

## THE SOPHOMORE JOURNEY RETREAT – TO GO... OR NOT TO GO...

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Our juniors and seniors consistently report that their Marist retreats are among those experiences that matter the most to their growth as individuals, as community, and in their relationship with God. As parents, you may be aware that often sophomores are the most resistant to participate in retreats. We thought it might be helpful to give you a little more direct information about our sophomore retreats so that you can guide your son/daughter accordingly.

The sophomore retreat, like any retreat, is designed to help the students, both individually and collectively to “retreat” from their “normal” everyday world, in order that they might better reflect back upon that world. Retreats like these will help the students focus on identity and self-image, relationships with others, relationship with God, and Christian living. They seek to help participants grow in personal, relational, and spiritual ways. While the goal is ultimately spiritual in nature, there is great sensitivity to non-Catholics, and to students who do not identify with any particular religious belief.

The Sophomore Retreat is called the **Journey Retreat**. Following the journey motif, it will help the participants to reflect on their life journey through a creative variety of talks given by upperclassmen, small group sharing, and a host of activities and games.

This retreat aims at connecting one’s life journey with God’s presence and emphasizes the role of faith in future life journey choices. Because of the intensity of this retreat, the overnight piece is important to the bonding and the self-reflection that occurs. For these reasons we give considerable time to this retreat, and we hold it on a weekend, just as we do for the junior and senior retreats. For many sophomores, the timing of this retreat is very impactful, falling as it does at this critical time of their life.

Our experience tells us that this retreat holds something of benefit for any sophomore willing to participate, even if faith does not have a prominent place in their life. We ask you to discuss this important event with your son or daughter.

The Journey Retreat, like all retreats, is considered “optional.” However, the reason is that, like the junior and senior retreats, free choice enables students to be more open to the experience that awaits them, and to make a choice because they want the experience it offers. What is difficult is to know how strongly to encourage students to attend. We generally caution against *requiring* a student to go. Students who are made to go often feel angry about being there and become resistant to the experience and actually disruptive to the retreat for the rest of the group. We suggest that you as parents have conversation with your son or daughter about the Journey retreat, and help them make a good decision about attending. We recommend that you encourage them to go, but to attend willingly, ready to participate and have a good time.

For more information, contact:

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