

John Burke, O.P.

Bible Sharing Youth Retreat

MANUAL FOR RETREAT TEAM

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Prefac e

I wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude the helpful observations I received from so many people who have either worked with the program detailed in these pages or who, in the light of their pastoral experience, made suggestions which have been incorporated here. The on-going advice of our councilors and other advisors has been of immeasurable value in designing this program.

In particular, I would like to thank: Fr. Joseph Allen, O.P., Delores Armentor, Dominic Berardino, Betty Berrie, Fr. Hugh Dominic Burns, O.P., Fr. Thomas M. Kalita, Fr. Ronald Olszewski, O.S.F.S.,

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1.

Introduction

PURPOSE OF RETREAT

The Bible Sharing Youth Retreat is designed to permit small groups of young people, working with adult leaders, to discuss and witness to the truth contained in five selected passages of the Sacred Scriptures over the course of a week-end. This active participation in Bible sharing has proven to be a powerful motivational resource for encouraging the retreatants to continue to explore the meaning of the Scriptures as a daily part of their spiritual lives far beyond the retreat itself. By reading the Bible every day, the young people will be following the exhortation of the second Vatican Council which states:

This Sacred Synod earnestly and specifically urges all the Christian faithful to learn by the frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the “excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ.” “For

ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* 25.

OVERVIEW

The retreat generates an atmosphere of intense involvement with the Lord Jesus through sharing the word of God. Equally important is a loving sense of intense involvement with fellow retreatants through free and open discussion of revealed realities.

While other elements are present which contribute significantly to its ultimate spiritual fruitfulness, the heart and focus of the retreat is a group discussion process called Bible sharing which is described in great detail in the book, *Bible Sharing: How to Grow in the Mystery of Christ* by John Burke, O.P. (New York: Alba House, 1979).

The Word of God Institute has been conducting Bible sharing retreats for both young people and adults since 1975. Over the years and under widely differing circumstances, the Institute has tried a number of different schedules and included a variety of activities. However, we found that the materials presented in this manual, when adapted to meet the special requirements of local conditions (time availability, facilities, leadership personnel, etc.), work well and bear rich fruit in terms of spiritual growth and a desire to continue to read and share the Bible with other Christians even after the conclusion of the retreat. In other words, this retreat is designed to be only the beginning of a lifetime of being nourished by the word of God as it lives in the Church of Christ.

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Not only does the program generate an on-going hunger for the word of God, the retreat fosters a deeper love for the Church and a desire for greater and more regular sacramental celebration, particularly in terms of the Holy Eucharist.

LAY LEADERSHIP: IMPORTANCE OF WITNESS

The retreat is designed to be conducted by lay men and women who themselves want to deepen their knowledge of Scripture as a means to personal spiritual maturity. Materials are provided here which will give the members of the retreat team sufficient knowledge to be able to lead small groups of retreatants in the discussion of the selected passages. At the same time, introductions have been provided so that lay people who do not have a formal education in Scripture or theology but who are willing to spend a reasonable period of time in preparation can have enough information to give the background of each the readings to the retreatants. In this way, the leaders will be able to set up the parameters for the small group sharing.

Lay leadership of the retreat is important because of the witness factor it presents to young Catholic men and women. The team, as will be seen in greater detail below, should be made up of exemplary Christians, who have a love for both young people and God’s word and are filled with an earnest desire to serve both in a ministry of love.

The retreat has proven to be life-transforming for more than one retreatant over the course of the years, and so it is true to say that the team leaders, drawn from all walks of life and all age categories, have the opportunity here of shaping the future courses of spiritual development for their young friends and fellow Christians.

At the same time, priests are needed to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (optional) and the Holy Eucharist (not-optional). In particular, we hope that the pastor(s) of the retreatants will be available to participate in the closing Departure Ceremony.

When planning the retreat, the Retreat Team may have other activities which it will want to include. Such additions, based on the knowledge of the local situation, are to be encouraged. At the same time, it is important to avoid overloading the retreat so that the central activities which are described in these pages are not overshadowed and their effectiveness thereby diminished.

REACTIONS OF PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

10th Grade Boy: A beautiful experience which brought me a lot closer to God.

10th Grade Girl: I felt the retreat was very fulfilling and enjoyable. I learned a lot about how to read and interpret the Bible so as to get something meaningful out of it – something I can apply to my own life. I think that this retreat brought me closer to myself and to God, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

11th Grade Girl: The retreat was a week-end of self-discovery and greater religious understanding. It helped me come in closer contact with the Lord, especially through the Bible sharing sessions.

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12th Grade Boy: The Bible to me was an old book of the do's and don'ts on how we should live our life. I found out from this retreat that it was much more fascinating than I had thought and that I could relate it to many of my own situations.

Adult Lay Leader: The week-end was a success for both teen-agers and adults. We gained an insight in the Word of the Lord and had a chance to share the experience with others.

Team Member: Absolutely fantastic experience! To see the teens, and adults, become so caught up in the Word of the Lord was truly exciting. That this was not just a week-end experience but a lasting one is shown by the fact that, from this same group, Bible sharing sessions every two weeks have continued, even through the summer months.

Pastor: One must have seen the transforming power of a Youth Bible Sharing Retreat to fully believe it.

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2.

Retreat Schedule

[Because it is not always possible for the retreatants to leave the parish for a retreat, a schedule is provided that can be adapted for use in the parish hall, school or other environment where the retreatants spend the nights in their own homes.]

FRIDAY SCHEDULE WHEN RETREATANTS REMAIN OVERNIGHT

PM

6:30	Retreat Team Meeting
7:00	Retreatants Arrive
	Register
	Room Assignments
7:30-7:45	General Session
	Introductory Talk by Retreat Leader
	Purpose of Retreat
	Structure of Retreat
	Distribution of Rule Sheet (Optional)
	Questions/Answers
	Introduction of Team Members
	Assignment of Groups
	8 Retreatants per Group
	2 Team Leaders per Group
7:45-8:30	Ice-Breaker Games
8:30-9:15	General Session
	Opening Prayer
	Explain and Fill Out Questionnaire (15 mm.)
	Small Groups Discuss Answers
9:15-9:30	Break

9:30-10:15 Introduction to Bible Sharing
 How the Bible Came to be Written
 Explanation of Sharing Process
 Distribution of Bibles and Discussion Questions
 10:15-10:35 Personal Witness Talk
 10:35-10:45 Spontaneous Prayer and Song

10:45-12:00 M Party
 Charades or Other Team Games

AM

12:00-12:15 Night Prayers
 Groups Pray Together in Chapel for:
 Retreat as a Whole
 One Another in the Group
 1:00 Lights Out

