

## Celebrating Love on Valentine's Day at the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center in Franciscan Tradition



Graymoor Spiritual Life Center



Yoga at Graymoor



Cross Country skiing at Fahnestock

Saint Paul writes “What can be known about God is perfectly plain since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity – however invisible – have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made.” So on this upcoming Valentine’s Day weekend, the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center in Garrison, NY offers an outdoors retreat including a cross country skiing clinic at Fahnestock State Park, yoga stretching afterwards, and meditation with all our senses on the greatest commandments – love one another and love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Franciscan spirituality is based on simplicity, nature, and daily compassion. Franciscan friar Tom Oriens, director of retreat house explains, “Graymoor was founded as a place of refuge for itinerant travelers of all faiths. Today for people on their journey through life, the ecumenical Spiritual Life Center continues to be a nurturing place of refuge.” Each season, the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center offers a ReCreation Weekend in which participants have the opportunity to experience creation with all their senses. “It helps balance my life,” says Phil Miller, owner of Tech Connect – a computer services company in Pleasantville. “As a small business owner, the responsibilities are endless. It is so important on occasion to purposefully set aside the time to do the other things that are essential in living life fully.”

The weekend begins with sharing what participants have discovered as the most scenic, most spiritual, and most adventurous in the Hudson River valley. “I am always amazed how much we have so close to us,” enthuses Connie Mack of Dutchess County. Friday evening concludes with a meditation to let go of the impediments to love: fear, anger, jealousy and self-doubt.

Saturday is an outdoors day at Fahnestock which begins with a cross country skiing lesson for beginners, and then an afternoon of skiing the miles of groomed trails. “Even having no experience with skiing” a delighted Paul Brunn from Queens exclaims, “I was cross country skiing in just one hour!” The Fahnestock winter park, located on Route 301 in Carmel, N.Y. rents cross country skis, snowshoes, and snow tubes. Information is available at [nysparks.com/parks/133/details.aspx](http://nysparks.com/parks/133/details.aspx). Snow conditions are updated at 845-225-3998.

In the evening, the group stretches with yoga exercises. Explains instructor, Cris Parque, “Not only is stretching healthy after physical exertion, but also the meditative aspect of yoga helps bring the day into context.”

Sunday is an opportunity both for church services and for guided reflection. “Not only as part of this retreat do we learn how to love – our life, ourselves, others, and the Divine,” relates Jackie Lee of Long Island, “but also we have the opportunity to put it into actions simply by the way we communally share this weekend together in conversation, in outdoor activities, and dining together. I guess that’s what real prayer is: simply the caring way that we live our daily life.”

Besides this winter program on February 14 & 15, Graymoor also commences summer each year with a ReCreation Weekend on June 20 & 21, and celebrates the transition of autumn on October 24 & 25. Sunday March 15, Graymoor has a one-day outdoors program on The Spiritual Directions centered on releasing impediments to love, and focusing on loving with our heart, mind, soul, and strength. To visit Graymoor or to register for Spiritual Life Center retreats, see [http://www.atonementfriars.org/our\\_missions\\_and\\_ministries/retreats.html](http://www.atonementfriars.org/our_missions_and_ministries/retreats.html).