



Gathered Session 1: Parent/Guardian and Young Person Introductory Session (60 minutes)

Overview

We know you are excited to start *Called to Mercy* in your parish, and we know the importance of helping the parents/guardians and young people understand how the program works. Here's an outline for an introductory session you can hold with the parents/guardians and the young people to explain the goals and unique approach of the program, the tools that each young person will need in order to participate, and the calendar of dates you have created for the program's gathered sessions, service day, and retreat. We suggest holding this session at least two weeks before the date you want the young people to begin the online learning modules. That way they have time to log in for the first time and confirm that their accounts are properly set up.

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
5 minutes	Welcome
5 minutes	Program's Big Idea
5 minutes	Unique Approach
10 minutes	Program Schedule and Flow
2 minutes	Materials Needed for the Program
15 minutes	How to Log In
5 minutes	How to Pay
10 minutes	Q & A
3 minutes	Closing Prayer

Practical Considerations

Preparation

- Make a copy of the handout “Program Schedule and Flow” (Document #: TX005808) and fill in the dates by which you would like the young people to complete each learning module, as well as the dates for each gathered session, the service day, and the retreat.

Materials Needed for This Session

- copies of the handout “Program Schedule and Flow” (Document #: TX005808), with dates filled in, one for each family
- copies of the handout “Log-In and Access Code Information” (Document #: TX005809), one for each family

The Session

Welcome (5 minutes)

When all of the participants have arrived, begin the session by sharing the following words:

- Welcome to *Called to Mercy*. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce you to our Confirmation preparation program and to provide you all the information you will need to sign up and begin the program.

Program's Big Idea (5 minutes)

Continue by offering a big-picture view of the program:

- At the heart of the formation experience of this program are Jesus' teachings and the Church's call to live as people of mercy. All the online learning modules for this program lead down this singular path: to understand what it means to be a person of mercy and to commit our lives to living mercifully toward others. This is what Pope Francis means when he says, “This is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy” (homily, March 17, 2013).

Unique Approach (5 minutes)

Give a brief description of the program's approach:

- *Called to Mercy* combines online learning modules that the young people will complete on their own with five gathered events.
- The online learning modules are accessed through a website application, using any type of device that can connect to the Internet.
- The gathered sessions include three community-building gatherings, a day of service, and a retreat.

Program Schedule and Flow (10 minutes)

Distribute the handout “Program Schedule and Flow” (Document #: TX005808) and walk the participants through it. Point out that there are 10 online e-learning modules that the young people will complete on their own by the dates indicated on the schedule. Also point out the dates of the gathered sessions and retreat.

Materials Needed for the Program (2 minutes)

Share that each young person will need two things in order to complete the online e-learning modules:

- a smartphone, tablet (such as an iPad or Kindle), laptop, or desktop computer (The modules are accessed through a website, so any web-enabled device that can access the Internet will work.)
- Internet access (modem, Wi-Fi, or cellular connection)

Answer any questions the participants might have regarding the technology needs.

How to Log In (15 minutes)

Distribute to each family a copy of the handout “Log-In and Access Code Information” (Document #: TX005809). Walk them through the following steps as they follow along on their handout:

1. Go to *mlearn.smp.org/enroll*.
2. Enter access code: _____.
3. Enter parent/guardian information and young person information.
4. Read and agree to the terms of service. If the young person is under 13 years of age, a parent/guardian must agree to the terms.
5. Receive a confirmation e-mail. (Both the parent/guardian and the young person will receive this.)
6. Open the e-mail and click on the link to reset your password. Create a new password and save changes. Then click “Continue.”
7. Log in with your e-mail address and password.
8. Select your course and begin with learning module 1.
9. Move through the 10 modules sequentially, completing them by the dates indicated on the handout “Program Schedule and Flow” (Document #: TX005808).

How to Pay (5 minutes)

Share that the young people will not have to enter any payment information if the parish is paying for their registration. They will simply enter the access code provided by the parish and follow the log-in instructions.

If parents/guardians are paying for the young people’s registration directly, share that after they agree to the terms of service they will be prompted to enter their personal information. They will then be directed to a payment page, where they may pay using any major credit card.

Q & A (10 minutes)

Ask the participants if they have any questions or concerns before the session concludes. (Reference the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of the *Called to Mercy Director’s Manual* for answers to commonly asked questions.)

Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Thank everyone for coming, and then close with the following prayer:

- Let us remember we are in God's holy presence.

Lord, we ask your grace, your blessing, and your guidance as these young people begin their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. May this journey through *Called to Mercy* be a time of true openness of our minds and hearts to the Great Commandment of Jesus: To love God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul; and to love our neighbors as ourselves. The greatest message of Jesus is the call to mercy—to bring healing, compassion, hope, charity, and justice to a broken and hurting world; to bring kindness and goodness to our relationships each day at home, at school, at work, and in our neighborhood. May we all take up this call and the invitation of Pope Francis to embark upon a “revolution of mercy” for the healing of the world.

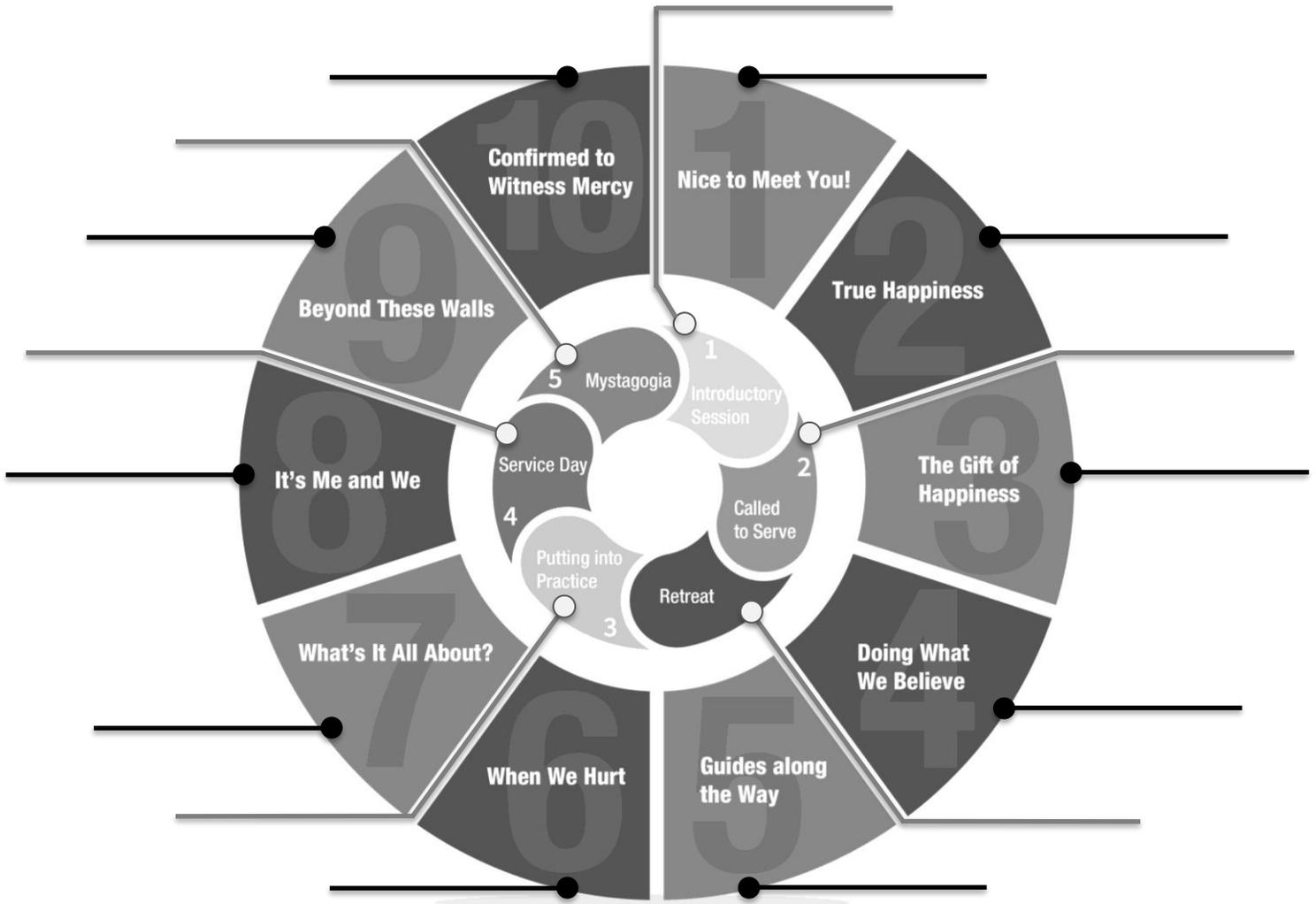
For this we pray in your Son's name, Jesus, the One who showed mercy to all he encountered, the One who calls us to the same.

Amen.



Program Schedule and Flow

The dates on the black lines are the dates by which you are to complete each learning module. The dates on the gray lines indicate when the gathered sessions, service day, and retreat will take place.



Notes:





Log-In and Access Code Information

1. Go to mlearn.smp.org/enroll.
2. Enter access code: _____.
3. Enter parent/guardian information and young person information.
4. Read and agree to the terms of service. If the young person is under 13 years of age, a parent/guardian must agree to the terms.
5. Receive a confirmation e-mail. (Both the parent/guardian and the young person will receive this.)
6. Open the e-mail and click on the link to reset your password. Create a new password and save changes. Then click "Continue."
7. Log in with your e-mail address and password.
8. Select your course and begin with learning module 1.
9. Move through the 10 modules sequentially, completing them by the dates indicated on the handout "Program Schedule and Flow" (Document #: TX005808).





Gathered Session 2: Called to Serve (90 minutes)

Overview

This session focuses on our call to mercy, inviting the young people to dream big in planning (or choosing) their service project. The young people will review some of the themes from the program that connect with our call to mercy; identify the “people in the shadows,” both those in need globally and in their own community; and imagine a service project that addresses the needs of those people. A scavenger hunt activity will help the young people consider some of the facts of poverty and hunger both around the globe and close to home. A brainstorming activity will help them imagine service possibilities. Before the closing prayer, the young people will vote on the service project or projects the group will carry out.

Two options are offered for choosing the service project or projects. Option 1 requires that the young people brainstorm, select, and plan original service opportunities. Option 2 includes brainstorming but then moves the young people into a choice of predetermined options for service.

Option 1 can be exciting and engaging as the young people dream big—even in revolutionary ways! Try not to be afraid of the challenges their ideas may seem to present. Young people will often imagine big, bold efforts, and their project plans may stretch the resources available. If you use this option, begin this session early in the Confirmation process to ensure you have time to plan and execute the idea—ideally after the young people have completed module 3. Giving them the opportunity to make a real difference on something they care about can be transformative!

Option 2 will give you a chance to contact, ahead of time, the agencies you might be working with for the service day. This option should still include consultation with the young people. Consider having a few young people get together to help with planning, and check their interest level on different projects. Preselect a few service opportunities the young people can choose from for the service day.

Principles for planning service (no matter what option you choose):

- Take time to dispel myths about why people are in need. Avoid stereotypes that blame or judge people for their challenges.
- Connect with services that are already in place. Educate yourself about local issues and agencies. Look around at what is already happening in your community. Don't compete with or duplicate current efforts. Collaborate, cooperate, or meet a need that is going unmet.
- Be in relationship—with people in need, with your parish social ministry committee, with area agencies and services. You will have a better sense of what the needs really are and how the young people might best serve.

Planning meaningful service opportunities will take time, but keep in mind that serving others is often the most memorable experience of Confirmation preparation for young people.

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
5 minutes	Gathering
10 minutes	Welcome and Opening Prayer
15 minutes	Icebreaker Game
25 minutes	"People in the Shadows" Scavenger Hunt
15 minutes	"What If We . . . ?" Brainstorming Activity
10 minutes	Sticky-Note Survey
10 minutes	Closing Prayer

Practical Considerations

Choose Your Option

There are two options for planning and choosing a service day in this session (see "What If We . . . ?" activity). If you, as the coordinator, are planning the service project(s) yourself (option 2), this session is best held after the young people complete module 7 but before the service day. If you would like to have the young people plan the projects (option 1), it is best to hold this session earlier in the process but after module 4, to allow sufficient time for planning and scheduling with any agencies you might be working with.

Preparation

- **Space:** This gathering requires space for the group to meet together as a whole, a large open space for the icebreaker game, and a space for the small groups to meet.
- **"People in the Shadows" Scavenger Hunt:** Gather local statistics on poverty and related issues of hunger, homelessness, health care, educational opportunity, and any other issues you would like to point your young people toward for their service projects. Your local Catholic Charities office may have these statistics or should be able to point you toward them. Record the facts on the "Local Poverty Facts" template on the handout "People in the Shadows: Local, National, and Global Poverty Facts" (Document #: TX005804). Then print the handout and follow the directions for cutting the boxes apart, color-coding them, and hiding them around the room. The young people will find the facts during the activity and post them on corresponding sheets of newsprint titled "Global," "National," and "Local."
- **Prayer:** For the opening and closing prayers, set up a prayer table with a tablecloth; two Bibles, one bookmarked at Luke 10:25–28 and the other at Luke 10:29–37; a candle; and matches.

