

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

RETREAT

This retreat is scheduled for one-day and it follows an outline from the program, *Chosen*. Schedule it on a Saturday before the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Communicate the date to catechists, parents and school staff.

PREPARATION:

1. Buy name-tags.
2. Make name-tags for each candidate with the small-group designation indicated on the name-tag.
3. Make copies of the hand-outs. You will need one for each candidate and extra copies for the parish pastoral team, catechists, school staff and families.
4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to candidates around 2:00 p.m. Ensure that there are priests available for this time frame.
5. Have some books on hand so that candidates can read if they finish early.
6. Similarly – prepare a craft table where candidates can make holy cards or bookmarks for their Confirmation. Candidates can do this if they finish early.

RETREAT:

9:00 a.m. Candidates arrive with their parents for the retreat and are welcomed by representatives from the parish and the school. Parents are welcome to stay or leave as needed.

9:30 a.m. Welcome – ensure that each candidate receives a name-tag with the small group designation, one twelve inch piece of string, and a balloon.

Icebreaker Activity: “Discovering One Another”

Distribute Hand-out #1 to each candidate instructing them to find people on retreat with them to secure initials for each of the seven items on the

sheet. Explain that the purpose of this activity is to talk with other young people on retreat that the candidate may or may not know.

10:00 a.m.

Session 1: Why Am I Here?

Distribute Hand-out #2 for the prayer. Explain to the candidates that this is a prayer from the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church asking for the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

OPENING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

TEACHING (15 MINUTES)

The teaching outline is provided from the program, *Chosen*. See the notes that follow.

Teaching Outline

1. Why are you here (on this retreat)?

- Pose some questions to your candidates: Who is here because a parent made you attend? Who is here only because it is a requirement for receiving Confirmation? Is anyone here because *you want to be* and not just because you have to be?
- Explain that they are ultimately here because God wants them to be.
- Many people ask about the meaning of life, of human existence, but never get much deeper than, "My parents wanted a child, so here I am."

2. Unanswered question = emptiness

- When people do not know why they exist, their lives have no meaning or purpose.
- People yearn for answers, so they seek things and experiences that will satisfy their longing for purpose. Some common places people seek to find fulfillment include:
 - » Money and material wealth
 - » Sexual pleasure and power
 - » Success (through good grades or career recognition)
 - » Constant partying, mindless distractions, or thrill-seeking activities
 - » Image and popularity
- When people do not know why they are here, they find life meaningless and end up broken and empty. If a prehistoric caveman stumbled upon a modern toaster, he would probably pick it up, shake it, try to hunt an animal with it, and eventually break it. Why? He would not know how to fulfill the toaster's intended purpose because he would not know the reason for the toaster's existence in the first place.
- If *you* do not know why *you* are here, then you will not know your destination, and if you do not know your destination, you will not have direction. In order to have hope, you need direction.
- Young adulthood should be a time of hope and possibility, yet so many young adults feel confused and empty, sometimes even leading to despair.

- Young adults who do not know what their lives are intended for end up feeling miserable and broken. (Suicide is the sixth leading cause of death for five- to fourteen-year-olds and the third leading cause of death for fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds.)

3. The answer

- You are not here as a result of random chance. You are here for a purpose, and when you pursue that purpose, you will become what you are intended to be. And nothing can take away the fulfillment and hope that comes with that.
- Just as you would look to the owner’s manual for the toaster to find out how to operate it, if you want to know why you are here—your purpose—you must look to *your* Creator. God knows your purpose because he designed you himself.
- You are here to know, love, and serve God in this life and to be happy with him forever in the next. (Have students repeat this phrase aloud with you a few times.) In other words, you were made for a relationship with your Creator.
- Through the Creation story in the Bible, we learn that God created the world in order to share his life with us. We learn of humankind’s rejection of God, of God reaching out to humanity through covenants and prophets, and, finally, of God sending his own Son to restore us to relationship with him. This is the story of *your* life. It is the story of *your* creation, *your* reason for existing, *your* salvation, and, ultimately, *your* promise of eternal life.
- Share with your candidates a personal story of someone you know who was sick, poor, or otherwise suffering, yet who was full of joy and hope because he or she lived for God—lived with *purpose*.
- St. Paul was a man who lived joyfully because he lived with purpose. Paul was in prison during the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero, a deranged and violent man who sometimes lighted his palace by using Christians as human torches.
- What did St. Paul write as he sat in prison awaiting what was sure to be a horrible death? Here is one letter he wrote from prison. (*Read Philippians 4:4-13 aloud.*)
- People who live their purpose shine—they stand out. Nothing can take away their joy because, like Paul, they have the peace that no earthly concern can suppress.
- If St. Paul had looked for his life’s meaning in anything other than God—money, sex, partying, popularity, or success—his life would have lost all meaning when a prison sentence stripped away every earthly pursuit and left him seemingly alone and desolate.

