

Reconciliation Retreats

Children's Retreat: Reconciliation

Overview

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

Retreat at a Glance

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

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- The Catholic Children's Bible*, a candle, and other items to create a prayer space
- blank name tags and markers
- copies of the following handouts:
 - "A Modern Parable of the Prodigal Son" (Document #: TX005786), enough for the adult leaders and each child
 - "Friendship and Forgiveness Prayer Space" (Document #: TX005787), enough for the adult leaders
- materials for the activity centers your choose
- additional worksheets, games, or short activities for each activity center
- refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

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

Retreat Outline

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the children and the adult leaders to the retreat. Tell them that a retreat is a time to step aside from normal activities and routines and focus on God and our faith. Explain that this retreat is a time to spend together and to think about the sacrament that they will soon be celebrating for the first time.
2. **Invite** everyone to quiet themselves and prepare for prayer, recalling that they are in the holy presence of God. Continue with the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat the phrases after each break:
 - God, our Father, / we thank you for bringing us together today. / Be with us / as we continue to prepare / to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. / Bless all of those in the Church / who are preparing to receive / the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. / We ask this / and all things / in the name of Jesus Christ, / who is Lord, / forever and ever. / Amen.

B. Directions for the Day (10 minutes)

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

C. Activity Centers: Part 1 (60 minutes)

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

Whether for a child or an adult, the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a particularly solemn moment. Yet it is a solemn moment that ends in joy and peace. The activity centers were developed to emphasize both the solemnity and the peace that this sacrament brings into our lives.

Activity Centers

- **Music:** For this center, use this format to recall three or four songs used during the Reconciliation preparatory sessions:

1. **Play** the song.
2. **Ask** the children what words or phrases they remember from the song. Comment on these briefly.
3. **Play** the song again, asking the children to sing along or to make up their own movements to the song.

Note: You may want to introduce one or two other songs that would also be appropriate and that can be found on iTunes or YouTube. Some ideas include “Amazing Grace,” “There’s a Little Wheel a-Turnin’ in my Heart” (spiritual), “Jesus Remember Me” (Taizé), “’Tis the Gift to Be Simple” (Shaker hymn), “The King of Love My Shepherd Is,” and “The Prayer of St. Francis” (“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”). You may wish to choose familiar songs from your parish liturgy that would have an appropriate theme relating to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- **Prayer:** Use the handout “Friendship and Forgiveness Prayer Space” (Document #: TX005787).
- **Drama:** Use the handout “A Modern Parable of the Prodigal Son” (Document #: TX005786). Assign the roles of narrator, father, younger son, and chorus (for remaining children). The narrator or an announcer may also announce the titles of the scenes.
- **Art:** Decorate an altar cloth or a banner with various art supplies for the celebration of First Reconciliation.

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

D. Break (20 minutes)

The experience of sharing food builds community and unity. This break can also be presented as a “Forgiveness Party,” like the one the forgiving father gave for his long-lost son. Begin the break or party with a short grace, thanking God not only for this food but for his forgiving love. Include some healthy snacks, such as crackers, fruit, and juice, as options for the break. Be aware of any food allergies in the group and adjust your menu accordingly.

E. Activity Centers: Part 2 (60 minutes)

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

F. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

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

Parent-Child Retreat: Reconciliation

Overview

In this retreat model, four activity centers will be created in which parents and children can build a common bond in understanding and preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a 3-hour retreat model; however, the time and activities may be modified according to your particular needs.

Retreat at a Glance

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

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

- The Catholic Children's Bible*, a candle, and other items to create a prayer space
- blank name tags and markers
- copies of the following handouts:
 - "Friendship and Forgiveness Prayer Space" (Document #: TX005787), enough for the adult leaders
 - "A Modern Parable of the Prodigal Son" (Document #: TX005786), enough for the adult leaders, each parent, and each child
- materials for the activity centers you choose
- additional worksheets, games, or short activities for each activity center
- refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

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

- ❑ Make name tags for the children, their parents, and the adult leaders, using the selected color or name for each group's tags.
- ❑ Create a rotation schedule for the groups, and provide the activity leaders with some additional short activities in case the children finish early.