Materials Needed

- **Gathering and Opening Prayer**
 - the song or music video “Start a Fire,” by Ike Ndolo, from the *Scandal of Mercy* album, and an audio or video system
 - a sheet of newsprint taped to the wall
 - several markers
 - the Bishop Frank Caggiano video “It’s a Beautiful Thing” (from module 2) and a video system
- **Icebreaker Game**
 - Internet access and a video system (*optional*)
- **“People in the Shadows” Scavenger Hunt**
 - three sheets of newsprint taped to the wall, one labeled “Local,” one “National,” and one “Global”
 - three rolls of tape
 - prepared fact slips from the handout “People in the Shadows: Local, National, and Global Poverty Facts” (Document #: TX005804), hidden around the room
 - small prizes for the members of the winning team
 - three copies of the handout “Fact Finding: Small-Group Leader Directions” (Document #: TX005805)
 - three sheets of newsprint and three different colored markers
- **“What If We . . . ?” Brainstorming Activity**
 - three sheets of newsprint and three markers
- **Sticky-Note Survey**
 - sheets of newsprint, one for each service project idea the young people will be choosing from
 - a roll of tape
 - three different colored sticky notes for each young person
 - pens, one for each young person
- **Closing Prayer**
 - slips of paper, one for each young person
 - pens or pencils, one for each young person
 - a small basket
 - the song or music video “Scandal of Mercy,” by Thomas Muglia, from the *Scandal of Mercy* album, and an audio or video system

The Session

Gathering (5 minutes)

As the young people begin to arrive, play Ike Ndolo's song or music video "Start a Fire" in the background.

When greeting the young people, recruit a reader for the opening prayer (Luke 10:25–28) and a reader for the closing prayer (Luke 10:29–37). Hand them each a Bible with the passages bookmarked.

Invite the young people to write on the newsprint at least one way they have already been involved in serving people in need. This can be service they have done through the Church, through another organization, or on their own.

Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Welcome the young people and introduce the session with these or similar words:

- Welcome, everyone. The team is excited to be gathered with you. Today (*tonight*) we'll make a plan for our service project. We'll consider some of the needs in our community and around the world. We'll look at what our Catholic faith asks of us. And then we'll make a plan for action. Let's begin our time together with prayer.

Light the candle and invite the first reader forward.

Gospel Reading: Luke 10:25–28, the Greatest Commandment

Play the Bishop Frank Caggiano video "It's a Beautiful Thing" from module 2.

Using these or similar words, ask:

- I have two questions to ask that you don't need to answer out loud. I just want you to think about them in silence for a few moments.
 - If I say I love God, that I am a follower of Jesus, but then do nothing to help people in need, what message might that send others about my belief?
 - If I say I follow Jesus and then lift up the lowliest of people and put them at the center of my concern, what does that teach the world about who Jesus is?

Allow 15–30 seconds of silence before continuing:

- God calls us to love. We show our love by loving one another, by loving our neighbor. As we take time today to look at our hurting world and the suffering in our own community, let's seek the courage to take action. Let's accept the call to light a fire in our hearts that burns with love for people living in the shadows so that our belief is witnessed. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Icebreaker Game (15 minutes)

If time allows, feel free to set the tone for this game by playing one of the many ridiculous "goats yelling like humans" videos available on YouTube. To begin, summarize the Gospel story Matthew 25:31–46 in these or similar words:

- Toward the end of Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 25, Jesus describes what things will be like at the end of the world. He explains how the Son of Man will sort the good people from the bad people the way a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep are the ones who

have taken care of those in need—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting those who are sick or in prison. The goats are those who have not done these things. It's a pretty serious story that talks about heaven and hell and who is going where. We're going to play a game now that is the opposite of serious, and really, the only similarity to the story is that it has sheep, goats, and shepherds in it.

The game is played by arranging the young people into two equal teams. There is a "field" (or a room or gym) divided by a center line, and each team has a home-base line at the opposite end. The teams will huddle, each on their own side. As quietly as possible, the team members will decide whether they will all be shepherds, sheep, or goats for this round. Everyone on the team will be the same character, and each character requires a different pose: Shepherds stand up and hold one arm straight out in front as if they are holding a staff, goats bend at the waist and hold their fingers up by their ears like horns, and sheep squat and mimic being on all fours.

Once the teams have decided on their character (remind them it's a secret), the two teams will face off by standing at the center line facing the players on the opposite team. Everyone should have a foot on the center line. At your command, the two teams shout "Shepherds! Sheep! Goats!" assuming each pose as they do. Then each team immediately shouts its chosen character and assumes that pose.

At this point, the real fun begins. Each of the characters figuratively "beats" one of the others (as in the game "Rock, Paper, Scissors"). The shepherds beat the goats, the goats beat the sheep, and the sheep beat the shepherds. After a moment of confusion, as the young people try to remember which character beats the other, the team with the dominant character will chase the members of the other team back to their home-base line. Anyone who is tagged before reaching the home base must join the other team. For example, if one team chooses goats and the other team chooses sheep, the goats try to tag the sheep. If a sheep gets tagged, she or he joins the goat team. This process repeats until there is only one person left on one side or until you run out of time, in which case the larger of the two teams wins.

It can save time if each team chooses a back-up character during the huddle. Then if both teams happen to choose the same character, one or both can quickly switch to their back-up character.

Tip: This game often takes longer to explain than it does to play, so consider taking a minute to demonstrate with just a few volunteers who are prepared ahead of time. It will move things along!

"People in the Shadows" Scavenger Hunt (25 minutes)

Hang the three sheets of newsprint labeled "Global," "National," and "Local" at the front of the room with a roll of tape by each one. Arrange the young people into three small groups, and assign each group a color. Explain that there are color-coded facts specific for each group hidden around the building (or room) that fall into the three categories on the sheets of newsprint. Each small group is racing against the others to find all of its facts and post them on the correct sheets. If any young people find another group's facts, they should leave them where they found them.

After about 10 minutes, or once all the facts have been found and posted (whichever comes first), find and post any facts that were not discovered, and invite the groups to read through them.

Award the prizes to the first group that finds and posts all of its facts, and then transition into the next part of the activity using these or similar words:

- In the video we watched during opening prayer, Bishop Frank Caggiano talked about the “people in the shadows.” Similarly, Pope Francis says, “The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those on the ‘outskirts’ of life” (homily, February 15, 2015).
- As we prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are invited more deeply into the service of others. Jesus is the one we follow, and we seek to love others the way he did. Our conversation today (*tonight*) will lead us to a decision about how we can serve people in the ways that our faith calls us to.

Distribute a copy of the handout “Fact Finding: Small-Group Leader Directions” (Document #: TX005805) to each group. Each group should appoint a small-group leader to help with this part of the activity. Then take a few minutes to discuss the questions on the handout:

1. Which of the facts do you find most surprising or upsetting?
2. Are there any issues (the ones that we’ve named or others) that you are motivated to act on now or that you have been involved with already?
3. What questions do you have about these issues?
4. What other issues or problems do you wonder about? Is there something you care about that hasn’t come up yet?

When the groups are done discussing, each small-group leader should read the following passage to his or her group:

- Showing love and care for those whom the world has rejected sometimes startles or “scandalizes” others. People can be surprised, and even upset, when we show mercy to those who are considered outsiders. When Jesus healed lepers or spent time with people who were seen as sinners, people were shocked. They were scandalized. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was scandalous, because it points out that even the person seen as an enemy can be the neighbor you are called to love. Jesus crossed social boundaries to get to the people on the outskirts, the “people in the shadows.” Our willingness to help people who have been rejected by others is what Pope Francis calls the “scandal of mercy.” Pope Francis is following Jesus’ example. Even before he was the Pope, Francis surprised people by riding the public bus with poor people instead of being driven in a private car like most bishops. As Pope he has upset and even scandalized people by handing out sleeping bags to the homeless, having showers installed for them at the Vatican, and welcoming them to sleep in Saint Peter’s Square. He keeps reminding us that we must care for those who are poor.

Now the small-group leaders will lead their group in a brainstorming discussion using the following questions. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and a marker to record their answers.

1. Who are the people in our community who are “living in the shadows,” and what would it look like to show them scandalous mercy? As a group, make a list of the people in need in your community. (*Hint:* Think about the statistics from your fact-finding mission, and consider the following groups: immigrants, refugees, the elderly, people in hospitals, people in nursing homes, those who are poor, the unemployed, those who are homeless, and the people “that society would prefer would just go away,” as Bishop Frank said.)

2. If you were to take action and help one or two of these groups through service, who would you want to help? In what way would you like to serve?
3. Do you know what is already being done to help these groups and who (what groups or agencies) is doing it? In what ways could you participate in these efforts, or how might you help in ways that the groups or agencies don't have the time or people power to do themselves?

“What If We . . . ?” Brainstorming Activity (15 minutes)

Now it's time to take brainstorming to the next level. Direct the young people to remain in their small groups. Ask each group to look over its brainstorming sheets so far. Give each group a new sheet of newsprint, and ask them to title it “What if we . . . ?” Explain that you want them to finish this sentence in a way that addresses one of the problems we've been discussing but as if there were no limits on time, money, or space. For example, “What if we . . . turned the church building into a homeless shelter?” (There actually is a church in San Francisco, St. Boniface, that invites homeless people to sleep in the pews at night.) Or “What if we . . . opened a restaurant to feed hungry people?”

As the young people think of each issue or group of people in need, encourage them to consider one of the questions from the previous activity: What would scandalous mercy toward that group of people look like?

Give the groups 10 minutes to come up with as many possibilities as they can. Make a show of timing them, and call “Go!” After 10 minutes, call “Time!” and ask the small groups to choose two of their ideas to share with the large group and to circle those ideas on their newsprint.

Sticky-Note Survey (10 minutes)

Option 1: Project Ideas Generated in This Session

Write the project ideas the small groups generated on separate sheets of newsprint and post them on a wall. You will need space around each project name for the young people to post their sticky notes.

Option 2: Project Ideas Organized by Parish Leader

Write your preselected project options on separate sheets of newsprint and post them on a wall. You will need space around each project name for the young people to post their sticky notes. Explain to the young people that although there is a predetermined set of service-day opportunities for them to choose from, the ideas they have generated are inspiring and beautiful. Ask if anyone would want to pursue any of the ideas above and beyond the service-day opportunities they will be choosing from. If anyone would like to pursue any of the ideas, arrange a time to meet with them outside of this session to develop a plan and to help them find the support they will need to carry it out.

For Both Options

Distribute three sticky notes in three different colors to each young person. Direct the young people to print their first and last name on each note. Designate a color for choice 1, a color for choice 2, and a color for choice 3, and direct the young people to write “1,” “2,” and “3” on those colored notes.

Give the young people 5 minutes to look over the project options. Then invite them to post sticky note 1 next to the option that would be their first choice, sticky note 2 next to the project that would be their second choice, and sticky note 3 next to the project that would be their last choice.

Let the young people know that projects will be chosen and groups formed taking these preferences into account, and announce when you will be informing the young people of their assignments. You might also ask for volunteers who would be willing to meet again to start planning and organizing each project.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Introduce the closing prayer in these or similar words:

- We will close today (*tonight*) with the story Jesus told when someone asked him, "Who is my neighbor?" The answer Jesus gave surprised everyone.

Light the candle and invite the second reader forward.

Gospel Reading: Luke 10:29–37

Distribute the slips of paper and pens or pencils, and then share the following:

- By naming the Samaritan as neighbor, Jesus lets us know that if we want to follow him, even those we might have considered enemies are people we are called to love. There is no one who is outside the duty of our call to love. I'd like you take a moment now and think about a group of people or just one person in need of love this day. You might be thinking about one of the groups you talked about with your small group, or maybe you are thinking about someone you know personally who is in need. Call to mind this group of people or this particular person and write the name of that group or person on your slip of paper, followed by a prayer intention. When you are finished, fold the paper and bring it forward to place in the basket. Return to your seat and pray for your intention as we listen to the words of the song "Scandal of Mercy," by Thomas Muglia, who wrote this song at the age of 17.

Play the song or music video "Scandal of Mercy."

Conclude with these or similar words:

- God, we ask your blessing on all these intentions, for the people we know personally and those in our community, nation, and around the world who are in need. Help us to live out the call to mercy, to be neighbor as the Good Samaritan was neighbor. Help us to remember always, each day, with each person we encounter, our call to mercy and to give witness to God's loving mercy to all we meet. Especially give us the courage to go to the outskirts of society, to bring mercy to those living in the shadows, those whose hearts or lives are deeply broken. For this we pray. Amen.

(The quotation by Pope Francis in this session is from his homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150215_omelia-nuovi-cardinali.html. Copyright [LEV].)



Fact Finding: Small-Group Leader Directions

After the leader introduces this activity, facilitate a discussion with your small group based on the following questions:

1. Which of the facts do you find most surprising or upsetting?
2. Are there any issues (the ones that we've named or others) that you are motivated to act on now or that you have been involved with already?
3. What questions do you have about these issues?
4. What other issues or problems do you wonder about? Is there something you care about that hasn't come up yet?