SATURDAY SCHEDULE WHEN RETREATANTS REMAIN OVERNIGHT

AM

7:45-8:00 Morning Prayer
 8:00-8:30 Breakfast

8:30-9:15 Prepare Ephesians 1:3-14
 Brief Background on Passage
 Song
 Private Study and Prayer
 9:15-10:30 Sharing Session 1
 9:15-10:00 Small Group Sharing
 10:00 Poster Making in Small Group
 10:15 Reporting on Small Group Sharing
 10:30-11:00 Break
 11:00-11:45 Prepare Luke 4:14-5:39
 Background
 Song
 Private Study and Prayer
 (11:30 Small Group Chapel Time)

11:45-1:00 Sharing Session 2
 11:45 Sharing
 12:30 Poster Making
 12:45 Reporting in General Session

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1:00-1:30 Lunch

PM

1:30-3:00 Recreation
Organized Team Games
(2:30 Small Group Chapel Time)

3:00-3:45 Prepare Mark 14:43-15:47
Background
Song
Private Study and Prayer
(3:30 Small Group Chapel Time)

3:45-5:00 Sharing Session 3
3:45 Sharing
4:30 Poster Making
4:45 Reporting in General Session

5:00-5:15 Break

5:15-5:30 Music Practice

5:30-6:30 Eucharistic Liturgy (Fulfills Sunday Obligation)

6:30-7:15 Dinner

7:15-8:00 Prepare Luke 24:13-53
Background
Song
Private Study and Prayer
(7:30 Small Group Chapel Time)

8:00-9:15 Sharing Session 4
8:00 Sharing
8:45 Poster Making
9:00 Reporting in General Session
9:15-11:30 Prepare and Present Scripture Skits

11:30-12:30 Evening Prayer
Witness Talk
Song
Meditation

1:00 a.m. Lights Out

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SUNDAY SCHEDULE WHEN RETREATANTS REMAIN OVERNIGHT AM

8:00-8:15 Morning Prayer
8:15-8:45 Breakfast
8:45-9:30 Prepare Acts I
Background
Song
Private Study and Prayer
(9:15 Small Group Chapel Time)
9:30-10:45 Sharing Session 5

9:30 Sharing
 10:15 Poster Making
 10:30 Reporting in General Session
 10:45-11:30 Recreation
 (11:15 Small Group Chapel Time)
 11:30-11:45 Fun Sing
 11:45-12:05 Witness Talk

PM

12:05-12:45 Small Group Discussion
 How did you grow here?
 How do you want to continue this in your parish?
 12:45-1:30 Lunch
 1:30-1:45 General Session
 Hear Small Group Reports on Previous Discussion
 1:45-2:15 Private Time
 Write Letter to Self
 Fill out Retreat Evaluation
 2:15-3:00 Departure Liturgy
 3:00-3:30 Pack and Depart
 3:30-4:00 Retreat Team Meeting

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FRIDAY SCHEDULE WHEN RETREATANTS DO NOT REMAIN OVERNIGHT

PM

6:30 Retreat Team Meeting
 7:00 Retreatants Arrive
 Register
 7:30-7:45 General Session
 Introductory Talk by Retreat Leader
 Purpose of Retreat
 Structure of Retreat
 Distribution of Rule Sheet (Optional)
 Questions/Answers
 Introduction of Team Members
 Assignment of Groups
 8 Retreatants per Group
 2 Team Leaders per Group
 7:45-8:30 Ice-Breaker Games
 8:30-9:15 General Session
 Opening Prayer
 Explain and Fill out Questionnaire (15 mm.)
 Small Groups Discuss Answers
 9:15-9:30 Break
 9:30-10:15 Introduction to Bible Sharing
 How the Bible Came to be Written
 Explanation of Sharing Process
 Distribution of Bibles and Discussion
 Questions

10:15-10:35 Personal Witness Talk
10:35-10:45 Spontaneous Prayer and Song
10:45-11:00 Night Prayers
Groups Pray Together in Chapel for:
Retreat as a Whole
One Another in the Group

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SATURDAY SCHEDULE WHEN RETREATANTS DO NOT REMAIN OVERNIGHT

AM

8:15-8:30 Morning Prayer
8:30-9:15 Prepare Ephesians 1:3-14
Brief Background on Passage
Song
Private Study and Prayer
9:15-10:30 Sharing Session 1
9:15-10:00 Small Group Sharing
10:00 Poster Making in Small Group
10:15 Reporting of Small Group Sharings to All
10:30-11:00 Break
11:00-11:45 Prepare Luke 4:14-5:39
Background
Song
Private Study and Prayer
(11:30 Small Group Chapel Time)
11:45-1:00 Sharing Session 2
11:45 Sharing
12:30 Poster Making
12:45 Reporting in General Session
1:00-1:45 Lunch
(1:30 Small Group Chapel Time)

PM

1:45-2:30 Prepare Mark 14:43-15:47
Background
Song
Private Study and Prayer
(2:15 Small Group Chapel Time)
2:30-3:45 Sharing Session 3
2:30 Sharing
3:15 Poster Making
3:30 Reporting in General Session
If possible, all participating in the retreat should attend the Parish Eucharistic
Celebration on Saturday before the evening Bible sharing sessions.
7:15-8:00 Prepare Luke 24:13-53
Background
Song
Private Study and Prayer

(7:30 Small Group Chapel Time)

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8:00-9:15 Sharing Session 4
 8:00 Sharing
 8:45 Poster Making
 9:00 Reporting in General Session
9:15-9:30 Refreshments

9:30-10:00 Evening Prayer
 Witness Talk
 Song
 Meditation

SUNDAY SCHEDULE WHEN RETREATANTS DO NOT REMAIN OVERNIGHT

AM

10:00-10:15 Morning Prayer
10:15-11:00 Prepare Acts 1
 Background
 Song
 Private Study and Prayer
 (10:45 Small Group Chapel Time)
11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-12:30 Sharing Session 5
 11:15 Sharing
 12:00 Poster Making
 12:15 Reporting in General Session

PM

12:30-1:15 Lunch
 (1:00 Small Group Chapel Time)
1:15-1:35 Witness Talk

PM

1:35-2:15 Small Group Discussion
 How did you grow here?
 How do you want to continue this in your parish?
2:15-2:30 General Session
 Hear Small Group Reports on Previous Discussion
2:30-3:00 Private Time
 Write Letter to Self
 Fill out Retreat Evaluation
3:00-3:45 Departure Liturgy
3:45-4:15 Retreat Team Meeting

3.

Bible Sharing Process

WHY BIBLE SHARING?

During this retreat, each retreatant and retreat team member is being asked to share the Bible because each has something to offer and share with the others about belief in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and about his/her experience of the Kingdom of God revealed in the Bible.

