



Life Teen Fall Retreat Day

Saturday, November 15, 2025

All teens planning to attend this retreat should sign up at **www.saint-mikes.org/fallretreat** no later than Thursday, November 6th.

Dear Teens,

We've all seen it. Whether it's a person's Instagram reel, portrayed image, or achievements, we've probably all had that moment where we look around and go 'Wow! They've got it all together! That must be the way to go.' Sometimes, through candid interviews, we find out that celebrity or influencer isn't all that happy and has had great struggles going on in their lives, even when the public portrayal looks amazing! To some extent, we are all tempted to think that certain worldly things might bring us the happiness that we crave. We are human. If we are not careful, however, some of these things can become substitutes for the one we have been designed to know, love, and find lasting joy in: God.

St. Thomas Aquinas names four primary categories people often use as substitutes for God: wealth, power, pleasure, and status. These four areas are alluring and promise safety and security but are waiting to devour us if we trust them too much. Unfortunately, when relying on these "goods" to comfort us, we forget where we should truly place our trust and create substitutes for God rather than trusting Him. During this retreat, we will take a closer look at each of these substitutes and how they can adversely affect our relationship with the Father if we are not careful about how we view and use them. All together, we will gain insight, through mediating on the person and actions of Christ, on how to be counter-cultural by choosing Christ-like virtues, living for and trusting in Him with hope!

Retreat Information:

- Who:** Any and All High School Teens! (Grades 9-12)
- **Teens currently in Confirmation Preparation must attend a retreat as part of Confirmation requirements. Spring Retreat will be the weekend of March 14, 2026.**
- Where:** Westview on the James Camp & Retreat Center
1231 West View Rd, Goochland, VA 23063
- When:** Saturday, November 15th, 9:00am - 9:00pm (Teens should arrive no later than 8:45am)
- How:** Dropped off/picked up directly at Westview (organize carpool as needed)
- Cost:** \$60 and Release Form due no later than Thursday, November 6th.
(\$30 for Teen Discipleship Team)

What paperwork do I need?

You need to make sure you have turned in a Youth Ministry Events Release Form for this year. It can be found on the Life Teen page of the parish website. If you haven't already turned one in for the year (since September 1, 2025), please make sure you have the four page form turned in to the Youth Ministry Office before the retreat deadline. **This must be turned in by Thursday, November 6th. We do not accept paperwork the day of retreat.**

Where do I need to be and when?

Teens should plan to arrive at Westview on the James via their own method of transportation, no later than 8:45am on the morning of retreat. Teens should plan to depart between 9:00 and 9:15pm at the end of the retreat. Proceed down the main drive, past the lake, until arriving at Wade Dining Hall/Springwood Cabin on the right side of the road. This is where retreat will be held.

I've never been on a retreat, am I going to like this?

I realize that for many of you, this will be your first off-site, retreat experience. We are going to have a fantastic time! It's okay if you're not completely psyched about going on retreat. Let this be a new experience for you and allow yourself to just enjoy a day away from being busy and simply enjoy the day with each other! You won't have to worry about homework, tests, chores, or even your phone. It'll be a relaxing, yet powerful and full day away from the outside world where you will only have one responsibility: to be your best self. This means taking topics seriously, having respect for yourself and for those around you, and allowing yourself to be open and honest so that you can discover areas of your faith life that may need some growth and continue to master those that already help you connect in faith!

Retreat Attendance Policy: In our efforts of keeping you safe and accounted for and allowing you to maximize the retreat experience by committing to be there and putting all other activities aside, all high school teens attending retreat must commit to be present for the entire duration of the retreat. This includes any "last minute/11th hour" requests before retreat. Our team works hard to lead retreatants in a faith-filled day. Coming and going from retreat not only takes away from the experience for each retreatant but, by association, all of the other teens on retreat. In addition, it creates layers of safety issues when tracking who should be on the property. In light of past experiences, we have decided to implement a firm and fair policy.

What about food?

The retreat center will provide us with lunch and dinner on retreat day. **You should eat something in the morning before arriving to retreat if you are a breakfast person.** We will have some breakfast-style snacks in the morning, as well as snacks mid-afternoon.

Additionally, we are asking you to please bring a pre-packaged snack with multiple units to distribute at the retreat center. The list of snacks desired will be found via a SignUpGenius sign up sent out in the week leading up to retreat. Simply sign up for a particular snack and bring it! Parent volunteers will portion any snacks need so on-site. **Do not open any of these packaged snack items prior to bringing them to retreat.** Please bring enough units of your snack to feed about seven people. Please don't bring anything that directly contains nuts. All food will stay in the main retreat hall.

I take medications. Where should I keep them?

Please make sure all medications you take on a regular basis (most especially the ones you'll be bringing to retreat) are listed in the proper box on the medical/release form. This will allow us to be aware of what you have if a question or situation arises. As budding young adults, we trust that you know when to take your medication at the proper times and can handle holding onto them. If other arrangements for medication need to be made, please contact Mike. Serious situations will be consulted with a local nurse and/or emergency services.

What should I bring?

- A (throw) blanket for use on the floor in the meeting spaces when not in chairs
- Comfortable shoes you don't mind getting dirty
- Refillable water bottle (only limited disposable ones will be available)
- Personal Journal Book
- Flashlight
- Bible, rosary, pen
 - (If you don't have one of these items, now is a good time in life to go seek one out and invest in one... I'm talking about the pen, of course! Suggestion: Look up The Great Adventure Bible!)
- Deck of cards/small card games for free time
- Your packaged snack for distribution (see above)

What should I NOT bring?

Laptops, tablets, anything valuable or precious to you. We will not be responsible if you lose something expensive or important. Please do not bring any illegal substances or items that distract you or others from your retreat experience. By registering for this retreat, you grant the right to the Parish Youth Advocate, or, under his direction, any adult Core team member to do a bag search of your belongings at the retreat site if there is reasonable suspicion that you have items with you that are not helpful in upholding the mission of our retreat day. (ProTip: This is not the route you want to go!)

In case of emergency for parents:

Westview on the James: **804.457.4210**. Mike's number: 440.829.3363. Please call only in the case of emergency, starting with the center's number and then Mike's number (call/text). The center's office monitors calls regularly and will funnel any St. Michael calls to Mike. Neither number should be used for questions about paperwork or retreat logistics. (Such questions should be discussed at least a week before retreat via regular parish contact!) On the flip side, as it is a retreat, we encourage teens to contact home only in cases of emergency. Rest assured, if we need to get in touch with you, we can and will!

Questions?

Please contact me with any questions you or your parents may have at **mhorvath@saint-mikes.org** or **804.527.1037 x200**. There may be a few other bits of information that I will need to get out to you over the next couple of weeks. Please be sure you are signed up for and are reading all Life Teen Flocknote e-mails for important messages and news. If you are not receiving them regularly, please sign up via the Life Teen page of our parish website (right column).

I look forward to spending time together, in a day away from the hustle and bustle, as we place ourselves in Christ's presence. By taking some time to pause and reflect of the life and actions of Jesus, may we come to more deeply encounter Him, reminding ourselves to resist what may look amazing and shiny in the moment, and instead choose to strive down the path of an authentic life of virtue and hope.

Peace,



Mike Horvath