



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A RETREAT FOR THOSE NAVIGATING DIVORCE OR
SEPARATION

Though the Mountains Be Shaken

A retreat for those whose marriage has ended or is ending — bringing the disorientation, grief, failure, and fragile hope of divorce into the presence of a God who does not abandon the broken.



Sacred Paths Retreat Series

Before You Begin

A word before anything else · Who this retreat is for · What God says to the divorced

You may have arrived at this retreat carrying shame — the particular shame that attaches to divorce in faith communities, however unfairly. You may have arrived carrying anger, or grief, or relief, or all of these at once. You may feel alienated from the Church, from God, from the version of yourself who stood at the altar and meant every word.

This retreat begins with a single truth: God does not abandon the divorced. He does not turn away from broken covenants. He runs toward them. The God of Scripture is, above all, a God who meets people in the ruins of what they hoped would last — and makes a way forward.

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”

— Isaiah 54:10

A NOTE ABOUT BLAME

This retreat takes no side

Marriages end in a thousand ways, for a thousand reasons. This retreat does not presume to know yours. It does not assign blame, adjudicate fault, or offer a theological verdict on your specific situation. It offers only one thing: the presence of God, and a structured invitation to bring your whole self — including the parts that feel most broken — into that presence.

Day One: The Honest Place

Theme: Naming what is true · Grief without pretense · The psalms as permission

The first requirement of healing is honesty. Not the managed narrative you present to others, not the version that assigns blame cleanly, not the one that protects your dignity or theirs. The honest place. What is actually true about where you are right now?

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Lamentations: sitting in the ruins

Read Lamentations 3:1–26 slowly. The author has watched everything he trusted be destroyed. He does not have answers. He has only the practice of bringing his devastation to God. And somewhere in the bringing, a thin thread of hope appears: 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.'

Journal: Write the honest account of where you are — not the public version, not the spiritual version. The actual account. What has been lost? What are you afraid of? What do you feel toward God right now?

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

— Lamentations 3:22–23

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The exile and the promise

Read Jeremiah 29:11–14 — God's letter to the exiles. They are in Babylon. The city they loved has been destroyed. And God says: I know the plans I have for you. Plans for welfare and not for evil. To give you a future and a hope. Not an easy future. Not an immediate rescue. A future. A hope.

Journal: What would it mean for you — specifically, in your specific circumstances — to believe in a future and a hope right now? What stands in the way of believing it?

MIDDAY EXAMEN · 20 MIN

1. Gratitude: Name three things — however small — that are still good in your life.
2. Grief: Name the specific loss you are mourning most right now. Not the marriage in general — the specific thing.
3. Anger or shame: Is there something you are angry at God about? Something that makes you feel ashamed? Name it without defense.
4. Fear: What is the fear about the future that is most present right now?
5. Grace: What one thing do you need from God this afternoon?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Hagar in the wilderness — seen when forgotten

Read Genesis 16:1–13. Hagar is used and then cast aside. She is in the wilderness — alone, with a child, with nothing resolved. And God appears. He sees her. He makes a promise. She names him: 'You are the God who sees me.'

Journal: In what ways have you felt unseen — by your spouse, by the Church, by God — through this experience? What would it mean to be named, as Hagar was: 'You are seen'?

Evening

Read Psalm 34 in full — the psalm of the one who is afflicted and delivered. Notice verse 18: 'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.' This is not a promise for people who have it together. It is a promise for exactly where you are tonight.

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”

— Psalm 34:18

Day Two: The Interior Work

Theme: Forgiveness · Honest self-examination · Releasing what cannot be held

The interior work of divorce is longer and harder than the legal work. It includes grief, anger, self-examination, and — at some point, in some form, at whatever pace is right — forgiveness. Not for the other person's sake, but for your own. Today we begin that work honestly.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Honest self-examination — not self-condemnation

Read Psalm 51:1–12 — the great prayer of honest self-knowledge and honest mercy. This is not about assigning blame for the marriage's end. It is about the honest interior audit that divorce makes possible: Who have I been in this marriage? Where did I fall short? What do I wish I had done differently?

There is a difference between honest self-examination and self-condemnation. One leads to grace. The other leads to paralysis. Journal: What is the honest account of your part — not their part — in what happened? Bring it to God as Psalm 51 brings it.

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The seventy times seven — forgiving what feels unforgivable

Read Matthew 18:21–35. Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. It does not require contact with the person who hurt you. It does not mean that what happened was acceptable. It means releasing the debt — not for their sake, but so that the wound does not become a prison.

Journal: What would it take to begin the process of forgiveness — of your spouse, of yourself, of God for not preventing this? You do not have to arrive there today. Simply name what stands between you and the beginning.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”

— Matthew 18:21–22

AFTERNOON · 45 MIN

Releasing what cannot be held

Take a slow walk — the trails, the lake, the woods. Carry one question, without trying to answer it: ‘What am I still trying to hold that needs to be released?’ Walk it. Let the question do the work that words cannot.

When you return, journal what arose. Not an answer — whatever surfaced.

Evening

Read Isaiah 43:18–19: 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?' The new thing may not be visible yet. But God is already doing it. Sleep with that.

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

— Isaiah 43:19

Day Three: A New Thing

Theme: What comes next · The life that is still yours · Being sent forward

You are not finished. That is the most important thing this retreat can say. The marriage has ended. The self has not. The life God gave you — the particular combination of gifts, experiences, wounds, and loves that make you who you are — is still fully alive, and still fully his.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

The woman at the well — and what she did afterward

Read John 4:28–30. After her encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman goes back to her town — the town where everyone knows her complicated history — and she tells them. 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.' She does not hide. She goes back and speaks.

You will go back too — to your community, your family, your daily life. The question is what you carry back from this retreat. Journal: What do you want to take from this encounter with God into the life that is waiting for you?

THE SUSCIPE



*Lord, take and receive this marriage that has ended —
its hopes and its failures, its good years and its painful ones,
my part in what happened and my grief over it.*

*Take also what comes next —
the singleness I did not choose, the future I cannot see,
the children who are watching how I carry this.*

Do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace.

They are enough to begin again.

— After St. Ignatius of Loyola

FINAL EXAMEN · 30 MIN

6. Review all three days. What word gathers what God gave you?
7. Name three things you will carry home from this retreat.
8. Name one person you will let into your honest experience when you return — someone who can walk with you without rushing your healing.
9. Write one sentence: a description of the person you want to be on the other side of this grief. Date it. Keep it.

Go, beloved pilgrim

You came here carrying a weight that few people fully understand. You leave carrying something else alongside it: the knowledge that God has been here with you, that your life is not over, and that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases — not for the married, not for the divorced, not for the broken-hearted, not for you.

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken.”

— Isaiah 54:10

Core Practices & Extra Scripture

PRACTICE

Find a companion for the journey

Divorce should not be walked alone. If you do not already have a therapist, spiritual director, or trusted community, making that connection is the most important next step from this retreat. You were not made to carry this alone.

EXTRA SCRIPTURE

God's word to the broken-hearted

- Psalm 62 — My soul finds rest in God alone
- Psalm 147:3 — He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds
- Isaiah 54:4–5 — Do not fear, for your Maker is your husband
- Hosea 2:14–15 — I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly
- Joel 2:25 — I will restore the years the locust has eaten
- Romans 8:1 — There is now no condemnation
- Revelation 21:5 — Behold, I am making all things new

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