The Way: Confirmation Retreats

Workshop

Opening Prayer

Loving Father, we pray today for our catechists. We thank you for their gift of ministry in your Church. Grant them your wisdom that they may grow in the understanding and teaching of your Word.

Grant them also your love that they may be fruitful heralds of your Word and lead others to love you.

Pour forth your Holy Spirit upon them to grant them wisdom about what is important; knowledge of the truths of faith; understanding of their meaning; right judgement about how to apply them in life; courage to persevere even in the face of adversity; reverence before all that is sacred and holy; and that loving zeal which leads others to a transforming encounter with your Son. We pray this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Overview

Retreats in the Overall Context of Youth Ministry

Laying the Groundwork for Confirmation Retreats

Best Practices for Confirmation Retreats

What Is a Retreat?

- Retreats are not synonymous with a conference or camp
- A retreat provides a place of solitude for meditation, self-examination, and prayer, to make certain necessary decisions in one's spiritual life.
- A strategic withdraw to regroup and then move into an offensive position

Elijah Retreats to Mt. Horeb

Retreats in the Context of Youth Ministry

- Retreats have proven to be a powerful asset for bring young people into a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ
  - They provide a stepping-stone on the faith formation journey
- Young people need adult mentors to accompany them in their relationship with Jesus
- An unintended consequence

Confirmation Retreats;
Their Place in The Way

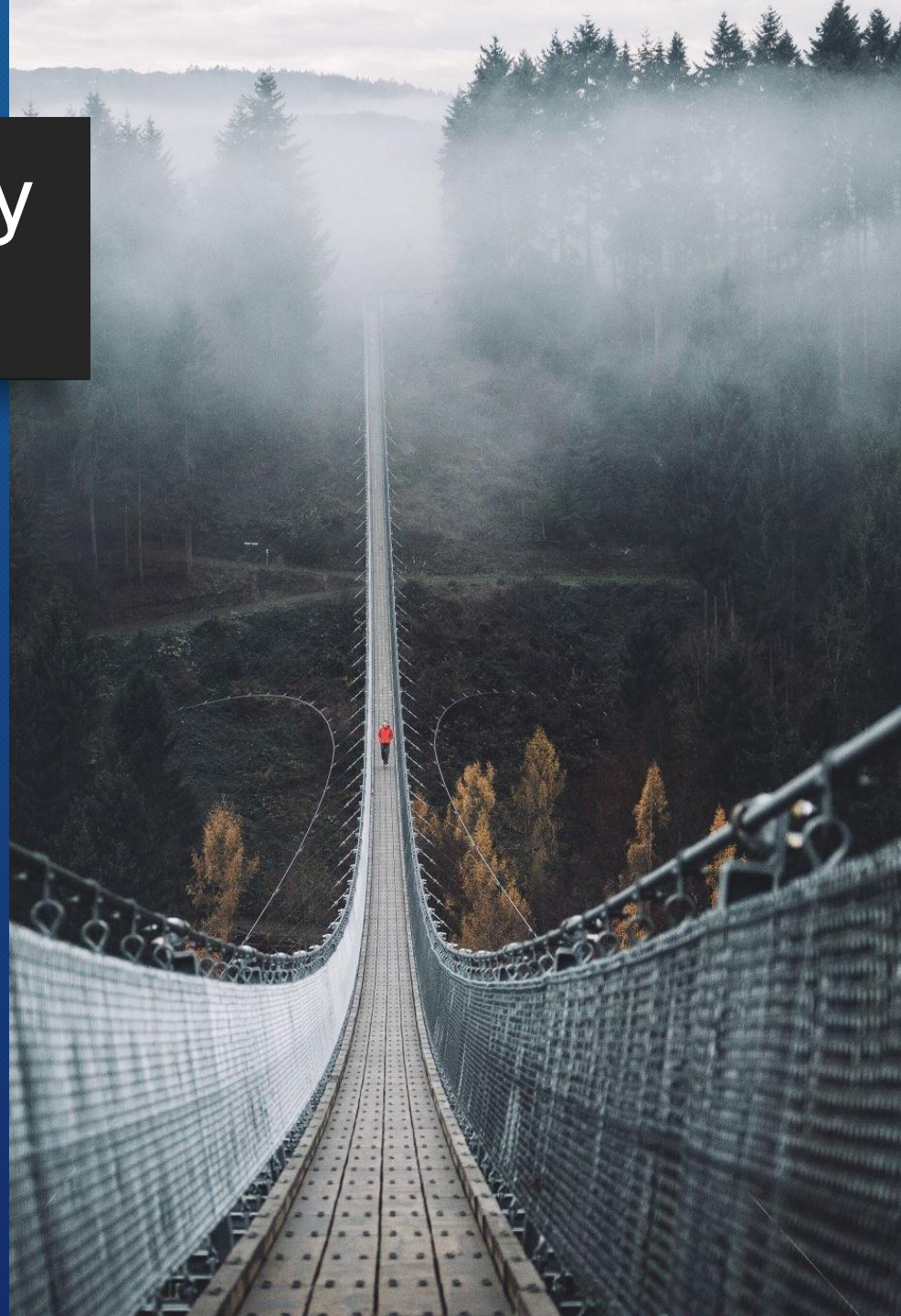
“We must provide for and encourage opportunities during childhood for these encounters and the powerful memories that accompany them. The Holy Spirit accomplishes these encounters when we make room for them and seek them. Through these encounters, our children enter into friendship with Jesus and fall in love with him…God uses our memories of him and his grace to fortify our lives in faith as we grow and age. This initiative creates moments to allow God to bestow good experiences and memories on our children, which they can carry through life.”

