



ACTS Retreat Teams: Staying Connected during Quarantine & Social Distancing

May 2020

It has been nearly 8 weeks since our San Antonio Stay Home declaration went into effect. All over the country, schools remain closed, public gatherings canceled, restaurants are slowly opening, and our homes have become our office. For many of us, it is the first time in our lives that we are unable to attend Mass. To say that our lives have been disrupted is an egregious understatement.

We have all been doing our part to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our headquarter staff continue to work from home and our store staff are on staggered shifts to fill phone and online orders. The office and store, like many others, remain closed to the public. ACTS Retreats across the world are either postponed or canceled.

But light is emerging and the possibility for seeing each other face to face seems sooner rather than later. Which begs the question: what can we do to prepare for rescheduled retreats?

Here are some suggestions we have about continuing the retreat experience during this waiting period:

1. **Remote Team formation**—Continue, or begin, team formation using the medium of technology. This does require a bit more organization on the part of the Retreat Leadership Team, but it is worthwhile. You can use any program that works for you and your team. Send out meeting agendas, meditations, and any business items ahead of time so that your meetings can run smoothly. ***Teams must maintain the 13-week formation timeline.*** These meetings serve not only to logistically prepare for the retreat weekend but, more importantly, to bond the team together through faith sharing and meditations.
2. **Online Training**—One of the ways that you can enrich your team formation is by taking the ACTS Retreat training online; registering for online training also supports ACTS Missions. It is available in English and Spanish. We also have our Father's Panel and Toolkit available in both languages. These courses are not only for retreat leadership but for the entire team.
3. **Pray, Pray, and then Pray some more**—For those of us working from home, we know the importance of a home office or a dedicated space that is just for work. The same can be said for prayer. Carve out some time, dedicate a small space in your home that is just for this purpose. Make this a family, or even a community, activity by inviting people to join in spirit to pray at a specific time.
4. **Be Patient**—Yes, we all want our retreat schedule to go back to “normal” but like so many have already said, God has the plan and perhaps it is for us to sit in this time of uncertainty and focus on Him. Be mindful of your Pastor's guidance and work together for the good of the parish community.



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Here are some frequently asked questions we have received:

What if our team had already begun meeting before the retreat was rescheduled? The team can continue to meet regularly for faith sharing and fellowship until the 13 weeks before the new retreat date.

Some of the team members are now unavailable for the new retreat date. Are there any guidelines for replacing these team members? Yes! There is some guidance for replacing team members in the ACTS Retreat Manual; read Chapter 3.

How many formation meetings should we have, given that we cannot physically meet? Teams should maintain a full formation timeline, that means 13 meetings. You can elect to have more than one meeting a week (virtual or otherwise as allowed) if the rescheduled dates do not allow for 13 regular calendar weeks.

Should we reschedule the retreat? All retreat teams should follow the CDC guidelines, as well as any guidance or directives given by their Pastor and diocese on this matter. Consult the retreat center to find out what their plans are to follow CDC guidelines.

ACTS Missions continues to recommend any retreats from now until the end of June be canceled or rescheduled during this pandemic, however, that decision ultimately belongs to the Parish Pastor.

As always, we remain available to support you.

In prayer and partnership,

Selina Farias, Maria Gomez, Frinee Sabella

Your Chapter Management & Education Team