This is a parish-based retreat
designed to help people learn about self-giving love and the Paschal Mystery

**Overview**

- This retreat is designed to be organized and hosted by leaders from local parish communities. Groups of neighboring parishes may also work together to plan and host these retreats.
- The host parish needs to have at least two rooms available (adjacent if possible) capable of holding about 50 people (new participants plus the team) at tables. The tables should be round if possible, but if not, rectangular tables will also work.
- This kit contains the schedules, check lists, outlines for all the talks, and reproducible prayer services and handouts.
- The maximum number of new retreatants is about 35. If you have too many retreatants, the time needed for personal sharing will run too long into the evening.
- Sanctus is a one-day retreat, usually scheduled for Saturday, running from 8 AM to about 9 PM. It can be offered frequently throughout the year, allowing as many in the parish to participate as want to.

  - Many parishes provide a fund for baby sitters to which various organizations in the parish contribute. This fund is used to help parents who could not otherwise afford sitters for the entire period of this retreat. Because of concerns for child safety, it works best to simply allow parents to arrange for their own child care and reimburse them if needed.
  - We are in debt to various other retreat movements on which Sanctus Retreat is modeled, in particular TEC – Teens Encounter Christ – and Cursillo.
  - Two liturgical celebrations are part of the retreat. An optional celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the closing Mass.

**Notes**

Making retreats part and parcel of parish life is on a par with all other forms of faith formation.

For Christians, the retreat has long been a way for people to refresh and deepen faith. Retreats offer people a chance to share with others a faith journey that is otherwise often lived alone.
Who should attend?

- **All parish leaders** should be the first to be invited. Whether serving on leadership groups or in various volunteer ministries (such as liturgical roles, catechesis, or pastoral care) each active member of the parish will benefit from making an annual retreat. It helps them deepen their communion with Christ and the church.

- **Parents of children** who are in religious education, especially those preparing for first reconciliation or Eucharist. It will greatly assist them to be ready as their child’s “primary teacher” to deepen their own communion with Christ and experience again the sacraments as this retreat celebrates them.

- **Couples as a Household.** We recommend that you invite couples to attend this retreat together, even if one of them is not Catholic. We are seeking to build “households of faith,” which is very difficult when one member deepens his or her communion with Christ but the other does not.

- **Those preparing a child for baptism.** What better avenue of faith growth is there for young couples than to deepen their communion with Christ through a retreat? It will make the baptism of their child more intentional and meaningful. Simply make this retreat part of their preparation process.

- **Youth and young adults** from age 19 and higher. Nothing is more important to young adults than learning the art of self-giving love and linking one’s life to the Paschal Mystery. For high school students, it is best to host a Sanctus Retreat specifically for them.

- **Those preparing for matrimony.** This is a very strong and powerful way to introduce faith into the marriage preparation process. By sharing their faith together, you greatly increase each couple’s chances for a long marriage. Simply make this retreat part of their preparation process.

- **Those who are making their way into the church, either for the first time as they seek full communion coming from another Christian tradition, or the fully initiated Catholic who has simply not darkened our doorway for a while.** The retreat process is very powerful in shaking off the myths and fears of being an active Catholic.

- **Any interested member of the parish.** Don’t forget to invite older adults, widows, single persons, the morning Mass crowd, and members of parish societies and social organizations.
Room setup

- A private conference room is needed with round tables, seating for 6 retreatants plus one leader per table. There will also be a podium, and a small table on which the Sacred Scriptures will be placed, along with a candle. If the lights in the room are bright overhead lights that cannot be dimmed, then bring in lamps to light the room with a more intimate lighting scheme.

- A private dining room, separated from the conference room. The tables here need not be round.

- The use of the church for the closing Mass is optional. It’s also possible to celebrate it right in the conference room where it would be more intimate and private. This is the Mass of the weekend on which the retreat occurs.

The Retreat Team

- A Retreat Leader for each weekend who may also give some of the talks and lead the large-group sharing. It is good to rotate the Retreat Leader role to prevent any one person from making this his or her personal ministry.

- Three or four other Speakers to give the talks which the Retreat Leader does not give. These speakers also double as table leaders.

- Table Leaders who will lead all activities at the table level; one leader is needed for each small group.

- A Host Team of five to six people, which will provide for hospitality, meals, and general setup and cleanup.

- Note: The host team itself may wish to plan prayer, reflections, and especially sacrifice on behalf of those making the retreat.

