



By His Cross and Resurrection

A Retreat on Triduum Themes

OVERVIEW

This retreat is designed as a one-day experience, but it can also be used as an overnight event. The retreat plan includes creative, active, and reflective activities and stories from the Scriptures to recall the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

Suggested Time

This retreat will take between 4½ and 6 hours with breaks. It can be extended to an overnight experience by using some of the alternative approaches.

Group Size

This retreat is most effective with groups of twenty or fewer. However, it can be done with any number of young people, divided into small groups, each led by an older teen or adult.

Special Considerations

This retreat is best used on the day of the Easter Vigil, or at least during the period of the Triduum. However, it can be effective at any time during the season

of Lent. Also, because of the serious, reflective nature of the event, it will be most effective with young teens at the higher end of the age range, such as seventh and eighth graders.

Materials Needed

- ☼ stick-on name tags, one for each person
- ☼ construction paper (optional)
- ☼ glue sticks, at least one for every two people
- ☼ a hole punch (optional)
- ☼ a ball of yarn (optional)
- ☼ an instant camera and film (optional)
- ☼ index cards, one for each person (optional)
- ☼ two or three hula hoops
- ☼ front panels from cereal boxes, one for every six to eight people
- ☼ a scissors
- ☼ a paper bag
- ☼ cellophane tape, one roll for every five to six people
- ☼ newsprint and markers
- ☼ masking tape
- ☼ a large piece of butcher paper, cardboard, or cloth
- ☼ a crucifix (not a cross), preferably the parish's processional crucifix
- ☼ a Bible
- ☼ seven votive candles and matches
- ☼ a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective music (optional)
- ☼ a pitcher of warm water and a basin
- ☼ several towels
- ☼ a loaf of bread on a plate
- ☼ a pitcher of grape juice
- ☼ a chalice or a large clear glass
- ☼ a purifier or another small cloth for wiping the chalice rim
- ☼ a variety of used news magazines and newspapers
- ☼ scissors, at least one for every two people
- ☼ masking tape
- ☼ pieces of 1/2-inch wide ribbon in a variety of lengths, 24 to 36 inches each, four pieces per person
- ☼ the parish's paschal candle or a large pillar candle
- ☼ a bowl of water
- ☼ a small container of olive oil or bath oil
- ☼ a taper candle or wick

PROCEDURE

Part 1: Getting Started (30 to 60 minutes)

1. As the young people arrive, give each person a stick-on name tag. Or if you have an extended period of time, you might ask them to be a little creative with their name tags. Two options follow here:

- ⊙ Each person tears the letters of her or his first name out of construction paper. The letters are glued together with the edges slightly overlapping. Punch a hole or two in the letters and attach a piece of yarn so that the name tag can be worn around the neck.
- ⊙ When the young people arrive, take a picture of each of them with an instant camera. Have them attach their picture to an index card and write on it their name and the phrases, "Child of God, disciple of Christ." Invite them to decorate their name tag creatively. Punch one or two holes in the top and string enough yarn through so that the tag can be worn around the neck.

2. Lead the young people in some simple mixers, icebreakers, and get-to-know you activities so that they feel comfortable with one another. Use the suggestions below, or consult the volume in the HELP series entitled *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*, which contains several strategies for bond building.

Pass the Hula Hoop

Direct the teens to stand in a circle and link hands with the people on either side of them. Separate one pair of hands and re-link them through the opening of a hula hoop. Announce that the object of the game is to pass the hula hoop around the circle without letting go of anyone's hands. They must figure out a way to get each person through the hoop without breaking the chain of hands.

When the hoop has been passed around the circle, start again. This time add a second hula hoop and perhaps even a third, starting each hoop at a different point in the circle.

Cereal Box Puzzles

Preparation. Cut the front panels from boxes of breakfast cereal into puzzle pieces. The number of puzzle pieces for each panel depends on the number of people you want to have in each small group. Six to eight people in a group is best. Put all the pieces for the panels in a bag and mix them up.