4. The challenge

- If your life is not centered on a relationship with God, you are like a toaster in the hands of a curious caveman. Missing a relationship with God is missing the very point of your life and leaves you in one of two positions: You will either be a surfer or a drifter.
- Surfing your way through life means always looking for the high of the next “wave”—the next party, the next indulgence of pleasure, the next thrill.

- Drifting your way through life is like floating aimlessly in the ocean, letting the current carry you wherever it flows.
- *Challenge your candidates:* Do you have a purpose and meaning, and does your life show it? Or are you just another surfer or a drifter?
- You are made for far more than surfing or drifting through life—you are made for the adventure and glory of loving and being loved by the Creator of all things.

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 MINUTES)

Distribute Hand-out #3 with the discussion questions for this session. The discussion questions are taken from the program, *Chosen*. Assign one group member in each group with the responsibility to take notes and one to report to the whole group a couple of highlights from their small-group discussion. The candidate for the role of secretary can be the candidate in the small group who has the most household pets. The reporter can be the candidate who has the most brothers and sisters at home.

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION REPORTING (5 MINUTES)

Ask the reporter from each group to give a quick snapshot from their small-group discussion.

10:45 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. Session II: The Depth of God’s Love

PERSONAL TESTIMONY (10 MINUTES)

This personal testimony should focus on an experience of God’s love, being convinced of God’s love, learning to accept God’s love, and loving Him.

These notes about preparing the personal testimony are taken from the program, *Chosen*.

A Guide To Giving Personal Testimony

"[What] we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." – 1 John 1:3

1. Before you begin to plan your testimony, spend several minutes in prayer.
2. As you plan, remember that the goal of a personal testimony is to share how Jesus has worked in your life. Choose only stories and details that will serve this goal.
3. A simple testimony outline:
 - a. Describe yourself before the change.
 - b. Describe what changed you.
 - c. Describe your life now, after the change.
4. Open with a brief overview of the theme or major point, and then give your testimony. Close by referring again to your testimony's theme or major point.
5. Streamline your story by omitting irrelevant details and facts. Focus on the heart of what was happening in your life. What was your life like before, and why? What did it feel like to change? What was your specific turning point? What is your life like now?
6. Be authentic, but avoid sharing about anything you are struggling with currently.
7. Testimonies are not meant to be catechetical lectures, so focus on personal stories rather than on ideas or theories.
8. You may wish to incorporate Scripture references that highlight God working in your life.
9. Use "I" statements, but avoid "you" statements. A testimony is not the forum for criticizing or reprimanding others.

TEACHING (15 MINUTES)

The teaching outline is provided from the program, *Chosen*. See the notes that follow.

Teaching Outline

1. Creation and the Fall

- God created us so we could partake of the Holy Trinity's infinite love and beauty, and he has adopted us as his eternally beloved children.
- Humankind rejected God's love by freely choosing sin, which separated us from his grace. By sinning, we caused our own destruction.
- God did not abandon us as would have been justified after our disobedience. His love for us could not be defeated even by our willful rejection of him.

