

Joined by Grace

Sample Schedules for Weekend Retreat Adaptation

In this format the Joined by Grace program is presented in one-and-a-half weekend days, either from Friday evening through Saturday evening or Saturday morning through Sunday at noon. This is a useful setting for couples who live in different cities or states and cannot attend weekly meetings together. It is also helpful for couples in which one or both partners travel often and have very limited availability. Parish or diocesan leaders can easily change the suggested schedule to more appropriately meet local needs.

The sample retreat schedules that follow allow for six sessions of ninety minutes each, with short breaks between. You will need to amend the schedule depending on the size of the participant group and how many mentor couples you have leading the retreat. Each session will include time for input, private reflection time for couples, and group sharing. Married couples who lead the retreat can follow the meeting outlines found in the *Joined by Grace Mentor Guide*. Because time will be at a premium, you will likely need to make adjustments to the schedule as you facilitate the retreat.

Once you become acquainted with the program material you will be able to discern which elements you want to emphasize and which you are comfortable condensing if time runs short. You may also discover that a longer weekend retreat is preferable, despite requiring more time of both mentors/facilitators and engaged couples. Or, you may decide that another structure is desirable such as meeting on three Saturdays for several hours each time. In brief, the program is designed to be flexible so that the needs of individual parishes and dioceses can more easily be met.

The weekend retreat is generally held in a facility where couples can be housed for the night: a retreat center or a hotel. The retreat is led by a team of couples and individuals responsible for a variety of tasks, from greeting and welcoming attendees to facilitating the meetings to cooking (if necessary), etc. In the retreat format it is important that there be one or two lead couples who coordinate all the activities and act as directors throughout the event.

The weekend retreat can also be held at the parish center or at some other facility without providing overnight accommodations. In this case the engaged couples go home for the night and return the next day to continue the program. When using this option the program can be less expensive while still offering a substantive experience.

It is expected that the engaged couples come to the retreat having read the *Couple's Book* and having discussed together their responses to the reflection questions posed in each chapter.

Sample Retreat Schedule #1

Friday evening through Saturday evening

Retreat teams should adapt this sample schedule to best meet their local needs. It is intended to give you a basic framework from which to plan and direct your retreat.

Friday

6:30 p.m. Arrival and Check-in

7:00 p.m. Welcome and Introductions of Retreat Team and Participants

Dinner

8:15 p.m. Opening Prayer and Kick-off

Use the prayer in the Mentor Guide for the first meeting, or create something new.

Review Schedule of the Weekend

Facility and Housekeeping Matters

Be sure to provide important information about where various sessions will take place and details such as when doors are locked, where food and beverages are allowed, any restricted-access areas to be avoided, etc.

8:30 p.m. Introductory Session

*Use materials from the Preface and Program Overview in the Couple's Book to set the tone and explain the structure of *Joined by Grace*.*

Mentor Presentations

This is a time for the mentor couples (retreat facilitators) to share their own stories. They should about how the sacraments strengthen their marriages.

Small Groups

Divide into small groups with no more than four engaged couples, each led by a mentor couple. Have engaged couples introduce themselves and share briefly about what they hope to gain from the retreat.

9:30 p.m. Night Prayer

Social hour

Saturday

8:00 a.m. Breakfast

8:45 a.m. Session 1. Welcoming and Accepting:
The Grace and Call of Baptism *(Mentor Guide, 24-40)*

10:15 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. Session 2. Being Fully Present:
The Grace of Confirmation *(Mentor Guide, 41-54)*

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. Session 3. Giving Oneself Completely:
The Grace of the Eucharist *(Mentor Guide, 55-68)*

2:30 p.m. Break

2:45 p.m. Session 4. Forgiving:
The Grace of Reconciliation *(Mentor Guide, 69-84)*

4:15 p.m. Break

4:30 p.m. Session 5. Healing:
The Grace of the Anointing
of the Sick *(Mentor Guide, 85-98)*

5:45 p.m. Dinner

6:45 p.m. Session 6. Serving:
The Grace of Marriage
and of Holy Orders *(Mentor Guide, 99-113)*

8:00 p.m. Vigil Mass
The Prayer for an Engaged Couple found on page 56 of the *Joined by Grace Program Manual* may be prayed at the conclusion of Mass or another suitable time.

9:00 p.m. Retreat Closing

Retreat Format Schedule #2
Saturday morning through 1:00 p.m. Sunday

Retreat teams should adapt this sample schedule to best meet their local needs. It is intended just to give you a basic framework from which to plan and direct your retreat.

Saturday

9:30 a.m. Arrival and Check-in

You will want to have some light breakfast foods available since lunch is not scheduled until 1:00 p.m.

10:00 a.m. Kick-off

Welcome and Introductions of Retreat Team and Participants

Opening Prayer

Use the prayer in the Mentor Guide for the first meeting, or create something new.

Review Schedule of the Weekend

Facility and Housekeeping Matters

Be sure to provide important information about where various sessions will take place and details such as when doors are locked, where food and beverages are allowed, any restricted-access areas to be avoided, etc.

11:00 a.m. Introductory Session

*Use materials from the Preface and Program Overview in the Couple's Book to set the tone and explain the structure of *Joined by Grace*.*

Mentor Presentations

This is a time for the mentor couples (retreat facilitators) to share something of their own stories. They should talk about how the sacraments strengthen their marriages.

Small Groups

Divide into small groups with not more than four engaged couples, each led by a mentor couple. Have engaged couples introduce themselves and share briefly about what they hope to gain from the retreat.

11:30 a.m. Session 1. Welcoming and Accepting:
The Grace and Call of Baptism (*Mentor Guide, 24-40*)

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m. Session 2. Being Fully Present:
The Grace of Confirmation (*Mentor Guide, 41-54*)

3:30 p.m. Break

3:45 p.m. Session 3. Giving Oneself Completely:
The Grace of the Eucharist (*Mentor Guide, 55-68*)

5:15 p.m. Break

6:00 p.m. Dinner

7:00 p.m. Session 4. Forgiving:
The Grace of Reconciliation (*Mentor Guide, 69-84*)

8:30 p.m. Night Prayer

Social Hour

Sunday Morning

8:00 a.m. Breakfast

8:45 a.m. Session 5. Healing:
The Grace of the Anointing
of the Sick (*Mentor Guide, 85-98*)

10:00 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. Session 6. Serving:
The Grace of Marriage
and of Holy Orders (*Mentor Guide, 99-113*)

12:00 p.m.

Mass

The Prayer for an Engaged Couple found on page 56 of the Joined by Grace Program Manual may be prayed at the conclusion of Mass or another suitable time.

1:00 p.m.

Retreat Closing