When the above discussion is complete, each small-group leader should read the following passage to his or her group:

- Showing love and care for those whom the world has rejected sometimes startles or “scandalizes” others. People can be surprised, and even upset, when we show mercy to those who are considered outsiders. When Jesus healed lepers or spent time with people who were seen as sinners, people were shocked. They were scandalized. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was scandalous, because it points out that even the person seen as an enemy can be the neighbor you are called to love. Jesus crossed social boundaries to get to the people on the outskirts, the “people in the shadows.” Our willingness to help people who have been rejected by others is what Pope Francis calls the “scandal of mercy.” Pope Francis is following Jesus’ example. Even before he was the Pope, Francis surprised people by riding the public bus with poor people instead of being driven in a private car like most bishops. As Pope he has upset and even scandalized people by handing out sleeping bags to the homeless, having showers installed for them at the Vatican, and welcoming them to sleep in Saint Peter’s Square. He keeps reminding us that we must care for those who are poor.

Continue the discussion using these questions:

1. Who are the people in our community who are “living in the shadows,” and what would it look like to show them scandalous mercy? As a group, make a list of the people in need in our community. (*Hint:* Think about the statistics from your fact-finding mission, and consider the following groups: immigrants, refugees, the elderly, people in hospitals, people in nursing homes, those who are poor, the unemployed, those who are homeless, and the people “that society would prefer would just go away,” as Bishop Frank said.)
2. If you were to take action and help one or two of these groups through service, who would you want to help? In what way would you like to serve?
3. Do you know what is already being done to help these groups and who (what groups or agencies) is doing it? In what ways could you participate in these efforts, or how might you help in ways that the groups or agencies don't have the time or people power to do themselves?





People in the Shadows: Local, National, and Global Poverty Facts

Gather local statistics on poverty and related issues of hunger, homelessness, health care, educational opportunity, and any other issues you would like to point your young people toward for their service projects. Your local Catholic Charities office may have these statistics or should be able to point you toward them. Record the facts on the “Local Poverty Facts” template below, one fact per box. Then print the entire handout, local facts as well as national and global facts. Cut the boxes apart as indicated, and fold the slips so that the facts are on the inside. Mix the slips up and then arrange them into three equal sets, one set for each small group. Color-code the outside of the slips with markers (draw a dot, line, or border), using a different color for each small group. Hide the facts around the room (tape under tables or chairs, in window frames, etc.). Let the small groups know which color slips each should look for. When someone finds a slip, he or she should read the fact to the group, and then the group should decide which sheet of newsprint to post it to: “Global,” “National,” or “Local.” If any young people find facts that are not their group’s color, they should just leave them where they found them.

Local Poverty Facts



People in the Shadows: Local, National, and Global Poverty Facts



National and Global Poverty Facts

<p>Poverty does not strike all demographics equally. For example, in the United States 13% of men live in poverty, compared to 16% of women.</p>	<p>The poverty rate in the United States for single-parent families with no wife present is 16%. For single-parent families with no husband present, it is 31%.</p>
<p>Poverty is often perceived as a problem of urban environments and inner cities in the United States, but the poverty rate in metropolitan areas (15%) is actually lower than the poverty rate for people outside of metropolitan areas (17%).</p>	<p>In the United States, the poverty rate for people living with a disability is 29%. That's more than 4 million people living with a disability—in poverty.</p>
<p>In the United States, about 1 in every 5 children, or 21% (15.5 million kids), lives in poverty.</p>	<p>Nationwide, 1.6 million children experience homelessness in a year.</p>
<p>The National School Lunch Program provides low- or no-cost meals to impoverished children. In 2012 alone, the program served subsidized lunches to more than 31.6 million children.</p>	<p>14% of the nation's senior citizens live in poverty.</p>
<p>In the United States, the highest poverty rate by race is found among blacks (26%), followed by Hispanics (24%). Asians have a poverty rate of 12%, while whites have a poverty rate of 10%. But the white poor outnumber the black poor considerably: 19 million to 7.8 million. White people make up 42% of America's poor, while black people make up about 28%.</p>	<p>In the United States, 7% of the population, or 21 million people, live in deep poverty, with incomes below 50% of the poverty line.</p>



<p>The USDA estimates that 14% (or 17 million) of households in the United States are food insecure, meaning that they had difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources.</p>	<p>More than one-fifth of children in the United States (21.7%) live below the poverty line, and nearly one-tenth (9.6%) live in deep poverty, defined as having incomes below 50% of the poverty line.</p>
<p>In the United States, 4 out of every 10 children live in low-income families.</p>	<p>The poverty line for an individual in the United States is \$12,000. For two people, the poverty line is \$15,000, and for a family of four people it is \$24,000. Compare these figures to estimates of what it costs to live the “American dream with a house, car, health insurance, and retirement and college savings, which is \$130,000 a year.</p>
<p>Around the world, nearly 842 million people suffer from hunger.</p>	<p>The poorest 20% of the world’s children are twice as likely as the richest 20% to be stunted by poor nutrition (not grow at a normal rate) and to die before their fifth birthday.</p>
<p>98% of people suffering from hunger live in developing countries.</p>	<p>About 2.7 million newborns worldwide die within their first month of life.</p>
<p>Human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry in the world after illegal drugs and arms trafficking.</p>	<p>Almost 200 million children under the age of 5 in developing regions are underweight for their age.</p>



People in the Shadows: Local, National, and Global Poverty Facts

<p>Hunger kills more people globally every year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.</p>	<p>Approximately 179 million infants in the least developed countries are not protected from diseases by routine immunization.</p>
<p>Hunger causes the deaths of about 5 million children each year.</p>	<p>About 3.2 million children under the age of 15 currently live with HIV.</p>
<p>About 17 million children in the world are born underweight annually, the result of inadequate nutrition before and during pregnancy.</p>	<p>Approximately 161 million children do not attend primary school.</p>
<p>Almost 3 billion people in the world lack access to toilets.</p>	<p>Globally, almost 1 billion people lack access to clean drinking water.</p>





Gathered Session 3: Putting into Practice (90 minutes)

Overview

This session should take place after the young people have completed module 5. It focuses on the theme of living out our call to mercy by “doing what we believe.” The young people will explore ways they can “do what they believe” in their everyday lives and will share the ways their chosen saints and sponsors serve as models for their lives. This session will help the young people to think more deeply about the call to be witnesses of mercy in the world. It will also help them to recognize God’s love as the source of real happiness (joy) and to understand that giving of ourselves out of love deepens our joy. A small-group activity will encourage them to reflect on the content from the first five modules.

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
5 minutes	Gathering
10 minutes	Welcome and Opening Prayer
10 Minutes	Icebreaker Game
10 Minutes	Partner Activity
15 minutes	Witness Talk
20 minutes	Small-Group Activity
15 minutes	Closing Prayer
5 minutes	Dismissal

Practical Considerations

Paperwork and People

- Meet with the Confirmation team ahead of time to go over directions for the small-group activity. See the handout “Doing What I Believe: Small-Group Leader Directions” (Document #: TX005806), and answer any questions the team might have.
- Recruit a member of the parish (ideally a young adult) to give a witness talk on the topic of “doing what you believe.” The presenter should talk about how he or she has put God’s love into action. (More details on the presentation are given in the “Witness Talk” section of this session.)

Preparation

- **Space:** This gathering requires space for the group to meet together as a whole, as well as space for the small groups to meet. Be sure there is enough open space (if your layout includes tables) for the young people to participate in a large-group game that uses a continuum line that runs the length of the room.
- **Prayer:** For the opening and closing prayers, set up a prayer table with a tablecloth, a Bible, and candle, and matches. For the closing prayer, this space will need to allow for the young people to stand in a semicircle around the table, facing a blank wall.

Materials Needed

- **Gathering and Opening Prayer**
 - the song or music video “Searching,” by Paul J. Kim, from the *Scandal of Mercy* album, and an audio or video system
 - copies of the handout “Opening and Closing Prayers” (Document #: TX005807), one for each young person and adult leader
- **Partner Activity**
 - projection equipment (*optional*)
- **Small-Group Activity**
 - projection equipment
 - sheets of newsprint, one for each small group
 - markers, one for each small group
 - copies of the handout “Doing What I Believe: Small-Group Leader Directions” (Document #: TX005806), one for each small group
 - sheets of Bishop Frank quotes from the handout “Doing What I Believe: Small-Group Leader Directions” (Document #: TX005806), one for each young person
 - a roll of tape
 - a meme creation app (*optional*)
- **Closing Prayer**
 - copies of the handout “Opening and Closing Prayers” (Document #: TX005807), one for each young person and adult leader (saved from the opening prayer)
 - posters created in small groups

The Session

Gathering (5 minutes)

As the young people begin to arrive, play Paul J. Kim’s song or music video “Searching.”

When greeting the young people, recruit prayer leaders for the opening and closing prayers. You will need three for the opening prayer and three for the closing prayer. Give each prayer leader a copy of the handout “Opening and Closing Prayers” (Document #: TX005807), and ask them to review their parts ahead of time.

Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Welcome the young people and introduce the session with these or similar words:

- Welcome, everyone. The team is excited to be gathered with you again. Today (*tonight*) we will explore further what it means to “do what we believe” as followers of Christ. We invite you to enter into this time with open hearts and open minds, letting the peace, love, and joy of the Holy Spirit grow in each of you. How would you explain what it means for people to “do what they believe”? What does that phrase mean to you? As you think about what you see and experience in your own life, where do you see a great example of people “doing what they believe”? Let’s begin with prayer.

Opening Prayer (see the handout “Opening and Closing Prayers” [Document #: TX005807])

Distribute the handout. Direct the prayer leaders to read from their places in the larger group. As leader 1 begins, have another young person come forward to light the candle.

Ask the young people to hang on to the handout for the closing prayer.

Icebreaker Game (10 minutes)

Ask the young people to imagine a line that runs the length of the room. Explain that you will announce a category, and then they are to arrange themselves along the line based on where they fall within the category. Crank up the chaos and fun by setting a time limit, playing elimination (last person to get in line is out, or not allowing the young people to talk).

Category	This end of the line is . . .	That end of the line is . . .
Height	short	tall
Hair color	light	dark
Age	younger	older
Birthday day of the month	the first	the last
Shoe size (number)	small	big
Alphabetically by your saint name	A	Z

Partner Activity (10 minutes)

Use the following lightning-round questions for a partner activity. Have everyone find a partner (you may have one group of three). The adult leader should then read or display with projection equipment the following questions. Then the young people will quickly answer each question to their partners.

1. Favorite color?
2. Ice cream or gelato?
3. Three words to describe yourself?
4. Three words your maternal grandmother would use to describe you?
5. If you could have any question answered, what would it be?
6. Pepperoni or sausage?
7. Best thing that happened to you this week?
8. Peanut butter: crunchy or creamy?
9. What do you want to be when you grow up?
10. What do you do for fun?
11. Apple or Android?
12. Favorite quote or saying?
13. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?
14. Favorite food?
15. ESPN or Discovery Channel?
16. Netflix or YouTube?

Ask the partners to share their responses to two additional questions (below). Read or project each question separately, and give each young person 30 seconds to answer each.

1. Whom did you choose as your Confirmation sponsor and why?
2. Whom did you choose as your saint and why?

Witness Talk (15 minutes)

This is a brief talk given by one of the team members or a youth, a young adult, or a parishioner who can share a powerful story of an experience of “doing what you believe.” This person should be someone who is living her or his faith by giving to another or others out of love, compassion, charity, goodness, and kindness, and by reaching out, as Bishop Franks says, to “those in the shadows.” The strength of this talk corresponds to the power of the story that is told. You will want to find someone whose story is engaging and inspiring and who is an effective storyteller.

Offer the following introduction to the young people:

- We are fortunate today (*tonight*) to have with us (*name of speaker and brief background*) to share with us his/her story of “doing what you believe.” Pope Francis says this:
The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone for eternity; [but] to pour out the balm of God’s mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart. The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those essentially on the ‘outskirts’ of life. It is to adopt fully God’s own approach, which is that of mercy. (Homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015)

The speaker should cover the following points:

- What drew you to giving of yourself in the way you did/do?
- Who is the person or people “living in the shadows” that you felt moved to care for or respond to?
- What breaks your heart about this person (or these people)?
- How do your beliefs serve as the motivation and basis for how you live what you believe?
- How have your beliefs inspired you to give of yourself out of love to another?
- What have you discovered through the experience that has surprised you?

The main goal of the witness talk is to connect the following points that Bishop Frank makes:

- We are called to “do what we believe.”
- We are called to mercy and compassion, especially to those places where people are “living in the shadows.”
- In giving of ourselves out of love, we receive lasting happiness (joy).

Small-Group Activity (20 minutes)

You may choose to show the Bishop Frank Caggiano videos “If God Is Love” and “It’s a Beautiful Thing,” from module 2, to establish the context for this activity.

