A Confirmation Retreat

Note: This retreat is designed for an entire day. By using only the shaded sections, the retreat can be completed in a shorter time period.

Materials Needed
- Name tags
- Brightly colored markers
- Newsprint
- Tape
- Pencils
- Bible
- Candle
- Basket
- Prayer table
- Copies of the blackline master handouts
- Letter paper and envelopes

Welcome and Gather
Greet each of the participants individually as they arrive. Provide name tags and brightly colored markers and invite the participants to create and decorate a name tag that identifies and describes them.

When everyone has arrived and finished making their name tags, welcome them. Present a brief overview of what will happen at the retreat. Use these or similar words to welcome the participants:

I am happy that you are with us at this retreat. Does anyone know what a retreat is? Retreat comes from a French word meaning “to withdraw.” There will be some quiet time and some prayer time, but we will also be active in groups. There will be time to get to know a little more about yourself and to discover ways God is working in your life now.

We will talk about Confirmation and ways that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit will be an active and vibrant part of your life. We will tell some stories. We will hear some people tell their stories. And we will do some fun things!

Let’s begin. (Lead the participants in the icebreaker activity.)

Icebreaker Activity
Ask all the participants to sit on chairs, which are arranged to form a large circle. Tell the participants that you will make a statement, and if that statement applies to them, they are to get out of their chair and rush to sit in a different chair on the other side of the circle.

Use some statements that can apply to some of the participants, such as “Everyone with brown eyes.” Use other statements that can apply to all of the participants, such as “Everyone who is in the sixth grade.” Use some fun statements that will get the participants laughing, such as “Everyone who has a piece of useless junk in their pocket.”

After you make the first few statements (and the participants get the idea of how the game is played), remove one of the chairs. This will leave one participant without a chair to sit on. Have that person stand in the middle of the circle, make the next statement, and run to find a chair when others move. Remember that not all participants will move with each statement. Conclude the activity by saying, “Everyone who is preparing for Confirmation.” (Be sure at this time to replace the chair that you removed.)

All the participants should now be sitting on different chairs than the ones they were sitting on when they first arrived. Allow a few minutes for the participants to chat and laugh about the activity and to begin to settle down a bit.

Summarize, saying these or similar words:

That was a fun way to discover how each of us is different from one another, but each of us also has one very important thing in common with one another: Each of us has been blessed by and created by God in his image and likeness.
Prayer and Scripture Reading

Invite the participants to stand and listen as you read the parable of the talents.

Leader: A reading from the gospel according to Matthew.
All: Glory to you, Lord.

Leader: (Read Matthew 25:14–30.)
The word of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask the participants to be seated and distribute copies of the handout on page 28. Allow sufficient time for the participants to reflect on and answer each of the questions. Invite volunteers to share how they responded to the questions. Then conclude with one of the participants reading this prayer:

God, our Father, open our minds and hearts to the teachings of the Spirit. May we use our talents to spread the message of Jesus, your Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Story

Have the participants sit comfortably as you tell this story.

There was a young boy named Gianni who lived in a small village nestled in the mountains of northern Italy. Tucked into the hills were rock quarries containing marble. Every day Gianni would walk to school, winding his way through the narrow streets of the village past all the stores and shops and houses. On his way home, he always paused and spent some time at the workshop of Giuseppi the sculptor. It was fun to watch him work as he used his hammers and chisels. Gianni was especially excited one day when a large block of glistening white marble appeared in Giuseppi’s workshop. Every day, Gianni would rush out of school to stand at the door of Giuseppi’s workshop. Gianni watched curiously as the block of marble slowly changed its shape. Then one day when Gianni gazed into the workshop, there it was, looking straight at him—a huge statue of a lion. He was amazed and turned to Giuseppi and asked, “How did you find the lion in that big piece of marble?” “Easy,” responded Giuseppi. “I simply chipped away everything that was not the lion.”

Connection

Discuss the story with the participants. Use these or similar points:

1. You cannot always tell who a person is or what a person is like by merely looking at the person’s outside. Looking beyond the outside of a person (chipping away at the marble) can help us discover who a person really is.
2. Each person has strengths and weaknesses.
3. Growing as a responsible Christian includes discovering our qualities, developing those qualities, and using them to live our faith. God works in us and through us to build on the gifts that each of us has been given.

Explain that at this retreat today, we are going to spend some time reflecting on the gifts that God has given us. The challenge now is to work with the Spirit and develop our gifts. Let’s begin by identifying those positive qualities that are important for a person to have.

Group Activity

Introduce the group activity by asking the participants to talk about people they respect and admire. Use these or similar words:

All of you know people you respect and admire. Who is someone you look up to? Who are some well-known people you look up to? What other people do you look up to? Which saints do you look up to? Think about why you look up to these people. Think about some of the qualities these people possess that you admire. Talk about some of the positive qualities that these people possess.