Retreat Outline

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the parents, children, and adult leaders to the retreat. Tell them that a retreat is a time to step aside from normal activities and routines and focus on God and our faith. Explain that this retreat is a time to spend together and to think about the sacrament that they will soon be celebrating for the first time.
2. **Invite** everyone to quiet themselves and prepare for prayer, recalling that they are in the holy presence of God. Continue with the following prayer, inviting everyone to repeat the phrases after each break:
 - God, our Father, / we thank you for bringing us together today. / Be with us / as we continue to prepare / to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. / Bless all of those in the Church / who are preparing to receive / the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. / We ask this / and all things / in the name of Jesus Christ, / who is Lord, / forever and ever. / Amen.

B. Directions for the Day (10 minutes)

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

C. Activity Centers: Part 1 (60 minutes)

The following are examples of possible activity centers that you may make available. Both parents and children may participate in the activity centers. Any special roles for the parents will be pointed out in a particular center. The centers may be presented simultaneously or in any order. For each center, make sure to have additional worksheets, games, or short activities that the children can complete if they finish before it is time to move to the next activity center. In this first part, each group will experience two the activity centers—30 minutes each. The groups will complete the other centers after the break.

Whether for a child or an adult, the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a particularly solemn moment. Yet it is a solemn moment that ends in joy and peace. The activity centers were developed to emphasize both the solemnity and the peace that this sacrament brings into our lives.

Activity Centers

- **Music:** For this center, use this format to recall three or four songs used during the Reconciliation preparatory sessions:
 1. **Play** the song.
 2. **Ask** the children what words or phrases they remember from the song. Comment on these briefly.
 3. **Play** the song again, asking the parents and children to sing along or to make up their own movements to the song.

Note: You may want to introduce one or two other songs that would also be appropriate and that can be found on iTunes or YouTube. Some ideas: “Amazing Grace”; “There’s a Little Wheel a-Turnin’ in my Heart” (spiritual); “Jesus Remember Me” (Taizé); “’Tis the Gift to Be Simple” (Shaker hymn); “The King of Love My Shepherd Is”; “The Prayer of Saint Francis” (“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”). You may wish to choose familiar songs from your parish liturgy that would have an appropriate theme relating to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- **Drama:** Use the handout “A Modern Parable of the Prodigal Son” (Document #: TX005786). Assign the roles of narrator, father, younger son, and chorus (for remaining children and parents). A parent can be chosen as the narrator. You may want to choose a male parent for the father and a child for the younger son. The narrator or an announcer may also announce the titles of the scenes.
- **Prayer:** Use the handout “Friendship and Forgiveness Prayer Space” (Document #: TX005787).
- **Art:** Decorate an altar cloth or a banner using various art supplies for the celebration of First Reconciliation.

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

D. Break (20 minutes)

The experience of sharing food builds community and unity. This break can also be presented as a “Forgiveness Party” like the one the forgiving father gave for his long-lost son. Begin the break or party with a short grace, thanking God not only for this food but for his forgiving love. Include some healthy snacks, such as crackers, fruit, and juice, as options for the break. Be aware of any food allergies in the group and adjust your menu accordingly.

E. Activity Centers: Part 2 (60 minutes)

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

F. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

1. **Bring** all of the parents, children, and adult leaders together for a closing prayer.
2. **Ask** the participants to quiet themselves and remember that they are in the holy presence of God.
3. **Begin** the prayer by singing or listening to one of the Reconciliation songs suggested during the preparatory sessions. You may also wish to invite several musicians to lead the hymn.
4. **Lead** the group in a prayer:
 - Lord God, we thank you for this time together on retreat. We know you are present with us each day. We ask for the gift of your Holy Spirit to continue to guide us as we near the day of First Reconciliation. Help us to learn and grow in faith as we become closer to you each day. Amen.
5. **Close** with the Lord's Prayer and the Sign of the Cross.