- A Retreat Prayer Coordinator who will coordinate inviting prayers and good works from the community to support the work of the retreat.

- The pastor or other priests and liturgical musicians, who assist in the planning and celebration of the closing Mass.

Materials needed

- A small table to serve as an altar for the enthronement of Sacred Scripture. You will also need a Bible, candle, and bowl of holy water. These can be placed on this altar.

- Paper and pens at each table for note taking.

- It really helps to decorate the meeting and dining rooms, to make them welcoming and appealing.

- Tent-style name plates for each table, one per table, on which the small group will write its chosen table name.

- Name tags for all, including all the leaders.

- Reproducible handouts which are included in this kit.

- Dining room essentials, snacks, beverages, and food for meals.
# Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Breakfast (served by the Host Team)</td>
<td>Dining room</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prayer before eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 AM</td>
<td>First session - “Introductions”</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
<td>Enthronement of Sacred Scripture</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:40 AM</td>
<td>Break (refreshments served by the Host Team)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Second session - “The Journey of Faith”</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>large group sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 AM</td>
<td>Lunch (served by the Host Team)</td>
<td>Dining room</td>
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<td></td>
<td>prayer before eating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>this meal may begin slightly late if the sharing runs long</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 PM</td>
<td>Third session - “Dying in Christ”</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
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<tr>
<td>between 2:15 &amp; 2:30 PM</td>
<td>Break (refreshments served by the Host Team)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:45 PM</td>
<td>Fourth session - “Living in Grace”</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:20 PM</td>
<td>Bringing it all to prayer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>quiet time followed by shared prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30 PM</td>
<td>Supper (served by the Host Team)</td>
<td>Dining room</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prayer before eating</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6:15 PM</td>
<td>Fifth session - “Holiness for Life”</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
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<td></td>
<td>works of mercy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Closing Mass</td>
<td>Church or other suitable space</td>
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Sanctus Retreat
Preparation

Six weeks or more before the retreat:

- Announce the retreat in the parish. You may use the poster and flier we provide for this purpose. Simply complete them with your particular information and you're ready to go.
- Scheduling will have to be done far in advance to have the needed spaces and people available.
- In many parishes, these retreats will be needed in a variety of languages. Even though immigrants eventually do speak English, most of the time they pray and live their daily faith in their native tongue. You have permission to translate any part of these notes for use in another language.
- Give personal invitations to all parish staff, elected leaders, and other leaders in the community. Encourage married couples to attend together. The expectation should be that anyone involved in parish life prepares for leadership by making an annual Sanctus Retreat.
- Many parishes schedule 4 or 5 retreats for each year and ask all leaders and volunteers to select one to attend during their fall preparation and leadership meetings. This assures they will have the needed rooms for the day and also allows people to sign up early and get the retreat into their personal calendars.
  - The retreat remains the same from year to year, even though people repeat it. The themes of dying and living in Christ do not change; they are eternal. We repeat them because each time we pass through these reflections, our encounter with Christ is deeper.

One month or more before the retreat:

- Recruit the Host Team to help with setup, cleanup, and meals - probably about 5 or 6 people. This team can be given all responsibility for this work.
- Recruit a Retreat Leader - someone with experience in leading group process and who has already experienced conversion to Christ.
- Recruit Table Leaders to lead table discussions. If necessary, these can be people making their first Sanctus Retreat.
- Schedule a two-room space, one to serve as a dining room, near the kitchen, and the other to serve as the meeting room. Snacks will be set out during most of the retreat as well. These can either be on a table in the meeting room or in the dining room. It’s necessary for both of these rooms to be private from other parish events. And it’s necessary for the meeting room to be available for the entire day because people will be leaving things on the tables, hanging
papers in the room, and so forth.
• Also, schedule the worship space if you prefer it for the closing Mass.
• Schedule the **Pastor or another priest**, plus **liturgical musicians**, for the closing Mass.
• Plan for a way to invite the whole community to be in prayer and vigil during the entire day. The **Retreat Prayer Coordinator** will be responsible to bring the community together in vigil with the retreatants.
  • One way: distribute vigil candles and prayer cards. Ask people to use them at their table during meals during the retreat day.
  • Another way: invite members of the community to offer up works of justice, mercy, and holiness - and communicate that to the retreatants by way of a simple note which will be read during the retreat.
• The meals are a key part of the retreat experience. They can be simple but elegant. Encourage the Host Team to develop menus that are easy to prepare and serve.
• The Host Team will also have time for its own spiritual reflections throughout the day. Ask the Host Team leader to prepare prayer and sharing activities for use during downtime in the Host Team schedule.