Divide the participants into groups of four or five. Have each group brainstorm and list on a sheet of newsprint at least five qualities they look for in persons they admire. Then have the group choose and circle the three most important qualities on this list.

Gather the whole group together. Discuss and share the top three qualities circled from the list made by the individual groups. From this discussion have all the participants decide on the five most important qualities for them as a group. Write these on a sheet of newsprint.
Presentation: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Use these or similar words to begin a discussion of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Together, we have identified qualities that we look for and admire in other people. How do we discover that someone has one or more of these gifts? It is because we see people using their gifts. We cannot see wisdom, but we can see the ways that people act wisely.

We too are called to develop our gifts in the same way as the people in the parable of the talents. Three people received gifts and were accountable for their gifts to their master. We must develop our gifts and talents. The Holy Spirit dwelling within us helps us do this.

Give a copy of the handout on page 27 to each participant. Discuss and explain the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Allow time for the participants to quietly reflect on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and to respond to the questions.

Activity

Have the participants create a skit that depicts people their age using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Form seven groups and assign one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to each of the seven groups. Encourage the participants to role-play a situation that portrays the use of the gift of the Holy Spirit assigned to their group.

Personal Witness to the Gifts of the Spirit

One aspect of the Church’s life is the faithful living of their Baptism by sharing their gifts. Illustrate a situation of someone giving witness to Christ by sharing their gifts. This could be done in several ways. For example:

1. Invite one or several of the group leaders of the retreat day to share their reflections on what the Holy Spirit means to them.

2. View and discuss a video that shows how people use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

3. Invite the participants to role-play the story of some of the people who are important in the history of the Church in Canada

Activity: Identifying Your Gifts

Involves participants in an activity that will help them identify the gifts that others see in them and the gifts that they see in themselves. Have them write a letter that will be used in the closing prayer celebration, thanking God for these gifts.

—Tape a cutout copy of the flame from the handout on page 30 to each participant’s back.

—Tell all the participants to walk around the room and write on each other’s flame a positive quality that they see in that person.

—After sufficient time, have the participants sit down in a comfortable position and take the list of positive qualities from their backs. Let them read the list.

—Play some appropriate music for reflection. Invite each participant to reflect on what these gifts and qualities mean to them.

—Distribute letter paper and envelopes and invite the participants to write a letter to God. This letter should include three parts: naming some of their gifts, thanking God for their gifts, and telling ways in which they will use these gifts.

—When everyone has written the letter, tell the participants that they will offer their letter to God during the closing prayer.
Closing Prayer Celebration

Gather the participants for prayer. Play a recording of reflective music to help the participants focus. On the prayer table place an open Bible, a candle, and a basket.

Leader: Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord!
All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us give thanks to God our Father, always and for everything.
All: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reader: (Proclaim Matthew 5:14–16.)

Leader: Let us spend a few minutes quietly reflecting on the words of Jesus and the meaning of those words for our lives. Think about all that we did together at this retreat, and reflect on ways that you can be lights to the world.

After some time for quiet reflection, continue playing music and invite the participants to bring the letter that they wrote to God and reverently place it in the basket. When all the participants have placed their letter in the basket, invite everyone to sing.

Response: (Sing “We Are the Light of the World” [Jean A. Grief, GIA Publications, 7404 South Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL 60638] or another appropriate song.)

All: (Provide a copy of the handout “Prayer to the Holy Spirit” on page 31. Have the participants take the prayer home as a reminder of the retreat day.)

Pray the “Prayer to the Holy Spirit.”

Leader: Good and gracious God, thank you for blessing us with your gifts. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we can truly see these gifts and use them to bring the good news of Jesus to the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Savior and Brother.

All: Amen.

Invite all to share a sign of peace with one another, encouraging one another to be lights to the world, using these or similar words:

(Name), peace be with you. Go forth and be a light to the world.
The Parable of the Talents
Matthew 25:14-30

1. What is the one thing you remember about the parable of the talents?

2. What would you say to the master when he returns?

3. What would the master say to you in response?
Sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit

At Confirmation we are sealed with the sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Read and reflect on the description of each of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Choose one of the Gifts. Write about or illustrate a situation in the three panels that shows how that gift might enable a young person to live their faith.

Wisdom enables us to value God above all creatures and to make decisions based on that value.

Understanding enables us to discover the meaning of our faith and to live according to its teachings.

Right judgment, or counsel, enables us to make practical decisions to live our faith.

Courage, or fortitude, enables us to overcome obstacles that stand in our way of loving God and others.

Wonder and awe, or fear of the Lord enables us to acknowledge the greatness and power of God through our trust and obedience to God.

Reverence, or piety, enables us to honor and respect God and all people as children and images of God.

Knowledge enables us to see God reflected in all creatures and to praise him.
Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, 
fill the hearts 
of your faithful. 
And kindle in 
them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit 
and they shall be created. 
And you will 
renew the face 
of the earth.