This is how all of us first came to faith. Our parents, relatives, teachers or friends shared their faith with us and brought us into the life of the believing Christian community. If we came to Christ when we were older, at some point another human being shared faith with us and led us into the Church. Reading, study, private prayer are most important, obviously. Nevertheless, at some point the witness of another is part of God's plan of bringing us into His Kingdom. This is why Christian preaching – the homily at Mass, for example – is so important. There the priest of God shares with the community his own faith in God when he preaches God's word.

Bible sharing continues this action of growth through the witness of others. We take the responsibility to beget faith in others and to nourish our own faith when we share the message of Jesus with others. This is how the early Church began – the Apostles shared their faith in Jesus with other people. In the Bible sharing sessions during this retreat you will therefore, continue the work of the Apostles. You will follow the pattern already established by the Church closest to the time of Jesus.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SHARE?

The Bible is not a single book; it is a library of many books, and it was compiled over the span of many centuries and cultures. Many different authors and editors contributed to the writing of the entire Bible as we possess it today in the Church. Yet, altogether they reveal God's unending love for us. Normally, we would read a whole book from start to finish in order to understand the author's perspective of faith from which he was writing. Here, however, in such a short period of time, you can only use selected passages that unfold the basic themes of God's revelation of His love.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN EACH SHARING SESSION?

Your schedule will show you that there are two phases to the sharing of each passage: **1) A Preparation;** **2) The Sharing** Session itself. In the Preparation, one of the team members gives the introduction which is found in this manual. He/she may want to embellish the introduction with

contributions of his/her own that flow from his/her own private study. Such contributions will serve to make the introduction more personal.

After the introduction, the entire group will spend some time in song-prayer asking for God's blessing on the private study of each retreatant and the subsequent sharing session by the small groups.

After that, each retreatant should go off ALONE to study the passage to be shared, examining it in the light of the discussion questions with which each will have been provided. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions; they are meant to stimulate personal reflection on the meaning of the passage, in itself and for life, which can then be talked about in the small group.

After a period of private time with the word and with God, the retreatants gather in small groups of eight along with two adult team members to discuss what they have gained from their private reading of the passage. The adult leader who conducts the discussion will do so by asking the group to discuss their responses to the discussion questions.

After having talked about the passage using the discussion questions, each small group will make up a poster which puts into colorful graphic form the central ideas it derived from the passage. The group should try as accurately as possible to present in a graphic medium what it discussed around the table in words.

Finally, all the groups come back to the central hall to hear the reports from each of the small groups about what they got out of the passage. This can be a very entertaining part of the retreat, since each group will make its report to the others by explaining the meaning of the poster they created. All the posters are then put up on the wall around the room where the general sessions are held. Thus, the team and retreatants both will be able to see in a vivid manner the growth in faith and understanding that is taking place during the retreat.

LEVELS OF MEANING

Two levels of meaning should emerge from each text shared: (1) the literal meaning of the text: i.e., what meaning the sacred author intended to convey in his own situation by means of the literary form, structure and words he used; and (2) the meaning of the text for us today in terms of my own experience of the truth that is being revealed.

There will not be enough time for the groups to talk about all the questions. We have deliberately provided more than you can use. If you find you are moving through them rather quickly, it is probably because the group has not gone deeply enough into the meaning of the text. So, take your time. Examine each text carefully. Interpret the questions with care. Allow everyone to express their views on the subject. If you do all this, the group should not be able to finish ahead of time.

SHARING PROCESS / 13

PRAYER

Finally, and most importantly, each sharing session should be well-seasoned with prayer. That is, begin each session with a prayer. Salt it with prayer as you go along, particularly if any disputes arise among you, or any of the passages seem unusually obscure. Finally, conclude each sharing with spontaneous prayer to which all the participants are invited and urged to contribute.

JOY

The sharing sessions during the retreat, while serious business, are not the classroom, and the participants are not simply acquiring new knowledge. All, leaders and retreatants, are there to share faith and to witness to the action of God in their lives through Jesus Christ. Hence, serious business it may be, but it is also joyous business. So, let the sharing sessions be a time of fun as well.

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4.

Setting up the Retreat

SELECTING THE RETREAT TEAM

Retreat Leader. The Retreat Leader has the responsibility for all aspects of the retreat. He or she must be able to relate well with the retreatants and the adult staff. S/he must be able to inspire them to work together in faith. More than anyone else, the Retreat Leader sets the tone and mood of the retreat so that all participating in the retreat in any capacity can come to a deeper knowledge of the Mystery God has revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. That Mystery is present to us today through our faith in Jesus Christ as it is lived in his Church.

The Bible Sharing Youth Retreat is a community celebration of that Mystery.

Unless otherwise indicated, the Retreat Leader presides over all the sessions. S/he conducts the games at the beginning of the retreat. The games are intended to help the retreatants and Group Teams to get acquainted with one another in a relaxed environment.

The Retreat Leader supervises the filling out of the Opening Questionnaire. However, the Group Teams will lead the discussions of the answers in the small group sessions.

The Retreat Leader leads all the prayers him/herself. S/he should feel free to add creatively to the basic prayer liturgies that are provided in this manual. For example, s/he may wish to expand the celebration of Evening Prayer on Saturday by using candles, low lights, an informal setting, etc.

All Team members should willingly carry out any requests the Retreat Leader might have which will serve to better the retreat. They should also report any difficulties they encounter to him/her so that there is a consistency in dealing with problems. This is especially necessary in dealing with the problems of the young. It is important for all participants to understand clearly who is in charge.

Group Team. The Group Team are the members of the Retreat Team who will probably have the most intimate relationship with the retreatants. There should be two assigned to each group of eight retreatants. One of the two will act as the discussion leader, leading the prayers, proposing the discussion questions, guiding the sharing that follows. The second member of the Group Team supports the work of the first. Sometimes it is difficult to get young people who are strangers to one another and to the adult team members to open up their hearts and minds to the work of God. Hence, it is necessary to stimulate discussion and the free exchange of ideas and feelings. Such a task is sometimes too difficult for one adult to do well. However, with second person there to contribute to the discussion from a totally sharing perspective, the sharing sessions will gain in vitality and enthusiasm.

At the same time, the Group Team must be cautious not to dominate the discussion. Their task is to stimulate the open expression of the retreatants' deepest feelings and insights, not inhibit them.

It is very important that the Group Team have absolutely no disciplinary responsibilities. Discipline should be handled totally by the Retreat Leader or the Chaperones, who will be described more fully below. The Group Team should be free to become friends with the members of their group, accepting them for what they are and supporting them even in difficult situations. Significant things happen as a result of hearing and sharing the word of God; the Group Team needs to be free to encourage their group to respond to the graces that are being given.

While all members of the Retreat Team should be thoroughly familiar with the Bible sharing process and even be knowledgeable about the passages to be shared, it is vital that the Group Team have studied the passages to be shared in considerable depth.

