
Diocesan Youth Retreat Team

FIRST EUCCHARIST RETREAT FORMAT

March 2019

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Retreat with Children and Parents

Overview

In this retreat model, children and parents will rotate through three activity centers. The retreat will also cover some material from Chapters 9 and 10 in the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Child's Book*. While this is a 90 minute retreat model, it is suggested to plan for 2 hours to account for transitions between activities, but it can be modified according to your particular needs.

Retreat at a Glance

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| A. Arrival and Gathering | (5 minutes) |
| B. Welcome and Opening Prayer | (5 minutes) |
| C. Activity Centers | (60 minutes) |
| Parts of the Mass Center | |
| Church Tour Center | |
| How to Receive Communion Center | |
| D. Guided Meditation before the Blessed Sacrament | (15 minutes) |
| E. Closing Prayer and Sending Forth | (5 minutes) |

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- A Bible, a candle, and other items to create a prayer space
- Name Tags
- Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Program Director Manual*
- Parts of the Mass Center
 - Match-Up Cards
- Church Tour Activity Center
 - Copy of "Church Tour Guide"
 - Objects, Sacred Vessels, Liturgical Books, and Vestments
 - *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Child's Book*
 - Copies of "Liturgical Objects" and "Liturgical Vestments" Match Up Worksheets (optional)
- How to Receive Communion Activity Center
 - *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Catechist Guide*
 - *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Child's Book*
 - Unconsecrated Hosts or Gluten Free Crackers
 - Empty Chalice
- Guided Meditation before the Blessed Sacrament
 - Copy of "Guided Meditation"
 - Soft, meditative music

Preparation Tasks

- Plan ahead to create a welcoming environment for the children and parents. Prepare name tags ahead of time and distribute them as families arrive.
- Determine what activity centers you will have, and make sure that you have enough materials for the number of people who will be attending.
- Sign up catechists or other volunteers to be present at each center to help the families with anything they might need and to indicate when their time has finished.
- Divide the large group into three groups, which will be directed to a different order of activities. You might indicate the three different groups by colored dots on their name tags or the list of activities on their name tags in the order they are to follow. For smaller groups, everyone can go through the activity centers together instead of rotating through the centers.
- Ensure that you have access to the objects, sacred vessels, liturgical books, and vestments for the Church Tour.
- Plan to have enough unconsecrated hosts or gluten free crackers for the children to practice receiving Communion.
- Prepare the music for the "Guided Meditation before the Blessed Sacrament"

Retreat Outline

A. Arrival and Gathering (5 minutes)

1. Distribute the name tags as families arrive.

B. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. Welcome the families to the retreat. Explain to them that the purpose of this gathering is to provide some quality time for parents and children to be together, sharing their faith through different activities. Remind them that with today's busy pace, it is crucial to take some time to step back and focus on those things that are at the center of our lives.
2. Introduce the pastor, the deacon, the catechists, and the other adults who may be present.
3. Ask the participants to quiet themselves and remember that they are in the holy presence of God.
4. If possible, have the pastor or associate pastor lead everyone into prayer. If they are not available, lead everyone into the following prayer, which can also be found on pages 103 to 104 of the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Program Director Manual*
 - God, our Father, we thank you for bringing us together today. Be with us as we continue to prepare to receive Holy Communion. Bless all of those in the Church who are preparing to receive the Eucharist for the first time. We ask this and all things in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.
5. Explain the Respect Rule and introduce an attention grabber
 - Respect Rule = respect for self, respect for others, respect for the space, respect for God

- Introduce an attention grabber that will be used during the day if a leader needs to grab the attention of the group
 - Examples:
 - *If You Can Hear My Voice* - A leader calls out "If you can hear my voice, clap (say a number)." The participants will clap that number of times, then remain silent.
 - *Flat Tire* - When a leader calls out "FLAT TIRE" the participants will make the sound of a deflating tire, then remain silent.
 - Raise an arm when you want the group's attention. When participants see your arm raised, they must raise their arm and stop talking. Eventually, the whole group will have their arms raised and be silent.

C. Activity Centers (60 minutes)

1. Explain to the group that they will now break into their smaller groups and proceed to the activity centers assigned to their particular group.
2. Tell them that there will be a helper at each activity center to explain how to complete the activity. This person will also indicate when it is time to move to the next activity.
3. Let the group know that they will have 20 minutes at each activity center, and explain that they will all gather together after they have completed all of the activities.

