

Our History

The Jesuit Retreat Center of Los Altos has offered the opportunity for people to break away from the rush of their daily lives to experience quiet times of prayer since 1925. The Center was founded and remains today an active religious community of the Society of Jesus—the Jesuits. They work cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Jose.



In the early 1920s, the Jesuits of Northern California, with the enthusiastic support of then San Francisco Archbishop Edward Hanna, sought to found a retreat center to serve the people of the Bay Area. With word that a property in Los Altos was available they bought it almost on first sight with the intent to convert the property's main structure into a retreat house. The first renovation was conversion of a billiards room into a chapel and it was there that the first Mass was celebrated on March 15, 1925. It was Archbishop Hanna who suggested the name *El Retiro San Iñigo* — the St. Ignatius Retreat.

The immediately popular retreat center quickly outgrew its original facility. Twelve acres were soon added to the property and a building process began. Loyola Hall, the primary residence and meeting space, was completed in 1927; Rossi Chapel was built the following year.

After World War II, twenty-two acre parcel was acquired. This included the large house on top of the hill — now called St. Robert’s Hall. Down the hill, Pereira Hall was completed in 1947, providing the large dining room with the sweeping view of the entire valley.

Three more retreatant residences — St. Robert’s Annex (1951), Marini Hall (1958), and St. Joseph’s Hall (1959) — completed the housing construction. In the meantime, many paths and shrines were built throughout the property and maintained by dedicated volunteers.

Just as in 1925, the ***Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*** provide the spiritual and intellectual foundation for all that happens at *El Retiro*. This is the call to live by Ignatian tenets to be “*Contemplatives in Action*” who recognize the presence of “*God in all things*” – to show our love for others in deeds and not just in words and to see that God is best served where people will best be helped. For more about the Jesuits [Click Here](#).