In order to prepare to make their important contribution to the retreat, the Group Team should read the assigned Scripture passages, pray about them and over them, reflect on their meaning for their own lives, and try to work out in some coherent form their own insights as they have been stimulated by the discussion questions. Finally, as a result of this preparation each Group Leader should try to add two more questions for discussion to those already given in this manual.

Support Team: Chaperones. The Support Team is made up of two sections of Retreat Leaders: Chaperones and Helpers.

The Chaperones are responsible for general supervisory work: handling the emergencies which always

seem to arise, like sickness, taking care of disciplinary matters, facilitating the movement of retreatants from activity to activity, and generally assisting the Retreat Leader in overseeing the multiplicity of details that are an integral part of the smooth functioning of a large group of people, especially of young people. Because of the demanding nature of their work, they should have no other responsibility in terms of the group sharing sessions.

Support Team: Helpers. These are Team members who offer their services in such areas as preparation and clean-up, the kitchen, and setting up the liturgies. This is an excellent position to start young people who have already made a retreat and feel called by God to foster Bible sharing as members of the Retreat Team. Their presence alone is a valuable witness to the retreatants. At the same time, of course, mature adults will also probably be necessary to assure the smooth handling of the housekeeping activities.

Witnesses. Although all the retreatants and Team members will be witnessing to one another in the group sharing, the atmosphere of the retreat is immeasurably augmented by devoting special times (indicated in the schedule) to witness talks by Christians who have a gift for this ministry.

It is impossible to lay down adequate criteria for the content of the Witness Talk. Obviously it should be about the action of the Lord in the person's life which resulted in the witness having become a more firm believer and a better person. The focus of the Witness Talk should be on the power of God and not on the person who is witnessing. The Witness Talk should lead the listeners to reflect on their own lives to see if God is acting in a similar way in them.

Since this is a Bible sharing retreat, it would be better to recruit those witnesses who have entered into a deeper relation with Jesus through the reading of his word.

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There is, of course, always a risk with witness talks, but they are worth it. Here are a few points to keep in mind that will help assure that the witness talks will be of positive benefit to the retreatants.

1. The witness should have achieved some maturity in the Lord.
2. The witness should be a member in good standing of a Christian Church, if the retreat is ecumenical. Otherwise, the witness should be in good standing in the Roman Catholic Church.
3. The witness should not be Fundamentalist in biblical outlook.
4. The witness talk should be prepared in advance and reviewed by the Retreat Leader for appropriateness.
5. The witness talk should be able to be given within the time limits of the schedule.

Music Leader. Music can be a tricky part of a Bible sharing retreat. One person (or group) should be responsible for selecting the music, providing accompaniment, leading the singing and motivating the retreatants to participate. While it must be recognized that the young are often not able to sing well and, therefore, are reluctant to do so, good music with good leadership can add much to the experience of the retreat.

This manual indicates the places where music is appropriate; however, it makes no effort to suggest which pieces of music should be used. There is too much variety in musical taste, so the actual selection

of music should be done by the Music Leader who will be sensitive to the tastes of the Team and retreatants.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

The physical environment that is available for conducting retreats varies considerably depending upon the resources of the region. This retreat is designed with the presumption that the retreatants will remain overnight, so suitable lodging and boarding accommodations need to be provided.

With regard to the Bible sharing sessions themselves, you will need one hall large enough to hold all the retreatants for the general sessions. You will also need places for each sharing group to talk freely without interfering with the other groups. Indeed, the more privacy you can provide each group the better.

You will also need a chapel or other suitable area that will be reserved strictly for prayer by individuals and by groups throughout the retreat. It is highly desirable to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved there at all times.

ASSIGNING THE GROUPS

Before the arrival of the retreatants, the Retreat Team should have assigned each retreatant to a group with which s/he will remain as a member throughout the retreat. A great sense of group identity will emerge during the course of the retreat and this is to be encouraged.

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It might be advisable, therefore, to assign the retreatants to groups by parish affiliation so that after the retreat they can do follow-up work in the parish from which they come. We also suggest that you have a spread of ages in each group. The retreat is suitable for retreatants from grade 8 through high school. Indeed, the basic format has been used successfully for groups of all ages.

MATERIALS NEEDED

The following materials will be needed during the retreat:

1. Each participant should have his/her own Bible
2. One large Bible suitable for enthroning
3. Opening Questionnaire
4. Pencils for answering questionnaire
5. Ice breaker games
6. Recreational equipment
7. Discussion questions
8. Basic resource and reference works:

- a. Brown, Raymond E., et. al. eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
 - b. Burke, John, O.P., *Bible Sharing: How to Grow in the Mystery of Christ*. New York: Alba House, 1979.
 - c. Leon-Dufour, Xavier. *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
 - d. McKenzie, John L. *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1965.
 - e. *The Jerusalem Bible* (footnoted edition –not the “Readers’ Edition”).
 - f. Biblical atlas
- 9. Morning and Evening Prayer sheets
 - 10. Song books
 - II. Oil for anointing
 - 12. Usual materials for Eucharistic Liturgy (Communion under both Species)
 - 13. Poster paper and markers; materials for affixing posters to wall
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 - 14. Departure Ceremony
 - 15. Sheet of Suspected Difficulties** (for Retreat Team only)
 - 16. Evaluation Sheets

5. Introductions to Bible Passages

The following introductions may either be read to the retreatants by the Retreat Leader as they stand, or they may serve as notes for his/her own presentation in which s/he adds the findings of his/her personal research.

Each general session where the introductions are given should begin with a prayer offered by the Retreat Leader which is appropriate to the theme of the passage to be shared.

The sessions close with song after which the retreatants spend time alone with the Lord and their

Bibles studying the passage to be shared.

Quiet should be observed by all during these essential times of the retreat.

Groups may use part of this time for Group visits to the Chapel for prayer.

Sharing Session 1: Ephesians 1:3-14. This passage from the Letter to the Ephesians is the favorite passage of many Christians. It sums up everything that God is doing for those who believe. It is nothing less than the revelation of the Divine Mind overflowing with love. God wants all of us to live in His presence forever through love.

AT THIS POINT READ THE PASSAGE ALOUD

Because the vocabulary and style of the Letter to the Ephesians are different from other epistles (e.g. Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, etc.), scripture scholars disagree whether Paul wrote this letter himself, or whether one of his disciples wrote it in his name (and, possibly, after his death.) In spite of this disagreement, however, the Church has always recognized Ephesians as the inspired word of God.

Although it is entitled, To the Church at Ephesus, it was in fact a letter that was circulated among many of the early Churches.

God has a plan for all of us. The Letter to the Ephesians reveals it.

