath a layer of routine. Today we go back to the beginning, not to sentimentalize it, but to find what is still alive there.

SHARED MORNING PRAYER · 20 MIN

The covenant renewed

Sit together in silence for five minutes. Then read aloud, taking turns with the verses: Genesis 2:18–24, and then Ruth 1:16–17 — Ruth's declaration to Naomi, which is one of the most beautiful covenant speeches in all of Scripture. Hear it today as a declaration between the two of you.

After reading, sit in silence for ten minutes. What rises in you as you hear these words today?

“Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

— Ruth 1:16

INDIVIDUAL PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The story of us — praying your history

Go separately. Each spouse reads Song of Solomon 8:6–7, then prays with memory: walk slowly back through the history of your marriage. The beginning. The early years. The hardest seasons. The moments of grace you have never forgotten. Where has God been in this marriage? Where do you see his fingerprints?

Journal: Write a letter to God about your marriage — honest, unedited. What are you grateful for? What has been hard? What do you most want for the years ahead?

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death... Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”

— Song of Solomon 8:6–7

MIDDAY EXAMEN · 20 MIN

Together — five questions

1. Gratitude: each spouse names one specific gift the other has given them — not a grand gesture, but something ordinary and true.
2. Where did God feel most present in my prayer this morning?

3. What surprised me about my own heart today?
4. What do I most want to say to my spouse that I rarely say?
5. What one grace do I want to ask for in the afternoon?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD • 45 MIN

The love that chooses — John 15

Read John 15:9–13 together, then go separately for the prayer period. Ignatius believed love is shown in deeds more than in words. Sit with this question for the full period: Have I been loving my spouse as an act of will and decision — choosing them daily — or have I been waiting to feel the love before I act on it?

Journal: Name three specific, concrete ways you have chosen your spouse in the past year. Then name one way you have withheld yourself. Bring both to God.

Evening

Read Ephesians 3:14–19 aloud together — Paul's great prayer for love that surpasses knowledge. Let it be your shared prayer tonight. Then simply sit together in silence for ten minutes before sleep. No agenda. Just the gift of presence.

“May you have strength to comprehend... what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.”

— Ephesians 3:18–19

Day Two: The Wound and the Gift

Theme: What marriage has cost · What it has given · Forgiving and being forgiven

Every marriage carries wounds — not because the marriage is broken, but because two broken people are learning to love each other. Today we do not pretend those wounds away. We bring them, honestly and gently, to the God who is in the business of redemption.

INDIVIDUAL MORNING PRAYER · 45 MIN

The honest prayer

Go separately. Read Colossians 3:12–15 slowly, twice. Then journal: What is the wound in this marriage that you carry most privately? Not as accusation toward your spouse — as honest self-disclosure before God. Where have you been hurt? And where — this is harder — have you caused hurt?

Then read Matthew 18:21–22 — Peter's question about forgiveness, and Jesus's answer. What does it mean to forgive seventy times seven? What would that look like in your specific marriage?

“As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

— Colossians 3:13–14

SHARED PRAYER MOMENT · 30 MIN

Speaking and listening

Come back together. Each spouse shares — briefly, without explanation or defense — one thing they are grateful for in the marriage, and one thing they would like to ask forgiveness for. The listening spouse does not respond immediately. Simply receive what is offered. Then pray together: 'Lord, we bring this marriage to you, with its wounds and its gifts. Heal what needs healing. Strengthen what remains.'

Then return to individual silence for the afternoon prayer period.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Imaginative Contemplation: The Wedding at Cana

Read John 2:1–11 alone. Place yourself in the scene using Ignatius's imaginative method. You are at the wedding. The wine has run out. Mary notices, and she tells Jesus. Jesus turns water into wine — the best wine, saved for last.

Sit with this image: the wine that ran out, and what was poured in its place. What in your marriage has run dry? What might Jesus pour in its place if you brought the empty jars to him? Journal your reflection.

“His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’”

— John 2:5

Evening

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 together — not as a standard to meet, but as a description of the love that is possible when two people are drawing from God's love rather than their own reserves. Read it slowly. Then each spouse names one verse that struck them and why.

Day Three: Sent Together

Theme: The mission of a marriage · What you are building · Returning renewed

A marriage is not a private arrangement between two people. It is a witness. It is a small church — what the tradition calls a domestic church — whose life together either reflects or obscures the love of God in the world. Today we ask: what is the mission of this marriage?

SHARED MORNING PRAYER · 20 MIN

The domestic church

Read Ephesians 5:25–33 together — the challenging, often misunderstood text on marriage as a sign of Christ's love for the Church. Read it charitably, as a call to mutual self-giving, not hierarchy. Then read Joshua 24:15 — 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Ask together: What does it look like for our particular marriage, in our particular season, to serve the Lord?

INDIVIDUAL PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The Suscipe — for a marriage

Go separately and read the Suscipe prayer below. Pray it slowly as an offering of your marriage — together, even though you are praying alone. Then journal: What is one specific way you will love your spouse differently when you return home? Not a grand resolution — one small, concrete act of chosen love.

THE SUSCIPE



*Lord, take and receive this marriage —
all that we have built and all that we have broken,
the years behind us and the years still ahead,
our children, our home, our ordinary days.
You brought us together. To you, Lord, we return it.
Do with it what you will.
Make it more than we could make it alone.
Give us only your love and your grace.
That is enough to keep choosing each other.*

— After St. Ignatius of Loyola

SHARED CLOSING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Three gifts and a blessing

6. Each spouse names one thing God gave them personally in these three days.

7. Each spouse names one thing God gave them about the marriage.
8. Each spouse speaks a blessing over the other — specific, personal, spoken aloud. Take your time. These words matter.

Go, beloved couple

You came here as two people. You leave as two people who have been reminded that God is the third strand in the cord that holds you together. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Go home and keep choosing each other.

“A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

— Ecclesiastes 4:12

Core Practices & Extra Scripture

Practices for your marriage · Carrying the retreat home

PRACTICE

The daily two-minute prayer together

Before sleep each night — thirty seconds of silence, one gratitude each, and one sentence of prayer. Sixty days of this practice changes a marriage more than most weekend retreats.

PRACTICE

The monthly examen for couples

On the first of each month: sit together for twenty minutes. Each spouse answers: Where did I feel most loved this month? Where did I fall short in loving you? What do I want to ask forgiveness for? What grace do I want to ask for in the month ahead?

EXTRA SCRIPTURE

For your marriage

- Genesis 1:27–28 — Made in the image of God, male and female
- Proverbs 31:10–12 — A spouse of noble character
- Song of Solomon 3:4 — I found the one my heart loves
- Hosea 2:19–20 — I will betroth you to me forever
- John 15:12 — Love one another as I have loved you
- Romans 8:38–39 — Nothing can separate us from the love of God
- 1 Peter 3:8 — Live in harmony with one another
- Revelation 19:7 — The marriage supper of the Lamb

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