

## **Caritas Retreats: Discover. Love. Anew.**

### **An Overview**

#### **A. Introduction**

The US Bishops, in their Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults entitled “Sons and Daughters of the Light,” identified four principal hungers among young adults: hunger for healthy personal identity, hunger for intimacy in relationships, hunger for life-giving spirituality, and hunger for meaningful work. They call for ministerial strategies that engage young adults in their hungers and provides a “vision of life based on a faith that calls each of them to holiness, community, and service.”

The Caritas retreat engages young adults in their hungers for love, God, and meaningful relationships through an experience of genuine community of faith.

Caritas, Latin for “charity,” is a four-day retreat launched in January 2005 primarily for Vietnamese young adults in their 20’s and 30’s. Since January 2010, it has been expanded for people from diverse cultures in their 20’s, 30’s, and 40’s.

#### **B. Goal**

Caritas retreats aim to provide affective and intellectual growth, namely:

1. *To offer retreatants a heart-felt experience of God’s personal love through a Christian community that is “real”.*
2. *To challenge retreatants’ “operational idea” of love and help each develop an understanding of love and relationships more rooted in God.*

In short, Caritas seeks to provide an experience that helps participants realize God’s personal love for them more genuinely and deeply.

#### **C. Key Approach**

The retreat is grounded in Catholic incarnational and sacramental principles, namely the belief that God is intimately present and active human history, personally and collectively. It promotes heartfelt, honest, and vulnerable conversations among participants to enable heightened awareness of God’s love action embodied through human relationships.

The talks by Team members facilitate this conversation by modeling honesty, openness, and vulnerability. The conversations in small groups invite each person to similar heart-to-heart exchanges. Such dialogues engender openness and transparency of heart that help make conversations with God in prayer tangible and meaningful and real. In short, Caritas is a “school of love,” an experience of genuine loving.