2. The cross and redemption

- Instead of shutting out humanity forever, God came even closer to us—he became man.
- In the person of Jesus, God lived our human life to offer us hope, life, and healing.
- Ultimately, Jesus took our place to confront our worst fear—death. He submitted to death in order to bridge the separation humanity had placed between itself and God—the way back to the love we were created for.
- The crucifix we see in church does not capture what Jesus actually endured for our sake. If it did, the true violence of the passion would overwhelm us.
- Share with your candidates the dramatic details of Jesus' passion—the brutal scourging, the humiliating crowning with thorns, the nailing of hands and feet. You may also consider including some physical props for your candidates to handle during the teaching (i.e., a cross, a pair of large nails, a branch of thorns).

3. The love of God for you

- This is *your* God, the Creator of the universe.
- Jesus is your bridge to the Trinity and to the life of sharing in the divine love for which you were created.
- God's love for you exceeds your understanding—if you were the only person on earth, Jesus would have gladly laid down his life for your sake alone.

- We should each ask ourselves how seriously we take Jesus' love. What difference does it make in our lives?
- At the foot of Jesus' cross, the apostle John stood steadfast, witnessing the scene with Mary, Jesus' Mother, but all the other disciples ran away into hiding.
- Ask your candidates to close their eyes and place themselves in that scene with John and Mary. Say: "Imagine Jesus gazing at you from the cross, loving you, happy to suffer any agony in order to give you life. Will you allow his love to transform you, or will you run away in fear and hide?"

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Distribute Hand-out #4 with the discussion questions for this session. The discussion questions are taken from the program, Chosen. Assign one group member in each group with the responsibility to take notes and one to report to the whole group a couple of highlights from their small-group discussion. The candidate for the role of secretary can be the candidate in the small group who is wearing the most red. The reporter can be the candidate who went to Toronto most recently.

SMALL GROUP REPORTING (10 MINUTES)

Ask each reporter from the small groups to offer a thought from their small group which they would like to share with other candidates at the retreat who are preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

11:55 am

Prayer

Distribute Hand-out #5 to the candidates.

Explain to the candidates that we are going to offer a prayer from the Roman Catholic Church tradition called, The Angelus. Ask the candidates if anyone is familiar with this prayer. Explain that it is a prayer for the intercession of Saint Mary, mother of Jesus Christ and that many faithful Catholics and religious communities pray The Angelus at noon daily. Grace before Meals will follow The Angelus. And then lunch will be available.

The Angelus

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with Thee;
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,*

*Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death. Amen*

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. And the Word was made Flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Grace before Meals

Bless us, O Lord and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

12:00 p.m.

Lunch

Grace after Meals

We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits,

O Almighty God, who lives and reigns world without end.

Amen.

12:30 p.m.

GAME

12:30 p.m.

Organized Game Activity

1:00 p.m.

Session III: Repentance, Reconciliation, and Healing

PERSONAL TESTIMONY (10 MINUTES)

This personal testimony should focus on an experience of turning away from sinfulness, making positive changes, seeking goodness in life, turning to God, and asking Him for the grace to live a good, faithful life.

TEACHING (15 MINUTES)

The teaching outline is provided from the program, *Chosen*. See the notes that follow.

Teaching Outline

1. The parable of the prodigal son

- Describe the parable of the prodigal son dramatically. Emphasize the despair of the son who, having squandered his father's inheritance on empty pleasures, returns home planning to beg his father to be a slave.
- Imagine how the son feels when he sees his father running out to meet him—probably afraid of his father's wrath and rejection.
- Instead, his father is overjoyed, not disgusted, and embraces his son with love and welcomes him home joyfully.

2. Personal testimony

- Here, share a personal testimony relating your experience to the parable.

3. Letting go of sin/coming home to God

- Everyone is wounded by sin—young people, old people, people who do not believe in God at all, and even faith leaders such as priests, religious, and youth ministers. *Everyone*.
- Many people carry deep shame for their sins, sometimes subconsciously. Shame often makes us hold ourselves back from the mercy of God when he wants nothing more than to shower us with forgiveness and grace.
- Shame held the prodigal son back from his father. Does the same shame hold us back from our heavenly Father when we sin? Are we like the prodigal son, chained by shame to the trough of pig slop instead of celebrating at God's feast?
- Sometimes we cling to sin because we are afraid of how our lives would change without sin. What would I do on Saturday nights? Will I lose my friends? Will I become boring?
- Choosing to give up sin may indeed be a bumpy transition. If you are accustomed to engaging in sinful activities every weekend, you will not have those familiar go-to plans. Some people may end their relationships with you, but this would only prove that your

connection with them was not true friendship, but rather was based upon something external.