**One week before the retreat:**
• Confirm with all parish staff members who will be involved to make sure they know the precise time and place they will be needed.
• Meet with the Host Team to double-check all details and supply lists.
• Shop for the needed supplies.
• Review your list of participants and break them into appropriate groups.
• Take a deep breath and relax - the Holy Spirit will be in charge of what happens.
• Hold a team meeting to review the schedule for the retreat, discuss the details, and train the small group leaders. Use the **Come to the Table** | **Ven a la Mesa** training which can be found at this link. Either click or cut and paste this link into your browser. [http://pastoralplanning.com./Come-to-the-Table/Small-Group-Leader-Prep.html](http://pastoralplanning.com./Come-to-the-Table/Small-Group-Leader-Prep.html).
• If you have a small number of people making the retreat, the sharing times will all be shorter than called for on the schedule. Simply adjust the times for this and end the retreat a little earlier.
Sanctus Retreat
Guide to the First Session: 8:45 AM
“Introductions”

Folks arrive before 8 AM and are greeted by the team. They get a name tag. The first event is breakfast. This meal is the way for them to meet each other and begin to enter into the retreat. Just as the eating is finished but before anyone leaves,

- The Retreat Leader gets everyone’s attention. He or she introduces him- or herself very briefly and welcomes everyone.
- Invite each person to share his or her name and one significant thing that happened to them that day. Keep this light and quick; it has to move fast to keep us on time.

After breakfast, adjourn to the meeting room where everyone goes to their tables. If the pastor or other parish staff is making this retreat, they simply take their places at a table like anyone else. It is not good for participating members of the parish team to come and go, appearing and disappearing. If they decide to make the retreat, they should be present for every moment of it, just as everyone else is doing. Once everyone is settled, we are ready to begin.

The Retreat Leader welcomes all again.

- Tells a little about him- or herself, background in the parish, desire to grow in holiness, love for the church, family details, hopes for this retreat. Not too pious at this point or some people might be put off.
- Explains the schedule a little, but only sketchily. Do not give the details or announce beforehand about prayer, meals, or the topics of the reflections. Let the retreat unfold for the participants a little at a time to keep them focused on the present moment.
- Gives the “community guidelines” for this retreat
  - Be kind to each other at all times.
  - Be honest - everything we hear here is confidential.
  - Work hard at this process of growing closer to Christ.
  - Listen closely to each other.
  - Speak clearly, charitably, and briefly when it’s your turn.
  - Be open to the Spirit in our midst.
  - Don’t keep the group waiting - be on time. We never begin until everyone is present, so if you’re tardy, everyone is waiting for you.
- Asks each small group to quickly (in three minutes, timed by the Retreat Leader) choose a group name and write it on the tented name plate for the table.
- With the group name chosen, there will be a brief large group sharing using the process outlined below. The purpose of this particular sharing
is to announce and explain the table name, and then to invite each participant to introduce him- or herself: name, family details, life in the parish, hopes for the retreat. This expands what we just did at breakfast.

LARGE GROUP SHARING OPTION

This is an optional process for group sharing which may be used throughout the retreat. In MOST parishes, small group sharing will be sufficient. In small towns or communities, using this large group sharing option will be a hurdle for some people so please consider carefully the suitability of this for your group.

1. Each group begins by sharing at the table, following the directions of the Retreat Leader.
2. Then, when all are finished, the Retreat Leader calls the whole group to order and invites each small group to stand in place, facing the rest of the large group.
3. Then, one at a time each person shares about the current matter. When all are finished, the large group applauds and the small group goes back to its table.
4. For some sharing periods, you may wish to pass a cross from one person to the next, down the line. Persons who don’t wish to share in this forum should be permitted to simply hold the cross quietly and pass it along without feeling pressure or embarrassment.

- If you’re using the large group sharing option, the small group should first announce its table name and why it was chosen. Then each person should make that slightly longer introduction of him- or herself.
- The Retreat Leader asks if there are any questions at this point and when all are satisfied, announces the Enthronement of Sacred Scripture.
The Retreat Leader now holds a brief ceremony during which we honor the Word of God. The central altar described above should be standing ready with the book stand empty on it.

1. The Retreat Leader processes to the center of the room holding the Bible above his or her head and places it reverently on the Bible stand. If possible during this procession, sing a short song.