Display on the screen the poll results from “Your Favorite Bishop Frank Quote,” from module 2. Arrange the young people into small groups of three or four. Distribute a sheet of newsprint and a marker to each group. Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

- God calls us to love. Bishop Frank talked about how we give and receive the love of God in many different ways—through other people, through beauty, in experiences, in prayer, and in other ways too. God asks us to share the love we’ve received with others. In your small group, you will revisit the quotes from Bishop Frank and think of some examples from your own life of the things he suggests.

Direct the small-group leaders to lead their groups through the activity as outlined on the handout “Doing What I Believe: Small-Group Leader Directions” (Document #: TX005806). When everyone in the small group has had a chance to share his or her favorite quote and an event or experience that relates to it, each group will use the sheet of newsprint and marker to make a poster titled “I am doing what I believe when I” Each group member will finish the sentence, writing her or his response on the poster.

Allow the small groups 10 minutes to work. Toward the end of the time, remind the groups to choose each one statement for their group leader to share as part of the closing prayer.

When the groups are finished, ask for the young people’s attention and point out the blank wall near the prayer table. Ask each small group to stand, share (without identifying who said what), and hang its poster on the blank wall. After all the groups have shared, conclude the activity with the following words:

- Thank you for your sharing. The power to change the world through love, through mercy, rests in this room. Each of you has the power within you, by God’s grace, to bring to the world what it is most in need of today: mercy! What will you choose to do with this power, this gift? This is the question we each must answer for ourselves.

Digital Option Have the small groups compile their responses to create a meme using a meme creation app. The groups will have to e-mail the adult leader their memes or store them on the cloud so the leader can access them to share with the large group on the projection screen. Practice this in advance, and provide clear instructions to the small-group leaders on what apps to use and how to display the finished memes.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Ask the young people to take out the handout “Opening and Closing Prayers” (Document #: TX005807), which they saved from the opening prayer. Arrange the young people in a large semicircle around the prayer space, facing the wall of posters. The prayer leaders should stand facing the semicircle. After the first reading, each small-group leader will read her or his group’s chosen statement from the “I am doing what I believe when I . . . ” poster. Continue with the rest of the closing prayer.

Dismissal (5 minutes)

Thank everyone for coming and make any announcements that may be needed. Remind the young people of critical dates for completing the modules and the date of the service day.

(The quotation by Pope Francis in this session is from his homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150215_omelia-nuovi-cardinali.html. Copyright [LEV].)



Opening and Closing Prayers

Opening Prayer

Leader 1: Let us pray together in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader 2: Gracious God,
We ask for a deepening of the gift of community.
Help us to grow in our love and care for one another during our time together.

Leader 3: We ask for the gift of intention.
Help us to be present in our gathering, and grant us the patience to set other things aside.

Leader 1: We ask for the gift of discernment.
Help us to recognize our gifts and use them for good.

Leader 2: We ask for the gift of strength.
Help us to be strong enough to do what we believe, to be people of our word, to be people of action, and to be examples for others. Help us to be like the great saints who have gone before us.

Leader 3: We ask for the gift of understanding.
Help us to support one another in our journey toward the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Leader 1: For all of these things, and in thanksgiving for the opportunity to come together again, let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father . . .

Closing Prayer

Begin by playing the song or music video “Start a Fire,” by Ike Ndolo.

Leader 1: We ask the small-group leaders to be ready to read their groups’ chosen statements from the “I am doing what I believe when I . . .” posters as part of the prayer after the first Gospel reading. We will let you know when to share you statements. After the second Gospel reading, be ready to share aloud the saint’s name you have chosen for Confirmation.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:13–16

Leader 2: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:
“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”



Leader 3: God, you call us to follow you, to “live out loud” what we say we believe, to be salt that gives flavor, light in the darkness, a city shining on a hilltop. We ask now that you bless our efforts and renew the fire in our hearts to love you and to love your people. Small-group leaders, please read the “I am doing what I believe when I . . . ” statements from your posters.

Leader 1: God, we are doing what we believe when we offer your love to a world in need.

Leader 2: When we have the courage to do what’s right.

Leader 3: Lord, you send your Spirit, the advocate, to encourage and strengthen us. Open our hearts as we listen to your Word.

All: Amen.

Gospel Reading: John 14:15–20

Leader 1: A reading from the Gospel of John:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.”

Leader 2: Loving God, you have also surrounded us with guides and guardians, saints and sponsors, friends and witnesses. We pray now with and for them in thanksgiving for the model they offer us in their lives, and in the love they have shown.

Leader 3: We have each chosen a saint as a model of God’s mercy. We will move around our semi-circle and each of you will state your saint’s name aloud. After the name of each saint is stated, we will all answer, “Pray for us.” (*Ask for a volunteer to start, and lead the whole group in responding, “Pray for us” after the saint’s name has been shared.*)

Leader 1: We thank you, Father, for the gift of our sponsors and all who guide us in faith.

Leader 2: We thank you, Holy Spirit, for the inspiration of our patron saints.

Leader 3: We thank you, Jesus, for the witness of our Confirmation team members as they walk with us on our journey to Confirmation.

Leader 1: Before we go our separate ways, let us offer one another a sign of peace. (*While the young people are exchanging the sign of peace, play the song or music video “Scandal of Love,” by Greg Walton.*)

(Scripture texts on this handout are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.)





Doing What I Believe: Small-Group Leader Directions

This activity has two parts: a directed small-group sharing and the creation of a group poster. You have 20 minutes to complete both parts, so keep track of your time in guiding the group.

Distribute a sheet of Bishop Frank quotes to each person in your group. Lead a sharing with your group members (about 10 minutes), directing them with these or similar words:

- When we went through module 2, we chose one of these quotes as our favorite. We want to choose again—maybe our choice is different now than it was when we completed the module. We will each choose one quote from Bishop Frank that we like the most, think of an experience from our life that it relates to, and then share that experience briefly with the rest of the group.

Share your favorite quote and experience first as a model, or share the following example:

- I picked quote 3, because I don't think you can love God if you don't love other people. That's hypocritical. One of the most loving people I know is a lady who takes the coats our church collects down to a homeless shelter for people who don't have coats. She says we should treat each person as if he or she were Jesus. If that homeless person were Jesus, we would want him to have a coat.

Once everyone has had a chance to share his or her favorite quote and an event or experience that relates to it, ask for a volunteer to be the scribe for the group. Ask this person to start by writing "I am doing what I believe when I . . ." across the top of the sheet of newsprint. Offer the following explanation using these or similar words:

- Our group is going to make a poster on this sheet of newsprint. Our poster will represent each of us at our best. Let's talk for a few minutes now about how each of us would finish this sentence: "I am doing what I believe when I . . ." When we've each completed the sentence in our mind, we'll share it and have the scribe write it on our poster. When we finish, we'll read our poster out loud to the large group, without identifying who said what, and then we will post it on our prayer wall.

At the end of your small-group time (before the large group is reconvened to share the posters), invite the group to choose one statement from the poster to be read as part of the closing prayer.



Quotes from Bishop Frank

1. “God is love. Anytime, anyplace, with any person, that we truly love the way God wants us to love them, God is present.”
2. “The mission is to love, and discipleship is to do it in the name of Jesus. That’s what we are called to do.”
3. “That’s the genius of being a Christian. It’s not complicated. Love God above all things, love your neighbor as yourself; Jesus put them together. That’s missionary discipleship.”
4. “Love is most needed in the shadows of society. . . . All those individuals who society would really prefer go away, I call those ‘the people in the shadows.’ Those are the people who need to be loved.”
5. “Anyone who goes out to reach out to those in need, who tries to love them, comes away with more than they gave to the person in need. That’s the beauty of love.”
6. “When you love, you’re also loved back. It’s a beautiful thing; it’s the way of God.”





Gathered Session 4: Service Day

Overview

Ideally the service day should take place after module 8. The call to mercy challenges us to leave our four walls behind and go in search of those who are distant—those on the “outskirts” of life. The service day provides a structured way for the young people, as a community, to go beyond the four walls of their own parish in service to others; it is a day to practice “doing what you believe.” Because the experience of the service day will vary significantly from one faith community to another, the following material provides a suggested structure for the day, an opening and closing prayer, and reflection questions.

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
15 minutes	Gathering
10 minutes	Opening Prayer
20 minutes	Opening Reflection Activity
	Service Projects (Off-Site)
	Reconvene (Lunch/Snacks)
30 minutes	Closing Reflection Activity
10 minutes	Closing Prayer

Practical Considerations

Before You Go: Paperwork and People

Don't forget to secure the following:

- permission to serve at the identified work site(s)
- signed permission forms from parents or guardians (including a media waiver giving permission to photograph and film the young people, if you plan to do so)
- transportation and any necessary insurance paperwork
- adult leaders for each service site
- a parish member who is active in social justice work (preferably as part of a church ministry that is open to young people) to give a witness talk

Communicating Expectations to the Young People

The young people will do their best work if they know what to expect. It will also ease the chaos on the morning of the service day if they already know where their group is going, what they will be doing at their service site, which adult leader(s) will accompany them, what they should wear, and what (if anything) they should bring with them. Prior communication is essential.

Preparation

For the opening and closing prayers, set up a prayer table with a tablecloth, a Bible, a candle, and matches. This table should be near the wall where you have the young people tape their paper bricks in the opening reflection activity.

Materials Needed

- the *Scandal of Mercy* album (Mission Eighty5™ Music) and an audio system
- paper bricks, one for each young person, from the handout “Bricks” (Document #: TX005790)
- black markers, one for each young person
- copies of the handouts “Opening Prayer” (Document #: TX005791) and “Closing Reflection Activity and Closing Prayer” (Document #: TX005810), one of each for each young person and adult leader
- food for meals and snacks
- a roll of tape
- blank sheets of paper, one for each small group

The Session

Gathering (15 minutes)

As the young people begin to arrive, play upbeat music from the *Scandal of Mercy* album, such as “Holy Spirit,” by Steven Joubert; “Start a Fire,” by Ike Ndolo; “Searching,” by Paul J. Kim; or other appropriate popular music.

When greeting the young people, recruit prayer leaders for the opening and closing prayers. For the opening prayer, you will need three prayer leaders and two readers. For the closing prayer, you will need two prayer leaders. Give them each a copy of the prayer handouts, and ask them to review their parts ahead of time.

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Distribute the handout “Opening Prayer” [Document #: TX005791]).

Direct the leaders to read from their places in the larger group. As leader 1 begins, have another young person come forward to light the candle.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:34–40

Direct the Gospel readers to move to the front by the candle and read from there.

Share the following with the young people:

- We are called to care for the least among us, the ones Bishop Frank refers to as “the people living in the shadows,” the outsiders, the forgotten, the brokenhearted. Today we go out in service to others, to “do what we believe” and to “be the neighbor who acts with mercy.” What does it mean to be a neighbor? What walls stand in the way of seeing others as our neighbors?

Opening Reflection Activity (20 minutes)

Arrange the young people, sitting or standing, facing a blank wall on which they will tape their paper bricks. Distribute a paper brick from the handout “Bricks” (Document #: TX005790) and a black marker to each young person.

Begin to play the song or music video “Scandal of Mercy” (acoustic version) and share the following with the young people:

- This song was written by 17-year-old Thomas Muglia. As you listen to the lyrics, write on your paper brick a word or phrase that expresses how you are feeling this morning as we prepare to go out, beyond these walls, in service to others. What walls stand in the way of seeing others as our neighbors? After you have written a word or phrase, bring your brick to the front and tape it on the wall.

Conclude with the following blessing:

- Lord, bless us this day. Bless us with your mercy. Bless us with kindness, compassion, goodness, and open hearts so that we may see our neighbors and bring love to them, just as we desire to be loved ourselves. You have said that those who show mercy are the true neighbors and that this is the path of lasting happiness. We ask this blessing in the name of your Son, Jesus, who has revealed to us through the Spirit the call to mercy. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Service Project(s)

All depart to service site(s).

Reconvene

Have a light meal or snacks (depending on time) available for the young people as a transition from work site to closing-process time. Set the meal or snacks up near the “wall” that was built during the opening prayer, encouraging the young people to look at the words and phrases on the bricks.

Closing Reflection Activity (30 minutes)

Arrange the young people into small groups for the closing reflection, ensuring that all members within a group went to the same service site. These questions, along with the response and dismissal and sign of peace, are available on the handout “Closing Reflection Activity and Closing Prayer” (Document #: TX005810); you can either print copies and distribute them, or project the questions on a screen for all to see.

- Did anything surprise you about your experience today?
- What did you learn about service?
- What did you learn about those you served and those who served with you?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What were some of the feelings you had during the experience?
- How was being a part of a team—a community—helpful to you today?
- In what ways does the organization or the group of people you worked with impress, inspire, challenge, or motivate you to give of yourself in service to others?
- In what ways can you continue to support, into the future, the organization or the people you served today?

Distribute a sheet of paper to each small group and ask each to come up with a hashtag to describe their discussion to the larger group, writing it in large print on their paper.

