

*Retreats: FAQs

1) What is a retreat and why do we do them?

Retreats are intentional experiences that purposefully remove students from their day-to-day experience, and places them in a space of reflection, prayer, community over a period of time. As part of our curriculum of offering students a true human and Christian education, retreats are a unique and superb opportunity to relax, have fun, bond with friends and classmates, as well as grow in human and spiritual dimensions.

We have a full, four-year, progressive (curriculum/content appropriate to age/grade, one retreat experience building off another) retreat program. This program centers on allowing students to meet themselves wherever they happen to be on their spiritual journey, while also having the support of their peers, and is a spiritual, not an academic or extra-curricular ministry.

2) Do they cost money?

Yes. Depending on the location and length of the retreat, costs can range from \$50 to \$100, but is usually between \$65 and \$75. Retreats are largely money in/money out events, but because they are class-wide, we do not fundraise for them. **As with everything at La Salle, financial hardship should not prevent a student from going; special financial circumstances are made by necessity and on a case-by-case basis.**

3) Where do the students go and for how long?

It depends; typically:

- A) **Freshman** do an overnight at Ghormley Meadows Christian Camp (Rimrock, WA), that involves them staying overnight and missing two days of school in mid-late October. The cost is often around \$65 (but can fluctuate) and the retreat is led by Campus Ministry staff as well as upperclassmen.
- B) **Sophomores** do a service retreat that involves a morning of direct service at Northwest Harvest and Volunteer Chore Services, followed by an afternoon of reflection and fun led by Campus Ministry staff and upperclassmen. There is sometimes a lock-in portion that evening at Lightning Hall. The retreat requires missing a day of school, and typically takes place in mid-February.
- C) **Juniors** spend two nights and three days at Ghormley Meadows Christian Camp on an intensive, fun, and faculty-led retreat that also represents their transition into seniors and the final phase of their time at La Salle. The retreat takes place in the spring, typically in mid-March.
- D) **Seniors** spend two nights and three days at Ghormley Meadows Christian Camp on an intensive, fun, and faculty-led retreat that also represents the culmination of their retreats as La Salle students, and begins the transition into graduation. The retreat takes place in the early winter, typically late November or early December.

4) Does a student have to go?

Retreats, being part of the regular curriculum event schedule, are **heavily** encouraged. Barring serious behavior or school policy issues, all students are expected to participate regardless of academic or financial standing, unless there is special reason for their absence and a signed request from parents to exempt them from the retreat.

But, more to the point, we would really challenge you with the question: *why wouldn't they?* Retreats are not only one of the most important growth opportunities of our students' young lives, they are also a blast. Students repeatedly list them as among their very favorite experiences and memories at La Salle, and consistently indicate their importance in their development as a high school student. They are incredibly fun and valuable experiences that really are once-in-a-lifetime.

5) **Does a student have to be Catholic?**

Absolutely not. Retreats, like all La Salle programming, are for EVERYONE. Period. Students will ALWAYS be met where they are at with faith and spirituality (even if they recognize none at all) and will ALWAYS be treated with dignity and respect.

6) **What happens/what is taught on retreats?**

Each retreat is different. All retreats focus on building the Lasallian values of Faith, Service, and Community in the context of our Catholic Christian tradition. Programming features a heavy emphasis on community, fun, and self-reflection, and always stays within the teaching authority of the Diocese of Yakima, established orthodoxy of the Church, and is faithful to our Catholic Lasallian tradition. Programming is also age-specific:

- A) **Freshman** programming centers on class unity, cohesion, and inclusive community. Students participate in several fun team-building events that allow them to deepen their understanding of spirituality, faith, and our Lasallian culture—all while growing closer with their classmates and building new friendships.
- B) **Sophomore** programming centers on class unity, cohesion, and active service. Students participate in direct service that allows them to deepen their understanding of service and social justice, faith, and our Lasallian culture—all while growing even closer with their classmates, building new friendships, and deepening existing ones.
- C) **Junior** programming centers on class unity, cohesion, and community. Programming encourages students to intensively evaluate their high school experience so far, their spiritual identity, and prepare as individuals and classmates for the transition into their final year at La Salle as seniors.
- D) **Senior** programming centers on class unity, cohesion, and community. Programming encourages students to intensively begin to evaluate their high school career, as well as begin the transition past La Salle and into young adulthood. Students have a lot of personal reflection time, but also a lot of time to spend with their classmates in the culmination of their retreat experiences at La Salle.

7) **Can a student be removed from a retreat? Does that happen?**

Like all student life activities at La Salle, retreats are a privilege, not an entitlement. Students are informed that serious retreat rule violations or school policy/behavior issues can result in dismissal from retreat. It would be an **extremely rare** for that to ever happen, but Campus Ministry retains the right.

8) **What do students bring?**

Again, that depends on the location, time of year, and level of retreat. All retreat activities overnight require a sleeping bag, pillow, as well as toiletries and personal hygiene items, and a signed permission slip/medical form. Students can also bring any prayer/reflection materials (personal journals, prayer books, etc.) they would like. Specific packing lists are distributed in advance of all retreats.

9) **What about conflicts in schedules?**

Retreats are among the VERY first items on the annual calendar, and as much as at all possible, avoid conflicts with other school events. They are regularly planned almost an entire year in advance. Retreats are *extremely* important and unique, and so all students and all other programs are asked to give them as wide a berth as possible. That said, when conflicts absolutely cannot be avoided, it is the student/parent/other program director's responsibility to work out alternate transportation and arrangements, and let the Director of Campus Ministry know. That said, a heavy stress is placed on avoiding such conflicts.

10) **Do you really take student's cell phones and ipods/ipads?**

If we find them, yes. **Retreats are cell phone, ipod, ipad (and any other electronic device) free events for students.** These experiences are about detaching from the day-to-day busyness of one's life, and really being present with oneself and with one's classmates. That can't happen with the constant distractions these items create. Students are asked not to bring these items and are informed that if they are seen the retreat staff will hold them for the remainder of the retreat. Tuning out and turning off are really liberating experiences; take the invitation seriously—it's worth it.

11) **So...is Ghormley really haunted?**

Those are probably just stories. Probably.