

## A Short Guide for Overnight Retreat Requests

Over the last year we have received many questions about the process by which we review the overnight retreats. We have written down a list of questions we look at as our guide as to whether we approve the retreat or need further work to have it be approved. By no means is this the only rubric we use, but it is the minimum we look to when reviewing requests. We hope this will help the person who is in charge of the retreat be fully prepared not just with the request but for the retreat as a whole. If you have any further questions, please let us know.

### **- Is it really a retreat?**

A retreat is a “*withdrawal for a period of time from one’s usual surroundings and occupation to a place of solitude for meditation, self-examination, and prayer, in order to make certain necessary decisions in one’s spiritual life.*” (Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 466) A retreat should also include a time of catechesis and formation within the person who is on retreat. Finally, a retreat is a time for renewal in the retreatant’s baptismal call. (See CCC 1265-1266) “*We can ask ourselves: is Baptism, for me, a fact of the past, relegated to a date, that date which you are going to go look for today, or is it a living reality, that pertains to my present, to every moment? Do you feel strong, with the strength that Christ gave you by his death and his Resurrection? Or do you feel low, without strength? Baptism gives strength and it gives light. Do you feel enlightened, with that light that comes from Christ? Are you a man or woman of light? Or are you a dark person, without the light of Jesus? We need to take the grace of Baptism, which is a gift, and become a light for all people!*” (Pope Francis, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131113\\_udienza-generale.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131113_udienza-generale.html))

### **- Who is your target audience?**

The first premise of this question is who is the target age range and/or gender of the group that can come on the retreat. The second, and more important, who is this retreat for? The retreat should be directed to a specific group of youth depending on where they are in their walk with Christ. Are you wanting to target youth who have never been on a retreat? Youth who have not had a conversion? Youth who just recently had a conversion but don’t know the next steps? Youth who are faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and strong in their faith? Remember, retreats are primarily for those who have had a conversion. A conversion is “*a radical reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God. This change of heart or conversion is a central element of Christ’s preaching, of the Church’s ministry of evangelization, and of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.*” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Glossary) Do not try and make a retreat for “everyone”. While there may be many different types of people at the retreat this should not make the content too generalized. There is an old saying, “If you try to please everyone, you’ll end up pleasing no one”. Make sure to be intentional with the audience because it will help establish goals to aim for with those who are going on the retreat as well as the development of the theme of the retreat.

### **- What is your main theme for your retreat? How do the talks connect back to the main theme?**

Once the main target audience has been defined (see question above), then the theme can be established based on where they are in the process of evangelization and catechesis (i.e. the Catechumenal Model). The main theme of the retreat should find its source within Jesus Christ and the Trinity. A very good rule of thumb is to have a Scripture Verse (from the Gospel is ideal) that is the driving force for the main theme of the retreat. Once this is established, then the talks given at the retreat should directly connect back to the main theme for the entire retreat. Talks should be rooted in Sacred Scripture and the Catechism. Personal Witness talks can be incorporated into the retreat, but they should not be part of the main talks of the retreat. Finally, there should be a reasonable amount of talks/reflections within a retreat. For example, if it’s a 2-3 day retreat then 4-5 talks would be sufficient.

### **- How are you fulfilling the four areas of formation?**

The four areas of formation are Spiritual, Intellectual, Pastoral, and Human. Here is a link that can give you a brief overview of these: <https://ericgallagher.me/the-four-areas-of-formation/>. You can also read this within the context of catechesis here: <https://www.archkck.org/ministries--offices/ecat-youth/ecat-youth---vital-youth-ministry#Four> All four areas can, and should, be touched on during a retreat especially spiritual formation.

- ***How are the Sacraments being implemented?***

A retreat should have time for Mass and, if possible, Confession should be made available. Please make sure that the rites of the sacraments are taught and done correctly:

<http://www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Rito&id=227> (Confession) and <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/> (Mass).

- ***How are you incorporating time of prayer during the retreat?***

As it has already been stated, a retreat must consist with ample time for prayer. This can be done in various ways: It can be structured prayer time with the whole group (i.e. Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Holy Hour of Adoration etc.) as well as unstructured prayer time for each person to pray on their own individually. One point of emphasis that is highly recommended is Lectio Divina. Here is a link that will give you resources on what lectio divina is and handouts to guide individuals and groups using the Sunday Gospel readings in English and Spanish: <https://linktoliturgy.com/quickconnect>. Individual prayer time can be guided by providing the participants with questions related to a talk, scripture verses and/or saint quotes to reflect on. It can also be time for them to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament or outside. This should take place multiple times throughout the retreat and should be given primary importance.

- ***If you are using a “program” retreat has it been approved by the Diocese?***

There are many great resources and ministries available and many offer various retreats. If you plan to follow a particular retreat outline with their talks, questions, schedule, etc. please make sure that the apostolate or ministry has been approved by the Diocese first. If you plan to bring in a ministry and/or speaker(s) from outside the Diocese of Fort Worth for your retreat (or any event) they must first be vetted through the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

- ***Do you have a schedule to show all of this laid out?***

It is highly recommended to send us a schedule when submitting a request as it will expedite the process for approval.