Invite each small group to come forward and present to the large group its hashtag and to say a little bit about what it means for them as a group. Have the groups tape their hashtags on the wall, next to the bricks. Allow time for the young people to offer individual comments about their experiences.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Light the candle and gather the large group near the prayer table and the wall of paper bricks while playing the song or music video “Start a Fire,” by Ike Ndolo. After the song, invite the young people to take their bricks down from the wall. On the back side of their bricks, have them write a sentence or phrase that describes how their feelings have changed from this morning. For example: “I felt nervous this morning, but now I feel proud of what we did.”

Distribute the handout “Closing Reflection Activity and Closing Prayer” (Document #: TX005810) if you haven’t already. Introduce the closing prayer with these or similar words:

- Earlier we reflected on what it means to go beyond the walls of the Church and our lives. We went beyond these walls in service. As we again listen to “Scandal of Mercy,” let us take a few minutes to think about the word or phrase we wrote on our bricks this morning. How has this day of service affected what you were feeling this morning? What new insight or perspective has this day generated for you about the call to mercy? Think about how you are feeling now. What, if anything, has changed for you?

Response

Read the prayer on the handout “Closing Reflection Activity and Closing Prayer” (Document #: TX005810).

Dismissal and Sign of Peace

Prayer leaders read from their places in the group.

Thank the young people for their commitment today (tonight). Make any announcements that may be needed before you dismiss the young people.



Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer

Leader 1: “The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those essentially on the ‘outskirts’ of life.” —Pope Francis (homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015)

Leader 2: God of mercy, be with us as we leave the four walls behind. Give us the courage to do what we believe and to live out Jesus’ mission in the world.

Leader 3: Be with us as we move beyond the sanctuary and reach out to our neighbors in need. Give us courage to leave the ordinary, safe bounds of society and to be “scandalous” as we break down the walls of division in care for our neighbors.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:34–40

Reader 1: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

“The king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’”

Reader 2: “Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’”

Reader 1: “And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Reader 2: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(The quotation by Pope Francis on this handout is from his homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150215_omelia-nuovi-cardinali.html. Copyright [LEV].

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Bricks



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Called to Mercy

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Closing Reflection Activity Questions and Closing Prayer

Closing Reflection Activity Questions

- Did anything surprise you about your experience today?
- What did you learn about service?
- What did you learn about those you served and those who served with you?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What were some of the feelings you had during the experience?
- How was being a part of a team—a community—helpful to you today?
- In what ways does the organization or the group of people you worked with impress, inspire, challenge, or motivate you to give of yourself in service to others?
- In what ways can you continue to support, into the future, the organization or the people you served today?

Closing Prayer

Response

God of joy, help us to see with your eyes,
that we may see each person as your creation
and reach out to all our sisters and brothers.

God of Hope, help us to hear with your ears,
that we may hear all who cry out
and bring hope to the forgotten, the frightened,
and the oppressed.

God of Love, help us to love like you,
that we may be messengers of mercy
and transform the world with your love.

Inspire us. Challenge us. Be with us.

And make us one in you.

Amen.

Dismissal and Sign of Peace

Leader 1: “The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those on the ‘outskirts’ of life.” —Pope Francis (homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015)

Leader 2: God of mercy, be with us as we leave the four walls behind. Give us the courage to feed the hungry, reach out to the lost, and live out the call to mercy in the world.

Leader 1: Let us end our time together today by continuing to tear down walls by offering one another a sign of peace.

(The quote by Pope Francis on this handout is from his homily at Mass with new cardinals, February 15, 2015, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150215_omelia-nuovi-cardinali.html.)





Gathered Session 5: Mystagogia (45 minutes)

Overview

This gathered session comes after the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. It focuses on the experience of receiving Confirmation and recalls the elements and activities of the entire preparation process. The session helps the young people reflect on the process, express their gratitude for the guidance and community they have experienced through program leaders and peer relationships, and affirm the commitment they have made by choosing a keepsake.

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
5 minutes	Gathering
5 minutes	Welcome and Opening Prayer
15 minutes	Small-Group Activity
10 minutes	Small-Group Activity
10 minutes	Closing Prayer

Practical Considerations

Preparation

- **Space:** This gathering requires space for the group to meet together as a whole, as well as space for the small groups to meet.
- **Prayer:** For the opening and closing prayers, set up a prayer table with a tablecloth, a Bible, a candle, and matches. For the closing prayer, you will need to provide several small keepsakes, each containing a phrase from the list below. Each young person will choose a keepsake based on the value, lesson, or gift he or she most desires to take away from the Confirmation experience.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| ○ Do What You Believe | ○ Be Present and Listen | ○ God Is Most Proud When We Try |
| ○ God Is Love | ○ Am I Willing to Do It? | ○ Christ Loves You |
| ○ It's Not Complicated | ○ Love Confirms Dignity | ○ Christ Wants You to Change the World |
| ○ Love God above All Things | ○ We Don't Earn Love | ○ Be Courageous |
| ○ Love Is Most Needed in the Shadows | ○ We Don't Earn Dignity | ○ Don't Be Afraid to Fail |
| ○ It's the Way of God | ○ Love Validates Dignity | ○ Try Whatever You Can |
| ○ He Looks to Us | ○ Realize the Dignity You Already Have | ○ Called to Mercy |
| ○ What Are You Doing about It? | ○ Go out and Make a Difference | ○ Forgive, Even When It Is Difficult |
| ○ Saints Are Our Friends | ○ Friendship: That's What the Kingdom of God Is All About | |
| ○ Your Will Be Done | | |

One option for a keepsake is to paint on small smooth stones, or print on cardstock, flames, doves, or other images along with the phrases, one per item. Include multiples of phrases to allow more than one person to choose a particular phrase. You may have ideas for other mementos or keepsakes that would be meaningful to your group. A T-shirt with the motto of mercy the young people designed as part of the retreat might be appreciated. In many places, there is a tradition of giving each young person his or her own Bible, such as *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics* or *The Catholic Youth Bible*[®], from Saint Mary's Press.

You may also want to invite three readers for the closing prayer to arrive a few minutes early to practice reading with the background music so that you can adjust the volume settings accordingly.

Materials Needed

• Gathering and Opening Prayer

- the song or music video "Holy Spirit," by Steven Joubert, from the *Scandal of Mercy* album, and an audio or video system
- copies of the handout "Opening Prayer" (Document #: TX005811), one for each young person and adult leader
- projection equipment and a digital photo that represents each invocation in the opening prayer litany (*optional*)

• First Small-Group Activity

- sheets of newsprint, one for each small group
- markers, several for each small group
- small prizes for the winning group members

• Second Small-Group Activity

- tape, one roll for each small group
- pens, one for each young person
- strips of paper in different colors (at least three per person)

• Closing Prayer

- the song "Scandal of Love," by Greg Walton, from the *Scandal of Mercy* album, and an audio system
- copies of the handout "Closing Prayer" (Document #: TX005812), one for each young person and adult leader
- keepsakes

The Session

Gathering (5 minutes)

As the young people arrive, have Steven Joubert's song "Holy Spirit" playing in the background. If you have not already done so, find three young people to read for the closing prayer.

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Light the candle. Welcome the young people and introduce the session with these or similar words:

- Welcome back, everyone, and congratulations on your Confirmation! The team is very glad to be gathered together with you one last time. We wanted the chance to get together after Confirmation to reflect on the experience of Confirmation itself, have the chance to say good-bye, and take the time to remember all the ways we have learned and grown through this process. Let's begin with prayer.

Opening Prayer (see the handout "Opening Prayer" [Document #: TX005811])

Distribute the handout. Direct the young people to read the prayer aloud as a group. If you collected digital photos, project them on a screen or blank wall during the prayer, as each invocation is read.

Small-Group Activity (15 minutes)

Arrange the young people into small groups. Give each group several markers and a sheet of newsprint. Introduce the activity in these or similar words:

- When I say "Go!" your group will have 3 minutes to write down everything you can remember about Confirmation. You may include memories that pertain only to you, such as "My family couldn't find a place to park," and memories that apply to everyone, such as "The bishop and all the priests raised their hands over us when they prayed for us." You may name funny things that went wrong as well as the serious things that were supposed to happen. You may include feelings like "I was nervous," as well as facts. Your group will get extra points for anything you write down that is specifically related to the Sacrament of Confirmation. Keep in mind symbols and gestures, colors, songs, prayers, and any special words that were said.

Ask if anyone has questions before you begin. Let the young people know when they can start by calling "Go!" and time them. Give them a 30-second warning, then call time.

- Count the total number of memories your group listed, and write that number down as your score. Circle any responses that include the following words or phrases. (*Read this list slowly.*)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| • Holy Spirit | • Confirmation name |
| • renewal of baptismal promises | • bishop |
| • red | • the phrase "I do" |
| • chrism | • procession |
| • oil | • the phrase "Be sealed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit" |
| • Sign of the Cross | • blessing |
| • sponsor | |

Give your team an extra point for any of those words, and add them to your score.

When all the groups have totaled their score, award small prizes to the winning group. Then invite the groups to spend a few minutes discussing the following questions:

- What stood out most for you or meant a lot to you at Confirmation? Was there a special moment in the celebration? Did someone important to you attend? How did you feel about the whole experience?
- What connections can you make between the Confirmation Mass and things you learned through the *Called to Mercy* online learning modules or gathered sessions, including the service day?

Small-Group Activity (10 minutes)

Invite the small groups to stay where they are. Give each small group a roll of tape. Distribute to each young person a pen and three strips of paper. Explain that everyone should take a few minutes of quiet now to write down on their three strips of paper anything they are grateful for regarding Confirmation preparation and Confirmation itself. They could list any of the experiences they have had or friendships they have developed in the gathered sessions, during the retreat, or on the service day. Perhaps they are grateful for leaders, sponsors, parents, or other adults who helped them prepare. Perhaps they are grateful for the experience of receiving the sacrament or for something specific they have learned through the process. When everyone is ready, invite the young people to share in their groups and to assemble a paper chain with their strips.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Invite the small groups to come to the prayer space and connect their paper chains with the other groups' chains to form one large chain. This can be hung on the wall or coiled around the base of the prayer table. When everyone is seated again, light the candle and distribute the handout "Closing Prayer" (Document #: TX005812). Call the readers forward and turn on the music. Cue the readers to begin and be ready to lower the volume of the music during readings and raise it again as the young people come forward to choose their keepsakes.



Opening Prayer

There is a short litany in the middle of the prayer. After each invocation, please respond, "You sent your Spirit."

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and light in each one of us the fire of your love. Give us the courage to keep feeding the flame. Help us to burn so brightly that the world will know your loving presence through us, and the whole earth will be renewed through mercy. God, you love us and have given us the Sacrament of Confirmation to strengthen and embolden us. Throughout our process of preparation, we have encountered your loving, challenging presence.

When we first began, . . . you sent your Spirit.

On our retreat, . . . you sent your Spirit.

Through our learning, . . . you sent your Spirit.

In our friendships, . . . you sent your Spirit.

Through our saints and sponsors, . . . you sent your Spirit.

In our service projects, . . . you sent your Spirit.

Through our parish community, . . . you sent your Spirit.

Through our leaders (*you could mention the names of adult and teen leaders here*) . . . you sent your Spirit.

In the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, . . . you sent your Spirit.

Together we have learned and grown. We have served and celebrated, given and received love and friendship. Bless our time together today. Once more, send your Holy Spirit among us to connect and inspire us, we pray, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.





Closing Prayer

Begin by playing the song “Scandal of Love,” by Greg Walton, from the Scandal of Mercy album. After the song has played for about a minute, lower the volume just enough so the readers can be heard. Cue the readers to begin.

Reader 1: The Gospel of John affirms that God is love. This love has now been made obvious and real in Jesus’ whole life. He is nothing but love, a love given freely. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him show us something unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially for sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering—all these signs are meant to teach mercy. Everything in Jesus speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is without compassion. Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them. He healed the sick who were presented to him, and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd. What moved Jesus in all of these situations was mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest needs.

Pause.

Reader 2: On June 5, 2014, Pope Francis tweeted, “Like the Good Samaritan, may we not be ashamed of touching the wounds of those who suffer, but try to heal them with concrete acts of love.”

Pause.

Reader 3: From a Confirmation homily given by Pope Francis:

Remain steadfast in the journey of faith, with firm hope in the Lord. This is the secret of our journey! He gives us the courage to swim against the tide. Pay attention, my young friends: to go against the current; this is good for the heart, but we need courage to swim against the tide. Jesus gives us this courage! . . . With him we can do great things; he will give us the joy of being his disciples, his witnesses. Commit yourselves to great ideals, to the most important things. We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for little things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals.

Pause.

Reader 1: Take a moment to think about everything we have experienced in our Confirmation process. From all of that—the material we learned, our retreat, our service day, our times together—what lesson, what value or insight, do you most want to remember? What is it that you want to take away from this experience and carry out into the world?

Reader 2: We invite you now to come forward a few at a time and choose a keepsake from the table that represents what you want to remember from Confirmation and carry out in your own life.

Turn the music back up until all the young people have come forward, and then lower the volume as the readers begin again.