2. Light the candle.

3. Proclaim a reading from the letter to the Ephesians 3:14-19, reading it directly from the Bible. Use the common dialogue to surround the reading:
   
   Leader: A reading from the letter to Paul to the Ephesians  
   At the end: The Word of the Lord  
   All: Thanks be to God

4. Then say that the Bible is the light for our lives and the life of the whole church. It will also be the center of what we do here during the course of today. Give a very short explanation of why this is so. Then say that baptism is the beginning of our journeys of faith. At baptism we receive Christ; we are empowered by grace to live in Christ. The water of baptism is a sign of this new life.

5. Then sprinkle all with this water as an opening blessing.

6. This entire opening ceremony should take 10 minutes or less. At the end, announce a 15-minute restroom break.
Sanctus Retreat
Guide to the Second Session: 10:00 AM

Talk outline for “The Journey of Faith”

This talk is a fifteen-minute reflection given by either the Retreat Leader or someone else chosen for this presentation. Do not be tempted to talk longer than the allotted time. As the group moves its attention to this moment, the Retreat Leader stands at the podium and calls everyone to attention, using humor and gentleness. He or she then introduces this speaker, giving a personal statement about his or her competency to share about the Journey of Faith. Keep the introduction short.

The schedule for this talk looks like this:
- 10:00 introduction to the speaker
- 10:03 the 15-minute talk
- 10:18 instructions given for small group sharing
- 10:20 small group sharing (can be stretched to 30 minutes if needed when not using the large group option)
- 10:40 optional large group sharing
- 11:30 dismiss to lunch – pray the meal prayer prior to dismissal

Purpose: to help the participants become aware that growing in holiness is a lifelong journey begun at baptism and continuing down through the years. It is intentional and basic. And it is something we share in the parish community. See Appendix One for a summary of the pertinent parts of the Catechism to help you form your thoughts. Here are your main points:

- Thank everyone for being at the retreat today.
- Our spiritual journey, I suppose you could say, started at baptism for us.
- But many came before us, parents, grandparents, neighbors, all the way back to the time of Christ and beyond.
- Down through history, a parade of faithful people has come to know Christ, to turn their hearts to Christ, and to live according to the teachings of Christ.
- So with us. Pause for a moment, think back over your own journey:
  - Remember religious ed?
  - What religion did you practice as a child?
  - What do you remember about those years in your faith life?
  - What was happening in your family then, or in the world, that affected your faith journey?
  - What were some turning points in your life?
- What brought you here today?
- Taking the time to think about our journey helps us steer a clear path forward toward Christ. We’re all so busy all the time. We run from this to that. We come running into church on Sundays, and then run out and keep the race going. Pausing to savor Christ’s love, to become more aware of Christ around us, and to share that with each other is what this retreat is about.
- Here share a brief story from your own life about your own journey of faith and how it has unfolded. Don’t be afraid to share about the rough times, but do not engage in inappropriate self-disclosure, the sort of thing which belongs in therapy or the sacrament of reconciliation. Keep this short and make sure it isn’t “about you.” It should be an illustration of the journey of faith as you have experienced it.

- After you finish:
- Distribute the Journey of Faith Inventory (the handout is within this kit) and ask people to take a few minutes to think through it and jot down some notes. Then the Retreat Leader thanks the speaker and invites each small group to share, giving each person time to speak. Note that this period of sharing tends to go a bit long; people have had a lifetime of experiences to share about. It is important to let the sharing take its time but warn the small groups that we must finish with their sharing no later than 10:40.
- If you’re using the large group sharing option, the Retreat Leader announces the large group discussion. Say we will use the same process we did for the Introductions (each group standing, each person speaking). Say that this will give each small group member time to share (briefly) with the large group. Using humor and gentleness, remind people that we don’t need to hear every detail about their lives.
- Dismiss to lunch after the final small group has shared. If this runs long, the Host Team should be ready to serve lunch a bit late.
Sanctus Retreat
Guide to the Third Session: 12:15 PM
Talk Outline for “Dying in Christ”

This is a twenty-minute reflection given by either the Retreat Leader or someone else chosen for this presentation. Do not be tempted to talk longer than the allotted time. As the group moves its attention to this moment, the Retreat Leader stands at the podium and calls everyone to attention, using humor and gentleness. He or she then introduces this speaker, giving a personal statement about his or her competency to share about what it means to die in Christ. Keep the introduction short.