➤ **Parts of the Mass Center (20 minutes)**

Objective: To review the order of the Mass and what happens during each part

Materials Needed

- Match-Up Cards

Suggestions for Use

- Divide the families into two groups. Ask the families to find the family who has the card that matches up with theirs. Once they have found each other, invite the matching families to stand side by side in a line or a circle. Have each pair introduce its matching cards. As an added challenge, have the families line up in order of Mass parts. This option may work best for smaller groups.
- For larger groups, you may ask for 13 volunteers and provide each person with a card. The rest of the group can work together to match the correct definition to the Mass parts or the group can help another 13 volunteers find their matching card. As an added challenge, have the group line the volunteers up in order of Mass parts.
- You might also play relay games. Lay out half of the matching cards on a table at one end of the room. Divide the families into two teams and give each family a card. Have them run up relay-style to select the matching card. The first team to complete its set wins.

Parts of the Mass

The following are the Mass parts and matching definitions. Feel free to modify the cards to create more or fewer cards, depending on how detailed and challenging you want the cards to be for your group. When writing the definitions, make sure to use the terms the children have learned. If you have a large group of families, you may also want to create multiple decks.

- (Card 1) Procession, (Card 1 Match) We stand as the priest and other ministers enter the assembly
- (Card 2) Penitential Act, (Card 2 Match) We admit our failure to fully live our Baptism
- (Card 3) Liturgy of the Word, (Card 3 Match) Parts of the Mass - Bible readings, homily, Creed, and Prayer of the Faithful
- (Card 4) The Gospel, (Card 4 Match) Tells us about Jesus and his teachings
- (Card 5) Homily, (Card 5 Match) The priest helps us understand God's Word
- (Card 6) Prayer of the Faithful, (Card 6 Match) We pray for the Church and for all people
- (Card 7) The Creed, (Card 7 Match) We profess or proclaim our faith together
- (Card 8) Liturgy of the Eucharist, (Card 8 Match) Parts of the Mass - the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion
- (Card 9) The Eucharistic Prayer, (Card 9 Match) The Church's great prayer of thanks
- (Card 10) The Lord's Prayer, (Card 10 Match) The prayer Jesus taught his followers
- (Card 11) Sign of Peace, (Card 11 Match) We share peace with each other
- (Card 12) Holy Communion, (Card 12 Match) We receive the Body and Blood of Jesus
- (Card 13) Concluding Rite, (Card 13 Match) The priest or deacon send us forth in peace to announce the Gospel of the Lord

Notes

- This is adapted from the "Mass Match-Up Cards" on pages 120 to 121 of the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Program Director Manual*.
- The DYRT will provide a set of match-up cards to parishes who request to receive training on conducting the retreat.
- One set will contain a total of 26 cards. 13 cards will have the Mass parts, and the remaining 13 cards will have the definitions. To assist the families, the backs of the cards will have a picture and number (corresponding to the Mass part and order the part takes place).
- Images on all cards (except Card 4) taken from <https://catholic-link.org/>
- Image on Card 4 taken from <http://clipart-library.com/>

➤ **Church Tour Center (20 minutes)**

Objective: To familiarize the children with the different objects, sacred vessels, liturgical books, vestments, and liturgical colors used during Mass

Preparation Tasks

- Ensure access to the objects, sacred vessels, liturgical books, and vestments

Materials Needed

- "Church Tour Guide" found on pages 3 to 6 of the *First Eucharist Resources Booklet*
- Objects, Sacred Vessels, Liturgical Books, and Vestments
- Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Child's Book*
- Copies of "Liturgical Objects" and "Liturgical Vestments" match up (optional)

Instructions

1. Guide the children and parents through a church tour, explaining the different objects they may find in a church or see used during Mass.
2. Remind the participants that they are in a sacred space and to maintain reverence during the church tour.
3. Have the families follow along on page 101 of the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Child's Book*. Additionally, you may provide each family with the following worksheets:
 - <http://www.drawn2bcreative.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Liturgical-Objects-Match-up.pdf>
 - <http://www.drawn2bcreative.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Liturgical-Vestments-Match-up.pdf>

➤ **How to Receive Communion Center (20 minutes)**

Objective: To teach the children the proper reception of Holy Communion

Materials Needed

- Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Catechist Guide*
- Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Child's Book*
- Unconsecrated Hosts or Gluten Free Crackers and Empty Chalice

Instructions

1. Go through the following steps, also found on pages 84 to 85 of the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Catechist Guide*.

