

Guidelines and Recommendations

Confirmation Retreats

Archdiocese of Seattle

2022

These guidelines and recommendations are offered to you in order to support you in providing the best possible experience for youth, and possibly adults, as they prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. You are encouraged to do what fits their needs, your needs, budget, facilities, season of the year, number of participants, and more.

It is acknowledged that Confirmation retreats are about the participant's relationship with God, not specifically catechizing. Catechizing is to be primarily provided outside of the retreat experience. Information about and experiences of prayer and relationship with God is to be the focus of the retreat.

It is strongly encouraged that the retreat be held off-site, not at the church or in the Religious Formation facilities. Getting away from the familiar, away from the "classroom", is invaluable in setting the tone for a retreat; a time away with God. It is also important that voices other than the regular catechist(s)/youth minister be engaged. The value of different perspectives, theologies, experiences, cultures, prayer forms/styles, etc. cannot be understated.

Practical Suggestions:

1. Be aware of budget, personnel, space and time resources. Consider "exchanging" or "partnering" with another parish...their YM provides the retreat and facilities for your group and you for his/hers. Or combine with another parish and share the responsibilities and expenses of the retreat.
2. Treat the retreat as any other offsite activity regarding permission slips, meds, photos, cell phone use, number of chaperones to the number of participants, insurance, etc.
3. Attend to attention span, energy level (adults and youth), and the schedule for the day/weekend. Be creative with this.
4. Schedule your retreat way ahead! Get it on the calendar, wherever you are having it. Get it on your parish and personal calendars as well and communicate this with the pastor/PA, parents, youth, and the parish at large so they can hold you in prayer and offer other forms of support.

5. Communicate with presenters and get a very firm commitment from them. A contract may be needed. Also get commitments from chaperones, meal providers, musicians, or whoever else you may need.
6. Consider basic details...Safe Environment, one day or overnight issues, meals needed, health matters and social distancing, liturgical needs/supplies (adoration, mass, prayer space, etc.), music, sound system, etc. If Mass is not at the parish, get Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, altar servers, etc. Write the Prayers of the Faithful. Assign someone to set-up and clean-up after Mass.
7. Theme/Focus: As noted earlier, the Confirmation Retreat is not specifically about catechesis. This is to be done in classes and other gatherings. Choose a song, phrase or scripture that speaks to relationship, whatever their image of God is. Retreat is for discovering a relationship with God, building on it, and/or deepening it.
8. Plan for a specific quiet prayer space. This could be a chapel, room or small building nearby. If you need to create a prayerful environment, use a variety of images of God from various cultures and styles. Make sure the decorations connect with the theme.
9. Determine how to set up/organize/decorate the retreat space. It might need to be the day prior by a team or a small group might set up the chairs, supplies, etc. early in the morning.
10. Pull together all the supplies you will need...journals, schedules, writing utensils, art/craft supplies, prayer space décor, first aid kit, adults' schedule/details, music, sound system, liturgical supplies, etc. Make a list that you can add to as you recall what you need to take.
11. Figure out how to clean up after the retreat. At the end they could pack everything up while everyone is doing something else. Possibly have a couple of adults remain to clean/pack up after everyone has left. Participants can definitely pitch in with some direction.
12. Make sure you have internet access, A/V equipment, etc. as needed.
13. Assign who rides in which cars, who is in which small groups, and which adults are assigned to the small groups. Be aware of separating boy/girl friends, personalities that could be disrespectful or disruptive, parents from children, etc.
14. Small groups should be only about 5 or 6 youth and one adult. This size allows for good conversation and building relationships of trust. Maybe name the groups according to the Gifts/Fruits of the Holy Spirit.
15. Create journals or folders with materials the participants will need. Maybe put their names on them.
16. Order/purchase whatever will be their "memento" or supplies for them to make their own "memento." (T-shirts, water bottle, holy card, medal, cross, clay bowl, etc.) Make

sure it has a strong connection to the theme of the retreat, the symbols of the Holy Spirit, Confirmation, etc.

17. There are sample schedules, activities, presentation topics, and reflection questions below. Adapt, rearrange, pick and choose, and add your own style.

18. It is suggested that your retreat has a primary leader, a mentor, and a coordinator. The primary leader keeps things on schedule and adjusts the schedule as needed, introduces the various activities, etc. The mentor prepares the adult small group leaders, keeps small groups on track, etc. The coordinator gets supplies ready for activities, the a/v system set up and working with video and music prepared.

One Day Retreat Considerations:

1. Time frame...how do you schedule the day to meet the needs of attention span, length of day, information/presentations, prayer time, etc.?
2. Meals/snacks...do they eat breakfast and dinner at home or is it provided as a kick-off and closing? Do they bring their own snacks and sack lunch, or are they provided? Beverages? Dietary needs.
3. Length of day i.e. 9-3 or 8-5 or 9-9? What is realistic? What is meaningful? Does it include a Sunday liturgy with the parish or a separate liturgy if you have mass at all?
4. Is the distance traveling realistic for the length of retreat? In other words, if the retreat is 6 hours long, does it make sense to drive to a site 2 hours away for 4 hours of travel time, gas, adult commitment, etc.?

