

Ten reasons why you should make a retreat

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1. Step back

One thing is certain: Life is short so we need to make the very best of it. Retreat is really about stepping back and making time to take a good look at our lives. It is a good time to ask fundamental questions about where you are in your life, how you got there and where you should go next. Retreat gives us time to think and to see how God is working in our lives.

2. Find the quiet

Life today is very noisy. Retreat gives us the luxury of genuine quiet. There are no phones to answer, no televisions to distract us, and no e-mail demands. Most retreats are silent, meaning there is no talking after the first meal until noon of the last day. Many people immediately say, "Oh I could never be silent for two days." The reason for the silence is to become aware of God speaking to us again. Retreats require no small talk and anyone who has been on retreat can tell you that the silence ends up being the very best part of the experience.

3. Pray with others

Praying with others is



part of retreat. Daily Mass is common; sometimes there is morning and evening prayer and often a healing service. These are optional of course, but praying with others gives us the grace and encouragement to keep opening our hearts to God.

4. Pray with God

Most of all, retreat gives us the gift of time to talk with and listen to God; to pour out our heart with the dreams, hopes and hurts from our lives. Many retreat places are in beautiful natural settings where it is easy to find God. You will have a private room in which to pray (and nap---a big part of retreat), a chapel

and places to pray such as Stations of the Cross or walking a labyrinth.

5. Become inspired

Of course, you won't have to do all this thinking on your own! Most retreats offer 3-5 talks during a weekend presented by the staff. They help to direct our prayer and thinking toward God. Many follow a theme about the Christian life such as "Becoming a Disciple of Jesus or "Finding the Peace of God."

6. Basic for help

Many issues will come into our minds during retreat. That is why professional staff members are always available.

kindly. Some retreat centers now of Tel' massage as part of a healing ministry. Massage helps to release the tensions stored in the body and open it to the Spirit.

8. Eat well

Jesus knew the importance of eating, so much so he left us a meal to remember him! Food is a very important part of retreat but the best part about retreat is you don't have to cook it, serve it or clean up afterwards! Your job is to stay in communion with God. What a treat that is! Most places can accommodate special dietary needs-just ask in advance.

9. Kick start life

Retreats refresh and refocus our lives. They help us to recognize what is truly important and how to lay aside what leads us away from God. Retreats give us a new perspective on where to go forward and what to leave behind.

10. Cost?

Some people don't go on retreat because they think they can't afford it. Most retreat houses have ways of helping

people meet the cost either by partial scholarship or method of payments. Never let the cost get in the way of deepening your relationship with God. And if you need transportation, the retreat center can see if other in your area can help with rides.

Young adults

More young adults should consider a retreat. Some young people think that retreats are only for older people, like their parents or that retreats are only for folks with lots of time on their hands. The transition into adulthood can be very demanding and confusing. You have so many options --perhaps more than any generation before so retreat can help sort out those issues. Convince some friends to come with you so you can process it later. Because God is ageless, the ideas we pray about on retreat are ageless too. They are for anyone seeking God, wherever you are in life.

Making an annual retreat can truly enrich your prayer and your relationships with others.

(Testin serves as on staff at St. Anthony Retreat Center in Marathon, Wis. Visit www.sarcenter.com for more information.)