Read aloud the second paragraph on page 84.

Ask, "What does the word *communion* mean?" (*unity or oneness*)

"What is the name of the Sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood of Christ?" (*Holy Communion, or the Eucharist*)

Say, "When we receive Holy Communion, we are more closely united to Jesus and the Church."

Read aloud the third paragraph.

Explain that during the Mass, we exchange the Sign of Peace with those around us by saying, "Peace be with you" or similar words.

Read aloud the remaining text on pages 84 and 85.

Say, "During the Passover in Old Testament times, a lamb was sacrificed and offered to God by the Israelites to help save them from death. Jesus is called the Lamb of God because he sacrificed his life for our sins."

2. Lead the participants into a discussion about proper manners. Begin by saying, "Now we will learn how to properly receive Communion, but first let us remind ourselves of some important manners."

Say, "Just like we are expected to have table manners at a meal, there are certain manners that are important to use at Mass as well."

Ask, "Can any of you think about any manners we should use at Mass?" (*Accept all reasonable responses. Talk about listening and participating.*)

Ask, "Does anyone know the proper manners for receiving Holy Communion?" (*Accept all reasonable responses.*)

3. Review the section on "How to Receive Communion" on page 110 of both the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Catechist Guide* and *Child's Book*. Make sure to explain the following points:
 - If the Blood of Christ is being offered, remind the children to bow before taking a sip from the chalice as they did before receiving the Host.
 - Bowing before the Body and Blood of Christ is a sign of reverence.
 - Mention that if they are receiving by hand, their hands are like a throne for Jesus. Explain the placement of hands:
 - For the right-handed: left hand over right hand
 - For the left-handed: right hand over left hand
 - Remind the children to clearly respond, "Amen."
 - Consume the Eucharist immediately.

4. Have some catechists demonstrate how to receive Holy Communion.
5. Have the children practice receiving Holy Communion with unconsecrated hosts or gluten free crackers. If the Blood of Christ will be offered, have an empty chalice available so that the children can practice holding the chalice.
6. If time permits, you may wish to review the "Rules for Receiving Holy Communion" on page 110 of both the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Catechist Guide* and Child's Book.

D. Guided Meditation before the Blessed Sacrament (15 minutes)

The following is a modified version of "Resource 5-B" found on pages 108 to 110 in the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Program Director Manual*.

The following resource provides an outline and script for leading families through a guided meditation. If this is the first time you are using a guided meditation with the group, you may want to take some time to explain this form of prayer to them. Invite the families to listen quietly and to use their imagination throughout the prayer.

Materials and Preparation

- Have enough chairs so that each person has an empty place on both sides of them. This will create an environment with less distraction. If there are pews in front of the tabernacle, be prepared to space the group accordingly so they have space around them.
- Provide soft, meditative instrumental background music.
- Practice the meditation aloud several times by yourself to get the tone and delivery you want. It will be helpful to read slowly and with a voice that is soft and calming but clear enough for the group to hear easily. As an alternative, you may want to make arrangements ahead of time for a priest to lead the meditation.
- The pauses are important in a guided meditation. Give the group enough time to visualize what you are saying. Make sure not to give too much time, or the group may become restless and their minds may wander.
- Before the families gather for the meditation, have the music playing softly and the lights dimmed if possible. You want them to arrive in a space that is already set for the meditation.

Guided Meditation Directions

1. Welcome the families as they gather back together from the activity centers, and ask them to sit down with at least one chair (or space) in between them. Continue with the following:
 - This is the tabernacle, and this is the tabernacle lamp. (*Point to the tabernacle lamp.*) Does anyone know what it means when the candle is lit by the tabernacle? (*Ask several children to share their responses.*) Yes, it means that Jesus is present. He is right here with us.

