



# BELLARMINE

Jesuit Retreat House

**Ministry of Invitation**

The Captains' Handbook

## DEDICATION



This updated edition of the Captains' Handbook is dedicated to the memory of Michael (Mike) Roche, who along with his Co-Captain, Phil Zera, served as a Retreat Captain for more than 40 years. Mike attended his final Bellarmine retreat in January of 2018, just weeks after the loss of his beloved wife, Kathy. At the opening dinner of that retreat, Mike gave an impassioned speech to the retreat group about how much Bellarmine retreats have meant to him in his own life.

Mike and Phil's retreat group filled the retreat house every January, and the two of them served as model Captains. We remember Mike fondly and hope that this updated edition of the Captains' Handbook helps all of our Captains come to know how important their ministry is to their retreat groups, to Bellarmine and to God.

## OUR MISSION



The mission of Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House is to foster the spiritual development of Catholics and other people of faith through a variety of retreats and contemporary programs that are grounded in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Dear Captain,

We are grateful to have your support to invite people to draw near to God at Bellarmine! We welcome you to use this Captains' Handbook as a guide, resource, and source of encouragement for your efforts.



Your goal as a Captain is to raise awareness of the goodness of a retreat and invite people to attend. Less than 10% of people in the Chicago area know that Bellarmine exists. We need your help to spread the word, witness the blessings, and encourage people to attend.

Captains recognize the deepening relationship with God that is fostered by setting aside time for an annual retreat. With this comes a joy that must be shared. Invite friends, neighbors, colleagues, and loved ones to join you for a retreat experience that will support them on life's journey.

### **Expectations – Consistency!**

- Notice and share the joys of your retreats with others, early and often!
- Select your retreat date, invite folks, and share a save the date 6-12 months in advance.
- Register for your retreat and remind folks by sharing the registration link.
- Utilize our Marketing Materials found on the Captain's portal to attract many folks.
- Read our emails and materials to be aware of the wide-array of unique offerings.
- If you need a group list, call or email us!

### **Succession Planning**

- After serving for a few years as a Captain, invite a Co-Captain to join you to broaden your reach.
- Coach and mentor Co-Captain(s) to ensure the future growth of your group.

Know of our gratitude for your support and companionship in faith, service, and prayer.

Peace and Christ's joy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Erin'.

Erin

# What do I do as a Captain?



## Come on retreat yearly and invite friends to come with you!

Most captains come to Bellarmine at least once a year and will often recruit people to come that same weekend. Usually this recruiting will happen in men's clubs, bible studies, family gatherings, etc. However, increasingly captains are finding that friends and acquaintances are interested in a particular retreat or theme and it's hard

to get everyone to agree on one weekend—that's okay, too. The Holy Spirit invites us all to various things. Therefore, Captains may choose to come on one or more weekends, but may also invite people to register for a weekend when you won't be able to attend.



Be familiar with our retreat schedule so you can invite people to programs and retreats that may interest them.

For instance, you may know of veterans, folks in 12-Step recovery, yogis, or writers that want to attend a unique retreat.

Scan the QR code or visit  
<https://jesuitretreat.org/pages/retreat-schedule>



## Share Our Marketing Materials

You can visit the URL below to find a number of resources for you to help recruit. This includes flyers that you may want to give to your parish, etc.

Scan the QR code or visit:  
[jesuitretreat.org/pages/retreat-promotional-materials](http://jesuitretreat.org/pages/retreat-promotional-materials)



We also promote a lot on the following social media channels. Sharing and liking our content helps increase our visibility.

If you use social media, and are not following us already, please take a moment to follow us and consider sharing and/or liking our posts. All of them help make more people aware of us and our retreats. *You'll also find short recruiting videos on YouTube!*

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/BellarminoJRH/](http://www.facebook.com/BellarminoJRH/)  
**Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/bellarminojrh/](http://www.instagram.com/bellarminojrh/)  
**YouTube:** [www.youtube.com/@jesuitretreat](http://www.youtube.com/@jesuitretreat)

## Marketing Material Examples

Trusting God in Life's Twists and Turns



**BELLARMINO**  
Jesuit Retreat House


October 24-26, 2025  
*Ignatian, Silent  
Weekend Retreat for Men*

Join us as we explore the life of St. Ignatius Loyola, a journey filled with unexpected twists that shaped his path. Like Ignatius, we, too, face changes that call us to reflect and follow where God leads. This retreat invites you to embrace life's turns with faith and openness.