The schedule for this talk is:
- 12:15 the Retreat Leader reconvenes the group & announces this talk
- 12:15 introduction of the speaker
- 12:20 the 20-minute talk
- 12:40 instructions given for small group sharing
- 12:40 small group sharing (flex with this time as needed especially if you’re not using the large group sharing option)
- 1:15 more or less, optional large group sharing
- 2:15 dismiss to a break

**Purpose:** To help participants see that in order for us grow in holiness and live in the light of Christ, we must pass through the Paschal Mystery: we must die to ourselves in Christ. (See Appendix Two for material from the *Catechism* to support your talk.) This means we must learn the art of self-giving love. We must learn that the first must be last, the most important must be the servant of all, and we must be aware of our shortcomings in order for us to allow the grace of Christ to really touch us deeply. Here is the flow of your talk:

- We know that Jesus Christ lived and died for others. His teachings and his actions showed a man who wanted to heal, to love, and to welcome others, including outcasts of all kinds.
- His death was part of his life. He was fully human – but in his death, he showed us a way of life. He showed us an act of self-giving love the likes of which we had never seen before.
- But his death reflected his life. Throughout his life he had showed this love and this willingness to die to himself. Again and again, he surprised the people around him and the religious authorities of his day by making part of his family those they had rejected: tax collectors, women, foreigners, the poor, the outcast, and the sick.
- Embedded in a hundred daily occurrences of our lives is a summons to
follow him. If you peer into what’s happening in your life and world, you will hear Christ calling you to follow him, to carry your cross as it were, and to die to yourself. We are all called to practice self-giving love, and in each call is also that summons to die.

- Here give an example from your life. Choose something that is not extraordinary; choose something quite common. Tell the story briefly. Here is an example from my life, just to prime your “story pump.”

  - In the early 1980s, I became very aware that many people in Guatemala are living in grinding poverty. It’s nothing like the poverty people in the first world endure (which is also bad). In Guatemala, whole families live in huts made of corn stalks, their human dignity compromised by a lack of clean water, and a lack of food and medicine. Infant mortality is very high. Education levels are very low. Generation after generation of fellow human beings is living almost like animals. Embedded in knowing this for me is a call, a summons. I am called to do something about it. So I am involved with Common Hope, an organization working on the ground there to change this. They’re very effective. And here is my dying: they need money. I have to give away my own hard-earned money, more than I’m really comfortable giving. In a way, I wish I’d never learned about this because the call is insistent and strong. I cannot live and eat comfortably any longer, knowing my sisters and brothers are suffering like this.

- We want you now to think about the events, people, and history of your own life, to peer into that and see how you have been called. In what is your summons to die to yourself embedded? It could be:
  - illness, injury, or an accident
  - a person with whom you’ve been having difficulty
  - a death or life-threatening event
  - your spouse or partner
  - an aging parent who needs care
  - a job change
  - the news you read in the press
  - or many other places.

- How have you been called to self-giving love? To forgiveness; to generosity with your money, time, or emotions; to give up your prejudices or judgments; to welcome someone into your life; to put aside your dreams and hopes for someone else; to do things you prefer not to in order to care for someone else; to accept yourself as you look
physically and give up being anyone else; to affirm your spouse and not always think of yourself as the one who’s correct about things; to be thoughtful of others’ needs and life situations, giving them time and support; and so forth?

- In these specific events, people, and actions of your life you will find the call of God to love. This love doesn’t hang over your head in the room, like a theological idea; it’s real and concrete, taking the shape for you, as it did for Jesus, of the poor, the lame, the outcast, and the hungry.

When the speaker is finished, the Retreat Leader steps to the podium to invite small group sharing again. Each person should respond to the question posed by the speaker. We want people to be specific about these experiences in their lives. If you’re using the large group sharing option, tell them we will use the same format for large group sharing as the previous talk.

It may be necessary to remind the small groups once or twice about the time. We want to give each person a chance to share in that small group setting. **This is the most important sharing of the entire retreat.**

**Special note:** Talking about the ways in which we are called to self-giving love can be both joyful and painful for people, sometimes both at the same time. Flex with the time as needed to allow everyone to speak. Keep an eye out for anyone who may be struggling with this question.
**Sanctus Retreat**

**Guide to the Fourth Session: 2:45 PM**

**Talk outline for “Living in Grace”**

This is a twenty-minute reflection given by the Retreat Leader or someone else. Do not be tempted to talk longer than the allotted time. As the group moves its attention to this moment, the Retreat Leader stands at the podium and calls everyone to attention, using humor and gentleness. He or she then introduces this speaker, giving a personal statement about his or her competency to share about how the church offers us a way of life that provides the context in which we live in grace. Keep the introduction short.