While the young people are still in the circle from the hula hoop game, distribute the puzzle pieces. When everyone has a piece, announce that they are to find the people whose puzzle piece is from the same cereal box. When they find one another, they must sit down and tape the cereal box panel back together. Provide each group with a roll of cellophane tape.

Things in Common

1. Give each small group a sheet of newsprint and some markers. Designate one person as the recorder, using an objective way of choosing a leader. For example, you might designate the person with the most letters in her or his first and last names, or the person whose house number adds up to the biggest total.

Explain that as a group, they are to find ten things that everyone has in common. The recorder's task is to write the ten ideas down. Obvious facts are not allowed, such as, "We're all human" or "We all have ten fingers" or "We're all in junior high." Tell them to try to find out a little more about one another through this exercise. Give them examples such as these:

- ⊗ Everyone was born in a different state.
- ⊗ Everyone has at least two grandparents who live nearby.
- ⊗ Everyone plays a team sport.
- ⊗ Everyone has played a musical instrument.
- ⊗ Everyone has read all the Harry Potter books.

2. When the groups are finished, ask them to share their results with everyone. Post the lists in an obvious place so that the teens can read about other groups during their break.

Part 2: Introduction and Prayer (45 to 60 minutes)

Preparation. Recruit three people to each read a Scripture passage, and give them a chance to look over the readings.

Mark the following passages in the Bible:

- ⊗ Mark 15:21–26
- ⊗ Mark 15:27–32
- ⊗ Mark 15:33–37

Make a life-size cross out of butcher paper, cardboard, or cloth. Cut the cross into puzzle pieces equal to the number of participants.

1. Review the lists of things group members have in common, and see if any characteristics or experiences are common to all the lists. Start a new sheet of newsprint, and ask the teens to name things that everyone in the room has in common. If they are stumped, direct them to faith-related items, such as the following:



Everyone was created by God.

God loves each person and knows each person through and through.

Through his death and Resurrection, Jesus redeemed us and all of humanity.

We are all called to follow Jesus and be like him.

List as many items as you have room for on one sheet of newsprint. Post the sheet with the other lists. Explain that during this retreat, they will explore together what all Christians have in common: a belief that the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of their faith. For two thousand years, people who have called themselves Christian have celebrated these events in the life of Jesus. The church continues to do so in the twenty-first century.

2. Ask the teens to reflect quietly on that thought for a few seconds. While they are doing so, create a prayer space in front of the group with a crucifix (preferably a processional crucifix), a Bible, and three votive candles at the base of the crucifix. If possible, dim the overhead lights.

Ask the first volunteer to read Mark 15:21–26 and then light the first votive candle. After a moment of silence, ask the second reader to read Mark 15:27–32 and then light the second candle. Again, after a few moments of silence, ask the third person to read Mark 15:33–37 and light the last candle.

Invite the participants to close their eyes and reflect silently on the death of Jesus and the reactions of the people around him. This reflection should last for about 3 minutes. If you have a recording of quiet instrumental music, play it at this time.

3. Close this time by offering the following prayer or a spontaneous prayer on the same theme:



O Jesus, when you died your mother and friends gathered at the foot of the cross and wondered why. We gather at the foot of this cross and wonder why. But you promised that your death would not be the end. We look forward to Easter, the fulfillment of your promise. And in your name we pray. Amen.

4. If you have dimmed the lights, bring them up at this time. Leave the candles lit. Give each person a marker and one of the puzzle pieces from the cross you made before the retreat. Ask the young people to think about someone they know who is like Jesus. It could be a parent, a friend, a relative, an acquaintance, or someone they have heard about. Tell them to write that person's name on their puzzle piece along with a short phrase that describes why that person reminds them of Jesus. Do not tell them that the pieces form a cross.

5. Distribute rolls of cellophane tape and announce to the teens that they must now assemble the puzzle, but do not tell them that the finished product will be a cross.