The letter is called “The Letter of the Fullness of Christ.” In this letter God reveals that all persons of all ages and times, races and colors are being brought together in unity in Christ Jesus. Because of God’s desire that we all be one in Christ, Christians have always looked upon all men

and women as their brothers and sisters. In this sense, the letter teaches us the universal brotherhood of all the human race.

God intends that we live together in peace and harmony. God also wants us to live together in unity with Him for ever in heaven. This is salvation. God intends it to be for everyone.

In the past, in the Old Testament, the Jews thought salvation was only to be for them. They thought that in order to be saved one had to be born a Jew or become a Jew. To be saved, they thought you had to observe their ancient Law of Moses.

In Christ, however, we learn that salvation is intended for all through faith. This idea of salvation being for all, whether Jew or Gentile became the source of great arguments between the Jews and the early Christians. It was one of the reasons why the Jews persecuted people like Stephen and Paul.

In this passage from Ephesians notice the number of times the letter speaks of God’s choice or election. This means that anyone who believes in Jesus believes in him only because s/he has been given the gift of faith by our heavenly Father.

But the divine choice is not just for the individual. The divine choice joins the individual to the people of God which is our Church. We find the strength and wisdom to live good, holy and happy lives in the Church.

As you read the passage today, allow the Lord to speak to you in a personal and intimate way. Consider Ephesians as a love letter from God. Hear God describing the great things that He has planned for you as a member of His chosen people.

In your sharing session, you will be asked to tell one another what you think this passage meant when it was first written and what you think it means for us today. You will also be asked to share with the Group how you have experienced the truths revealed here in your own lives.

Sharing Session 2: Luke 4:14-5:39. The Gospel of Luke is the first part of a two part work of the New Testament. The second part is the Acts of the Apostles which you will be reading tomorrow.

Tradition credits the writing of both parts, Gospel and Acts, to a physician named Luke. Luke was probably a pagan from Antioch who was converted to Christ. He was certainly well educated because he wrote some of the finest Greek in the New Testament. Luke was also a dear friend of the Apostle Paul. From passages in Acts, it seems that Luke actually traveled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys. From time to time Luke probably lived with Paul.

What motivated Luke to write his gospel?

He tells us himself in the opening chapter, 1:1-4. There he says that he wants to show the mysterious figure, Theophilus, "how well-founded is the teaching you have received." Today we might say that Luke wrote a catechism to explain the teachings of the Church to believing Christians.

There are certain qualities which characterize this gospel. Unlike the gospels of Matthew, Mark or John, Luke assumes that his readers know little of Jewish Law and customs. It seems, therefore, that he wrote for non-Jewish converts to Christ.

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In Luke, Jesus is revealed as a heroic person. He towers above all the other characters in the gospel. He is always in control, even when he is dying on his cross. Nevertheless, Jesus' ministry, which began when he walked the dusty roads of Palestine in the flesh, is completed only by the Church after his resurrection.

In fact, it is true to say that Jesus ministry has not yet been completed. It is being carried on today by all those believers in Jesus who are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Acts of Apostles tells us how our ministry in the Church began.

The story of the two books, Luke and Acts, is the story of a journey in faith. The Gospel of Luke tells of Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. There he dies on the cross and is raised from the dead. Acts tells how the power of Jesus' resurrection goes forth to the ends of the earth. This happens through the action of the Holy Spirit which Jesus gives to his Apostles.

In the section of Luke you will be sharing now, we find Jesus just as he is beginning his public ministry in Galilee. The discussion questions have been designed so that you can read a small section of

the passage and then discuss the questions. By discussing the questions you will arrive at the meaning of that section.

As you read this passage, notice the following things that are revealed here about the person of Jesus:

1. Chapter 4:16-30 and vv. 42-44 reveal the personal qualities of Jesus and the nature of his mission.
2. Chapter 4:31-41 reveal the power of Jesus.
3. Chapter 5:1-11 is an important section because it tells about the people Jesus called to work with him to save the world.
4. Chapter 5:12-32 tell us about the people Jesus loved, cared for and wanted to help in very special ways: a leper, the handicapped, even a hated tax collector and other sinners.
5. Verses 33-39 are tricky, but you will be able to work out their meaning with your group. In fact, you will even enjoy the challenge.

We have some good reference works here, so if you would like to take a moment to look up what a tax collector is, or something else in the passage that is not clear to you, feel free to use the books we have brought here for you.

Sharing Session 3: **Mark** 14:43-15:47. The Gospel of Mark is credited to John Mark. He probably wrote it between 65 and 70 A.D. This was about 35 to 40 years after the resurrection of Jesus.

Until Mark wrote his gospel, the story of Jesus had been passed along by word of mouth by the early preachers of the Church. The Apostles and their disciples, the prophets, and evangelists were telling the whole world about Jesus. Mark wrote their preaching down, as did Luke, Matthew and John. This is why there are four different versions of the same story. There were many preachers in the early days of the Church, and each preacher told the story in a slightly different way. When

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the story came to be written down, different gospel writers reflected different oral traditions. What is most important, however, is that all four gospels, were inspired by God. Thus, these four gospels, and only these four, can be called the word of God.

Mark was a friend of both Peter and Paul. He was also a cousin of Barnabas. We read about all of them in the Acts of the Apostles. Barnabas, in fact, was the one who first brought the great apostle Paul to the Church at Antioch. From that Church both Barnabas and Paul went out to preach what has come to be called Paul's first missionary journey. You can read all about this in Acts 11:25-12:25.

It is interesting that John Mark was the cause of the break up of the team of Barnabas and Paul. They argued violently over Mark because he deserted them on a missionary journey. Sad to say, Scripture does not tell of their ever getting back together again. Instead, Paul teamed up with Silas-Silvanus. (Read Acts 15:36-40) So you see, the early Christians were very human –just like us. It is the power of God that makes the saints.

The gospel Mark wrote reveals that what appears to be a very ordinary death for a criminal – a crucifixion – is in reality a great mystery of God’s action. Jesus is condemned to death because he has been causing a great deal of trouble. He has laid claim to being the Christ – the Messiah whose kingdom is not of this world. Pilate, the Roman governor, does not think Jesus has done anything wrong. Nevertheless, because the excited crowd demands his death and threatens to become violent if it does not get its way, Pilate gives in and has Jesus crucified.

However, Mark goes on to tell us that this is all part of God’s secret plan to bring us salvation. What looks like one thing, therefore, is in fact, something else. And the end result of the crucifixion is not simply Jesus’ death, but our life in faith.

From its very first line, the gospel explores the question: Who is Jesus? At first, Jesus is very popular. He heals many people. He casts out demons. And he preaches about the kingdom of God. However, after a while he turns out to be a disappointment to the Jews. They wanted a leader – a messiah – who would deliver them from the Roman conquest and restore them to greatness as a nation. Jesus was too meek, too humble, too gentle to do that. Besides, he had his sights set on other goals. So the Jews turned against him. Aware of their growing hatred for him, Jesus draws his disciples aside and begins to teach them about the kingdom of God.