Reader 2: We leave this place, not alone, but connected—to one another, to our church, to the Gospel, to Christ who binds all things through his Spirit. Our call to mercy doesn't end here. Our call to a merciful life is just beginning.

Reader 3: Dear God, help us to remember:

The generosity of the Good Samaritan,

The holiness of our sponsors and saints,

The lessons we have learned and the love and friendship we have shared.

Help us to always be people who “do what we believe,”

To always reach out to the people in the shadows,

To be your mercy in the world.

We pray in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Adult leader: Before we go, let us share with one another a sign of Christ's peace.

(The quotation from Pope Francis's Confirmation homily on this handout is from Homily at the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation, April 28, 2013, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130428_omelia-cresime.html. Copyright © LEV.)





Retreat

Overview

This retreat is a full-day event, with an overnight option, designed to help the young people enter a more contemplative and reflective period, free of day-to-day distractions and busyness. The retreat focuses on the theme of mercy and allows the young people to explore their own stories of encounters of mercy in their lives—when they have experienced mercy and when they have not. The young people are led in a process of writing a story of desire for their own life, imagining how they desire to live a life rooted in, and giving witness to, mercy. As they consider how this might look for themselves, they are invited to reflect on the stories of Jesus, spiritual guides, and the saints, as well as the call of the Church.

Preparation

One Month Before

If the Confirmation community will be attending Mass as part of the retreat, set the Mass up for the final activity or before dinner (if you are extending the full-day option or doing the overnight option).

Mercy moments are staged stations for the young people to experience during the “Good Samaritan Stroll” in the closing prayer experience. Ideally, parishioners or parish or school staff who have not been involved in the retreat up to this point will serve as the actors, but retreat volunteers can step in if needed.

- **Station 1:** A person is unloading his or her car or moving items from one place to another. Essentially, the person may be taking five items inside and bringing the same five items back outside. The person must appear to be struggling with heavy items or too many items, perhaps even dropping some. The actor may not ask for help but may receive help graciously.
- **Station 2:** People (e.g., menu ministry team members) are setting up or cleaning and putting away tables and chairs in the dining area, rushing and maybe even a bit frantic, as though they are running behind, perhaps struggling with the heaviness of the chairs or tables.
- **Station 3:** An elderly parishioner is sitting on a bench outside of the building. The parishioner should wait until the young people initiate communication, and then he or she may respond.
- **Station 4:** An unrecognizable parishioner is bundled up or standing in the sun fanning herself or himself (depending on the weather outside of the building). The parishioner should wait until the young people initiate communication, and then he or she may respond.

Recruit adult volunteers to help throughout the day, including a volunteer to create the PowerPoint presentation during the retreat and chaperones if you are doing the overnight option.

Establish a menu ministry coordinator to prepare and serve food for the day. Provide a budget, guidelines, and a list of food allergies. The menu ministry coordinator will then organize a group of parents, the previous Confirmation group, or the leadership team to be on the menu ministry team. All of the food prepared for the day will be based on children’s books, to emphasize the theme of *story* that runs through the retreat. Examples are listed here, but feel free to brainstorm and create new options. Print color copies of the front covers of these books, or borrow the actual books (from parish families or your local library) and display them with their corresponding foods.

Breakfast:

- *Green Eggs and Ham*: breakfast casserole
- *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*: muffins
- *If You Give a Dog a Donut*: donuts

Lunch:

- *Dragons Love Tacos*: tacos
- *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*: spaghetti with meatballs or Swedish meatballs
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*: fruit kabobs
- *James and the Giant Peach*: peaches
- *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*: Swedish fish or Goldfish crackers
- *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*: cookies
- *Goodnight Moon*: moon pies

Dinner is optional if you are doing the full-day retreat without the overnight option. Consider inviting parents, sponsors (if the young people have already identified them), members of the previous Confirmation group, and any other parishioners or staff members involved in the Confirmation process to a potluck dinner with the young people. Sharing a meal is a great way for the young people to feel that they are part of the faith community. Encourage them to take the opportunity to share moments of mercy they have experienced on the retreat, and ask the other guests to share their own stories of mercy.

One Week Before

1. Assign the young people to groups of four or five. These will be their groups for the entire retreat.
2. Make copies of the handouts and gather other resources needed for the activities:
 - a large candle, altar, or statue to serve as the centerpiece for the retreat
 - pens or pencils and markers
 - an audio or video system
 - instrumental music (*optional*)
 - copies of *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke*, one for each young person
 - pads of sticky notes in different colors, one color for each group
 - a puzzle with large pieces (at least two or three pieces for each young person)
Note: Depending on the number of participants, the “Puzzle: We Are the Church” activity may work better as a small-group activity. In this case, provide one puzzle for each small group, preferably large enough that each participant can take five pieces for the second part of the activity.
 - a large mirror
 - sticky-back mirror sheets, trimmed to fit on the inside front cover of *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke*, one for each young person
 - 11-x-17-inch sheets of art paper, one for each young person (*optional*)
 - the song “Amazing Grace,” sung by Sarah Kroger, on the *Scandal of Mercy* album
 - PowerPoint and projection equipment
 - small journals, one for each young person (*overnight option*)

- the song “Scandal of Mercy” (acoustic), by Thomas Muglia, on the *Scandal of Mercy* album (*overnight option*)
- people-shaped craft sticks, one for each young person (*overnight option*)
- flameless candles, one for each group (*overnight option*)

Full-Day Retreat: Morning (4 hours)

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
15 minutes	Breakfast
30 minutes	Icebreaker
15 minutes	Opening Prayer
45 minutes	“Letters Form Words” Activity
15 minutes	Break
30 minutes	“Puzzle: We Are the Church” Activity
30 minutes	“Reflecting Christ: Morning Wrap-Up” Activity
60 minutes	Lunch

Breakfast (15 minutes)

Set the breakfast foods and books or book covers out ahead of time so that the young people can begin eating as they arrive. If they ask the reason for the books, encourage them to think about the connection between the stories and the food, and to keep thinking about the importance of stories in general as the retreat unfolds.

Icebreaker (30 minutes)

Welcome the young people and explain that this icebreaker will serve as an introduction to the theme of the retreat. Offer the following directions:

- Letters are the building blocks of our language. Each has its own identity, but we need to know how to use and arrange them in order to communicate with one another. If a letter stands alone (with the exception of *A* and *I*), it lacks meaning.
- Individual letters suggest something different to each of us. For example, when one person sees an *S*, he or she might think of a favorite sport, soccer, while another person might think of his or her best friend, Sam.
- The goal of this alphabet icebreaker is to get through the whole alphabet with only one person speaking at a time.
- For example, one person says “*A*,” and another person follows with “*B*”; however, if two people jump in at the same time, the group must start over.

This prompts the young people to listen, wait, and try to establish a group rhythm. Encourage the young people to be spontaneous for the first few tries—just jump in and start. If they repeatedly struggle to complete the round, ask if they want to pause and problem-solve among themselves. After they make it through the entire alphabet, invite them to try it again, this time with their eyes closed.

Finish the icebreaker with a word round, similar to the first, but proceeding clockwise around the circle saying words in alphabetical order. Offer the following directions:

- Now we will go around the circle saying words in alphabetical order. You will say the first word that pops into your head that begins with your letter. If you hesitate, the group must start again, with the person who hesitated now starting with A.

Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

The icebreaker serves as a good transition into a new way to pray.

Distribute a pen or pencil and a copy of the handout “ABC Prayer” (Document #: TX005826) to each young person. Offer the following directions:

- As you ask God to guide your pen, write an ABC prayer by writing down one intention for each letter (that starts with that letter), including things you are thankful for, things that you need guidance with, people in your life, issues that are important to you, people you want to pray for, whatever you feel called to write.

Consider playing soft, instrumental music to create a prayerful atmosphere.

When everyone is finished writing, invite the young people to go around the circle alphabetically again, saying the word, phrase, or name they wrote as their intention for that letter. If a young person’s prayer is personal or confidential, she or he can pass, and there is no need to start over if someone hesitates.

Share the following reflection:

- There once was a little girl with terminal cancer. As her family gathered around her bedside in her last few hours, they were filling their time with words and realized that they had not asked the little girl what she would like to say. In her gentle, sweet voice she began to say her ABCs and her family wondered where this was going. When they asked her why she recited the ABCs, she replied, “I just didn’t know what to say, so I figured I would say the letters and God would put together the words.”

Pose this question to the group:

- How often do we let God put together our words?

Allow quiet time before inviting the young people to share as they feel comfortable.

Close by saying the following prayer as a group, found on the handout:

- “Indeed, the word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). Let your words live in me, Lord, and let me act according to your word. Amen.

Letters Form Words (45 minutes)

Arrange the young people into their assigned groups and let them know that these will be their groups for the rest of the retreat. Ask each group to choose a scribe for a brainstorming activity.

The groups will have 3 minutes to brainstorm words found in Scripture or heard during the Mass. Explain that this activity will serve as the introduction to the theme of the retreat, which they will find out after the first part of the activity. Encourage the young people to try to stick to words that are related to Scripture or Mass (for example, *praise* and *Lord* instead of *home* and *walk*). The scribes should write down as many words as they can. At the end of 3 minutes, gather a word count from each group.

Introduce *mercy* as the retreat theme in these or similar words:

- Two powerful ways God makes his mercy present to us are through Scripture and the Mass.
- Mercy, as you will explore and experience throughout this retreat, is God's compassion and forgiveness poured out on us. We see God's mercy in action in the way he protected and guided the Israelites in the Old Testament, and in the way Jesus forgave sinners, healed the sick, and taught the crowds in the Gospels.
- We see God's mercy in the Mass too. For example, right at the beginning of the Mass, we acknowledge our sins and ask Jesus to forgive us. In the Eucharistic Prayer and in receiving Jesus' Body and Blood, we enter into Jesus' ultimate act of mercy: his suffering and death on the cross to save us from sin and death and bring us to eternal life.
- When we receive God's mercy, we are filled with new life. The life we receive through God's mercy enables us to forgive others and to show them compassion. The Holy Spirit leads us to show mercy to our family, friends, classmates, neighbors, and everyone we meet. The Spirit also inspires us to share with others the message of God and his mercy—how we experienced God's mercy in the first place.

Now direct each group to narrow its list down to 10 words that would describe for people everything they need to know about mercy.

Give each group a pad of sticky notes (in their assigned color) and have them write each of their 10 words on a separate sticky note. As each group presents by sticking its notes on a bulletin board, blank wall, or other open space, invite all the young people to work together to sort the words to help identify any repeats, differing words, or other patterns that emerge once all the words are posted.

Ask for volunteers to explain why their group picked their words and why they didn't include others.

Direct the groups to gather together again and narrow down their lists to five of the most important words about what mercy is. They may use words that other groups presented after the first round. Have the groups present their new lists, and encourage them to share how they arrived at those five words (for example, why they chose to add a certain word from another group, or how they decided which words to eliminate).

Distribute a copy of *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke* to each young person. Direct the young people to write their group's five words near Luke 6:35: "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked." As an alternative to writing directly in the Gospel, you

could suggest that the young people each write their group's words on a sticky note and then stick the note to the page near this verse.

Break (15 minutes)

Puzzle: We Are the Church (30 minutes)

Transition to this activity with these or similar words:

- In the last activity, we created lists of words to tell people about mercy.
- Mercy is both a gift we have received from God and a gift we are called to give away. It changes our lives and the lives of those we offer it to.
- In this activity, we will explore how that receiving and giving happens in community.

Spread out the puzzle pieces in a large, flat area where all the young people will be able to reach and rearrange them. If you are conducting this activity in small groups, ensure there is enough space between groups so that their puzzle pieces do not get mixed together. Guide the young people in assembling the puzzle three times, following these directions for each round:

- Round 1: Assemble the puzzle as a group.
- Round 2: Divide the pieces equally and touch only your pieces to assemble the puzzle.
- Round 3: Divide the pieces again and assemble the puzzle without talking.

Gather the larger group and discuss how this activity relates to faith. Have the young people share their ideas. Affirm their contributions and close the first part of this activity with these or similar words:

- Our receiving and giving mercy are best understood in the context of the Church community. We are connected to one another in the Church, and we receive strength and grace from the sacraments and people in the community who enable us to show mercy to one another and to people outside the Church.
- In the Church, we each bring different gifts to help one another follow God and show mercy, just as you helped one another assemble the puzzle in the different rounds.
- In the next part of this activity, we will learn that mercy must be concrete. Mercy is not just a nice feeling; it is love and forgiveness and compassion put into action with the people we encounter.

Now direct the young people to each choose a puzzle piece and then gather with their group members. Give each group some markers and instruct the young people to write the following on the back of their puzzle pieces. (If you are conducting this activity in small groups, have each young person choose five puzzle pieces from her or his group's puzzle and write one of the following on each piece.)

