

First Reconciliation Retreat

The retreat is a time for the parents and children to contemplate together God's great love for them. Jesus came "that we may have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10-10) Sin leads to a loss of this life in Christ. Jesus' forgiveness of sinners is reviewed through Scripture stories and parables.

Components for the retreat should include:

- Understanding the institution of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Reflecting on sorrow for sin
- Reflecting on confession of sin to the priest
- Reflecting on reparation for sin

Two to four hours is sufficient time for a retreat for children preparing to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Parents are the first faith educators of their children. Therefore, **parents need to play an active role in the retreat**. Children, with their parents, should journey together through this preparation period.

Remember that this is a retreat, not a vacation bible school experience. **Children are to be given an opportunity to encounter the Lord** and be immersed in prayer at an age appropriate level.

Retreats can be formatted in various ways. The sample outlines provided have the children and parents progressing through various stations.

Examples are taken from Our Sunday Visitor, Diocese of Fargo, Holy Family Parish in Woodruff, Immaculate Conception Parish in New Richmond and St. Joseph Parish in Rice Lake.

Sample Outline A

- I. Welcome and sign in (use name tags)
Introductions and Instructions
 Pastor welcome
 Distribute any handouts
 Explain the layout and flow of the retreat
Opening Prayer
- II. Rotate through four stations
- III. Break – with snacks and/or meal
- IV. Rotate through four more stations
- V. Concluding Prayer of a Children’s Eucharistic Adoration, prayer service or Mass

Sample Outline B

- I. Welcome and sign in (use name tags)
Introductions and Instructions
 Pastor welcome
 Distribute any handouts
 Explain the layout and flow of the retreat
Opening Prayer
- II. Rotate through four stations
- III. Snack
- IV. Concluding Prayer of a Children’s Eucharistic Adoration, prayer service or Mass

Sample Outline C

- I. Opening Prayer
- II. Complete two worksheets with parent for review and reinforcement of what learned in class
- III. Craft project (a keepsake of the sacrament)
- IV. Interview – go over reconciliation with their catechist, teacher and/or other representative
- V. Fill out a “cheat sheet” with their parents that they will take into reconciliation with them
- VI. Visit the reconciliation room with the pastor
- VII. Closing Prayer

Sample Outline D

- I. Welcome & Opening Prayer
- II. Discussion of what is reconciliation and what is a sacrament
- III. Read John 10:14-15 with activity about the Good Shepherd
- IV. Table discussions of what sin is
- V. Mock confessions
- VI. Bathroom and snack break
- VII. Tour of reconciliation room
- VIII. Closing Prayer, using Luke 15:1-7 (Parable of the Lost Sheep)

Sample Outline E

- I. Welcome and Opening Prayer in Church
- II. Discussion of what Reconciliation is and what it means in our lives.
- III. Children and Parents separate. Children go and do a couple activities together. Parents remain in Church and participate in Rite II of Reconciliation.
- IV. Children and Parents join together for snack and closing prayer.

Break Outs/Stations Examples

The Salvation Story and the Prodigal Son

1. Begin with a short prayer
2. Review salvation history using coloring pages (children can take them home)
 - <http://ascensionpress.com> Great Adventure Kids "Let's Journey Through the Bible" Bible Story Coloring Book, by Emily Cavins, Illustrated by Eileen McCook
 - <http://catholicblogger1.blogspot.com/2012/07/free-religious-coloring-pages.html> The Catholic Toolbox
 - <http://catholicfaitheducation.blogspot.com/2010/01/bible-coloring-pages.html> Catholic Faith Education
 - <http://www.roman-catholic-catechism.com/roman-catholic-bible-2.html> St. Anne's Helper
3. Have the priest (or other individual) read the Prodigal Son story (Lk 15:11-32)
 - <http://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/prodigal-son/> Free Bible Images
 - <http://www.amazon.com/Return-Prodigal-Poster-Print-Rembrandt/dp/B000YP29N2> Poster
4. Have some kind of visual for the children to look at while listening to the story
5. Review the story and its message
6. End with an Act of Contrition

Examination of Conscience

1. Begin with a short prayer
2. Discuss what sin is and is not
3. Give the children a copy of an examination of conscience (samples on diocesan website and at end of this document)
4. Read the questions out loud while the children think about what you're asking
5. Say a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for His help
6. Have children think quietly about their sins
7. End with an Act of Contrition

Role Play Reconciliation

1. Begin with a short prayer
2. Review the steps to reconciliation
3. Have children select a "sin" (piece of paper with sin written on it) from a basket
4. Have each child go through the steps of confession with an adult, one at a time
5. Discuss the do's and don'ts of going to confession (possibly have the parents act out "bad" confessions)
6. Tour the confessional
7. End with an Act of Contrition