The ultimate teaching that Jesus gives us, however, is not given in words alone. It is his very person. Jesus is the Son of God who died because of his love for us and in absolute obedience to his Father. It is from Jesus’ death that we learn the greatest truth we can ever know – the wisdom of the cross.

What the Passion story tells us, therefore, is that God’s ways are not our ways. We cannot expect perfect happiness on earth or always demand miraculous cures. Christian life is joyous, yes; but it is the joy that comes from knowing who we are and where we are going. It is the joy that comes from knowing we are children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, and heirs of eternal life.

The Gospel of Mark tells us that, like Jesus, we have to carry our cross. Like Jesus, we have to be ready to be rejected for being holy and good. We have to face the consequences of living just lives. We have to submit to whatever the Father wills for us – even if it means our own death on a cross with Jesus.

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3. The word of God brings salvation from sin and darkness.
4. This kind of experience needs a structure. When many are together, we need rules to help each other.
5. Explanation of retreat rules
6. Answer any questions from retreatants

7. The over-all explanation having been given and the housekeeping details taken care of, introduce the retreat team.

8. Assign the groups with which they will remain for the entire retreat: eight retreatants per group, two adult leaders per group.

ICE BREAKER GAMES

The purpose of ice breaker games is to stimulate interaction among all the participants. All, therefore, should participate in the games.

There are many games that can be played which will bring about the desired results. Since many leaders have already had extensive experience in running retreat programs for young people, you are probably already familiar with a wide variety of games. The principle is simple: play games that require individuals to make contact with each other. For example:

Matching Cards. Take a deck of playing cards. Cut each card in the deck in half in a jog-saw puzzle manner. Give one half of each card to a different person. On a signal from the Retreat Leader, each person tries to find the person holding the other half of his/her card. When they find the mate, they have a brief conversation with the person. Then they will introduce that person to the entire group.

Bingo. Give each participant a Bingo card, six squares by six squares, each square indicating a different personal characteristic. The point is to find the person with the characteristic. When the person is found, the name is inserted in the square. The first person to get six names in-a row in any direction gets "Bingo."

Some of the personal characteristics might be: uses mouthwash regularly, can whistle Dixie, can do a back-bend, owns a cat, etc.

OPENING QUESTIONNAIRE

We ask all the retreatants to answer the following questions briefly in writing. After 15 minutes, we will ask you to share your answers with the members of your sharing group.

- I. Why did you come here?
 2. What do you hope to gain from this retreat?
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3. What do you feel is the most important thing about your religion?
 4. What do you feel is the least important thing about your religion?
 5. Of what are you most afraid?

6. Is anything troubling you now?

Notes for Retreat Team: Possible Problems. By filling out the Questionnaire and discussing their answers in the small groups, many of the retreatants' spiritual hurts will be revealed. The Group Leaders should be sensitive to these hurts because during this intense time of sharing the word of God the leaders can have life-changing influence for the good. Be sensitive, therefore, to the pain caused by:

1. Relations to parents, especially the father (or lack thereof)
2. The search for self-identity: Am I loved? Is my life important to anyone? To myself?
3. Relations to peers that limit personal growth. For example, the hard-rock macho for boys; confusion about what is Woman for girls. Peer pressure.
4. Boredom with liturgical religion
5. Sex, money, drugs, alcohol
6. Questions about what is success
7. Feelings of helplessness, loneliness, fear (especially fear of rejection)
8. Confusion about "sin" and what is "sinful"
9. Resentment against authority: familial, societal, ecclesial

TALK: INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE SHARING

[If it is possible, the introduction to Bible sharing should be given by a priest or religious educator who is knowledgeable in the subject. However, since this is not always possible, the following talk – with personal embellishments, the fruit of private study – can be given by the Retreat Leader. It will give sufficient background to the retreatants for them to understand the principles of biblical interpretation they will be using in their Bible sharing sessions. For ease and directness in communicating the substance of this talk, after having studied the material which follows, the Retreat Leader should make an outline of the talk and speak to the retreatants from the outline.]

How the Bible Came to Be Written. All of us are here, I am sure, because, in some way we have had an experience of God in our lives. There are many different ways we have experienced Him, and each one of us has our own story to tell about our awareness of God's presence and action in our lives. (Leader: Draw from your own experience.)

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We know that what we have been experiencing comes from God and not from our own imagina-

tion because we have been living in the Church. God has given us the gift of His Church through Jesus Christ so that with the help of the Church we can recognize God as our Father and Jesus as our brother and saviour.

So we have come here together this week-end to recognize God better through the reading of His Sacred Scripture.

One of the first things to understand about the Scriptures is that they were not simply dictated from above into the the waiting ear of a holy scribe, who took down the dictation. There is a famous painting which shows the Gospel writer St. Matthew sitting at a desk with a quill pen in his hand. He is writing busily away because the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is whispering in his ear. It is a nice picture and the idea is~certainly simple to grasp, but that's not how the Bible came to be written.

First of all, the Bible is not even a book. It looks like a book. It feels like a book, and today we read it like a book. But it is not a book. The Bible is a collection of many books, some large and some small. These many books have been brought together into one volume over many centuries.

The earliest books of the Bible date back as far as one thousand years – or even more – before Christ. The latest books of the Bible were written 75 or 80 years after Christ. We call these latest ones the New Testament. The ones written before the coming of Christ are called the Old Testament.

All these many books were written by people who had had an experience of God in the the context of the community of God in which they were living. The earlier books were written by Jews. The New Testament books were written by members of the early Christian communities.

They wrote about what it means to believe in God and to believe in Jesus. Not all wrote directly. Some preached, and their disciples wrote down what they preached. We see this very clearly in the writings of the great prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Then, over the centuries, these various writings were gathered together by different editors and compilers. At long last we have the Bible in the form we have it today. But it took centuries of preaching, writing, compiling and editing to bring it all about.

Of vital importance for us believers today is the fact that is this long, complicated process took place under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, As a result, the Bible we have today is really the work of the Holy Spirit. He inspired all those writers to write down only those things He wanted to have written down. He further inspired the compilers to compile and edit only those things He wanted included in the final product –the Holy Bible.

God has not revealed all truth in the Bible. For example, the Bible is not meant to be a science textbook; God does not explain there the atomic tables nor provide an analysis of gravitational forces. But in the Bible, God has revealed everything we need to know in order to live happily and at peace on earth. In the Bible, God has revealed all the truth we need to know to get to heaven.

Because of the Spirit's powerful activity in all these preachers, writers, editors and compilers over so many centuries, the Bible we have today is really the word of God.

