



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A RETREAT FOR THOSE IN RECOVERY

Where Sin Abounded, Grace Abounded More

A retreat for those in recovery from addiction — honoring the spiritual foundation already present in your journey, and deepening your encounter with the God of the Twelve Steps.



Sacred Paths Retreat Series

Before You Begin

Who this retreat is for · The Ignatian-Twelve Step connection · How to use this guide

If you have worked the Twelve Steps, you already know more about Ignatian spirituality than you might realize. The honest moral inventory, the admission of powerlessness, the decision to turn your will and your life over to God, the making of amends, the ongoing practice of self-examination — these are Ignatian practices dressed in different clothes.

This retreat honors the spiritual depth already present in your recovery, and invites you deeper into the encounter with the God who has been your Higher Power all along. Whether you are thirty days sober or thirty years, whether your recovery is solid or fragile right now, this retreat is for you.

“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

— Romans 5:20

A WORD ABOUT LANGUAGE

An inclusive note

This retreat uses explicitly Christian language and Scripture. If your recovery has been built on a broader understanding of a Higher Power, you are welcome here. Read the Scripture passages with whatever openness you have. The God who met you in the rooms of recovery is the same God who meets you here.

Day One: Step One and the God Who Meets Us There

Theme: Powerlessness and grace · The prodigal's return · Honesty as a spiritual practice

The First Step is the spiritual foundation of everything: 'We admitted we were powerless — that our lives had become unmanageable.' This is not a statement of defeat. It is the beginning of the only kind of honesty that leads to healing. Ignatius begins the Exercises in the same place: an honest look at who we are before God, without the defenses that keep us from receiving help.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

The prodigal son — the whole story

Read Luke 15:11–24. The son 'comes to himself' — a beautiful phrase for what recovery begins with: the moment of honest seeing. He does not wait until he has cleaned up. He goes back as he is.

And the father 'saw him while he was still a great way off.' God sees us on the road back, before we arrive, before we have made all the amends, before we have done everything right. He runs. He embraces. He throws a party.

Journal: Where are you on the road right now — in your recovery, in your relationship with God? Write the honest account.

“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

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Steps 2 and 3 — the decision at the center of everything

Read Romans 8:1–2 and Psalm 46:10. Steps Two and Three are the heart of Ignatian indifference: 'Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.'

Journal: What has it looked like, in your specific recovery, to turn your will and your life over? Where has it been easiest? Where does it remain hardest?

MIDDAY EXAMEN · 20 MIN

1. Gratitude: Name three specific gifts that recovery has returned to you.
2. Honesty: Where in your recovery right now are you being less than fully honest — with yourself, with your sponsor, with God?
3. Consolation: Where do you feel most alive and free in your sobriety?
4. Desolation: Where does recovery feel hardest or most precarious right now?
5. Grace: What one thing do you most need from God this afternoon?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The woman who lost the coin — and the celebration

Read Luke 15:8–10. She sweeps the whole house, searches carefully, and when she finds the coin she calls all her friends and neighbors: 'Rejoice with me.' Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents.

You have been found. The question is whether you have received the celebration — whether you have allowed yourself to be the occasion of the rejoicing, or whether shame has kept you at a distance from the welcome. Journal: What stands between you and fully receiving the celebration of your recovery?

Evening

Read Psalm 40:1–3 — 'He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.' This is your testimony, in the words of the psalm. Sleep tonight as one whose feet are on solid ground.

"He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure."

— Psalm 40:2

Day Two: The Interior Life of Recovery

Theme: Steps 4–10 · The ongoing work of self-knowledge · Amends and freedom

The middle steps of recovery are the Ignatian examination of conscience in sustained form: honest inventory, acknowledgment of specific wrongs, willingness to make amends, ongoing vigilance about interior movements. Today we bring the interior work of recovery into dialogue with Scripture and silence.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

The character defects — and the God who removes them

Read Psalm 51:1–12 and Romans 7:15–25. Steps Six and Seven ask us to be 'entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character' and to 'humbly ask him to remove our shortcomings.' Paul's great cry — 'I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do' — is the honest prayer of everyone in recovery.