After the cross is assembled, invite the participants to offer their ideas about why the pieces formed a cross rather than another symbol. After listening to

their thoughts, ask them to place a hand on the cross on or near their puzzle piece. When everyone is settled, read the following prayer:



May we always be blessed with people in our life who remind us that all of us are supposed to do what Jesus did in his life, like _____ [read the names and comments on the puzzle pieces, or invite the young people to read their choices]. We thank you, God, for the gift that these people are to us and to the whole world. Amen.

Recreation and Nutrition Break

During this break put the cross off to the side but in a place where it will be visible by everyone for the rest of the retreat.

Part 3: The Last Supper (about 30 minutes)

Preparation. Recruit two volunteers to each read a Scripture passage. Mark the following passages in the Bible:

☉ Matt. 26:26–30

☉ John 13:1–15

Recruit one or more adults to have their feet washed in case no young people volunteer.

Add two votive candles at the foot of the crucifix (leave these unlit while the others remain lit), a pitcher of warm water, a basin, several towels, a loaf of bread on a plate, a pitcher of grape juice, and a chalice or large clear glass.

1. Gather the young people in front of the prayer space that you used in part 2. Request that they focus silently on the crucifix and recall the incidents from Jesus' last days that the candles represent.

Ask the first volunteer to read Matt. 26:26–30 and then light a candle. After a moment ask the second volunteer to read John 13:1–15 and follow the same procedure.

2. If the young people are not already seated in chairs, set some chairs in front of the group. Call for volunteers to have their feet washed, and have them sit in front of the group. If no young people volunteer, call on the adult(s) that you recruited before the retreat.

Remind the participants that this was a powerful prayer moment for the followers of Jesus. Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet, but when Jesus told him that this would show how good a follower he was, Peter agreed. Request that the young people observe the washing silently.

Using the pitcher and the basin, wash the feet of those who have volunteered. Do both the washing and drying slowly and prayerfully. If you are using reflective music, you might play it at this time. Then wash and dry the hands of all the other people in the room. If you have a large group, you may want to have other adults help with this task so that you can move through the entire group in a short amount of time. However, be sure to maintain an atmosphere of reverence.

3. Ask the young people the following question:



In what ways do people in the community give their bodies—their strength, time, or talent—to serve others?

Invite them to share their answers. Some obvious examples include doctors, teachers, ministers in the church, and homeless-shelter workers.

Call one young person to come forward and hold up the plate containing the loaf of bread. Remind the group that Jesus shared bread with his followers and told them that it was his body to be broken for them. Just as Jesus did, many people in our world give totally of themselves to make the world a better place. We are all called to do the same.

Invite the teens to share specific names of people they know who give their all for others. Then take the plate from the person who is holding it, and tell her or him to take a piece of bread and eat it. Return the plate and ask the holder to serve the next person. Continue passing the bread until everyone has gotten a piece.

4. Invite one of the young people to hold up the pitcher of grape juice. Ask the following question and invite the young people's responses:



Who in our community puts their life on the line for others?

Some examples are a police officer, a firefighter, a soldier, and so forth.

Remind the teens that when Jesus shared the cup he said that it was his blood, which was poured out for us. Invite the teens to share specific names of people they know who put their life on the line for others. Then pour the juice into the chalice or glass and offer it to the person who was holding the pitcher. Wipe the cup, then follow the same procedure as you did with the bread to distribute the juice to the rest of the group.

You may want to give the young people a stretch break before moving into part 4. Leave the candles lit for the next activity.

Part 4: The Garden and the Cross (60 to 75 minutes)

Preparation. Add two unlit votive candles to the prayer space. Recruit two more volunteers to read the Scriptures. Mark the following passages in the Bible:

☉ Mark 14:32–46

☉ Luke 23:35–46

Write the following questions on newsprint:

1. Where and how in your school or community do people experience fear; emotional, spiritual, or physical violence; or unjust treatment?
2. Where in the world do people experience violence, horror, mistreatment, injustice, fear, and prejudice?
3. Who is doing good things for those who suffer injustices at your school? in the community? in the world?
4. How is God's presence made known, even amid evil?

