

## PROGRAM

### SACRED PRIESTLY RETREAT

Rome – Assisi – Montecassino – Holy Sites of Central Italy

9 Days / 8 Nights

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#### DAY 1 – ARRIVAL | Gateway to the Sacred

**EVENING** Your journey toward spiritual renewal and communion with fellow clergy begins as you arrive at the airport. After completing immigration formalities, you will be welcomed by your dedicated tour representative and transferred by private coach to your first destination.

As evening falls, you settle into your accommodations, taking time to rest and prepare your heart and mind for the profound experiences that await. Tonight is a moment of transition—from the ordinary rhythms of daily pastoral life to the sacred rhythm of pilgrimage and shared spiritual purpose.

Overnight accommodation provided.

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#### DAY 2 – ROME | The Heart of Catholicism and Apostolic Tradition

**MORNING & AFTERNOON** We begin our pilgrimage in Rome, the eternal city and spiritual capital of the Catholic world. Upon arrival, we transfer to our hotel and take time to settle in.

This day is dedicated to exploring the foundational sites of our faith. We walk the streets where countless saints and martyrs have walked, where Peter himself established the Church upon the rock of apostolic succession.

We visit the major basilicas and sacred sites that form the spiritual backbone of Rome, moving through centuries of Christian history. Each location speaks to the continuity of faith, the sacrifice of the early Christians, and the enduring power of the Gospel.

We pray in spaces sanctified by generations of believers, allowing the weight of tradition and the presence of the Holy Spirit to transform our understanding of what it means to be shepherds in Christ's flock.

**EVENING** Dinner is shared in a local restaurant, an opportunity to fellowship with brother priests and reflect on the day's spiritual experiences.

Overnight in Rome.

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#### DAY 3 – ROME | Deepening Our Encounter with the Sacred

**MORNING & AFTERNOON** Our second day in Rome allows us to continue our spiritual exploration and deepen our encounter with the foundations of apostolic faith.

We visit additional sacred sites, each chosen for their profound significance to priestly ministry and the universal Church. From the tombs of saints to the locations where early Church Fathers taught and suffered for the faith, we immerse ourselves in the heroic witness of those who came before us.

We may participate in Mass at one of Rome's great basilicas, an experience of communal prayer that connects us to priests throughout the world and to the communion of saints across all ages.

Time is reserved for personal prayer and contemplation before the Blessed Sacrament, allowing each priest to bring his own pastoral concerns, gratitude, and intercession into the presence of Christ.

We explore the spiritual and artistic treasures housed within these sacred spaces—paintings, sculptures, and architectural elements that all bear witness to God's beauty and majesty.

**EVENING** Dinner provides continued fellowship and conversation, deepening the bonds between members of our priestly community.

Overnight in Rome.

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#### DAY 4 – ROME TO MONTECASSINO | Journey to Monastic Tradition

**MORNING** After breakfast, we depart Rome for the sacred heights of Montecassino, one of Western Christianity's most significant monastic sites.

The drive takes us through the Italian countryside, through landscapes that have inspired spiritual seekers for centuries. As we travel south, the terrain becomes more dramatic, hills rising majestically around us.

**AFTERNOON** Upon arrival at Montecassino, we ascend to the monastery perched high above the surrounding valleys. This location—chosen by Saint Benedict himself—stands as a monument to monastic life and the pursuit of spiritual discipline.

We visit the Abbey, a structure rebuilt after World War II devastation, and explore the grounds where monks have lived according to the Rule of Saint Benedict for nearly fifteen centuries. The monastery's library, cloisters, and basilica all speak to the contemplative life and the commitment to prayer that has characterized monastic communities throughout the ages.

We may participate in or observe the canonical hours—the monastic prayer cycle—experiencing firsthand the rhythm of liturgical prayer that has sustained monastic communities since the Rule was first written.

A sacred Mass is celebrated, either with the monastic community or in one of the monastery's chapels, allowing us to unite our priestly prayer with the unbroken tradition of monastic intercession.

**EVENING** Dinner is simple and reflective, in keeping with monastic traditions of simplicity and silence. This meal becomes a spiritual practice in itself—an opportunity to quiet our minds and listen to the voice of God speaking through the profound silence of this holy place.

Overnight at accommodations near Montecassino.

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#### DAY 5 – MONTECASSINO REGION | Exploring Spiritual Riches

**MORNING** Our morning is spent further exploring the spiritual and historical treasures surrounding Montecassino.

We visit San Giovanni Rotondo, a site of profound spiritual significance and monastic tradition. Here we encounter communities dedicated to prayer and service, and witness the fruits of contemplative religious life.

We may also visit Monte Sant'Angelo, another sacred site in this region rich with pilgrimage traditions. These locations, steeped in centuries of faith and devotion, offer opportunities for prayer, reflection, and encounter with God's presence in nature and community.

**AFTERNOON** We return to San Giovanni Rotondo for further exploration and prayer. The afternoon allows for personal time—hours for individual contemplation, confession if desired, and deeper spiritual work.

