



## Start-Up Retreat for SCCs

### "Celebrating Our Faith" - A plan for a 4-hour retreat

This retreat can be held on two consecutive nights, on a Saturday, or condensed into one evening. It's based on the Creed that we proclaim at Mass, divided into 4 parts:

1. What does it mean to believe in One Father?
2. How are our lives changed by believing in Jesus the Son?
3. Why do we need the Holy Spirit?
4. How important are we to the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church and the communion of saints?

Speakers may come from the parish, but the planning team might prefer to have a special guest speaker to draw more people to the retreat. In this case, they might want to add a third night to the retreat, and give the whole first night to the guest speaker. Skits can be used in-between talks to help illustrate them. Talks should last no more than 20 minutes each, unless you have brought in a special guest speaker.

Suggested handout: Copy and distribute the Nicene Creed. This can be placed on the back side of each night's program.

#### **SUGGESTED BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT:**

##### **Celebrate Our Faith!**

Come join your fellow parishioners in a celebration of our Catholic faith. This retreat will stir up your enthusiasm and inspire new energy for living the faith in everyday life and difficulties. You will have an opportunity to sign up for a small faith-sharing community, but please come even if you're not interested in participating in a Small Christian Community. Refreshments will be served afterward. Mark your calendar for (dates and times inserted here).

Topics include: What does it mean to believe in God the Father? How are our lives changed by Jesus? Why do we need the Holy Spirit? How important are you in the family of church and the communion of saints? We will have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the first night, and we will close with Mass on the second night.

You won't want to miss (insert special guest speaker here and brief bio, if you have one)!

**PART ONE**

**Opening Song:** Any using the theme of celebration or evangelization

**Leader:** Welcome and introductions

**Speaker/Couple 1: What does it mean to believe in One God, the Father Almighty?**

Fit your own story of faith into these main points:

1. God the Father is sometimes hard for us to feel close to because our human parents were not perfect. Some were even abusive or never around. We tend to think God is the way our parents were.
2. Tell how your relationship with the Father was healed, or how you met the Father.
3. God is the Father of all, but we have prejudices and there are some people we'd like to think are not loved by God as much as we are. What kinds of people do we think are not deserving of His love? Perhaps you could talk about someone (no names please) who is very difficult to get along with, someone who has caused you major problems.
4. We are all brothers and sisters, adopted by God our Father. We are called to love everyone, just as the Father loves everyone. How can we reach out to the brothers and sisters we don't usually spend time with?

**Song:** The Lord's Prayer ("Our Father ....")

**Speaker/Couple 2: How are our lives changed by believing in Jesus the Son?**

Fit your own story of faith into these main points:

1. Describe what your life was like before you gave your whole heart to Jesus? Were you sinful? Were you unhappy? Were you mixed up and confused? How did you damage your life as a sinner?
2. Who was Jesus in-the-flesh for you? How did the witness of the way they lived their lives bring you to conversion?
3. After you realized that Jesus died for you so that your sins would be forgiven, what changes happened in your life, in your attitudes, in your priorities, or in your goals?

**Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament**

(Approx. 5-10 minutes)

Refer to *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist (OSEHE)*, published by authority of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy and any Diocesan Guidelines on Eucharistic Adoration, Exposition & Benediction

1. At the start, the priest or deacon may want to invite people to think of what areas of their lives still need conversion and to offer these to Jesus as they pray silently.
2. **Song** at the end: "Jesus is Lord" or some other meditative song about Jesus.

**Leader:** Invite people to return to Night Two with prayer requests for people they know who are in need of evangelization and conversion.

**PART TWO**

**Opening Song:** Any using the theme of celebration or evangelization

**MC:** Welcome and introductions

**Speaker/Couple 3: Why do we need the Holy Spirit?**

Fit your own story of faith into these main points:

1. Describe a time when you were asked to get involved in a ministry at church and you felt inadequate. Why did you feel inadequate?
2. Relate this to a Saint or biblical prophet who was an ordinary person asked to do a big work for God, someone who might not have been adequate except for the help God gave them (eg., Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, the Virgin Mary)
3. What gifts of the Holy Spirit have helped you do the work of God?
4. How did you develop your relationship with the Holy Spirit? How have you learned to hear His voice and trust in His power?

**Song:** Any about the Holy Spirit

**Speaker/Couple 4: How important are we to the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church and the communion of saints?**

Fit your own story of faith into these main points:

1. Parents' faith makes a lasting difference.
2. We all belong to a bigger family, the communion of saints. There are many members of the one, holy, catholic church who don't attend church, or if they do, they don't get involved in community life. But many of these are ready to be evangelized.
3. Tell a story of how you used to be unconnected to the church community. What got you interested in joining RENEW or other small faith-sharing groups?
4. We belong to an apostolic church. The word "apostle" means "one who is sent forth to share the faith." At the end of every Mass, we are all sent forth into the world to share our faith with others. We are a large community during Mass. Small communities are where we learn how to share our faith. It's also where we get the wonderful opportunity to see others grow in their faith. Describe what it means to you personally to be an apostle, a faith-sharer.

**End with Mass**

Make sure that Mass starts immediately, by going into the processional song right after the last talk, or give the people something to watch or listen to while they wait. Ideas:

1. A soloist sings a meditative song
2. Participants can write the names of people who need conversion, to pray for them during Mass. These names can be dropped into a basket and taken to the altar during the offertory.
3. Participants gather around the altar or move to sit closer together up front.