

Captains and Co-captains of Mater Dolorosa

Weekend retreats at Mater Dolorosa owe much of their success to the Captains and Co-Captains of the weekend retreat groups. Every year they bring so many retreatants not only from their parishes, but also family members, friends, and co-workers.

The new Mater Dolorosa Ambassador Committee (2018), is comprised of current and former Board Members, MD staff, Captains, and Vice-Presidents. It has provided new **“Guidelines for Retreat Captains”** (see the pamphlet cover page on the left). These guidelines provide suggestions for Captains and Co-captains in their recruiting efforts. The guideline text is shown in red font, with additional notes in black font:

Guidelines For Retreat Captains



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Service As A Retreat Captain

1. Inspire people in your parish as well as friends, family members, and work associates to join you for annual retreats at Mater Dolorosa.
2. Covenant for three years to be a Retreat Captain, renewable per standards established by the Ambassador Committee.
3. Have a minimum of one Co-captain, preferably two or more. Consider inviting parish leaders with regular contact with parish groups to be Co-captains. Many parishes have four or more Co-captains working together promoting annual Mater Dolorosa Retreats.
 - Probably the single most important task for a Captain is acquiring effective Co-captains.
 - Teamwork is more effective for recruiting
 - A Co-captain expands the pool of prospects
 - Your Pastor can be a most-effective Co-captain.
 - One of the Co-captains normally assumes the Captains role over time, and this change in roles is often a positive development.
 - Upon retiring as Captain, consider becoming a Co-captain and remaining a member of the team.

4. Attend your annual Captain's meeting at Mater Dolorosa as well as attending the annual retreat with your group.
 - Each year Mater Dolorosa has three Captain's meeting which is always well-attended by Captains and weekend VPs. Your meeting will include a social hour, dinner, providing an opportunity to meet with fellow Captains, your VP, and the Retreat Team.
 - The Retreat Team Members give an outline of the theme for the current year.
 - The Retreat Center Director provides current news about our retreat center.
 - Recruiting tools are handed to the Captains at this meeting such as: Effective parish bulletin announcements, sign-up forms, on-line registration instructions, and parish/group registration form the following year.

5. Seek advice and information from your weekend retreat Vice-President, and maintain contact with your VP during the year, especially at the half-way point and two months prior to the retreat.
 - a. Plan a meeting at the parish for retreatants near the halfway point between retreats.
 - b. Hold an event during the year to build camaraderie with the retreatants.
 - c. Garner the support of your pastor in your recruitment efforts.
 - d. Make presentations to parish organizations and network with those groups to effectively recruit for the annual retreat.
 - e. Set up a recruitment table, assisted by the co-captains in front of the church in Sunday for promoting Mater Dolorosa and signing up retreatants.
 - f. Post announcements in the parish bulletin well in advance of the weekend retreat. Contact your VP for commonly used announcements.
 - g. Promote annual events at Mater Dolorosa
 - The weekend VP is a Captain's best source of support during the year, and all VPs have at least three years of experience as a successful weekend group Captain.
 - Two-way communication with your VP is essential to the long-term success of the weekend retreats program.
 - The VPs are in contact with the Ambassador Committee, which began in the fall of 2018.

New Communication Process

1. Four Months Prior to Retreat
VP contacts Captains to discuss progress and give assistance.

2. Three to Four Months Prior
MDRPC sends postcards and email to retreatants

3. Three Months Prior
 - a. Confirm with VP's if contact has been made and record any feedback.
 - b. Email Captains to confirm progress on numbers and affirm the quota will be met or not.
 - c. Adjust quota as needed.
 - d. MDRPC emails VPs regarding status or progress

4. Two Months Prior

MDPRC contact captain to confirm all is well and still on quota. Last minute adjustment to numbers as needed.

5. One to Two Months Prior

MDPRC follow-up with Captains

6. Six Weeks Prior

SCPRC send confirmation reminder postcards to retreatants.