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We can understand this complex process very easily when we look at how the New Testament was put together.

First, Jesus preached to the people and taught his disciples.

Then his disciples and apostles went out and preached what they had heard Jesus preach. Their preaching and made new Christians.

Then these new Christians went out and preached what they had heard the apostles say that they had heard Jesus preach.

Finally, other Christians began to write down what they heard these preachers of the early church preach. That is they began to write down what they heard the preachers say that they had heard the apostles preach that they had heard Jesus preach.

Notice, no one was following the preachers around with a notepad taking dictation; certainly there were no tape recorders around. The writers of the New Testament had to work from memory of what they heard, or else they looked up what other people had written that they had heard the preachers preach.

You don't have to take my word for all this. The Bible tell us this is how it happened. Let St. Luke himself tell us how he came to write his gospel. Turn now in your Bible to Luke 1:1-4.

[N.B. At this point the Team members will want to be sure that each retreatant has his/her own Bible and knows how to use it. If the retreatants have any doubt about where to find things in the Bible, they should be reminded to look in the Table of Contents. The Team should be circulating around the hall to help them. If they have any questions about how to use the editorial aids, they should be answered.]

Read aloud Luke 1:1-4.

We see here in this passage that many people were writing about Jesus. Many were writing down what they had heard the different preachers preach. Luke, therefore, went to a number of sources, both written and oral sources, to get the material for his new look at the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

This is why there are so many different versions of the one gospel. Each writer used different sources. Each put together his gospel in a different way. Although many were doing this, as Luke says, only four gospels were recognized by the Church as the inspired word of God.

And here we have another important principle: we can recognize the Bible as the word of God only because the Church tells us that it is the word of God. The technical name for this identification of the biblical books by the Church is: "the canon of Sacred Scripture."

One of the many tragedies that faces a divided Christianity today is that Christians do not agree about which books are the inspired word God. Most of our Protestant brothers and sisters, for example, deny that seven books of the Old Testament are the word of God. This can make for some difficulties if you try to share the Old Testament with them.

Furthermore, some of the most precious doctrines of the Roman Catholic church find their biblical basis in Old Testament books not recognized by our Protestant brothers and sisters. For example, we find an excellent biblical reference to the Church's understanding of purgatory in 2 Maccabees 12: 38-45.

Another thing about the word of God: It is not just limited to the Bible. God's word is a living word that is handed down from generation to generation through the preaching of the Church. That's how we have the word of God written in our hearts, through the preaching of the Church. Paul writes about this in 2 Cor 3:2 ff.

Since the word of God is living and the result of the action of the Holy Spirit, we need the Holy Spirit to recognize God's word today. That is why we have come together this week-end – to write the word of God in our hearts through the action of the Holy Spirit.

We will be asking each of you to read a passage of the Bible, pray over it, and seek to understand its meaning by using the discussion questions that have been given to you. Then you will come together in small groups. There, under the Holy Spirit who is present to us all, you will begin to write the word of God on the hearts of one another.

You will share with your group what the word means to you. You will be able to hear what others say the word of God means to them. By this exchange of insights into the meaning of the Bible, you will be better able to see how God is truly acting your life today.

The five passages we selected for you to share during this retreat have a distinct contribution to make your experiencing the presence of God in your lives and discerning His loving action there.

Bible Sharing Process. The process of sharing we will use here is both simple and enjoyable.

First, you will be given a series of discussion questions for each passage to be shared. Take the questions and your Bible and go off alone to a quiet spot. There, alone with God, read the Bible passage. Reflect on its meaning through the guidance that is given in the questions.

In other words, try to answer the questions. You will find they are not exam-type questions. The discussion questions are meant to stimulate you to reflect on what the passage is saying. They will help you to focus in on the words of the Bible text and show the relationship of those words to daily living.

While you are reading the passage to yourself, pray to the Lord for guidance. Pray that He will send the Holy Spirit upon you and your group so that the meaning of the passage may come alive to you all.

You will then be asked to go to the discussion area with your group. There, under the leadership of two Retreat Team members discuss what you have gotten out of the passage.

Notice, you will be discussing what you got out of the passage. Bible sharing is a very personal activity. Therefore, its success depends on your willingness to be honest, candid and willing to talk. If no wants to talk, sharing is impossible.

You and your group have to be willing to talk about the things that mean a great deal to you. There is no doubt about it, that can be difficult at times. Sharing also depends on your willingness

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to listen to your brothers and sisters when they have something to say. Listening and talking. These are the ways the Lord is going to come to you and to all of us this week-end.

After your group has been sharing the passage for about 45 minutes, you will be asked to draw up a poster which summarizes the ideas derived from the Bible text you have been discussing.

Finally, all the small groups will come back together again here, and each will show and explain their poster to the other groups. We will then put the posters on the wall so that you can see a record of growth during this retreat.

CONDUCTING THE SHARING SESSIONS

When the group meets for the Scripture sharing sessions, the first Group Leader:

1. Offers a prayer asking God's blessing on the upcoming sharing. It is best if this can be in the nature of a personally composed prayer, rather than a formula prayer such as the Our Father or Hail Mary.
2. Invites one of the retreatants to read the passage (or part of the passage) aloud.
3. Proposes the first of the discussion questions.
4. From then on, it will be the First Leader's task to keep the discussion focussed on exploring the meaning of the text in itself and for our lives today. S/he should allow an ample range of freedom in the discussion so as not to inhibit the generation and exchange of insights. But at the same time, care must be taken that the discussion does not wander so far afield that it fails to come to grips with the meaning of the text.
5. Everyone in the group should be encouraged to participate in the discussion. This means the shy will have to be encouraged to speak, and the naturally dominating encouraged to give others a chance to share. At this point the active support of the second team member is particularly needed.
6. After the period assigned for discussion has been completed, the First Leader should make some effort to draw the insights expressed together into a summary form.
7. Then, the group begins to work on the poster as a graphic expression of what they have been discussing. At this point the Group Team should be open to the creativity of the group.
8. The sharing session closes with a final prayer. The First Leader should begin the prayer and invite the all the members of the group to add their own thoughts, praises and petitions. It is appropriate to conclude this prayer with the Our Father.

More detailed information about how to conduct the sharing session and lead the discussion can be learned by reading Bible Sharing referred to previously.

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POSTER MAKING

Each sharing session concludes with fifteen minutes devoted to the making of a poster by the group. This may turn out to be the liveliest part of the sharing, but it is important sharing.

The retreatants will be able to take the ideas they have been discussing and translate them into another medium – color and line. This process will force them to reconsider their discussions and to sort out what is most important and valuable. Secondly, poster making requires group effort so a spirit of fellowship will be fostered in the group. This spirit of fellowship will be augmented when the group prays together, especially in the chapel.