Here is the schedule for this talk and the following conversation.

- 2:45 the Retreat Leader reconvenes the group & announces this talk
- 2:50 introduction of the speaker
- 2:50 the 20-minute talk
- 3:10 instructions given for small group sharing
- 3:10 small group sharing (flex with this time as needed especially if you’re not using the large group sharing option)
- 3:30 more or less, optional large group sharing
- 4:20 dismiss to the prayer exercise

**Purpose:** to help the participants see how the church provides us with a way of life that helps us keep on track. And when we get off track, the church provides us with a pathway back.

Here are your main points:

- It’s often said that each of us moves to a different drummer in life but I don’t think that’s true. I think we can narrow the number of different drummers down to a dozen or twenty. The key idea, though, is correct: we do march to a drum beat in life. We tend to follow the drum beat that rings in our inner ear.

- How can we make that drum beat be one of faith? As we exercise our spiritual lives, this is a key. What we hear repeated to us, the actions we take over and over again, and the people we see on a regular basis – these all create that drum beat.

- For example, here is a set of messages, actions, and people who would form a certain kind of drum beat:
  - Money is everything – get as much as you can
  - Dominate anyone who is weak as you climb the ladder of success
  - God wants you to be rich
  - The rich and famous are the most important and we should all be like them
  - Wealth is a blessing – a lack of wealth shows a lack of blessing
- Buy, buy, buy – it’s good for the economy
- The only important thing is what you own
- What you own is who you are
- Ignore the poor – let them get their own share of the pie
- And so forth

- What is the drum beat you hear in these messages, actions, and people?

- Yet again, for example, here is another set of messages, actions, and people who would form a drum beat:
  - Clothes make the person
  - You have to shop in all the “right” stores and buy the “right” brands
  - Be careful who you are seen with – you never know who might be watching you
  - Go into debt if you have to, but make it look good
  - Don’t let yourself grow old
  - If you don’t look thin, rich, and beautiful, you’re not OK
  - Never wear the same outfit twice
  - What you want is most important
  - If it’s in the way, get rid of it
  - Your will is more important than anything else

- What is the drum beat you hear in this? Where will it lead?

- Get the point? The message we hear, the people we see, and the actions we take shape and form us. This is especially true when we’re young but it continues to be true throughout our lives. The choices we make for ourselves and our families determine what this drum beat will be. For example, what do you hear in this set of messages, actions, and people?
  - How you treat others determines how happy you will be
  - God loves you unconditionally and I can do no less
  - Taking care of one’s neighbors is a high value in life
  - Forgive your enemies and do good to those who harm you
  - The good things in life are all meant to be shared
  - Sharing meals is the most important thing we do
  - The poor belong to us because they belong to Christ
  - How we look is important but who we are is most important
  - It’s OK to get your hands dirty in the garden
  - Let’s sit a spell on the porch and have a highball
  - And so forth
• For us, this drum beat is set in place by being at Mass each Sunday, a weekly downbeat of the drum! We are present, not because it is a “mortal sin” to miss, but because we know people there count on us to be present. We go to Mass not to get, but to give of ourselves, and that’s what keeps us in the pews.

• It’s also set by the flow of the sacraments in our lives. We move through life sacramentally: baptism leading to confirmation and Eucharist. Reconciliation when we have fallen off the track. Marriage or ordination and religious life when we are ready to commit ourselves to serve one another. Anointing as we approach illness and death.

• Our drum beat is also set in place by the annual flow of the seasons of the year, both in the parish and in our homes. For example, here is what one person reported as his flow:
  o Back-to-school sales in late August, nervous first school days, Labor Day weekend marking the end of summer
  o Ripe watermelons, shutting down the summer gardens, autumn leading up to Halloween, All Saints, and All Souls days
  o Thanksgiving turkey, family meals, and Advent leading up to Christmas
  o The cold winter months, sledding on the hill, Ash Wednesday right around the corner
  o Lenten fasting, devotions, and many family birthdays in this period
  o Holy Week at the parish leading to Easter Sunday, the whole family at dinner, eggs, chocolates, and the end of Lenten fasting
  o Springtime, May devotions to Mary, graduation, first communion, marriages, and Memorial Day weekend, dandelions, early radishes in the garden
  o Summer on the land: haymaking, gardens, chickens, 4-H projects, the county fair, and cold beer
  o Labor Day weekend again, fall harvests, the state fair, and apple picking time
  o Autumn leading up to Halloween...and so it went.