**Retreat Leader: Fr. Michael Graham, SJ**  
Former Xavier University President (2001-2021); collaborator in the area of Jesuit Mission and Identity; ordained in 1988; entered the Jesuits in 1978.



To register for this retreat, scan the QR Code or visit [jesuitretreat.org/retreats](http://jesuitretreat.org/retreats)



847-381-1261 • JesuitRetreat.org • Barrington, IL

The Bellarmine Retreat Experience

*What to Expect*

This retreat includes several presentations, daily Mass, communal prayer, six delicious meals, a one-on-one conversation with a spiritual director, and many other opportunities to explore the retreat house and grounds. Come to the quiet to read, sleep, pray and reflect. All activities are optional.

- Bellarmine has two libraries, a resource center, two chapels, dining room, and many other places to relax.
- Located on 80 acres, with both woodlands and prairie grasses.
- Outdoor spaces include walking trails, prayer gardens, a gazebo, stations of the cross, as well as patios and outdoor chairs and benches.
- Each retreatant has their own bedroom.



*Graces and Blessings of a Retreat*

*"I enjoy coming to a Bellarmine retreat to let go of the worldly distractions and reconnect and refocus on Our Lord and what is important in life."*

*"Time to be silent, to grow in my relationship with Jesus. Excellent 'tools' given to help make that happen."*

*"The silence. It's the only time in life where I have access to silence for this long and it opens my heart to hear God."*


*Join us on retreat!*

To register for this retreat, scan the QR Code or visit [jesuitretreat.org/retreats](http://jesuitretreat.org/retreats)



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Let the Earth Rejoice—Encountering Our Common Home




**BELLARMINO**  
Jesuit Retreat House


July 14, 2025  
*Day of Reflection  
for Adults*

This day of reflection invites participants into a contemplative space to experience the sacredness of creation and deepen their relationship with God through the natural world. Rooted in Ignatian spirituality and inspired by Laudato Si', the day offers a rhythm of prayer, reflection, silence, and time in nature to foster spiritual attentiveness and ecological awareness.

**Retreat Leader: Ben Rogers, SJ**  
Assists the Provincial in caring for Jesuits in the Midwest Province; previous director of the Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago at Oshkosh, WI.



To register for this retreat, scan the QR Code or visit [jesuitretreat.org/retreats](http://jesuitretreat.org/retreats)



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Bellarmino began as a ministry primarily focused on Ignatian, silent weekend retreats for men. Today, we serve the spiritual needs of men and women of faith. Our ministry offerings include:



## **Ignatian, Silent Weekend Retreats**

Many of our weekend retreats are single-gender. We offer several co-ed retreats, too.

## **Bill W 12-Step Retreats**

Several single-gender retreats each season are dedicated to supporting the recovery of men and women in 12-step programs.

## **Summer Individually Directed Retreats**

These retreats last between five and eight days. We offer the opportunity to meet with a spiritual director daily, participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, worship in adoration, enjoy the serenity of our property, and spend time in silent prayer and reflection.

## **Semi-Silent Retreats**

The environment of a semi-silent retreat will be quiet and contemplative with an opportunity to connect with others over conversation at meals and/or in small group sharing.

A semi-silent retreat includes several presentations, daily Mass, communal prayer, optional small group sharing, delicious meals, a one-on-one conversation with a spiritual director, and many other opportunities to explore the retreat house and grounds. Come to the quiet to read, sleep, pray, and reflect. All activities are optional.

You can talk, just not too much!



## Personal Retreats

Personal retreats invite one to experience time alone with God amidst the prayerful silence for a day or overnight stay. We can arrange for retreatants to meet with a confessor or spiritual director if desired and schedules permit.

Bellarmino has two libraries, a resource center, two chapels, and many other common areas. Outdoor spaces include various walking trails, various prayer gardens, a gazebo, a labyrinth, stations of the cross, as well as a few patios and outdoor chairs and benches. The availability of personal retreats is limited. Please call our office to check availability.

## Spirituality Programs

We continue to add to our offerings of day, evening, and afternoon themed spirituality programs.

## “Coming Home” Retreats for Veterans and Families

Fr. Michael Sparough, SJ and a team of veterans lead a day-long retreat for men and women to pray and reflect on their military experiences in a safe environment.