- The struggle is infinitely worth it. The peace and fulfillment of God are the real thing, while the fleeting satisfaction of sin is an illusion. You deserve the real thing, even if it comes with sacrifice.
- Sometimes we do not want to give up habitual sins because we think it will be too difficult. This outlook is not from God. Wallowing in our sin is being dishonest with ourselves about our true identity and dignity as children of God. Shame that makes us lose any hope of changing does not come from God—it comes from the devil. Satan tempts us with sin and the lie that we are defined by the sins we have committed.
- You are God’s beloved child. God is not waiting until you mess up so he can condemn you. Quite the opposite—when you mess up, God is ready to run out to welcome us back. Even if you struggle with a sin that seems addictive, God is ready and longing to help you become free.
- St. Maximilian Kolbe said, “Don’t lose heart, even if you commit a mortal sin many times, because that is just stinking pride.”
- Pride can also lead us to compare our sins to the “worse” sins of others and to conclude falsely that our sins are harmless or not really hurting anyone.
- Again, this is a lie. All sin leads to destruction. Seemingly “harmless” sins chip away at our dignity now and set us up for deeper falls in the future.
- Is it harmless to develop an addiction to porn? Is it harmless to risk contracting HIV or another STD? Is it harmless to damage your relationship with your parents because of lies? As sins play out, the price is your true self, and ultimately your life.

4. Called to freedom/called home

- God wants you to abandon sin not because he wants to limit you, but because he wants to free you from sin’s bondage and destruction. You are created good and beautiful, and sin represses who you really are.
- Seriously consider what holds you back from running to your Father when you sin. Choose to reject the lie that you are nothing more than the sins you commit. Instead, whenever you sin, whether it is a “bigger” or “smaller” sin, run back to God immediately. Say to him, “Father, I have sinned against you, and I have sinned against my family, but I want to try again.” You are eternally precious to God, and he will never refuse to embrace you again.
- The most profound way to return to God is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- In John 20:21, Jesus gives us the amazing gift of Confession when he authorizes the apostles to forgive sin in his name. When the priest, working *in persona Christi*, absolves us of our sins, we know without any doubt that we are reunited to God. What a gift to hear the words of mercy spoken aloud and to have absolute confidence that our sins are forgiven.

- Remember that the devil wants you to keep your sins a secret. The last thing he wants is for any light to be brought into a sinful situation.
- Confession also enables us to release the burden of carrying around the weight of sin and to leave behind our darkest moments forever. Too many people hold onto the shame of sin for years, sometimes waiting until they are eighty years old to confess sins they committed when they were seventeen. This is a tragedy. Freedom is available to us right now. Get rid of your sins in Confession and never look back.
- If you turn to God with your sin, you will find God running to embrace you—every time, no matter how many times you have fallen.
- Lead the retreat group in a spontaneous prayer asking for the grace to reject sin's shame and for the courage to seek mercy and freedom in Confession.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Distribute Hand-out #6 with the discussion questions for this session. The discussion questions are taken from the program, Chosen.

1:45 p.m.

EXAMEN OF CONSCIENCE

Distribute Hand-out #7 for this session. Go through the questions from the Examen, review the ritual for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Act of Contrition.

2:00 p.m.

Silent Prayer and Reflection – Time to review the Examen of Conscience

Sacrament of Reconciliation

2:45 p.m.

Break

3:00 p.m.

Session IV: Vocation Discernment – Committing to Jesus

PERSONAL TESTIMONY (20 + 5 MINUTES)

This personal testimony should focus on hearing God’s call, following where He leads and trusting the grace of the Holy Spirit to help us in living out our vocation as a single person, married, religious or ordained priest. Ask someone to share their vocation journey with the candidates. This personal testimony should focus on hearing God’s call, following where He leads and trusting the grace of the Holy Spirit to help us in living out our vocation as a single person, married, religious or ordained priest. Those giving testimony are encouraged to focus, in particular, on the joy they have experienced in saying 'yes' to Jesus' plan for their lives. Provide 5 minutes at the end of the personal testimony for candidates to ask questions.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Distribute Hand-out #8 with the discussion questions for this session.