We gather for communal prayer and reflection, sharing with one another the spiritual insights emerging from our pilgrimage.

**EVENING** Dinner and overnight rest in the accommodations near these sacred sites.

Overnight in the region.

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## DAY 6 – SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO TO LANCIANO & LORETO | Ancient Faith and Eucharistic Miracles

**MORNING** We depart for Lanciano, a site of supreme theological and spiritual significance.

Lanciano is home to one of Christianity's most significant Eucharistic miracles—an occurrence that speaks to the mystery of Christ's real presence in the sacrament of the altar. Here, a consecrated host underwent a visible transformation, remaining as evidence of this miracle to the present day.

We visit the sanctuary where this miracle is preserved and venerated. As priests, we stand before this profound witness to the nature of the Eucharist and the reality of Christ's presence that we ourselves confess at the altar. This encounter becomes a meditation on our own priestly mission and the sacred responsibility we bear in the celebration of the Mass.

**AFTERNOON** We continue to Loreto, one of Catholicism's most important pilgrimage destinations.

Loreto is home to the Basilica of the Holy House, believed to be the very dwelling where the Holy Family lived in Nazareth. According to tradition, this house was miraculously transported to this location in the medieval period. Whether one accepts this tradition literally or understands it symbolically, the basilica stands as a powerful witness to devotion to Mary and to the sacred character of domestic life.

We visit the sanctuary, pray before this ancient structure, and participate in or attend Mass, uniting our priestly intercession with countless pilgrims throughout the centuries who have sought the intercession of the Mother of God at this holy site.

**EVENING** Dinner and reflection on the day's profound encounters with the mystery of the Eucharist and the role of Mary in the Church's life.

Overnight in the region.

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## DAY 7 – ASSISI | The Saint of Poverty and Evangelical Simplicity

**MORNING & AFTERNOON** We travel to Assisi, the birthplace of Saint Francis and one of Christianity's most spiritually transformative destinations.

Upon arrival in this medieval hilltown, we are immediately transported into the world of Saint Francis—a world of radical poverty, absolute trust in Divine Providence, and passionate love for all creation. The very stones of Assisi seem to whisper the Gospel in its most authentic and challenging form.

We visit the Basilica of Saint Francis, a magnificent sanctuary built to honor the saint who renounced worldly wealth to embrace spiritual riches. Within this basilica lie the mortal remains of Francis, and its walls contain frescoes depicting scenes from his extraordinary life.

We spend time in the lower basilica, a more intimate sacred space, and in the upper basilica, where light streams through windows illuminating scenes of Francis's radical conversion and sanctity.

We visit the Basilica of Saint Clare, honoring the feminine dimension of Franciscan spirituality and the powerful witness of women religious in the Church's history.

We may also visit the site of the Porziuncola, the small chapel where Francis received his initial call from God—a location of profound spiritual power and simplicity.

Walking through Assisi's narrow medieval streets, we encounter the lived context of Francis's ministry. We see the places where he preached, prayed, and lived in radical dependence on God's care. The entire town becomes a classroom in Gospel values.

**EVENING** We gather for evening prayer and reflection, allowing the spirit of Saint Francis—his poverty of spirit, his radical trust, his passionate love—to penetrate our priestly hearts and challenge us to greater fidelity to our own evangelical vows.

Dinner provides time for conversation and community with fellow priests, sharing insights about how the Franciscan charism speaks to contemporary priestly ministry.

Overnight in Assisi.

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## DAY 8 – ASSISI TO ORVIETO & ROME | Eucharistic Wonder and Return

**MORNING** We depart Assisi for Orvieto, another site of Eucharistic significance and theological importance.

Orvieto's magnificent cathedral houses within its walls the testimony to another Eucharistic miracle. We visit this extraordinary Gothic structure, marveling at its architectural splendor while contemplating once again the mystery of Christ's presence in the sacrament.

**AFTERNOON** We return toward Rome, allowing time for reflection and integration of all we have experienced throughout our pilgrimage.

The journey itself becomes a time of prayer—passing through Italian landscapes, watching afternoon light transform the countryside, and allowing the experiences of the past days to settle into our hearts and spirits.

**EVENING** Upon return to Rome, we gather for a final dinner together—a celebration of our shared pilgrimage and the bonds formed between brother priests through our common pursuit of spiritual renewal and deeper

intimacy with Christ.

Overnight in Rome.

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## DAY 9 – DEPARTURE | Carrying Grace Home

**EARLY MORNING** We rise early and transfer to the airport for our return flight home.

As we depart, we carry with us far more than souvenirs or photographs. We carry renewed hearts, deepened faith, and a refreshed sense of our priestly vocation. We have stood where saints stood, prayed where martyrs prayed, and encountered Christ in the silence, beauty, and spiritual intensity of these sacred sites.

The pilgrimage continues as we return to our parishes and ministries, bringing the grace and insights of these days to bear on our pastoral work. We go forth as renewed witnesses to the Gospel, strengthened by our encounter with the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us, and recommitted to our role as shepherds in Christ's Church.

End of services