• This annual flow of feasts, seasons, holidays, and events comes naturally to us. You could easily name your own. Family events and those of the parish flow together as though of one piece of cloth.

• This is how we experience grace. Grace is not a mere theological idea that floats above your head in the room here. It’s quite real and quite practical. It comes from the sacraments, from paying attention to nature, from giving
and receiving love with each other, and from many other sources. It is God revealing and giving God’s own self to us. We may not hear the drum beat of sacraments, feasts, and seasons – but it continues to sound in our inner ear. We march according to it, even when we don’t consciously hear it.

- Grace is experienced as a divine power, an energy of love, which flows through us and makes it possible for us to choose the way of Christ, the way of the Cross. We are able to practice self-giving love, to die to ourselves, only because we have that grace.

- We may not be aware of this “rhythm of faith” which has been established in our life. We only follow what we know. And that’s how it is for everyone. It’s the reason we must carefully tend our souls to be sure the messages, people, and actions of our lives are ones leading to holiness. It’s easy to inadvertently start marching to the beat of a different drummer.

- Sin occurs when we allow ourselves to get off the track and allow values and messages other than those of God to take over our lives: selfishness, lust, greed, meanness, unmanaged anger, or others.

- What has composed the drum beat in your life? How have you marshaled the drummer to make sure it’s the beat that you really want to hear? What messages do you hear playing in your inner ear?

- What are the messages of sin? What are the greatest temptations in today’s world which lead us away from the divine drummer?

- Name other possible drummers to whose beat you could be marching. Compare these from the point of view of achieving human happiness and, therefore, holiness.

When the talk is finished, the Retreat Leader asks the small groups to discuss the questions posed by the speaker. Each person should respond to the questions. We want people to be specific about these experiences in their lives. The large group sharing option may not be needed at this point in the retreat.

After the sharing is finished, announce a short break. Ask everyone to return within five or seven minutes.
Sanctus Retreat
Guide to the Fifth Session: 4:20 PM
(or later depending on the sharing in the previous discussion)

Option One: a period of personal prayer
Option Two: celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Retreat Leader stands at the podium and calls everyone to attention, using humor and gentleness. He or she then introduces this period of prayer or the celebration of Reconciliation. In either case, with quiet recorded music playing in the background, ask everyone to sit comfortably at the table, and think back over this day from the very beginning. Use these notes to help them recall everything we have done:

- We arrived and got name tags and a cup of coffee
- Breakfast and introductions
- Our small groups were formed; we named them; and we introduced ourselves to each other more fully
- We enthroned Sacred Scripture and were blessed with the water of our baptisms
- We shared about our own journeys of faith from our birth onward
- We had a delicious lunch served by our Host Team
- We learned about the Paschal Mystery, that it isn’t only about the dying of Christ but mainly about our own summons to self-giving love
- We shared about that together – many wonderful stories!
- We learned about living in grace, about that drum beat in our lives, a drum beat of faith
- And we also shared about that and about ways we can be led off the track to follow other drummers

**Option One:** Supper is coming soon, but first, we want to pause and bring all we have done so far to God in prayer. So please pause right now and allow the music to touch your heart. Be quiet right where you’re sitting now. And use the page we have handed you to compose a prayer. Talk to God in your own words about what has happened so far today. Tell God about the loves and losses in your life.

- Mention that in evening prayer, anyone who is willing will be invited to pray all or part of the prayer they have written, as a way of gathering all our prayers together as one.

**Option Two:** The ministry of the Church helps us celebrate and realize our Reconciliation with God through this sacrament. We take time now to pause in our busy lives, turn our hearts to Christ, and confess the sins that have been hindrances to our spiritual growth.

- Mention that a number of confessors are located within the space and invite participants to celebrate the Sacrament.
Evening Prayer follows
The Retreat Leader reconvenes the group and turns off the music. Gather everyone with a simple prayer such as:

Oh God, we know that you are with us
and that you guide all we do.

We pray with gratitude for the gifts of this day.

Here invite anyone who wishes to share their prayer. At the end, conclude with the Lord’s Prayer and the Sign of the Cross. You may wish to make this your evening meal prayer as well.
Sanctus Retreat
Guide to the
Talk outline for “Holiness for Life”

After supper, the Retreat Leader reconvenes the group and gathers everyone back in the meeting room. He or she announces that we have just one short session left, one in which we will make what we have learned today into practical and realistic goals for our spiritual lives.