Two Day/Weekend Retreat Considerations:

1. Does your group have the attention span and the time for this commitment?
2. How will you provide lodging, medicine, supervision, etc. per Archdiocesan requirements?
3. Do you have the resources needed—budget, transportation, cooks, facilities, etc.?

Theme Suggestions/Ideas:

Come, Holy Spirit

You are All I Want

Speak, Lord, Your Servant is Listening

1Timothy 4:12—Be an Example

Sealed in the Spirit

Acts 2:12—Awaken!

1Timothy 1:14—All About That Grace

Reflection/Small Group Question Samples for reflection and small group sharing—only use about three questions per reflection:

What did you just hear that was new? How does it challenge you? What has your head heard this morning? What is your heart desiring? What questions about your relationship with God are arising? What can you concretely do to implement in your own life what the presenter said? What is your image of God and where did it come from? What did you understand about the Holy Spirit prior to retreat? What is your understanding and relationship now? How have the different prayer experiences been for you? What activity, prayer, presentation, etc. has brought you to a deeper relationship with God? What are your concerns, questions, anxieties? What are you excited about?

Games/Activities:

1. **Coin Connections** - Get enough coins before your meeting for each student, making sure there are no “antique” coins (i.e., the years before your students were born). Each student gets a coin and takes a turn sharing how old they were and something significant that happened to them the year the coin was minted.
2. **Whistle a Happy Tune** - Divide your students into two groups and ask for the best “whistler” in each group. Set the timer for 10 seconds and give each whistler a bowl of papers with familiar tunes written on them (like nursery rhymes, church worship songs, etc.). Both teams go at the same time and try to whistle the tune for their team while the team guesses. The twist is that by picking them out of the bowl, they won’t be whistling the same song at once, which adds to the chaos and calamity. Have them crunch up a cracker in their mouth first (no swallowing!) for a fun — and slightly messy — challenge!
3. **Tarp Turn**-- Materials: Tarp—large enough for everyone to stand on it but not too large as a lot of extra space makes the game too easy. Objective: Communication, creativity, cooperation. Lay out the tarp and have everyone stand on it. The participants must flip the tarp over and stand on the opposite side of the tarp without anyone stepping off of the tarp. If someone steps off, start the game over. No hands may be used. Variations for successive attempts: no talking; cannot use hands to assist/hold another person; use a smaller tarp.

4. **Gossip/Telephone**—No materials needed. Objective: listening, being quiet, focus, respect. Create a line or circle of about 15 participants. Large groups might need to split into two or three groupings. The leader whispers a phrase to the person at the beginning of the line/circle. This person then whispers the phrase s/he heard to next person. This continues until it reaches the end. No repeating the phrase for clarity. When the last person receives the phrase, s/he says it out loud to determine how close it is to the original phrase. Mix the students up and repeat the activity, using different phrases. Discuss the connection with the objectives of the game and prayer. What gets in the way of us hearing God clearly? Are we truly focused or are we distracted? Etc.
 - a. Phrases to be used:
 - b. No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:3)
 - c. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. (Ps 143:10)
 - d. There are 7 gifts and 9 fruits of the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
5. **Hand Squeeze**—Materials needed: a coin, a spoon for each line placed on a chair or box at the end of the line, paper and pen to keep track of score. Objective: Communication, trust, cooperation, speed. Two groups of the same size stand back to back holding hands. At one end of this human chain, the group leader tosses a coin. Only the first person (of each team) in the chain is allowed to see if the coin comes up heads or tails. If heads, the first person squeezes the hand of the next person and so on until the last person is reached. The end person then snatches the spoon that was placed on a table. The goal is to be the faster team getting the information (heads was tossed) through the chain and grabbing the spoon first. **Looking at the first person in the line and talking are not allowed.** The winner is the team who grabs the spoon the most times. If the spoon is grabbed in error, a penalty point is deducted.
6. **Demonstration**-- Youth and God stand next to each other. They chat about anything...school, work, weather, family, mission trip, self-image, life goals, etc. After about 20 seconds, insert a youth between them who simply starts talking about a disagreement s/he had with a best friend (talking to large group as if telling a story) while original youth and God try to continue their conversation. After about another 20 seconds insert another youth who starts talking about a coach or teacher they really admire (as if telling a story). Original youth and God keep trying to communicate. First inserted youth also continues. Another 20 seconds, insert a third youth (talking about a movie s/he saw) while all others continue their talking. Another 20 seconds, insert a fourth youth (talk about the Seahawks, Kraken, Mariners, Storm, Sounders, Seawolves, Reign) while all other conversations/stories continue. Another 20 seconds, insert a fifth youth (talk about plans for work, trade school, college, or gap year after high school)

while all other conversations/stories continue. After about 20 seconds, stop all the stories and let the original youth and God continue talking while removing each additional youth one at a time.