

Faith in 5 – Adults Encountering God



1. **A spiritual retreat or encounter** is an opportunity to spend time with God, to get to know Him better, and deepen our love for Him. This unique time can serve as a 'reset', increasing our energy and focus, appreciating and reflecting on what was revealed to us. A break from the chaos of life restores our soul. Ultimately, it strengthens us to share His love with others. Jesus often took time away from his disciples to pray alone (Luke 15:16, Mark 1:35).

Retreats can be done for a week, a day or even an hour. They can be done in a variety of settings, from a retreat center to church to monastery. They offer a chance to break up a normal routine and delve into spiritual practices such as prayer, reflection and rest. Spiritual retreats may have various themes that reinforce Christian values, principles, or scriptural understanding. Activities may focus on silence, scripture study, a liturgical season (Advent or Lent), or seeking community with like-minded people for discernment or guidance.

Silent retreats can be serious alone time with God and can be intense. A **private retreat** is personal where no schedule is necessary; a **directed retreat** is a private retreat that involves meeting with a spiritual director. Guidance and spiritual insight are given during these meetings. The spiritual director could be a priest, nun or monk on staff. A **preached retreat** is common, usually held on the grounds of a parish. These are typically held during the weekend and involve talks from the retreat director or other speakers.

The retreat was popularized by St. Ignatius of Loyola, in the 1520s, directing others in the [spiritual exercises](#) of meditation, contemplative practice and reflective prayers. These exercises are meant to draw one closer to God. [The Daily Examen](#) is an example of a reflective prayer.

2. **Engaged Encounter/Marriage Encounter – Engaged Encounter**, endorsed and approved by the Catholic Church, involves a community of Catholics who support engaged or married couples by sharing experiences of living a sacramental marriage. These retreats may include presentations, couple dialogue (together and with the larger group), prayer and self-reflection. [Engaged Encounter](#) present talks given by priests and married couples on sacramental marriage, communication, intimacy and values. [Marriage Encounter](#) was developed by a priest in 1962 as a weekend retreat to 28 couples in Barcelona, Spain. It was brought to America in 1969. Married couples spend the weekend together, to revitalize their Christian marriage. After presentations, there is private time for the couple to work on improving communication. It is not marriage counseling or couples therapy but aims to turn a good marriage into a great one. Married couples of any denomination may now attend. The experience is faithful to the Church's definition of marriage, between a man and a woman. Marriage as a sacrament is a grace of God's love to the world.



3. **The Cursillo movement** is a Catholic-based training program that started in Majorca, Spain, in the 1940s. Catholics were preparing to make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. James at Compostela to renew their faith. In preparation, training sessions were held for those in charge of the pilgrimage. In Majorca, a group of laymen led by Eduardo Bonnín created what they called a short course in Christianity, Cursillo de Cristiandad. Later, the training was shortened to three days and adapted to direct change in community life rather than prepare for pilgrimage.



Over the course of three days (Thursday evening to Sunday), participants (called "cursillistas") listen to several spiritual talks about real-life experiences in the Christian life, which become the basis for small-group discussions. Along with the testimonies are times of music, prayer, Christian service, and contemplation. Life after the Cursillo weekend is referred to as the "fourth day," where participants go out into society and apply what they have learned. Participants are then invited to group reunions and larger gatherings called Ultreya ("to go further").

The website, www.cursillo.net stresses that cursillo is not an organization but a worldwide lay movement within the Catholic Church. It mirrors the mission of the Church, which is evangelization, to "help Christianize the world by living out what is fundamental to being a Christian in our everyday lives".

4. **ACTS retreats** originated from Cursillo retreats in 1987. It "is a parish-based event which offers parishioners an opportunity to experience the love of Jesus Christ...fostering a desire for intentional discipleship. [They] are given by parishioners for parishioners and in this way, serve to build Christian community at the parish" ([Source](#)). According to their website, this retreat involves prayer, service and teaching. It begins on a Thursday evening and ends with Sunday Mass. Their goal is of spiritual reflection and surrender. The pillars of the apostolate - adoration, community, theology and service - form their namesake, **ACTS**. The laity are able to participate in the apostolic mission to make disciples of all nations.



5. **World Youth Day (WYD)** is a festive pilgrimage, a worldwide event for young Catholics (ages 16-35) to learn about the faith, growing closer to Christ through prayer and the sacraments. The highlight is the encounter with the Pope. During this time, they witness firsthand the universality of the Catholic Church, and "share with the whole world the hope of many young people who are committing their lives to Christ and His Church". WYD is celebrated every three years in a different country. In August 2023, World Youth Day will be held in Lisbon, Portugal. According to their website www.worldyouthday.com, the week-long schedule includes a walking tour of the host city, an Opening Ceremony, Catechesis, Youth Festivals, the Papal Welcome, Via Crucis with a Pilgrim Walk, Prayer Vigil and a Closing Mass. The young people are able to spend time with hundreds of thousands of other young Catholics from all over the world. Each WYD is focused on a theme based on Scripture. The theme for 2023 is "**Mary arose and went with haste**" (Luke 1:39). Mary as charitable woman and missionary, going in haste to her cousin Elizabeth in the Visitation, demonstrates the hope that young people answer the call to go into the world quickly to do Christ's work.



On Palm Sunday in 1984, closing out the Year of Redemption, Pope St. John Paul II, imagined “a powerful moment in which the young people of the world could meet Christ, who is eternally young, and could learn from Him how to be bearers of the Gospel to other young people”. The following Palm Sunday, 1985 – the United Nation’s International Year of the Youth - the Pope welcomed the youth of the world to Rome and announced later that year the Institution of World Youth Day.

6. **FOCUS** – acronym for the Fellowship of Catholic University Students - is a “Catholic outreach organization that shares the hope and joy of the Gospel with the world. **FOCUS** missionaries encounter people in friendship, invite them into a personal relationship with Christ and accompany them as they pursue lives of virtue and excellence”. This outreach inspires and provide skills for college and university students to become lifelong disciples and evangelists of the Faith, going out into the world to encourage others to do the same. **FOCUS** missionaries work with chaplains and campus ministers, meeting with students on the campus community. After graduation, these missionaries offer their support by being active in their parish community, inspiring vocations and continuing to encourage others into a relationship with Christ and the Church.



SEEK is a national 5-day [conference](#), led by **FOCUS**, inviting people – college students and post-college parishioners – “[to learn the Catholic faith, experience genuine fellowship and to unite as members of the Body of Christ](#)”. Everyone who attends is encouraged to seek their faith, and vocation in life; “to hear the call and live differently”. During this event, there are opportunities for fellowship with other Catholics, inspirational talks and entertainment, catechesis, and individual prayer, which includes adoration, Scripture and the sacraments. The goals of a **SEEK** event are Encounter (deeper relationship with Jesus and the Church), Transformation and Community. The next **SEEK** conference is scheduled in St. Louis, Missouri, January 1-5 in 2024.



7. As one desires to draw near to the Lord:
- Commit** - set aside distractions; make this time a priority. Devote this time for you and the Lord.
 - Pray** - Make time for personal reflection and meditation before, during and after
 - Be Open** – Enjoy what God has in store for you. Allow God to speak to you, listen attentively. Participate in the experiences before you, share with and learn from others.

**Come to me, all you who are weary and overburdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.**

Matthew 11: 28,29

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