This is a seven-minute talk given by the Retreat Leader or someone else chosen for this job. Do not be tempted to talk longer than the allotted time. As the group moves its attention to this moment, the Retreat Leader stands at the podium and calls everyone to attention, using humor and gentleness. He or she then introduces this speaker, giving a personal statement about his or her competency to share about the theme of Holiness for Life. Keep the introduction short.

Here is the schedule for this talk and the following conversation.
- 6:15 the Retreat Leader reconvenes the group & announces this talk
- 6:18 introduction of the speaker
- 6:20 the 7-minute talk
- 6:30 20-minute small group sharing
- 6:50 optional large group sharing – time for each person to name one item
- 7:30 dismiss to the closing Mass

Note: In many parishes the closing Mass is also the vigil Mass of the weekend liturgies. In that case, flex this timing to coordinate with that. You may hold your Mass before supper if the parish vigil Mass is early.

Purpose: to help the participants see how their journey now continues into their everyday lives. They will be asked to identify what will most help them live with Christ more closely. Here are your main points:

- The Gospels show how the journey of faith is lived. We come to know Christ and to die to ourselves in loving others, as Christ did for us. This leads us to a rhythm in our lives brought about by faith: Sunday Mass, regular prayer, and works of mercy.
- We are called into service. God’s presence in our lives is always giving us a nudge toward love, always toward love. To give and receive daily love with your spouse or partner and family members. To help the materially poor by ending the causes of poverty. To visit the imprisoned. To care for an aging parent or friend. To bring viaticum, oil, and friendship to the ill. To care for a sick friend. To speak on behalf of the voiceless, the rejected, and the marginalized of our culture.
- There are many ways people are called. Each call is unique but all of them taken together show how God is caring for the world.
• One thing about this: the call is more than merely making money, or getting famous, or being comfortable, or being “right” about your theology or politics. The call is to serve and the question is: to what or to whom are you called?

• Each person on this journey of faith needs different tools. For some it’s a small group with which to share Scripture and faith sharing. For others, it’s a monthly gathering, to help keep them on track. For still others, it’s a prayer guide, helping them know and love the Scriptures. And the question here is what tools do you need to help you answer God’s call in your life?

When the speaker is finished, the Retreat Leader comes to the podium and announces another round of sharing, first in small groups using the handout provided, then optionally in the large group.
Introduction. This Liturgy should be more intimate than weekend Sunday liturgies because it is being celebrated in a much smaller group. When possible, we recommend you use a smaller space than the parish church, such as a small chapel, or a room prepared as a chapel for this occasion. However, because of the shortage of priests it may be necessary to celebrate this as the vigil Mass for the parish as well as for this retreat. In this case, we suggest making the retreat group a special focus of the entire liturgy as a way of helping others in the parish see the benefit of the retreat.

Music. Music should be kept simple and singable. If possible, use the parish hymnal. Our goal is ultimately to help everyone take a more active role in the Sunday Mass. Invite the retreatants to take appropriate roles in the Mass as readers, communion distributors, and so forth.

Blessing and sending forth. After the communion rite, the Presider might consider giving a special blessing to all to send them on their way. This would be an appropriate time for the Presider and Retreat Leader to present each retreatant, including the retreat staff and themselves, with some sort of closing gift. It would be appropriate to use a brief rite of presentation for this purpose.

After the Mass. When the Mass is concluded, the Retreat Leader makes a formal ending of the retreat with a five-minute presentation. If this has been a vigil Mass for the weekend, the retreat participants may linger behind for a short ending. Do not be tempted to stretch this out into a long talk. Here are the main points:

- When you arrived here for this retreat, you didn’t know what to expect. But during this special today, God has touched your life in remarkable ways. You are now a new child of God, and your journey of faith continues.
- [You may wish to invite anyone who wishes to share aloud how they felt God touched them during this retreat.]
- Being at peace with God and the church is an action of the Holy Spirit. It isn’t a result of the talks or activities of the retreat, but a result of the Spirit’s own movement within your heart.
- As you go forth now, think about someone whom you know personally who would benefit from this experience. Make a commitment now to invite that person or couple to sign up for the next retreat here in the parish. It is scheduled for [here give the date of the next retreat]. They will be forever grateful and you will be an agent of the Holy Spirit.