Furthermore, persons who may not be able to express well in words what is on their minds and in their hearts may find a true tongue in contributing to the designing of the poster.

The group leaders should participate, of course, but poster making is the time when the creativity of the retreatants should be allowed free reign.

On the other hand, the leaders should be sure that the poster does reflect the group's discussion; that all have a chance to participate; that group members are designated to explain the poster in the general session.

A competitive spirit may well arise as the posters are mounted on the wall. That is not bad. Healthy competition in the Lord can lead to greater efforts both in sharing ideas and producing posters that reflect the discussions.

Do not distribute poster materials until the time called for in the schedule. Limit poster making to that period. The focus of the sharing session should be on the meaning of the word of God and not on the poster.

CONDUCTING THE SKITS

Some of the most enjoyable, funniest and most memorable moments in the Bible sharing retreat occur during the preparation and presentation of the skits. Human beings have a marvelous way of seeing the humorous in even the most serious events; the humor, in fact, has a way of bringing out the significance of the events. At the same time, putting on a show is just plain fun.

Each group is asked to put on a brief skit based on a passage of Scripture. They can be serious or humorous, satirical or reverent. The items needed for the skit are limited to what is already available in the retreat area. Make-do is the watchword.

No time limit need be assigned; usually the creative instinct will only be able to sustain five minutes or so of performance.

Four things should be adhered to in the giving of the skits:

1. Everyone in the group must be in the skit as a performer.
2. The skit must be biblical.
3. Everyone not in the skit being performed must be present in the audience. Allow an interval

between skits for last minute preparations for the next skit.

4. No critical evaluations of the skit are allowed.

GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PRAYER EXPERIENCES

The retreat should be liberally salted with prayer. All, Team and retreatants, have come together in faith as a result of a special calling of the Holy Spirit. Since the retreat has begun under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it will continue under His guidance and bear the kind of fruit that He wills it to accomplish. Therefore, in order to be sure that everyone is always totally in harmony with the operations of the Spirit, it is important that everyone keep up a running conversation with Him.

Four kinds of prayer are to be encouraged during the retreat:

Liturgical Prayer. First, there is the liturgical prayer called for in the schedule and for which special liturgies and prayer forms have been provided. These are opportunities for celebration that will connect the experiences of the retreatants here with their liturgical experiences in their parishes. The good celebration of the Eucharist, therefore, is particularly important.

Beginning and Ending Prayer. Every session should begin and end with prayer – which may be in the form of singing. The Retreat Leader, in particular, should be adept at offering spontaneous prayer at the beginning of the general sessions. The beginning prayer should reflect the theme of the session and call down God's blessing upon it.

The prayer need not be long; however, as the retreat grows in the experience of the Lord, you will find that the prayers offered have great meaning. Consequently, they should not be perfunctory or simply formalistic.

A retreatant should give the blessing at each of the meals. This blessing, too, should express an appropriate personal sentiment on the part of the retreatant.

Small Group Prayer. Prayer is also an essential part of the group sharing sessions. The First Leader should begin each session with a spontaneous prayer. When difficulties arise during the sharing – obscurities of meaning, for examples/he should offer another prayer.

Finally, each sharing session should conclude with spontaneous prayer to which all the participants are invited to contribute. The Group Leaders should allow enough time for this final prayer to be a heartfelt expression of gratitude for the gifts received. That is, it should not be rushed.

The schedule calls for each group to go to the chapel or prayer area at least once during the retreat to offer intercessory prayer as a group for the retreat as a whole and for the members of the group. The visit should take at least 15 minutes. It is not necessary to structure the prayer. You might want to have some singing, but much of the time will be spent in silence, with thoughts being freely expressed by the retreatants as the Spirit moves them. It should be a relaxed and intimate moment for the retreatants with their group and with God.

Amazing miracles of grace take place during this sacred time.

Private Prayer. Finally, the schedule calls for the retreatants to spend time alone studying their Bible and praying over the Bible passage they will be sharing in their group. This should be a period of silence. There should be an atmosphere which encourages private communion with God over His word.

If individuals consistently have trouble utilizing this period of time well, it might be advisable for a member of the Retreat Team to investigate why the individual is having difficulty. There might be some need for counseling on a spiritual problem which this simple event surfaces.

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9.

Letter to Self

At the end of the retreat, the retreatants should be given the opportunity to reflect prayerfully on what they have been doing during the retreat. In this reflection they will be able to see what can be of help to them in their future lives as Christians.

What have they learned? How can it be helpful to them throughout their lives?

To help their reflection on these two important matters, ask each retreatant to write a letter to her/himself about what has happened here. Ask each to make some specific resolution concerning her/his future life.

The letters should be put into a self-addressed envelope and given to the retreatant's Group Team.

Six to eight months after the conclusion of the retreat, the letter, which has not been opened by any one,

should be sent to each retreatant.

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10. Evaluation

10.EVALUATION

In order to improve your retreat program it is necessary to get feed back from three sources: the Retreat Team, the retreatants, and the pastors of the parishes to which the retreatants return.

Immediately after the retreat, the Retreat Team should meet to discuss the structure and dynamics of the retreat. They should identify both the good things and the bad, and try to determine the cause of each. As a result of their discussion, the Retreat Leader should draw up, while they are still fresh in mind, what improvements need to be made in subsequent retreats.

And the end of the retreat each retreatant should fill out an evaluation form. These should be circulated among the members of the Retreat Team. When all have had an opportunity to read and pray over the evaluations, the Team should meet again to incorporate the retreatants' evaluations in any plans for new retreats.

A retreat should have long-lasting effects. Therefore, the pastors of the retreatants should be contacted about 6 months after the retreat for their observations regarding the effects of the retreat on their parishioners. It is difficult to predict what the pastors' reactions will be. Certainly, however, if they have no observations to make, it shows that greater integration between the Retreat Team and the pastors should be worked out.

RETREATANT EVALUATION SHEET

RETREAT ATTENDED _____

I WAS A MEMBER OF GROUP _____

1. The thing I liked MOST about my retreat was:
2. The thing I liked LEAST about my retreat was:

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3. The single most helpful thing that happened to me during the retreat was:
5. The person who helped me most during the retreat was (check one):

Another retreatant _____

A Leader ____ (Write his/her name if you wish)

A Chaperone (Name)

A Helper (Name)

A Priest ____ (Name)

6. The retreat for me was (give rating by circling appropriate number):

FAIR				PRETTY GOOD				EXCELLENT	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7. Did the retreat make a real difference in your life? If so, how?

8. Please contact me, I would like to serve as a member of the Retreat Team (name)
9. Please contact me, I would like to continue to do Bible sharing (name)
10. I recommend you invite the following person(s) to the next retreat of this kind:
(name)

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