Journal: What character defects has recovery made most visible to you? Which ones have been removed? Which ones remain? Bring the remaining ones to God honestly, without self-condemnation.

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

— Romans 7:24–25

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Amends — the ongoing work

Read Luke 19:1–10. Zacchaeus does not wait for a program to make him ready. When he encounters Jesus, transformation and restitution are immediate: 'Half of my possessions I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.'

Journal: Where does the work of amends still press on you? Is there an amends you have been postponing? Is there one you have made but need to receive forgiveness for receiving? Bring the specific situation to God.

AFTERNOON · 45 MIN

The Tenth Step — the ongoing inventory

Read 1 John 1:8–2:2. The Tenth Step asks us to continue to take personal inventory and to promptly admit when we are wrong. This is the Ignatian daily examen in recovery form. Sit with today — just today. Where have you been most yourself? Where have you been least honest? Where did you feel God's grace? Bring it all to the light.

Evening

Read Galatians 5:1 — 'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.' Recovery is not merely sobriety. It is freedom — the interior freedom that comes from no longer being enslaved to a substance, a behavior, or a compulsion. Sit with the word 'freedom' for ten minutes before sleep. What does it mean to you?

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

— Galatians 5:1

Day Three: Steps 11 and 12 — Sent

Theme: Conscious contact · Carrying the message · The life of service

The Eleventh Step asks us to seek 'through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out.' The Twelfth Step asks us to carry the message to others. This is Ignatian spirituality from beginning to end: contemplation leading to action, silence bearing fruit in the world.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Step 11 — conscious contact

Read Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:15–16. Jesus, in the middle of a wildly active ministry, regularly withdrew to pray. The life of service requires the life of prayer. The conscious contact is not a supplement to the work — it is the source of the work.

Journal: What does your conscious contact with God look like right now? Where is it rich? Where is it thin? What would it look like to deepen it?

THE SUSCIPE



*Lord, take and receive my recovery —
the sobriety I have been given, day by day,
the amends I have made and those still to be made,
the service I have offered and the service still ahead.
You have brought me out of the pit. To you, Lord, I return it.
Do with it what you will.
Use what you have given me to help someone else find what I found.
Give me only your love and your grace.
They are enough for one more day.
And one more day is all I need.*

— After St. Ignatius of Loyola

FINAL PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Step 12 — carrying the message

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. 'The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.' This is the Twelfth Step in Paul's words: we carry the message because we have first received it.

Journal: Who is the person you most want to carry the message of your recovery to? Write their name. Write a prayer for them. What specific comfort have you received that you want to give to them?

FINAL EXAMEN · 30 MIN

6. Review all three days. What word gathers what you have received?
7. Name three specific gifts from this retreat that you will carry back to your recovery.
8. Call or message your sponsor when you return. Tell them one thing from this retreat.
9. Write one sentence: the next right thing. Not the whole future — just the next right thing.

Go, beloved sober pilgrim

You have come a long way. The God who met you in the rooms meets you here. The God who met you on your worst day meets you in the hermitage. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases — not for the addict, not for the alcoholic, not for the one who has made a wreckage and is making amends. Where sin abounded, grace abounded more. Go and carry that.

“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

— Romans 5:20

Core Practices & Extra Scripture

PRACTICE

The daily Eleventh Step prayer

Each morning: 'God, direct my thinking today. Free it from self-pity, dishonest motives, and self-seeking. In my work today, give me the strength to do what is right.' One minute. Every morning. The practice holds the day.

EXTRA SCRIPTURE

For recovery

- Psalm 107:13–14 — He delivered them from their distress
- Isaiah 61:1–3 — To bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom
- Luke 4:18 — Recovery and freedom in Jesus's own mission statement
- John 8:36 — If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed
- 2 Corinthians 3:17 — Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom
- Ephesians 2:4–5 — God, being rich in mercy, made us alive
- 1 Timothy 1:15–16 — Christ Jesus came to save sinners — of whom I am the foremost

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