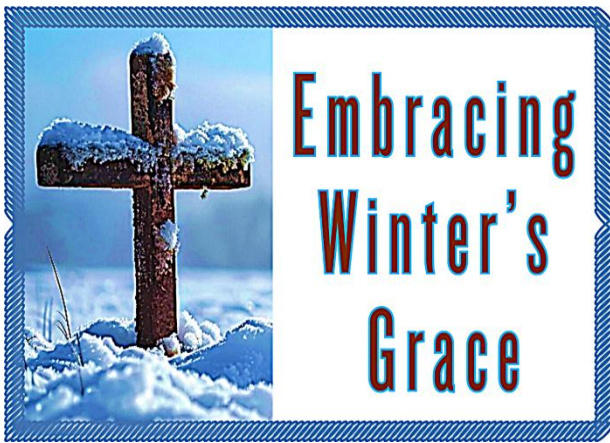




A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group • 40-50 min.
Designed for Men in Ministry

Leader: Welcome to this retreat, a serene space carved out of our busy lives, as men in ministry, to reflect and embrace the grace that winter brings. This sacred time invites us to find warmth and beauty in the stillness of the season.

Let's take a moment of silence to center ourselves in the presence of God, inviting the Holy Spirit to be our guide.

Finding Winter's Grace

All: Dear Lord, we come before You, as we gather here in unity, as men in ministry, with hearts open to the wonders of Your creation. Today, as winter approaches, we pause to reflect on the beauty, grace and stillness that this season brings into our lives.

Lord, just as the earth prepares to rest, we may also find peace in the quiet moments. Help us to embrace the changes this season brings, knowing that Your hand guides us with love and purpose in our lives and ministries.

In these months of shorter days and longer nights, teach us to find grace and beauty in solitude. Let the stillness of winter be a reminder of the profound peace and grace that can be found in Your presence. May we cherish this time to reflect, renew, and reconnect with our inner selves and with You, our Creator.

Lord, winter also brings us closer to one another. As we spend more time indoors, may we nurture our ministries with kindness and warmth in your grace. Help us to build stronger bonds, as we lift each other up. Let our homes be filled with laughter, love, and the light of Your spirit.

In times of trials and discontent, Lord, we ask that You be our comfort and solace. Surround us with love, lifting us up as we continue our ministries. Let your grace be a source of warmth, guiding us through the darkness of winter and into the light of Your eternal love. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Reader 1: Grace, in the Catholic tradition, is considered a free and undeserved gift from God that aids us in our spiritual journey. It is God's love and presence in the world, empowering us to live according to His will. Grace is not something that can be earned; rather, it is generously bestowed by God, allowing believers to grow in faith, hope, and love even in coldness of winter.

Catholic theology distinguishes between different types of grace:

- ❖ Sanctifying Grace — This is the grace that dwells in the soul, transforming and sanctifying it, making it holy and pleasing to God. It is imparted through the sacraments, particularly baptism, and is crucial for salvation.
- ❖ Actual Grace — This refers to the temporary divine assistance that helps individuals perform good acts and resist sin. It prompts and supports people in making moral decisions and fulfilling God's commandments.
- ❖ Sacramental Grace — Each sacrament provides specific graces that help believers live out their Christian vocation. For instance, the grace of matrimony strengthens the marriage bond, while the grace of the Eucharist nourishes spiritual life.

Reader 2: For all the work we do, as men in ministry, no matter what season, grace can be a source of strength and inspiration, especially during those tough situations, in your personal and/or ministry life, when it feels like you're getting hit from all directions.

Below are ways that grace can influence our ministries:

- ❖ Compassion and Patience — Grace encourages us to approach our responsibilities with compassion and patience, even when it is an uphill battle, reflecting God's love in our actions.
- ❖ Resilience and Strength — In challenging times, grace can offer the resilience needed to continue our ministries, even when faced with physical and emotional exhaustion, which each of us experience, on different levels.
- ❖ Spiritual Growth — Engaging in acts of care in our ministries can become a form of spiritual growth, as we experience God's presence in our interactions with all those we serve. This is evident when we reach out to those who are in need.
- ❖ Forgiveness and Understanding — Grace fosters an environment of forgiveness and understanding, which we can build upon, allowing us to navigate difficult situations with empathy and kindness.

Finding Grace in Stillness

Leader: Let's find grace in winter's stillness.

- ❖ Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Imagine a serene winter landscape. The air is crisp, and snowflakes gently fall around you.
- ❖ Picture yourself wrapped in a warm cloak, feeling embraced by God's love and grace.
- ❖ As you breathe in, invite the peace of winter into your heart. Now, make room and breathe out any worries or burdens you carry.
- ❖ Meditate on the stillness around you. What does this silence reveal about God's presence and grace in your life?
- ❖ Spend some time pondering these questions. Share your responses at your table.
 1. What insights have you gained from this reflection on winter's grace?
 2. How can you carry the lessons of winter into other seasons of your life?
 3. In what ways can you extend grace and forgiveness to others, in your ministry, while mirroring the purity of snow?

Embracing Grace

Reader 3: Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 — This passage resonates with our retreat theme of finding grace in the harshness of winter and in difficult times. It also speaks of the different seasons of life. After the reading, close your eyes and meditate on the passage and how it relates to you and your experiences in your ministry?

Reader 4: Utilizing the lined paper at the end of this retreat, write a short prayer or reflection inspired by the theme of "Embracing Winter's Grace." Focus on aspects of your role in your ministries that you wish to uplift or transform through grace.

- ❖ Begin your prayer with gratitude for the season of winter and its lessons.
- ❖ Include a request for strength, peace, or understanding in your ministry and faith journey.
- ❖ Conclude with an affirmation of the grace you find in your life.

All: Loving God, as we embrace the grace of winter, help us to carry its lessons into all aspects of our lives. May we find beauty in stillness and strength in Your eternal love.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Guide us with Your light, now and always. May we continue to find grace and tranquility in our ministries, throughout the winter season and beyond. Amen.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.