PRAYER

Distribute Hand-out #9: Prayer of Commitment to Christ.

3:45 p.m.

Stretch Break

3:50 p.m.

Session V: Catholic and Proud

TEACHING (15 MINUTES)

Explain how saints are canonized in the Catholic Church and are examples for us of faithfulness. Ask all or a few candidates if they would be willing to present their Confirmation Saint Project.

The teaching outline is provided from the program, *Chosen*. See the notes that follow.

Teaching Outline

1. 24/7

- We are called to a real relationship with God, not just for one hour every Sunday.
- Consider the effects of devoting only one hour each week to your best friend—the relationship would collapse. Compare this to the way we often treat God.
- Sometimes we have different “selves” depending on where we are. We party on Saturday and then go to Mass on Sunday, even though we recognize easily that this kind of inconsistency in any other relationship would be very destructive.
- Jesus wants us on Saturday night; he wants us in the classroom; he wants us on the football field; he wants us when we are out with our friends. Our lifestyle should make it clear that God comes first.
- Building an authentic relationship with God, just as with any relationship, requires time spent together, specifically through prayer and the sacraments.

2. Practical Tips

- Seriously committing to Christ, like serious athletic training, takes consistent effort and a plan. Here are some strategies for building your relationship with God:
 - » Seek solid nourishment in God’s Word and in the Eucharist. Make Sunday Mass a priority; do not skip Mass because you are tired or busy.
 - » Pray daily and pray often.
 - » Choose the right friends, ones who will support you in the life of faith instead of dragging you into the empty promises of sin.
 - » Practice making the right choices even in the small things. Choosing God in the smallest things prepares you to choose him when it seems overwhelmingly difficult.
 - » Go to Confession often, as soon as possible after you fall and at a minimum once a year.

Think of Confession as cleaning your soul—we clean our bodies daily, so shouldn't we give at least as much concern to the cleaning of our souls?

- » Practice charity by small acts of service. Sharing the gospel starts with our actions.
- » Go on an annual retreat to refuel your spiritual life and renew your commitment to God.

3. Close

- Specifically at Confirmation, the Holy Spirit empowers you with the strength to conquer any temptation or trial you may face. Read Acts 2 to see the dramatic change in the apostles after Pentecost.
- If you truly want a life of adventure, a life with deep meaning and fulfillment, be a rebel. Be a committed Catholic. Be a saint!

EXPLAIN THE FOLLOW-UP HOMEWORK FROM *CHOSEN* AFTER THE RETREAT:

Lesson 17: Who's calling? (Holy Orders and Vocational Discernment)

Lesson 24: Where do I go from here? (The Journey Continues)

4:05 p.m.

Adoration

Distribute Hand-out #10 to the candidates and ask them to bring Hand-out #9 with them into the Church. Explain to the candidates that they will be offering their prayers before the Blessed Sacrament.

To begin the time of Adoration, recall this story from the life of Saint John Paul II. On December 2, 1981 Pope John Paul II inaugurated perpetual adoration in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. Peter's Basilica with a Mass. At the end of the Mass following exposition of the Blessed Sacrament he prayed,

STAY WITH US

"Stay with us today, and stay from now on, every day, according to the desire of my heart, which accepts the appeal of so many hearts from

various parts, sometimes far away... Stay that we may meet You in prayers of adoration and thanksgiving, in prayers of expiation and petition to which all those who visit this basilica are invited...

May the unworthy successor of Peter and all those who take part in the adoration of Your Eucharistic Presence attest with every visit and make ring out again the truth contained in the Apostle's words: 'Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Amen'.

Invite the candidates to use hand-out #10 as a guide for their own prayers and quiet time before the Lord.

4:30 p.m.

Closing Prayer

Ask the candidates to stand together and offer the Prayer of Commitment to Christ on Hand-out #9.