## Regular Spiritual Direction with a Priest or Lay Director

Meet with a Jesuit staff member or Jesuit-trained lay spiritual director for ongoing support in your spiritual life.

## Special Groups

Parishes, schools, and organizations that share our mission host their own retreat programming at our retreat house. We offer a variety of sacred spaces, meeting rooms, beautiful grounds, and dining options. To learn more, contact us at 847-381-1261 or email us at [events@jesuitretreat.org](mailto:events@jesuitretreat.org).

## Discipleship



St. Ignatius reminds us that we need others to accompany us on our spiritual journey; we cannot walk it alone. The Bellarmine team is committed to accompanying you on your journey as a retreatant and Captain.

Inviting others to attend a retreat can sometimes be challenging. You may hear "no" from the same individual multiple times before he or she decides to come to Bellarmine. We are

here to encourage, support, and affirm your efforts. Please feel free to call or email the Bellarmine staff anytime with concerns, questions, or needs. We have a designated staff member, our Retreat Coordinator, to support you in your role.

## Annual Captains' Meeting



Each spring, Bellarmine offers Retreat Captains the opportunity to gather for a day of prayer, reflection, and sharing. At the annual Captains' Meeting, you will hear from Bellarmine staff members and fellow Captains as we reflect on the graces of the previous year and share new developments for the upcoming retreat season. Your attendance enriches our community and bolsters your recruiting efforts.

*"A silent retreat at Bellarmine is not an escape but a homecoming—to God, to peace, to your truest self. While on retreat, I learned to listen with the ears of my soul."*



## Embracing the Mission, Vision, and Core Values



Our Captains are an extension of the Bellarmine team and may be the first way many people experience our mission, vision, and core values. When extending the invitation to come on retreat, our Captains embody the commitment to foster the spiritual development of others, build the Kingdom of God, and promote Ignatian Spirituality, silence, prayer, hospitality, service to the poor, and sacred spaces.

## Personal Invitation to Those in Your Community



In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus challenges us to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19). Invite many, and do not be discouraged if it takes several invitations before someone feels called to make a retreat. Ignatian Spirituality emphasizes being a "contemplative in action". Prayerfully discern those

individuals in your parish, workplace, social circles, and family who might benefit from a retreat, and put that into action in the form of a personal invitation.

## Our Core Values

Ignatian Spirituality for Adults & Youth • Silence  
Service to the Poor • Prayer • Hospitality  
Sacred Spaces



## The Flow of a Captain's Work

*Each Spring, usually in April, we publish the schedule for the retreat season starting in September.*

**1** Pick your weekend and ask your group for thoughts on possible retreat dates.

**2** Tell Bellarmine which weekend you are selecting for your group (by mid-June).

**3** Inform your network which weekend you have selected and encourage them to save the date and register to save a spot.

**4** If you want personalized ads, inform Bellarmine (in July—sooner if your retreat is in the fall).

**5** Send Parish Bulletin Editors ads at least three months before your retreat and ask that the ad run at least four times.

**6** Check the Captain's portal two months in advance to learn who has registered from your group so you can send reminders.

**7** Follow up with those that aren't registered yet (phone calls and text messages help).

## In preparation for retreat, I will:

- Pray about whom to invite to Bellarmine
- Personally invite many to the quiet of a retreat
- Maintain frequent communication with my retreat group and Bellarmine
- Use Bellarmine's materials to follow-up with invitations and spread the word
- Work to raise awareness of and attendance at Bellarmine
- Read the Captains' Handbook and annual Program Guide to inform myself of the breadth of Bellarmine's offerings

## On retreat, I will:

- Welcome all retreatants, especially those who are new to Bellarmine
- Help to ensure volunteer roles are filled for Mass, Stations of the Cross, and the rosary
- Act as a role model of prayerful silence
- Pray for all those on retreat with me

## After retreat, I will:

- Consider the individuals who made retreat with me and pray about who may serve as a Co-Captain to broaden my reach and help build attendance
- Continue to pray for those who attended the retreat with me
- If it is time for me to retire from my role as a Captain, I will pray about who may serve as my successor

## Accessing the Captain's Portal

- Visit our website at [www.jesuitretreat.org](http://www.jesuitretreat.org)
- Click on "CAPTAINS" on the top of the home page
- From the drop-down menu, select "CAPTAIN'S PORTAL"
- Click on the "Captain Portal Login" button

Name: Captain

Password: RetreatCaptain1946

*Please note: The username and password are case-sensitive.*



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