7. One Week Prior

MDPRC sends sign-up information to captains.

(end of the Guidelines For Retreat Captains)

Recruiting Tips

1. **Seek permission from the pastor** to speak after each weekend Mass (you can share this responsibility with one or more Co-captains) at the same weekend you set up tables outside to promote the retreat. About two months prior to the retreat is a good time. Be sure to have brochures on hand to hand to your parishioners.
2. **Recruit enthusiastically**
 - Be sure to mention the beauty and serenity of MD, wildlife and gardens, the quality of the preaching (serious as well as humorous), private room and bathroom, the sense of peace and God's presence, in-depth sacramental experiences.
 - Don't be overly concerned about getting too many for your quota. Most often, because of cancellations and other groups not meeting their quotas, those on your "waiting list" will be able to attend.
3. **The Retreatant Letter:** This letter may be more effective than phone calls. It's a letter to past retreatants from your group or parish warmly inviting them to sign up early for the upcoming annual retreat. It should bring them up to date with any major changes at Mater Dolorosa, and a reflection on the new theme. A specific date should be indicated for them to meet early sign-up requirements before opening it up to the rest of the parish.
4. **Bulletin Announcements** – (3 Months Prior to Retreat)
It is important that you get your parish, school and club articles into their respective bulletins early. This is also where co-captains can be immensely helpful in wording the articles to reach a specific group with the proper invitation slant.

5. **Team Meeting** – (1½ Months Prior to Retreat)

The team meeting allows you and your co-captains to come together to verify everything is ready for the implementation of your recruiting. New presentations can be reviewed and assignments can be checked to verify that your co-captains will support the Mass schedules for recruiting. It allows you in a short period of time to assess where you may need to spend a little more time in making sure the recruitment process will enable you to meet your quota. Be sure to consult your Vice President about the meeting as he can indicate how all the parishes on your weekend are progressing to meeting their quotas.

6. **Retreatant Re-verification** (2 Weeks to Retreat)

With everyone and everything going faster and faster there are bound to be a few cancellations. In order to find out before the weekend so that their spots can be refilled, work with your co-captains and call all retreatants to determine if you will see the retreatants at Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center on your weekend. This should be done about 1 ½ to 2 weeks before your Retreat. Give any last-minute reminders that are necessary – “bring a bible”, etc. Ask if they have any questions – especially for new retreatants who have not been to the enter before – what they should expect – towels, bedding, soap, etc.

7. **Final Mater Dolorosa Weekend Retreatant List** (Wednesday – 1 ½ weeks to Retreat)

The Wednesday before your retreat send your retreatant list via e-mail (MaterDolorosa@compuserve.com) or fax (626) 255-0485 to the Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center. The list must contain the name and MDPRC ID number for each of the returning retreatants or the name, phone number, and mailing address for each new retreatant. The MD ID number is critical for returning retreatants as it allows quick generation of retreat notification post cards. Generally, the cards are mailed the same week, which gives the retreatant a firm “you are confirmed” card a week before your retreat.

8. **The Retreat Parish Meeting** (during Retreat)

The Retreat Parish Meeting during the retreat is your chance to add a personal touch for the parish in about 15 minutes at the retreat. Keep it short! Introduce all co-captains who worked for them to make it possible for them to be on the weekend. Introduce the Vice President when he appears at your group meeting.

Note: ask if anyone is interested in working with you on next year’s retreat recruitment. Select co-captains from your weekend who have been impacted by the weekend and express a willingness to help others experience a weekend. Ask them, while on your weekend, to help you next year. They should be selected on a basis of enthusiasm, weekend impact, and parish organization cross-section, both in age and parish life.

IMPORTANT: Hand out “Come to the Mountain” brochure to each retreatant. Ask them to hand this brochure to another person they would like to share the retreat weekend with. Remind them to put their name and phone number at the bottom of the last page so that person can call them instead of the retreat center.