The priest will offer the candidates a blessing and then bless catechists, family, school staff and parish staff as the time of retreat concludes.

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY: “DISCOVERING ONE ANOTHER”

Task	Initial Here
1. Get seven different autographs on the back of this paper.	_____
2. Get someone to sing “Happy Birthday” as fast as he or she can.	_____
3. Arm-wrestle someone.	_____
4. Find a person who lives twenty minutes or farther from church.	_____
5. Find a person who has a birthday in the same month you do.	_____
6. Do as many push-ups as you can and have someone count them off for you.	_____
7. Find a person who has different color eyes than you.	_____



OPENING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION I: WHY AM I HERE?

1. Introductions: Have each group member state his or her name, where he or she is from, and his or her favorite thing to do. Have each group member answer the following question: If you had to be someone else (anyone in history), who would it be?
2. State that anything shared in the group is confidential and should not be shared outside the group.
3. Why are you here on this retreat? (Be honest.) What do you hope to gain by being here?
4. Have you ever wondered about the purpose of your existence? What answers have you come up with?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very important), how important is Jesus to you?
6. What do you want to have happen in your relationship with God? What do you need to do to make this happen?



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION II: THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE

1. What do you think about the skit you just saw? What do you think about the session teaching you just heard?
2. Who, if anyone, would you be willing to die for right now? Why?
3. Think about the person you are closest to. What qualities do you like most in this person? How do these qualities compare with those of Jesus?
4. Do you take God's love for granted?
5. How hard is it for you to relate to, imagine, or accept God's unconditional love? Why?
6. In our daily lives, how should we respond to God's love?



PRAYER

The Angelus

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with Thee;
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death. Amen*

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. And the Word was made Flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Grace before Meals

Bless us, O Lord and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grace after Meals

We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits,
O Almighty God, who lives and reigns world without end.
Amen.



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION III: REPENTANCE/HEALING/RECONCILIATION

1. What struck you most in the last session?
2. What are two sins that people your age often struggle with? What sins do you personally struggle with?
3. How do these sins keep you from growing in your relationship with Jesus? How can you move past them?
4. What happens when you hold onto anger, pain, or guilt for a long time? How does that negatively affect you?
5. Is there anyone you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness? What is stopping you?
6. God is always ready to forgive and heal us if we ask. Do you find this hard to accept or relate to? Why?
7. What holds you back from experiencing God's mercy in Confession more often?



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

SEVENTH GRADE

LOVE GOD

“Know, then, that the LORD, your God, is God: the faithful God who keeps covenant mercy to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments.” - Deuteronomy 7:9

Examination Questions:

- Have I been to Mass every Sunday? Did I pay attention or allow myself to become distracted?
- Do I make God a priority in my life, or do I put other things (sports, friends, clubs, and activities) above God?
- Do I pray every day?
- Have I cursed or used God’s name outside of prayer?
- Do I make Sunday a day to rest, or do I fill it up with things that I forgot to do during the rest of the weekend?

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” - John 13:34-35

Examination Questions:

- Have I gossiped about others? Do I bully others in person or online?
- Have I talked back to my parents or been mean to my brothers and sisters?
- Do I love myself for who God made me or do I put myself down?
- Do I show respect for everyone around me even if they do not do the same for me?
- Do I honor and respect people in authority (teachers, youth ministers, Core Members, parents)?
- Have I showed respect for friendships and other relationships in my life? Do I keep healthy and appropriate boundaries in my relationships?
- Have I allowed myself to look at inappropriate websites or to watch inappropriate television shows?



Going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Before Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Spend some time quietly thinking about what you will confess. Say a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make a good Confession. Wait quietly until it is your turn to meet with the priest or enter the confessional.

- Sit with the priest or go into the confessional. Begin by saying, "Bless me Father for I have sinned."
- Say, "It has been *length of time*..... since my last confession."
- Tell your sins to the priest and end by saying "For these and for all my sins, I am sorry."
- The priest gives you a penance – something you do in order to make up for your sins and to show that you want to change your life.
- The priest invites you to tell God how sorry you are. You pray the Act of Contrition.