- their name
- the name of a person who has been important in their faith
- the name of a person in their parish, school, or family who is a good example of mercy
- one of the five words their group picked to describe mercy
- the name or description of someone who is in need of their mercy

Gather the larger group once more, and have the young people assemble the puzzle again, this time with the backs of the pieces faceup. (If you are conducting this activity in small groups, have the small groups stay together for this part.) Invite the young people to observe how all of these words together

make a big picture, a story of those gathered here. Transition to the next activity, the last of the morning, with these or similar words, addressed to the larger group:

- Picture your life as a continuation of Christ's story. What is this story about? In what ways are you helping to write it?
- Now picture your life as a story of its own. What is it about? Who decides what happens in it?

Reflecting Christ: Morning Wrap-Up (30 minutes)

Often we must take a step back and look in the mirror to see if our lives are reflecting Christ.

Direct the young people to come up and get a copy of the handout "Mirror of Mercy" (Document #: TX005827). Before each young person sits back down, she or he should hold the handout up to the large mirror for a moment to see that it reads, "I reflect Christ's mercy." When everyone has done this, explain that they will now spend 15 to 20 minutes in silent reflection time as they answer the questions on the handout.

As the young people rejoin the larger group, distribute the sticky-back mirrors and direct them to stick the mirrors onto the inside front covers of their copy of *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke*.

Conclude with this prayer as the young people gaze into their mirrors, literally seeing themselves on the pages of Scripture:

- May we always reflect God's mercy in our words.
May we have the strength to reflect God's mercy in our actions.
May our life be a reflection of God's story, rooted in mercy and love.
We ask all of this, in the name of the true example of mercy, the Holy Trinity.
Amen.

Lunch (60 minutes)

Gather the young people in the dining space. Have a member of the menu ministry team or another adult volunteer offer a short blessing before lunch.

Stories feed our souls and leave us hungering for a lead role.

Encourage the young people to eat their lunch with people they haven't talked to yet today. Ask each table to discuss this question as they eat:

- What book would you want a part in?

Distribute sticky notes or small pads of paper and a few pens to each table. During the meal, hold three 1-minute speed rounds every 15 minutes:

- Round 1: Name as many books as you can.
- Round 2: Name as many TV shows as you can.
- Round 3: Name as many movies as you can.

The tables will compete as groups, and their answers must be written down to count. Consider offering a reward for each round, such as allowing the winning table of the first round to be first in line for food.

These games will tie into the idea that books, TV shows, and movies tell a story, and so should our lives. After lunch, the young people will begin a session on Scripture stories.

Full-Day Retreat: Afternoon (5 or 6 hours)

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
30 minutes	Free Time
30 minutes	"Scripture Stories about Mercy" Activity
20 minutes	"Images of Mercy" Activity
100 minutes	"Exploring Mission Statements" Activity
15 minutes	Break/Snack
45 minutes	"What Is Our Motto of Mercy?" Activity
60 minutes	Closing Prayer Experience
60 minutes	Celebration of the Mass (<i>optional</i>)

Free Time (30 minutes)

Guide the young people in using this free time to mingle with one another, play games, call their parents, or simply rest and relax.

Scripture Stories about Mercy (30 minutes)

Introduce guidance and encouragement to live lives of mercy as the topic of the afternoon.

Direct the young people to gather in their groups. Assign one or two passages from the Reading Guide in *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke* to each group. As an alternative, use the following Scripture passages (which appear in the *Called to Mercy* modules).

- Matthew 5:14–16
- Luke 3:10–11
- James 2:14–17
- Matthew 5:43–48
- Matthew 25:35–40
- 1 John 3:17–18
- John 15:11–14, 16–17
- Matthew 6:9–15
- Luke 10:25–37

Ask the young people to consider the following questions as they read and then to discuss the questions in their groups:

- What do these stories tell us about mercy?
- What do these stories call us to do or be?

Explain to the young people that Pope Francis calls us to be missionaries of mercy. In his document *The Face of Mercy (Misericordiae Vultus)*, he uses many images to help us better understand the “face of mercy.” Let’s explore these images to find out what mercy looks like!

Images of Mercy (20 minutes)

Divide the “Images of Mercy” handout (Document #: TX005828) so that each group gets three images used by Pope Francis. Have the groups discuss what each image says about mercy.

The following images are listed on the handout:

- medicine of mercy
- balm of mercy
- the path of merciful love
- a force that reawakens us to new life
- an oasis of mercy
- instruments of mercy
- the oil of consolation
- fruits of divine mercy
- sanctuary of divine mercy

Other images from *The Face of Mercy* that might help the young people contemplate mercy include the following:

- God’s justice
- Jesus as the face of the Father’s mercy
- the beating heart of the Gospel
- the great river of mercy

Exploring Mission Statements (100 minutes)

Remind the young people that a mission statement is a summary of the goals, purpose, and values of a person, institution, or business. Explain that the next two activities introduce the young people to the process of creating a mission statement to guide their lives, based on the goals, purpose, and values that are important to them.

Have each group look up the mission statements for three popular businesses or brands and write these on a sheet of paper. Then direct the groups to trade papers and try to guess the businesses or brands based on the mission statements.

Mission Statements in Scripture (30 minutes of the total)

For this part of the “Exploring Mission Statements” activity, direct the young people to open their Bibles or *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke* to the Scripture passage their group read in the “Scripture Stories about Mercy” activity. If they were assigned more than one passage, have the groups choose one passage to study for this activity.

Invite the groups to do the following:

- Write a mission statement based on your group’s Scripture passage.

Give the groups some time to write their missions statements and then invite them to share these statements with the larger group. They should read the Scripture passage their statement is based on as part of their presentation.

Our Stories (35 minutes of the total)

Introduce this part of the “Exploring Mission Statements” activity, in which the young people will craft their own mission statements for a life of mercy, with these or similar words:

- We have gone from letters, to words, to stories.
- Look at your group’s five words to describe mercy and at the Scripture passage you read, along with the mission statement your group crafted. If you were to craft a *personal* mission statement, one to guide your life personally, what would it be?

Invite the young people to take the next 20 to 30 minutes for quiet reflection to formulate their personal mission statements. Encourage them to incorporate ideas from the rest of the retreat.

Create Stories (35 minutes of the total)

For this part of the “Exploring Mission Statements” activity, explain to the young people that they will create a photo story or video that reflects their personal mission statement. They will record the photos or video with their phones and e-mail them to the volunteer who is putting together the PowerPoint presentation. (You might consider setting up a gmail account specifically for this purpose, such as *ConfirmationYourParishName@gmail.com*). Alternatively, the young people could use an app like Snapchat to record and share their mission statements.

If you have fewer than 20 young people, have them choose one of the following options:

Option 1: Act out the words of your personal mission statement in three to five photos.

For example, with the mission statement “To love and serve God,” a young person might take these photos:

- a heart made with their hands
- hands outstretched in service
- a hand pointing up or hands praying
- a sheet of paper that says “To Love and Serve God”

Option 2: Take multiple photos of the words of your personal mission statement.

If you have more than 20 young people, have them choose one of the following options:

Option 1: On an 11-x-17-inch sheet of paper, write your personal mission statement. Decorate your mission statement and take a photo with it.

Option 2: Take a video of yourself proudly stating your personal mission statement.

Direct the young people to gather with their group members while they work on their mission statement stories, as they may need help taking photos or shooting videos.

Gather all of the stories into one e-mail account and download them to use during the closing prayer. Have one of the volunteers put the personal mission statement stories together in a PowerPoint presentation with the song “Amazing Grace,” sung by Sarah Kroger on the *Scandal of Mercy* album, as the background music. Save the PowerPoint presentation to be played during the closing prayer of the retreat or after the Confirmation Mass as part of a montage of the young people’s mission of mercy.

Break/Snack (15 minutes)

What Is Our Motto of Mercy? (45 minutes)

In this activity, the groups will brainstorm a motto of mercy for their whole Confirmation class. Once each group has come up with two or three ideas, they will present and “sell” their mottoes to the larger group. After all the groups have presented, lead the larger group in voting to choose one motto for the whole Confirmation class.

Invite the young people to record the class motto, along with their personal mission statements, on the back of their puzzle pieces from the morning activity, if they so choose.

Note: Consider incorporating this class motto into the PowerPoint presentation for the closing prayer. You might also have it printed on bookmarks, candles, or T-shirts for a wonderful Confirmation gift. Personalize the Confirmation gifts by adding each young person’s personal mission statement to his or her gift.

If you are using the overnight retreat option, skip to the Mass or dinner following this activity. If you are not using the overnight option, transition to the “Closing Prayer Experience” at this time.

Closing Prayer Experience (60 minutes)

Distribute a copy of the handout “Good Samaritan Stroll” (Document #: TX005829) to each young person. Begin the experience by asking one of the young people to summarize the Parable of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke. If no one is familiar with it, ask for two or three volunteers to read it aloud from *The Catholic Youth Bible: The Gospel of Luke* (10:25–37). Describe the concept of mercy as presented in the parable in these or similar words:

- We often think of a “Good Samaritan” as someone who does something nice for another person. But the Samaritan in Jesus’ parable did so much more than a random act of kindness.

First, he went out of his way to show mercy to the man who had been attacked. His act of mercy set back his own travel time, in addition to his money, significantly. And he didn’t expect anything in return; he actually offered to give even *more* if it was required!

Second, the Samaritan typically would have considered the victim, a Jewish man, to be an enemy. And vice versa—maybe the Jewish man would have refused the Samaritan’s help, if he were able! But the Samaritan recognized that the Jewish man was in need and decided to show him compassion, regardless of who he was.

- In the next part of this prayer experience, you will have opportunities to show mercy to others and to reflect on other times when you have shown mercy to another person or when mercy has been shown to you.

Explain to the young people that they will now experience a “Good Samaritan Stroll,” consisting of four *mercy moments* (stations described in the Preparation section at the beginning of the retreat plan) that they will rotate through in their groups. For each mercy moment, the groups should observe what is happening, briefly discuss what the merciful course of action would be, and then put it into action.

Each group must go to each mercy moment together but not at the same time as another group. Be sure that each group begins at a different mercy moment, discusses the applicable questions on the handout after experiencing a mercy moment, and waits patiently before moving to the next one if another group is still there. It is best to have adults at each mercy moment to facilitate and help with the flow of the groups.

If you have more than four groups, a feasible option is to divide the class in half. Half of the young people can participate in the “Good Samaritan Stroll” while the other half has time for quiet personal reflection, and then the groups can switch.

When all groups have completed the four mercy moments, gather the larger group in a circle around a large candle, an altar, statue, or whatever has served as the centerpiece of the environment throughout the retreat.

Share these or similar words:

- Today we have gathered to see how letters become words, words become sentences, and sentences become stories. These stories shape our lives and tell us more of who God is, and who God calls us to be.
- Bishop Frank tells us, “Love helps the person realize the dignity that they already have.” Mercy is offering the love of Christ, which we first received and then are called to give to others just as freely as it was given to us.
- In the journey of faith, there are those who have shown us mercy. We now take a moment to think of those people.

Allow the young people some quiet reflection time and then invite them to identify these people by name.

- These people have been a model of mercy to us. They are a part of our story and an inspiration as we look forward to the mission God has planned for each of us.

Share the PowerPoint presentation of the young people’s personal mission statements and stories.

- As we conclude our time here today, let us ask for the courage to start a revolution of mercy. Let our mission become our vision of how we will show God’s mercy to others. Just as you “put on” Christ in your Baptism, we now ask God to ignite the Gifts of the Holy Spirit within each of you as you “put on” mercy.

Close with the prayer “Circle of Mercy,” by Jeannette Goglia, RSM, following the directions on the handout to pray it as a group.

Celebration of the Mass (60 minutes, *optional*)

Transition to the Mass with these or similar words:

- The Mass tells us a story, a story we are a part of. As we have learned today, it is a story of mercy. How does the Mass tell the story of mercy? How does the Mass tell our story?

Talk beforehand to the priest who will be celebrating the Mass to see if he is comfortable with brief interruptions (similar to a teaching Mass). The young people will benefit from hearing explanations of some of the many moments of mercy throughout the Mass, such as the Penitential Rite, the Gloria, any mercy references in the day's readings, and the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion Rite.

Distribute a copy of the handout "Celebration of the Mass" (Document #: TX005830) to each young person. Direct the young people to cut out the heart on the handout and bring it with them to the Mass. Give each young person a pen before the Mass so they can note moments of mercy during the Mass (either a moment they experience mercy personally, or a moment they recognize that mercy has been offered) on their paper hearts.

Overnight Option: Evening (4 hours)

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
60 minutes	Dinner
20 minutes	"Mercy and the Mass" Activity
70 minutes	"Works of Mercy" Activity
70 minutes	"Write My Story" Activity
20 minutes	Evening Prayer

Dinner (60 minutes)

The dinner hour can also be a good time to have the young people take their belongings to their rooms for the night, play a game outside, etc.

If you are having a potluck dinner, encourage the young people to sit with their families, previous Confirmation class members, or other parishioners, and to share what they have experienced throughout the day. Ask the priest or another parishioner ahead of time to say grace before the meal.

Mercy and the Mass (20 minutes)

Begin the evening with a brief discussion of the young people's experience at the Mass, using the following questions to get the discussion going:

- How does the Mass tell the story of mercy?
- How does the Mass tell our story?

Discussion can begin in the larger group and then break into smaller discussion groups or vice versa.