Saint Skits

1. Begin with a short prayer
2. Choose a saint (suggestions – St. John Vianney, St. Faustina)
3. Choose a child to act out the parts of the story you read
 - <http://catholicmom.com/kids/puppet-ministry/> Puppet Ministry Scripts
 - <http://www.loyolapress.com/saints-stories-for-kids.htm> Saints Stories for All Ages
 - <http://www.christianbook.com> The Children's Book of Saints
4. Discuss the life of that saint
5. End with an Act of Contrition

Light of the Holy Spirit

1. Begin with a short prayer
2. Discuss how we've all received the Holy Spirit at Baptism and that the Holy Spirit is sometimes described as a light – light a candle
3. Hand out a copy of the Baptismal Promises. Tell the students they should respond “I do” to each as you read them
4. Demonstrate how sin extinguishes the “light” by placing a votive candle older inverted over the top of the lit candle cutting off the air and why we need confession
5. End with an Act of Contrition

Stain Class Candle Votive Holder

- Materials needed: glass jar, colored tissue paper, pressed flowers or leaves, white school glue, small plastic bowls or disposable containers, markers, votive candles or LED lights, paintbrushes.
- Mix ½ cup of glue with 1/4 cup of water. Give children paintbrushes and have them cover a section of the jar with a thin coat of glue solution overlapping the tissue paper pieces until the jar is covered.

Match stick or clothes pin crosses

<http://www.makingmusicprayingtwice.com/kids-activities/easter-activities>

Ricky's First Reconciliation – Video -

http://www.twentythirdpublications.com/Support/Catalogs/08_Sacraments_Flyer.pdf

Responsive Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is repeated so many times in church that its meaning is often overlooked or lost altogether. The following responsive reading is designed to cause people to think more about the meaning of the Lord's Prayer as it is being recited in worship.

Assembly: a real person, who cares for and loves me.
Leader: Who reigns in heaven
Assembly: living higher than I am, understanding more than I.
Leader: Holy is your name
Assembly: we honor and praise your holy name.
Leader: Your kingdom come
Assembly: yes, come quickly, Lord Jesus, live in our lives.
Leader: Your will be done
Assembly: you always know what is best for us.
Leader: On earth as it is in heaven
Assembly: as you always have and always will.
Leader: Give us this day our daily bread
Assembly: you have always supplied what we really need.
Leader: And forgive us our sins
Assembly: in the name of Christ.
Leader: As we forgive those who sin against us
Assembly: seventy times seven, Lord.
Leader: And lead us not into temptation
Assembly: give us the strength to resist.
Leader: But deliver us from evil
Assembly: when we fail, you come through.

Leader: For yours is the kingdom
 Assembly: in which we share.
 Leader: And the power
 Assembly: greater than anything we have ever known.
 Leader: And the glory
 Assembly: brighter than the sun.
 Leader: Forever
 Assembly: for all time to come.
 Leader: Amen!
 Assembly: Amen!

Ten Commandment Bracelet

- Tie a strong knot 3 inches from the end of a cord
- String on the first three beads –
 - Discuss each commandment as you string it on
 - These beads represent the first three Commandments which remind us of our relationship and love for God
- Tie another double knot close behind the teal bead
 - The next seven beads represent the last seven Commandments that remind us of how God wants us to treat our neighbors and friends
 - As they put on each bead, discuss each Commandment
- Once the last seven beads are strung, tie a strong knot close to the last bead
- Provide a sheet explaining the colors of the beads on the bracelets
 1. Pale yellow: have no other gods besides me.
 2. Dark blue: honor God's name.
 3. Green: go to Church on the Lord's Day
 4. Light blue: honor and respect your parents
 5. Black: do not kill or hurt anyone
 6. White: be faithful in marriage
 7. Pink: do not steal or take things
 8. Purple: do not lie
 9. Yellow: do not want your neighbor's wife
 10. Orange: do not want your neighbor's goods

Children's Examination of Conscience (Diocese of Fargo, Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, 2012)

Responsibilities to God

- Do I try to pray, even when I find it hard to do so?
- Do I always show respect to God, my family and friends by the words I use?
- Have I gone to Mass every Sunday or asked an adult to take me to Mass?
- Do I have a good attitude about attending Mass?
- Have I been good in church?

Responsibilities to others

- Have I ever been disobedient or disrespectful to my parents?
- Have I talked back to parents, teachers or others?
- Have I been selfish toward my parents, siblings, teachers or friends?
- Have I lied or been deceitful to my parents or to others?
- Have I been arrogant, stubborn or rebellious?
- Have I pouted and been moody?

- Have I gotten angry and lost my temper?
- Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?
- Have I hit or shoved anyone?
- Have I made fun of others and called them names?
- Have I said mean things about another person behind their back?
- Have I used bad language?
- Have I stolen anything? Have I returned it?
- Have I skipped my household chores when I was supposed to do them?
- Have I skipped my homework when I was supposed to do it?
- Have I ever copied another person's answers on a test or assignment?
- Have I destroyed or damaged someone's property?
- Have I ever been jealous about what other people have?
- Have I ever been jealous about what other people get to do?