

Why Are You Going?

Why are you going on the Junior Retreat? When I went on my Junior Retreat, I was sitting in your place thinking, “Why are they making me go on a retreat. I really don’t want to go.” I know that there are some of you out there thinking the exact same thing, but don’t. My retreat was a lot of fun.

So, what exactly is a retreat? No one can really define what a retreat is because it is a different experience for everyone, but a retreat is basically an experience of yourself, of others, and of God.

The only reason why my retreat was fun was because I participated, and was open to what was said. It’s very important that you participate. The retreat team will be there to help push you and challenge you to participate. They are also there to put some new ideas out for you to think about. It’s up to you what ideas you believe and take with you. We only ask that you listen. We aren’t there to force new ideas or beliefs on you. You make the choice of what you take with you and what meaning it has for you.

You will hear a lot that participation is important. It is. You don’t have to believe everything that is said. Just participate and have fun. There are many different levels that you can participate on. One level is just going through the motions and not really doing anything else. The next level is to

listen to what is said and talk about what you are thinking. The third level is to be willing to grow and change as a result of what you learn about God, yourself, and your relationships.

If you just sit back and watch and don't participate, you aren't making a retreat. That's just watching other people make a retreat. You will only get out of this retreat as little or as much as you put into it. Take part in your small group discussions and share what you think. It's important to listen to what other people think, and listen to everybody's experiences and ideas. Don't hold back because you are usually shy or quiet. Step out from your "comfort zone." Push yourself beyond what you would normally do. You need to sing the songs and get into all the activities. You need to share yourself with others and not worry about what other people think. You will get to know other people here by sharing what you think and listening to what they have to say. You may find out that other people have had the same experiences and are going through the same things you are going through. It may be somebody who you have never really thought would be going through the same things you are going through. You may make new friends here that you never thought you would be friends with. The only way other people can get to know you is for you to share what you have to

think. The only way you can get to know other people is by listening to what they have to say.

Be open to the new ideas that you hear. All you need to is to be open to everything that is said to you, and take your own meaning from that. You need to at least consider what other people are saying, and not judge them for what they are saying.

I know that you are going with friends from your class. That's good but remember that there are other people too. Don't turn people away because they aren't in your regular group of friends. Let this retreat be an opportunity for you to make some new friends and bring your junior class closer together.

Nothing extraordinary is just going to happen to you on this retreat. Your junior retreat is a different experience for each person, so forget what other people have told you about it. If you sit there waiting for something to happen to you, or are waiting for a certain part of the retreat, the whole thing will pass you by. Things will only happen if you work towards. To work towards it, you need to participate, and let the retreat flow.

On the retreat, there will be times when we ask you to be quiet. Please do so. Take the time and opportunity to do some serious thinking about yourself, and what you have heard on your retreat.

Don't judge the retreat until it is over. Give yourself a chance to see the whole picture before forming an opinion. Prejudgments aren't usually the best because they are usually wrong. You are only prejudging the retreat based on what you have heard, what is on the outside. Judge it after you have seen the whole picture, after you've experienced the whole retreat. You will have time after the retreat is over to evaluate the retreat. Wait until the to judge the retreat, not before.

So, after all that, why are you going? I know some of you are thinking, "The only reason why I am going is because they are making me go." Don't think of it that way. God wants you to go. It may be hard for you to understand. I don't understand it all yet. The word KAIROS means "The Lord's Time." God wants you to be his servant. You cannot be God's servant while you are serving yourself. Give yourself to God. Do what he asks of you, if not for the rest of your life, at least while you are on retreat. Something may happen that will make you want to serve Him.

There are two code phrases for this retreat. Remember them. The first one is "Be Open." The second is "Be Honest." Remember that everything said on retreat is confidential. Everything that is said there, stays there. Not only does it stay there, but it stays within the group that heard it.

If something is said in a small group, it stays in the small group. The only person who can take it beyond that group is the person who said it.

There are two extreme cases when it is necessary for a retreat leader to take things beyond the confidentiality barrier. One time is when you are going to hurt yourself. The other case is if you are going to hurt somebody else. If you are feeling one of these two ways, go talk to somebody. We won't take it any further than it needs to go. Don't let that stop you from sharing what you think and are feeling. The retreat team is not there to get you in trouble. We will keep everything confidential. Don't be afraid to talk.

Finally, we only ask that you participate, relax, and have a good retreat. Go home, think about it, and come tomorrow with an open mind.