



## LOS ANGELES RETREAT CENTER COMMUNITY PROMOTES SPIRITUAL DIRECTION DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

Los Angeles (February 25, 2021) – It seems the need for solace, peace and understanding has never been higher as the area wrestles with the effects of the pandemic, economic conditions and a seemingly unending divisiveness in the nation. We are beyond the need for a "mental health break," many have reached a state of emotional and spiritual exhaustion in their lives. In recent meetings with the Retreat center directors and their staff in the LARCC (Los Angeles Retreat Center Community), the concern is real and unabating.

While most centers are currently closed for visitors due to the pandemic's critical status in the area, we are still offering a service that is increasing in demand: Spiritual Direction. "Spiritual Direction" are often misunderstood words. So what is Spiritual Direction, and who delivers it?

Spiritual Direction is often compared to counseling or therapy, which it is not. It is often "taught" by those who have not traditionally trained. This is not the case with LARCC centers. Becoming a Spiritual Director can take up to two years to complete, and not every candidate becomes a director.

In simple terms, Spiritual Direction is a means for an individual (the directee) to meet with a qualified Spiritual Director on their spiritual journey. So it is more of an accompaniment with another than purely giving advice. Compassionate listening is often a crucial part of the service, and those receiving Spiritual Direction share their spiritual journey in life, covering all aspects which affect their relationship with God. Ultimately, the goal is to deepen our relationship with God and find the increasing inner peace which all seek in these difficult times.

Meetings typically occur once a month for around an hour; these days these meetings can happen on the phone or via Zoom or similar service. Each of the retreat centers in LARCC has several spiritual directors on their staff and offers the service regularly.

Here are some effects of what those who have received Spiritual Direction has been on their lives:

"Spiritual Direction is something people don't talk about. Many think it's only for really holy people. In my very ordinary life as a very busy working mom struggling with schedules, meals, commitments, and all the world throws at us- I discovered Spiritual Direction. Perhaps it's more accurate that the Holy Spirit stopped me and whispered gently into my ear- I Love You, just as you are, here and now, come out of your storm and rest. Through Spiritual Direction my life with the Holy Trinity has been transformed. My only regret is not having started Spiritual Direction much earlier in my life." *AK, Los Angeles*

"For four years Spiritual Direction has been a part of my monthly "Hermitage Experience", a journey to the quiet place within where one encounters God. As a Secular Franciscan, Spiritual Direction has helped me to explore the questions that St. Francis of Assisi has posed

to us - "Who are You, O God; Who am I?". I recommend Spiritual Direction to help you build your trust in the presence of Christ within. *SF, Malibu*

“Spiritual Direction found me during a time when my life and spirit were broken, at my absolute lowest, angry with God for having seemingly abandoned me.

As my Spiritual Director and I began to open and “investigate” these conditions, I came to understand that I was living a life of unnatural constraint and that the culmination of events, although deeply painful, were freeing me of bonds that had suffocated my very identity. I had emerged and arrived “at the liminal,” a regular theme in my spiritual direction. I began to realize that God was liberating me, not hurting me, and opening the way to a joyful and purposeful life particular to my unique desires and gifts.”

“Attempting to understand how God is working in my life often makes me impatient and frustrated! Spiritual Direction sustains me in navigating changes and unknowns, facing fear, and moving forward in complete trust of God’s love for me, with my Spiritual Director as my journey guide.”

"I know every bird in the mountains and the creatures of the field are mine," and so God provided with the grace of Spiritual Direction. Spiritual Direction found me.” *Several voices from Encino.*

In Spiritual Direction sessions, I share my blessings as well as my challenges with my Director. I am grateful that she gives me a comfortable space where I am able to let down my guard, and I know it is OK to reveal my foibles as well as my gifts. I feel safe to open myself to the whisperings of the Spirit and find more meaning in my everyday life. *GS, Mary & Joseph Retreat Center*

The Los Angeles Retreat Center Community offers spiritual Direction to those looking for a deeper relationship with God. These are just a few experiences from individuals receiving Spiritual Direction from the retreat centers in the community.

The following are the current members of LARCC, offering a choice of locations, facilities, and programs to Los Angeles area residents that are convenient wherever they live and whatever their particular faith expression:

- Holy Spirit Retreat Center (Encino) <https://www.hsrcenter.com>
- Mary and Joseph Retreat Center (Rancho Palos Verdes) <https://maryjoseph.org>
- Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center (Sierra Madre) <https://materdolorosa.org>
- Sacred Heart Retreat Center (Alhambra) <https://sacredheartretreathouse.com>
- Serra Retreat (Malibu) <https://serraretreat.com>

Many of the retreat centers are offering online retreats. The online programs can be conducted at the location of your choice, making it simple to enjoy one of these retreats wherever you are situated.

A combined calendar of events is attached to this Press Release for the period January through February 2021 for distribution.

The retreat centers hope this new collaboration will help those in need of a retreat or a spiritual break to find the most appropriate venue and program to meet their requirements.

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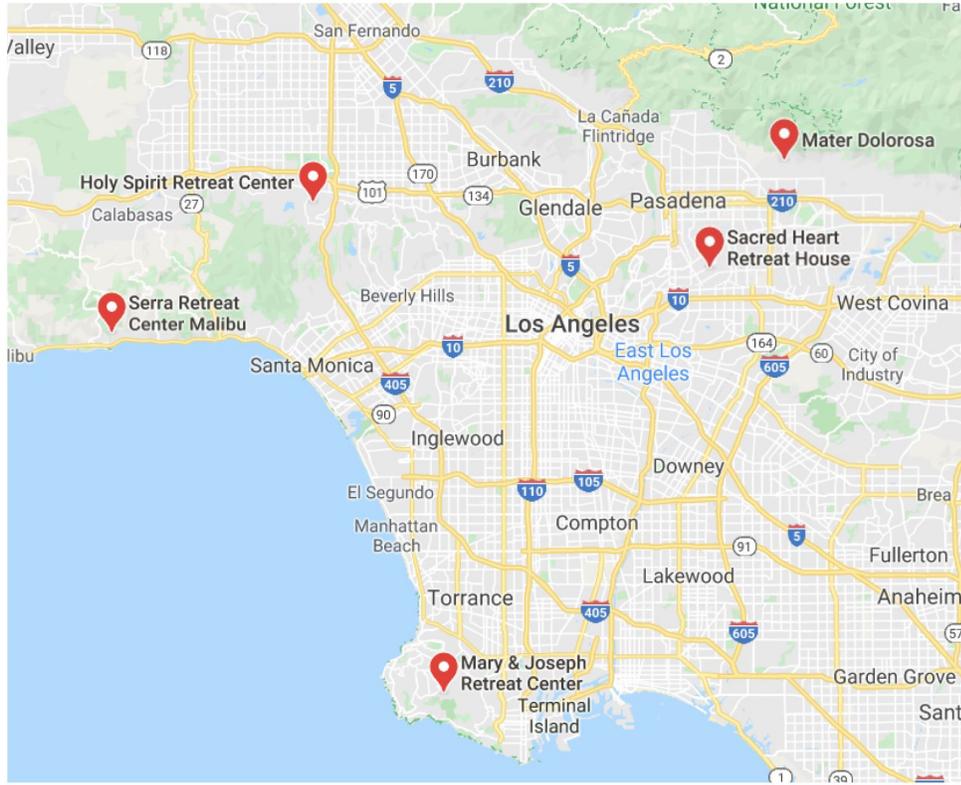
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*Location of Los Angeles Retreat Center Community Member Organizations*