**Parish, Regional or Diocesan Retreat Model**

Below is a general outline of what we believe are the most important components of a parish or diocesan retreat. This retreat would compliment the *Witness to Love* model. In addition, we believe that a retreat needs to be very accessible to young couples who have:

1. Limited theological and philosophical foundations
2. Never been exposed to a mature presentation of the faith or sufficiently evangelized and/or catechized
3. Little appreciation of reading, reflecting, and personal prayer
4. Been formed by a negative view of permanency and the goodness of marriage

These couples need a deeper reference for faith formation, prayer, inspiration, and conversation that they can continue to refer to over the years. We use the following key topics for the retreat:

1. Who is God?
   1. Understanding how He is the author of our lives and provides a structure and order to all His creation
   2. God is Love and is understood in terms of relationships
2. What does it mean to be male and female?
   1. Understanding God’s plan for our Salvation and Freedom
   2. See how we were wounded by sin (speaking in medicinal terms of sin inflicting injury instead of guilt)
   3. Using the Virtues as our tutor; Virtues perfect freedom
   4. We only grow (emotionally, spiritually, psychologically) within relationships
3. Who is Christ and why we need salvation and redemption?
   1. With Christ, we see God, author of creation, drawing Himself into our lives
   2. Christ reveals truths about ourselves inviting us to understand what is real and permanent. When our minds and will correspond to His revealed truths we experience reality through living the Cardinal Virtues:
      1. Courage: power to pursue difficult goods and resist attractive evils
      2. Temperance: the ability to shape the desires towards the proper goal
      3. Justice: give what one is owed
      4. Prudence: able to choose best action and have the power of integrating all of these truths to make an excellent choice
4. Christ's Love for the Church and our need for the Sacraments
   1. All become transformed and redeemed by Christ through the blood and water that poured from His side
   2. All in life becomes now a gift or grace, and offering of eternal life
   3. Love and fidelity survives and overcomes death
5. Why do we have a Sacrament of Matrimony and what are the ends of Marriage?
   1. Seeing love as effectively and actively committed to the good of another
6. Understanding the Promises or Vows of Marriage
   1. In Matrimony there is the mutual commitment of wife and husband to each other, in a deeper level there exists their commitment to the Lord, together. But most deep of all, marriage is the Lord’s commitment to them! On their wedding day couples will hear and consent to the Lord saying: “It is not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go and bear fruit that will last!
   2. Need to protect and defend the Vows/Bond: “Only Jesus can love perfectly and is able to love fully, for better or for worst, riches or sickness, death do us part.”
7. Living what God has revealed about Marital Love and Sexuality (NFP vs. Contraception)
   1. Understanding ourselves through being a gift to another
   2. Understanding the language of the body
   3. As parents, we with God, co-create new life through the gift of children.
8. Living and forming a Catholic marriage and family within the Church (connecting them to their parish and the sacraments)
   1. Importance of couple prayer
   2. Understanding role of mercy and the Sacrament of Reconciliation within marriage and family life
   3. Developing a Eucharistic spirituality and a rootedness in Christ
   4. Living a Domestic Church and as a missionary outpost of your local parish

This is a general outline of the content to be covered and the order that it should be covered in. We recommend a three to six hour retreat.