- We are going to use the next few minutes to think and to pray quietly. While we are here, rest your voices. I will be talking and leading you in prayer. I am going to help you think about Jesus and invite you to talk to Jesus quietly in your heart. You are getting ready to receive Jesus very soon, and I want to help you feel really close to Jesus.
- Rest your hands in your lap. Close your eyes, or look at a candle or the cross. Take a deep breath, and imagine that you are breathing in God's love. As you breathe out, whisper the name "Jesus." (*Repeat this several times with the group.*) Now try to rest your eyes and listen carefully.
- Imagine that you have just walked in the door of a little room. (*Pause*) It may be very fancy or very plain. Look around your room. (*Pause*) You like this room. The walls are your favorite color. You can hear soft music in this room. You also see a small stained-glass window, like the windows in church, with lots of pretty colors. (*Pause*) You see the sunlight coming through the window—it makes everything sparkle. How does it make you feel? (*Pause*) You see a table. Is it a kitchen table, or a dining table, or maybe a breakfast bar? Maybe it is a picnic table, or a booth like in a restaurant. (*Pause*) You sit down at the table. It is just your size. You feel very relaxed and peaceful. (*Pause*) Now someone else comes into your room. You look around to see who it is. Right away, you know it is Jesus. (*Pause*)
- Jesus sits down beside you. Feel how near he is to you. (*Pause*) You look at Jesus, and he smiles at you. You smile back at Jesus. Jesus has such gentle eyes. His eyes seem to say, "I love you." (*Pause*) Jesus says your name...It sounds so beautiful. You feel warm and cozy. (*Pause*) Without using any words, you say hello to Jesus. (*Pause*) Then Jesus begins to talk to you. Jesus says, "I want you to know how happy I am to be here with you. I love you so much. Very soon, I will be even closer to you. I am even more excited than you are about your First Eucharist. (*Pause*)
- Now Jesus wants to talk to you about what happens at Mass. He says, "In the Eucharist you give gifts of bread and wine. But you also give me your good works and prayers. In a way, you give me yourself. During the liturgy, the Holy Spirit changes the bread into my Body—for you!—and the wine into my Blood—for you! I give these special gifts back to you so you can share my life. (*Pause*)
- Jesus asks, "What would you like to tell me now?" He smiles again, and waits. It is your turn to talk to Jesus—silently, in your heart. Tell Jesus how you feel about receiving Holy Communion. Maybe you tell him that you are so excited, or very happy, or maybe even a little nervous. Tell Jesus what you like about getting ready for First Eucharist. Tell him what you find difficult. Maybe the hardest part is the waiting—waiting to receive Jesus! I am going to give you a little quiet time to talk to Jesus in your own words. (*Long pause*)
- Now imagine the room growing and Jesus inviting others to join you at the table: your family, friends, classmates, and parish community. Just like the first Christians gathered as a Church, we continue to celebrate the Eucharist as the Body of Christ. We come together as a community to

worship and adore Jesus and bring our prayers to him. *(Pause)* Jesus tells you, "During your First Eucharist, there will be many people who will join you in celebrating such a special moment. Know that these people will always be there to support you."

- It is almost time to go. Say good-bye to Jesus, but know that he is always with you. Look around again at the room you are in and feel how comfortable and calm the room makes you feel.
 - Now I want you to become aware of the place we are in and the seat you are sitting on. When the music stops, take a deep breath and slowly open your eyes. *(Stop the music and give everyone time to open their eyes. If time permits, continue with steps 2 and 3. Otherwise, continue on to the Closing Prayer and Sending Forth.)*
2. Begin using your normal speaking voice to indicate that the guided meditation is over. If there is time, it will be helpful to gather the families and talk about their experiences in the guided meditation. You may also wish to have them draw or write a journal entry describing their encounter with Jesus in the guided meditation.
 3. Encourage anyone who expresses that they did not see Jesus. Although most of the children (and parents) will have no problem with the guided meditation, some may have difficulty closing their eyes or calming themselves enough to maintain attention. Assure these individuals that sometimes this prayer takes practice and that they can always talk to Jesus in their own prayers.

E. Closing Prayer and Sending Forth (5 minutes)

1. If there is not enough time to complete steps 2 and 3 in the guided meditation, inform the families that this concludes the retreat portion.
2. Before closing in prayer, distribute any announcements or reminders for the parents and children to bring home.
3. Ask all to stand. If the pastor or deacon is present, invite him to bless the children. Or, in the absence of a priest or deacon, you may close with one of the following prayers.
 - Dear Jesus, we thank you for the gift of the Eucharist. We know that when we receive Holy Communion, we will become more closely united with you and with the Church. Help us to go forth to love and serve you and one another. We ask this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (found on page 100 of both the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Catechist Guide* and *Child's Book*)
 - God, our Father, we thank you for this special time together to celebrate your love and celebrate each other. We ask you to continue to guide us as we prepare for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Help us always to celebrate the gifts you have given us to share with each other. We ask for your blessings on all of those in the Church throughout the world who are preparing for First Eucharist. Send us the Holy Spirit to help us follow Jesus every day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (found on page 101 of the *Celebrate and Remember: Eucharist Program Director Manual*)