1. Invite the first volunteer to read Mark 14:32–46 and then light a votive candle, as in previous sections. Allow a few seconds of silent reflection before moving on.

2. Tell the young people to move into the same small groups that they were in at the beginning of the retreat. Give each small group a sheet of newsprint, a variety of magazines and newspapers, scissors, and glue sticks.

Display the questions you wrote on newsprint before the retreat. Tell the small groups that they are to discuss the four questions for a few minutes. Then they are to find pictures, words, and stories that represent the answers to the first two questions and use them to create a collage on one side of the newsprint. On the other side, they are to create a collage of pictures, words, and stories that answer questions three and four.

As the groups finish their task, post the collages with the answers to the first two questions facing out. If possible, post the collages so that they are visible from the prayer space.

3. Gather the participants in the prayer space. Invite them to a moment of silence while they look at the examples of violence, horror, mistreatment, injustice, fear, and prejudice. After about 30 seconds, tell the young people to continue looking at the posters while the second volunteer reads Luke 23:35–46 and then lights a candle.

4. Ask the teens to close their eyes. Explain that you will read four situations, and you would like them to think about times when they found themselves in the same situation. Read the following statements, pausing about 30 seconds in between each to give the participants a chance to reflect:



Remember a time when you were rejected or rejected someone else.

Remember a time someone made fun of you or you made fun of someone else.

Remember a time when you were angry, mean, or when you lied or cheated.

Remember a time when you were forgiven.

Give each person four pieces of ribbon and a marker. Have them write on each of the ribbons their experience of one of the four situations. Emphasize that this is to be done silently and privately. You may want to suggest that they move to a part of the room where they can be alone with their thoughts. Tell them that the ribbons will be tied to the crucifix, but no one will get a chance to read what's on them.

As they finish their ribbons, have the young people tie them to the processional crucifix.

Part 5: Resurrection Celebration (45 to 60 minutes)

Preparation. Recruit a volunteer to read Luke 24:1–12. Mark the passage in the Bible.

1. If possible, do this final segment in the church around the paschal candle. If it is not possible to use the church, set up the parish's paschal candle or a large pillar candle in another part of the retreat space from where the rest of the activities have taken place.

Have someone carrying the crucifix with all the ribbons streaming from it lead the group to the area where the paschal candle stands. Also have all the people who read the Scriptures carry their lit votive candles in procession. The person who volunteered to read the passage from Luke should carry the Bible. Ask someone from each small group to carry the collage poster they created with the representation of the answers to the final questions facing out. Also have someone else carry a bowl of water and a small container of oil. Gather everyone around the paschal candle. If possible, put the posters up on a wall near the candle. If not, lay them on the floor.

2. Remind the teens that one of the most common symbols of Easter is a large candle, which represents the passage from death and darkness to life and light. The paschal candle is blessed at the Easter Vigil at every Catholic church in the world and is lit during sacramental celebrations at the parish.

Ask the last volunteer to read aloud Luke 24:1–12 and then use a taper candle or a wick to light the paschal candle. Direct all those who have votive candles to extinguish them.

3. Place the bowl of water and the oil near the paschal candle. Direct everyone to extend their hands in blessing over the water. Say the following prayer or a spontaneous one on the same theme:



Come, Holy Spirit, bless this water and oil and make them holy. It is a reminder to us of our Baptism, when we became children of God. May we also become Easter people who have chosen to follow the way of Jesus. We ask this in his name. Amen.

4. Invite the group members to come to the bowl one at a time and bless themselves with the water as a reminder of their Baptism. Then pass the oil around the group. Have each person anoint her or his neighbor by tracing the sign of the cross on her or his forehead and stating, "Remember, _____ [name], you are a child of the Resurrection. Go now and show others the Spirit of the Risen Christ."

5. If it is appropriate to do so, conclude with an Easter party or celebration of some sort.

(This retreat was developed by Joe Grant, Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky.)