Act of Contrition:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly intend, with your help, to sin no more and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

- The priest prays the prayer of absolution. If you are making your Confession face-to-face, the priest will extend his hands over your head while he prays. As the priest blesses you, make the sign of the cross and answer, "Amen."
- The priest says, "Go in peace."

After Receiving the Sacrament, return to your pew and wait for others to conclude and for the final prayers.

NOTE: If you have any difficulty, ask the priest to help you out. He will be happy to do so.

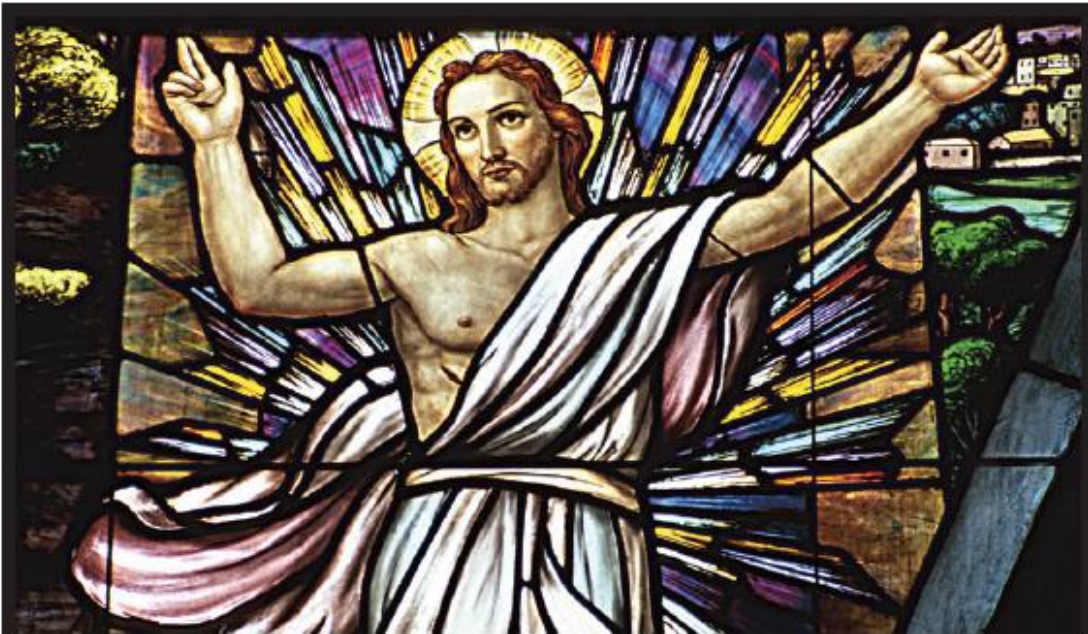


SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION IV: COMMITTING TO CHRIST

1. What struck you most in the last session?
2. Have you ever sat in Church or looked at a holy person and thought, "That's not for me"? Why?
3. How do you feel about the fact that God is calling you to a deep relationship with him and to a life of holiness? Do you find this scary? Hard to accept? Exciting? Why?
4. What sacrifices are you afraid of making in order to answer God's call?
5. What good could come from a life committed to Jesus that would be lacking in a life that is not committed to him?





Prayer of Commitment to Christ

*Lord Jesus Christ, you said, "I came that they
might have life and have it more abundantly."*

I want to belong to you from now on.

I want to know what it means to live life abundantly.

Teach me what it means to be a Christian.

Teach me how to follow you.

*I ask you to forgive me and to free me
from the sins that keep me from living
the life that you have for me.*

I commit myself to you. Jesus, I trust in you.

Amen.



PRAYERS FOR HOLY ADORATION

ADORATION

- We listen to a reading from scripture
- There is time for reflection and silence
- This leads to a prayer of praise, usually in a litany form

READING: John 15:9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love! You will remain in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you! There is no greater love than this, to give one's life for one's friends; and you are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants anymore, because servants do not know what their master is about. Instead I have called you friends, since I have made known to you everything I learned from my Father.

You did not choose me; it was I who chose you and sent you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

And everything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

This is my command, that you love one another.