– Bishop James Johnston, *Strengthening Faith in a Challenging World*

Encounter & Building Memories

Confirmation Retreats in The Way Timeline

- 5th Grade Call to Holiness Retreat
  - Focus: Kerygma and initial evangelization
  - Prerequisite for Confirmation Preparation
- 6th Grade Confirmation Retreat
  - Not the first time a 6th grader will have been on a retreat
- Natural bridge into Camp Savio



How Does A Retreat Fit Within Confirmation Preparation

- “Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit- his actions, his gifts, and his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life.”

  – Catechism of the Catholic Church 1309

Catechumenal Process & Confirmation

Confirmation preparation is considered a “catechumenate in the analogous sense for the baptized who have not completed the sacraments of Christian initiation..” – Directory of Catechesis # 62

The Confirmation retreat ideally serves as a part of the “time of purification and Illumination (to provide) a more intense preparation” – DC #63

Hosting a Retreat for 6th Graders

How to engage a 6th grader on a retreat

Keep them moving as much as possible for large groups	Bite sized content	Use stories to make your points	Guided silence & reflection times

Host separate retreats for 6th graders and 9th/10th graders during these transition years

Laying the Groundwork for A Confirmation Retreat

What will work best for your parish?

Questions to Consider

1. Where are your candidates in their spiritual journey?
2. What spiritual decisions will you lead the candidates to make through the retreat?
3. What will be the theme/focus of your retreat?
4. How does your retreat connect with your confirmation classes?
5. When is the best time to hold a retreat based on your curriculum?
6. What are the time and resources necessary for doing a retreat well?
7. Will your retreat be overnight or one day?

Overnight vs. Day Retreat

- Overnight (multi-day) Retreat:
  - Pros:
    - Fresh environment
    - Memorable experience
    - Free from daily distractions
    - Deeper reflection time
  - Cons:
    - Expensive
    - Less parent/sponsor involvement
    - Limits candidate availability – need make up opportunities for those who cannot attend
- One Day Retreat (Day of Reflection)
  - Pros:
    - Less expensive
    - Easier to incorporate parents/sponsors
    - Can offer multiple opportunities
  - Cons:
    - Less memorable experience
    - Not able to go as deep
    - May feel like an extended class session

When Should You Host Your Confirmation Retreat?

Early:	Sets the tone for the classes Able to establish relationships with students before classes
Middle:	Potential to go deeper on a subject Reenergizes the candidates and breaks up the routine of classes Works best if spiritual formation is incorporated into remaining class sessions
End:	Provides enough time for the candidates to reflect on their confirmation journey and what life will look like after receiving the sacrament Candidates receive sacrament of Reconciliation directly before receiving Confirmation

Best Practices for Confirmation Retreats

In Planning: Zeal

In Execution: Surrender

In Reflection: Mercy

4 Key Components of a Retreat

- Liturgy (Group Prayer)
- Reflection (Individual Prayer)
- Formation
- Recreation

Preparing Retreat Team Members

Emphasize establishing relationships first over catechesis

Encourage/challenge catechists to engage with candidates outside small group discussions

Be comfortable with silence

Name tags are helpful; use their names!

Planning a Confirmation Retreat (Zeal)

- Begin and end everything in prayer
- Involve your catechists in the planning
- Have a “No Electronics” policy for candidates
- Small details go a long way

Pitfalls to Avoid in Planning

- Improper balance of 4 Key Components of a Retreat
- Not defining the Theme/Focus of retreat
- Failing to incorporate the retreat into the overall Confirmation formation process or using the retreat as the only opportunity for spiritual formation

Pitfalls to Avoid in Planning Cont.

- Using Small Groups as primary means of formation
- Failing to be intentional with recreation time
- Failing to prepare retreat team members
- Assuming candidates have had a conversion

Executing a Confirmation Retreat (Surrender)

- Pray consistently & be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit
- Don’t over stress about keeping the schedule while on the retreat
- If you have candidates bring materials (bible, journal, rosary) make sure you have the candidates use them

Reflection After a Confirmation Retreat (Mercy)

Attend Adoration and prayerfully reflect on your retreat

Your execution won't be perfect; that's ok

Some questions to consider:

- How did your candidates encounter Christ while on the retreat?
- What was the most impactful aspect of your retreat?
- What didn't go over as well as you planned?
- What Improvements can you make for next year?

Sample Schedules

Overnight Retreat Sample

- Theme: Dynamite
  - “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses...”
    - Acts 1:8
  - Explores the transformative power of the Holy Spirit
- Aims to invite candidates into a more intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit

One Day Retreat Sample

- Focus: the Virtue of Mercy
  - “When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’”
    - Mark 10:48
  - Explores the need for God’s mercy and the love of God the Father
- Aims to inspire a desire for purification and a life of virtue within the candidate

Q & A