

Eucharist Retreats

Children's Retreat: Eucharist

Overview

In this retreat model, four activity centers will be created in which children can be together to build community and reinforce what they have learned about the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This is a 3-hour retreat model; however, the time and activities may be modified according to your particular needs.

Retreat at a Glance

- A. Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)
- B. Directions for the Day (10 minutes)
- C. Activity Centers: Part 1 (60 minutes)
- D. Break (20 minutes)
- E. Activity Centers: Part 2 (60 minutes)
- F. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- a Bible, a candle, and other items to create a prayer space
- blank name tags and markers
- copies of the following handouts:
 - "An Exodus Celebration of God's Power and Love" (Document #: TX005772), enough for the adult leaders
 - "Guided Meditation before the Blessed Sacrament" (Document #: TX005773), enough for the adult leaders
 - "A Special Passover Meal with Jesus" (Document #: TX005774), enough for the adult leaders
 - "Script for a Special Passover Meal with Jesus" (Document #: TX005775), enough for each child
- materials for the activity centers you choose
- additional worksheets, games, or short activities for each activity center
- refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

- Ask the catechists, parents, or other volunteers to help set up for the retreat, lead child groups and activities, bring snacks, provide hospitality, and clean up after the retreat.
- Decide how many activity centers you need for your scheduled time frame and plan the specific activities (see the following pages).
- Arrange the children into four groups in advance (you may need only two groups if you have a smaller number of children). Assign each group two or more adult leaders, and give each group an identifying color or name.
- Make name tags for the children and the adult leaders, using the selected identifying color or name.
- Create a rotation schedule for the groups, and provide the activity leaders with some additional short activities in case the children finish early.

Retreat Outline

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the children and the adult leaders to the retreat. Tell them that a retreat is a time to step aside from normal activities and routines and focus on God and our faith. Explain that this retreat is a time to spend together and to think about the sacrament that they will soon be celebrating for the first time.
2. **Invite** everyone present to quiet themselves and prepare for prayer, recalling that they are in the holy presence of God. Continue with the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat the phrases after each break:
 - 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.

B. Directions for the Day (10 minutes)

1. **Explain** to the children that they are going to go to different activity centers today. Tell them that they are going to be grouped according to the color or name on their name tags. Point out the adult leaders who will lead each group so the children know where their group will meet.
2. **Describe** the different activity centers that are available, and identify the activity leaders.
3. **Encourage** the children to enjoy themselves.

C. Activity Centers: Part 1 (60 minutes)

The following are examples of possible activity centers that you may make available. For each center, make sure to have additional worksheets, games, or short activities that the children can complete if they finish before it is time to move to the next activity center. In this first part, each group will experience half of the activity centers—30 minutes each. The groups will complete the other centers after the break.

Activity Centers

- **Music:** Use the handout “An Exodus Celebration of God’s Power and Love” (Document #: TX005772).
- **Prayer:** Use the handout “Guided Meditation before the Blessed Sacrament” (Document #: TX005773).
- **Drama:** Use the handouts “A Special Passover Meal with Jesus” (Document #: TX005774) and “Script for a Special Passover Meal with Jesus” (Document #: TX005775).
- **Art:** Decorate an altar cloth or a banner using various art supplies for the First Eucharist liturgy.

Note: For additional activity center options, you may wish to use some of the core activities that the children enjoyed throughout the chapters, or you may wish to use some of the additional activity options at the end of each chapter that were not used before.

D. Break (20 minutes)

The experience of sharing food builds community and unity. Include some healthy snacks, such as crackers, fruit, and juice, as options for the break. Be aware of any food allergies that might exist within the group and adjust your snack menu accordingly.

E. Activity Centers: Part 2 (60 minutes)

Continue the retreat with the remaining activity center rotations (30 minutes each).

F. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Bring** all of the children and adult leaders together for a closing prayer.
2. **Ask** the participants to quiet themselves and remember that they are in the holy presence of God.
3. **Begin** the prayer by singing one of the Eucharist hymns the children know or are learning for the First Eucharist liturgy. You may wish to invite several musicians to lead the hymn, or have an appropriate recorded version of the song available.
4. **Lead** the group in a prayer:
 - Lord God, we thank you for this time together on retreat. We know you are present with us each day. We ask for the gift of your Holy Spirit to continue to guide us as we near the day of our First Eucharist. Help us to learn and grow in faith as we become closer to you each day. Amen.
5. **Close** with the Lord’s Prayer and the Sign of the Cross.

Parent-Child Retreat: Eucharist

Overview

In this retreat model, three activity centers will be created in which children and parents can learn and have fun together. This is a 2-hour retreat model; however, the time and activity centers may be modified according to your particular needs.

Retreat at a Glance

- A. Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)
- B. Directions for the Day (10 minutes)
- C. Activity Centers (each family completes each of three centers) (75 minutes)
- D. Closing Prayer and Sending Forth (20 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- a Bible, a candle, and other items to create a prayer space
- light refreshments
- blank name tags and markers
- pens and pencils
- blank name tags for gifts activity, one for each participant
- materials for each activity center
- additional worksheet games or activities that families can complete if they finish an activity early
- index cards for at-home family activity suggestions
- a basket or decorative box for family activity cards

Preparation Tasks

- Notify families in advance that they and their children will be involved in an art activity and that they will want to dress accordingly.
- Ask the catechists, parents, or other volunteers to help set up for the retreat, lead child-parent groups and activities, be helpers at each of the centers, bring snacks, provide hospitality, and clean up after the retreat.
- Select a volunteer to read Romans 12:3–8 for the opening prayer. Ask them to begin with “A reading from the Letter to the Romans” and end with “The Word of the Lord.” Prepare a script to be inserted into the Bible if necessary.