After they have had time to process the first set of questions, direct the young people to gather in their groups and to individually consider the following questions, which are also listed on the "Celebration of the Mass" handout (Document #: TX005830). Give the young people time to reflect on the questions and record their answers (or just write notes so they remember), and then invite them to share their answers, as much as they feel comfortable doing so, with their group members.

- What did God want you to hear today?
- How does the Eucharist provide mercy in a way that nothing else can?
- How can you start a revolution of mercy?
- Who is in need of mercy in your community?
- How do you define *mercy*?

Works of Mercy (70 minutes)

Briefly introduce and define the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Counsel the doubtful. To encourage someone who is struggling with doubts about faith or God, to keep him or her company on the journey. To live your own life so that others can see your faith in action.

Instruct the ignorant. To share your faith with others through religious education, the Bible, or by inviting them to Mass.

Admonish the sinner. To gently correct someone who is hurting themselves or others by his or her actions.

Comfort the sorrowful. To listen and be present with someone who is mourning the death of a loved one, the loss of a friendship, and so on.

Forgive injuries. To forgive without holding a grudge when someone hurts you.

Bear wrongs patiently. To react calmly and kindly when someone treats you unfairly.

Pray for the living and the dead. To bring the worries and struggles of family, friends, and classmates to God, as well as your own worries and struggles.

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry. To donate food or share extra servings with someone who needs it.

Give drink to the thirsty. To conserve water and support efforts to provide clean water around the world.

Clothe the naked. To donate clothing or money to organizations dedicated to helping people in need.

Shelter the homeless. To volunteer at, or donate items to, a homeless shelter. To respond with compassion when you encounter a homeless person.

Visit the sick. To volunteer at a nursing home and support those who take care of the elderly and ill.

Visit the imprisoned. To donate items to a prison ministry or organization that ministers to the families of those in prison.

Bury the dead. To send a card to someone whose loved one has died or to respectfully visit a cemetery.

Distribute the handout “Works of Mercy” (Document #: TX005831). Divide the list among the groups so that each group will be working on at least two Spiritual and two Corporal Works of Mercy. Overlap is acceptable if you have three or more groups.

Invite the groups to write a realistic scenario for each of the Works of Mercy they have been assigned. Each scenario should include an encounter with someone in need of this work of mercy and a merciful response to their need. Encourage the young people to base their scenarios on real events they have experienced, if possible. Note that more than one person can be involved in a given scenario; we are called to show mercy together, as a community of faith.

Give the groups plenty of time to work on their own, and then gather the larger group again. Ask for volunteers from each group to share one or two of the group’s scenarios until all of the Works of Mercy have been presented. The volunteers can either simply read the scenario or the group members can act it out.

Write My Story (70 minutes)

Distribute the small journals and explain this activity in these or similar words:

- Our lives are the continuation of the stories in Scripture, the continuation of the story of Christ, who is present today through us. Our lives are a reflection of Christ's love and mercy. When we receive love and mercy, we are then able to give love and mercy. God tells a story of faith through each of our lives. You are the main character in *his* story.
- Each of us has different gifts and talents. Some of us draw, some of us write poetry, some of us journal, but we are all storytellers.
- Using your ABC prayer, the words your group used to describe mercy, and your personal mission statement, you are going to write the story of your life.

Share the following "story" options with the young people:

- a picture book
- a children's book with one or two sentences on each page
- a five-page reflection
- a poem, placing one to two stanzas on each page
- a song
- a play with two to four scenes

Let the young people know they will have a little over an hour to work on their story of faith now, as well as time to finish it in the morning. Share the following prompts if anyone is having trouble getting started:

- Be sure the focus is on faith and mercy intermingled with life events. I invite you to go beyond, "I was born, I moved here, I went to school here." This is the story of your faith life.
- Who are you? Whom has God created you to be? How did you get here—whom or what has God put in your life to help you reach this point? Where are you going? Where is God leading you? How will you live out your mission of mercy?
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, focus on a few key points in your story instead of trying to describe everything you've ever experienced. For example, how did God reach out to you at a specific good or bad time in your life? What were the concrete changes you noticed—or decided to make—after this encounter?

Evening Prayer (20 minutes)

Share with the young people that music tells us a story, sometimes with no words.

Distribute the handout "Music Journaling" (Document #: TX005832). Play some instrumental music and have the young people journal the story they hear. Give them a couple minutes to finish writing after the music ends, and then have them gather and share in their groups.

Together say the following, which is included on handout:

- Mercy is God's powerful Word spoken in Jesus—
His life, passion and resurrection.
It bends and changes, forms and re-forms our lives,
so that we may receive Mercy
and, in turn, be merciful.

Retreat

Close by listening to “Scandal of Mercy” (acoustic), by Thomas Muglia, on the *Scandal of Mercy* album.

Dismiss the young people for the night in silence, as a time of reflection, prayer, and Scripture reading. This allows the young people to push themselves beyond their comfort zone and enter a time of extended silence, keeping them calm and prayerful as they go to bed.

Announce that lights-out will be in 30 minutes. Direct the chaperones to prayerfully sit vigil in the hallways with the lights low to maintain the atmosphere of prayer as the night ends.

Overnight Option: Morning (4 hours)

Suggested Structure

Time Frame	Activity
60 minutes	Breakfast and Cleanup
30 minutes	Opening Prayer
45 minutes	Reflection Time
45 minutes	"Sharing Our Stories" Activity
60 minutes	Closing Prayer Experience

Breakfast and Cleanup (60 minutes)

Opening Prayer (30 minutes)

"God: Delights in Who I Am"

by Annette Embrich, ASC

No matter where I may find myself—
Among the thickest of thistles and thorns in the desert
Or, in the midst of heat or in darkness,
I can only open myself to be
Who I am called to be.

What difference is there if I sparkle in the light
Or lay silent in the silence of the night?
Whether I'm perfectly formed or stained lightly,
I am created very beautifully
And becoming who I'm meant to be.

No shadow can ever cloud my goodness.
No one's light can dispel my spark.
I am beauty, I am hope, I am light
And that's who I'm called to be.

As I unfold with grace and integrity to the light
Of the full moon reflecting upon me,
I discover there's a piece of light in all of us.
It may be hidden or sheltered for a short while,
But I have with me the power to illumine the dark.
That's when I know I am who I'm called to be.

Whom has God created you to be? Distribute the people-shaped wooden craft sticks and markers and invite the young people to decorate their sticks with images and words that describe themselves. They can include gifts, talents, characteristics, quirks, likes, dislikes, and more.

When the young people are finished, they will share their people sticks in their groups.

Reflection Time (45 minutes)

The young people may take this time to finish or refine their story of faith they began the night before. Consider having a quiet activity available, such as a reflection walk the young people can take individually or in pairs, for anyone who finishes early.

Sharing Our Stories (45 minutes)

Call the young people back to the prayer space and ask them to sit in small circles with their group members. Give each group a flameless candle to place in the middle of their circle while they share their stories with one another. (If you have a group of 20 or fewer, feel free to invite each young person to share her or his story with the larger group.)

Encourage the young people to share as much of their stories as they feel comfortable doing. Remind them that sharing our stories, especially stories of faith, can bring us closer together as a community and can help encourage others on their journeys.

Closing Prayer Experience (60 minutes)

See “Full-Day Retreat: Afternoon” section for details.

(The scriptural quotations in this retreat are from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition*. Copyright © 1989, 1993 by National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All rights reserved worldwide.)

The prayer in the “Evening Prayer” section is from the Common Statement from the international gathering of the Sisters of Mercy for Trócaire [1981]. Used by permission.

The prayer “God: Delights in Who I Am,” by Annette Embrich, ASC, is used by permission of the author.)



ABC Prayer

A
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“Indeed, the word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). Let your words live in me, Lord, and let me act according to your word. Amen.

(The scriptural quotation on this handout is from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition*. Copyright © 1989, 1993 by National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All rights reserved worldwide.)



YOUNG & SINGLE TOGETHER!



Who am I as a reflection of Christ?

How is Christ merciful?

How am I called to be merciful?



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Called to Mercy



Images of Mercy in *The Face of Mercy*, by Pope Francis

What do these images say about MERCY?

Medicine of mercy

Balm of mercy

The path of merciful love

What do these images say about MERCY?

A force that reawakens us to new life

An oasis of mercy

Instruments of mercy

What do these images say about MERCY?

The oil of consolation

Fruits of divine mercy

Sanctuary of divine mercy





Good Samaritan Stroll

Mercy Moment 1

What would have been a “nice” thing to do?

Why do some people walk right by those in need?

Mercy Moment 2

When have you been in a situation like this? Did anyone show you mercy?

Have you ever ignored someone who was in need of mercy?

Mercy Moment 3

What would have been the merciful thing to do?

Where else have you witnessed or experienced mercy during this retreat?



Mercy Moment 4

What is the difference between “being nice” and showing mercy?

What is a way that you can show mercy tomorrow?

“Circle of Mercy” by Jeannette Goglia, RSM

Gentlemen begin each sentence by saying “In Mercy.” Ladies complete each line.

In Mercy, we touch the hearts of those who are in mis’ry.
In Mercy, we’re touched by them and feel their strength and courage.
In Mercy, we heal the pain of those who are in sorrow.
In Mercy, we’re healed by them and see the face of hope.

Together:

For the circle of Mercy is timeless: it is Spirit of Life itself
Which roots us in Faith, and lifts us in Hope,
And holds us in God’s loving care,
And holds us in God’s loving care.

Ladies begin each sentence by saying “In Mercy.” Gentlemen complete each line.

In Mercy, we welcome those the world has left rejected.
In Mercy, we’re drawn within the loving heart of God.
In Mercy, we forgive the incompleteness in another.
In Mercy, our sins are healed and we are whole again.

Together:

In Mercy, the Spirit Faith will root us in God’s Presence.
In Mercy, the Spirit Hope will lift us out of doubt.
In Mercy, the Love of God will be our joy in living.
In Mercy, we join with one another on our journey.
Amen.

(The “Circle of Mercy” prayer on this handout is used with permission of the author.)





Celebration of the Mass

The Mass tells us a story, a story we are a part of. As we have learned today, it is a story of mercy. How does the Mass tell the story of mercy? How does the Mass tell our story?



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After you participate in the Mass with your Confirmation community, consider the following questions:

1. What did God want you to hear today?

2. How does the Eucharist provide mercy in a way that nothing else can?

3. How can you start a revolution of mercy?

4. Who is in need of mercy in your community?

5. How do you define *mercy*?





Works of Mercy

As a group, write a scenario for each of the Works of Mercy you have been assigned. Include details to make each scenario as realistic as possible—just like a real situation you might encounter at school or at home. The questions below will help you get started.

As the other groups present their scenarios, jot down ideas of how you can live out the Works of Mercy they depict.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Counsel the doubtful

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

2. Instruct the ignorant

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?



3. Admonish the sinner

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

4. Comfort the sorrowful

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

5. Forgive injuries

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?



6. Bear wrongs patiently

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

7. Pray for the living and the dead

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Feed the hungry

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?



2. Give drink to the thirsty

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

3. Clothe the naked

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

4. Shelter the homeless

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?



5. Visit the sick

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

6. Visit the imprisoned

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?

7. Bury the dead

Where does the scene take place?

What happens?

Who needs mercy, and why?

How will you show this person mercy?

What happens after you show this person mercy? What would happen if you didn't show mercy?





Music Journaling

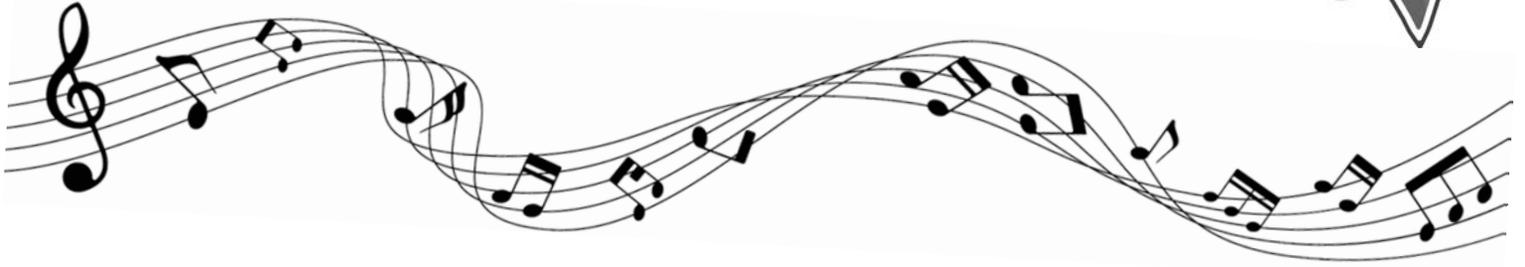


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Mercy is God's powerful Word spoken in Jesus—
His life, passion and resurrection.
It bends and changes, forms and re-forms our lives,
so that we may receive Mercy
and, in turn, be merciful.

(The prayer on this handout is from the Common Statement from the international gathering of the Sisters of Mercy for Trócaire [1981]. Used by permission.)