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ⊗ This retreat would work well as a parent-teen activity.
- ⊗ Consider breaking this retreat into five sessions and doing one session weekly during the season of Lent. Conclude the series by attending the Easter Vigil together.
- ⊗ If you want to extend this retreat to an overnight experience, you may want to show a movie like *Godspell*; *Jesus Christ Superstar*; *Jesus of Nazareth*; or another film version of the life, Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

For part 2: Introduction and prayer

- ⊗ Instead of brainstorming in the large group, challenge the small groups to come up with a list of ten faith-based characteristics they have in common. This exercise will take more time than doing it as a large group.
- ⊗ If you have a large group, you may want to give each smaller group pieces from one section of the cross. Tell them to take their pieces and assemble their section of the cross. Then bring the sections together and assemble the entire cross. As you are doing so, comment on the universality of the church and how we are all united by the cross of Jesus.
- ⊗ Assemble the cross by gluing the pieces to a sheet of plywood to make a lasting reminder of the retreat and its message.

For part 3: The Last Supper

- ⊙ If you have a large group, use several plates and cups. Break the loaf of bread evenly among the plates and pour the juice into other cups. Start them at different points in the group.
- ⊙ To add more movement to this part of the retreat, allow each person to add to their puzzle piece at the appropriate time the names of people who give their all and people who put their life on the line.

For part 4: The garden and the cross

- ⊙ Intensify the garden experience by inviting adult leaders, young adults, or high school leaders to share their stories in response to the following "remember" questions.

I remember a time when . . .

- ⊙ I was rejected or rejected someone else.
- ⊙ someone made fun of me or I made fun of someone else.
- ⊙ I was angry, mean, or lied or cheated.
- ⊙ I was forgiven.

This adds a witness talk or faith story dimension to the retreat, and younger adolescents are particularly interested in the faith stories of older youth or adults.

- ⊙ The collage activity will undoubtedly lighten the atmosphere, provide movement, and add noise to what has been a somber hour. If you would rather maintain the quiet, reflective mood, consider one of these options:
 - ⊙ Just have the adult leader conduct a discussion based on the questions.
 - ⊙ Have each person silently make his or her own collage on a sheet of notebook paper. Play reflective music during this time.
 - ⊙ Post four sheets of newsprint or butcher paper. Ask the teens to silently look through the magazines and newspapers and find a story, word, or picture that answers each of the questions.
- ⊙ If possible, hang the collages suspended from the ceiling so that both sides are visible.
- ⊙ To avoid confusion, you may want to write the four "Remember a time . . ." statements on newsprint. If you choose to do this, do not display the newsprint until you distribute the ribbons.

For part 5: Resurrection celebration

- ⊙ Time the retreat so that the group can join the parish celebration of the Easter Vigil. If you choose this option, omit part 5.
- ⊙ Consider leading the young people in a simple chant while they are processing to the candle. Many of the chants from Taizé are short, simple to sing, and do not take a lot of rehearsal. The music and recordings are available through GIA Publications, 7404 S. Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL 60638-9927, phone 800-442-1358.

- ☉ If the church or school has grounds (woods, a garden, or a lawn), enhance the experience by quietly moving the group outside, processing with candles or flashlights, and gathering around the processional cross.
- ☉ If you have extra time, consider doing this last part outside. Give everyone a small piece of paper and a balloon. Tell them to write words and phrases that are associated with Easter, such as *Alleluia! He is risen! Rejoice!* or *This is the day the Lord has made!* Put the paper inside a balloon, fill the balloon with helium, and tie it off. When the reader gets to Luke 24:5, "He is not here, but has risen," signal the teens to release their balloons so that they carry the good news of the Resurrection.
- ☉ You may want to provide taper candles with drip protectors to each person. As people come up to be anointed with water and oil, have them light their taper from the paschal candle.
- ☉ Continue the retreat with a service project by doing an Easter-egg hunt for local children, singing Easter songs and delivering daffodils to shut-ins, or volunteering to serve a meal at a soup kitchen.

NOTES



Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this retreat.