- ❑ Arrange the participants into three groups in advance. You might indicate the three different groups by colored dots on their name tags or list the activities on their name tags in the order they are to follow.
- ❑ Determine where the activity centers will take place and where the large-group gathering will occur. Set the room(s) accordingly with chairs, tables, prayer space, and materials needed.
- ❑ Write different family activities on index cards for the sending forth. These activities might include the following: help someone in need, avoid a disagreement, share with a family member, share with a friend or neighbor, do chores without complaining, feed the hungry.

Retreat Outline

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the families to the retreat. Explain to them that the purpose of this gathering is to provide some quality time for them and their child 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. **Ask** the participants to quiet themselves and remember that they are in the holy presence of God. Light the candle, and invite the volunteer to proclaim Romans 12:3–8.
3. **Take** a few moment of silence, and then make some brief comments about how the strength of the Body of Christ, the Church, consists of the many different gifts that each of us has and offers to each other and to the world.
4. **Invite** the parents to think of a gift that their child has demonstrated. Have them write this on a blank name tag and place it on their child's shirt.
5. **Encourage** the children to think of a gift their parent has demonstrated. Give them examples, such as "being funny" or "always being there." Have the children write this on a blank name tag and place it on their parent's shirt.
6. **Invite** everyone to stand, and together pray the Lord's Prayer.
7. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

B. Directions for the Day (10 minutes)

1. **Explain** to the participants that they will now break into their smaller groups and proceed to the activity centers assigned to their particular group.
2. **Inform** 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. **Tell** the participants how long they will have at each activity center, and explain that they will all gather together for a closing prayer after they have completed all of the activities.

C. Activity Centers (75 minutes)

Art Center (25 minutes)

In this activity center, families will be asked to take part in creating a mural collage of the Body of Christ in the parish.

Materials Needed

- 8½-x-11-inch blank drawing paper
- markers
- poster paints and paint brushes
- glue and tape
- drop cloths
- paper towels
- smocks or oversized shirts for the children
- variety of decorative elements (lace, sequins, yarn, cotton, buttons, etc.)

Choose a large wall or floor space for this activity, and place a drawing or painting of Jesus in the center of the space. Title it "Our Parish Family Is the Body of Christ." Ask each family to create a picture of their family on an 8½-x-11-inch piece of paper and identify themselves on the drawing, such as "The Rodriguez Family." Invite them to use the materials provided to add to their drawings. Have them place their drawings around the image of Christ.

Liturgy Center (25 minutes)

In this activity center, families will learn and identify articles used in the Eucharistic liturgy.

Materials Needed

- index cards with numbers
- a sheet of paper for each family with the name of each of the liturgical items
- the actual liturgical items (or photos of them) for identification, such as: altar, ambo, tabernacle, chalice, paten, purificator, Lectionary, Sacramentary, chasuble

Place items around the sanctuary and sacristy that are related to the Mass. Use index cards to assign a number to each item. Give each family a list of the items; the list should not be in numerical order. Ask them to identify each of the items on display by putting the number of the item next to the name of the item on their worksheet. Ask volunteers to help the families handle or touch the smaller items, and to explain how and when they are used at the altar or in the liturgy. Give the volunteer helpers answer sheets so the families can check their answers and, if they wish, go back and make corrections. If it is not practical to have families in the church, take pictures of the items and make large prints. Number the pictures and display them on the wall or on a table at the activity center.

Prayer Center (25 minutes)

In this activity center, families will make a prayer book together.

Materials Needed

- paper
- scissors
- pens and pencils
- markers and colored pencils
- hole punches and staplers
- yarn and ribbon
- card stock
- used textbooks for illustrations
- glue
- prayer starters

Provide a variety of prayer starters (e.g., "Thank you, God, for . . .") that could be used as prayers before Mass or after Communion. Each family member should choose two prayer starters to complete. Themes of prayer could include desire for Jesus, sorrow for sin, love, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, guidance, or a special intention. When the families are done, invite them to bind their prayers into a personal prayer book for First Eucharist, using the hole punches, staplers, yarn, and ribbon.

D. Closing Prayer and Sending Forth (20 minutes)

1. **Invite** the participants to quiet themselves and remember that they are in the holy presence of God.
2. **Lead** the following prayer:
 - 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 one another. 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.
3. **Ask** the parents to bless their children by tracing the Sign of the Cross on their child's forehead with their thumb. Then ask the children to bless their parents by tracing the Sign of the cross on their parent's forehead with their thumb.
4. **Invite** everyone to pray the Lord's Prayer, and end with the Sign of the Cross.
5. **Thank** everyone for coming, and ask each family to draw out one card from the basket or decorative box as they leave. Tell them that they will find a suggestion on the card for how families can live out their faith. Ask them to find ways during the week to complete this action in their home, school, or neighborhood.