



Christ have mercy.

Κυρια Ελεεισον + Χηριστε Ελεεισον+ Κυρια Ελεεισον

Schedule

Thursday evening

6:00 PM	Supper (served and cleaned up by host team) prayer before eating	Dining room
6:45 PM	First session - "Introductions"	Meeting room
7:45 PM	Break (refreshments served by host team)	
8:00 PM	Second session - "Seasons of Mercy" large group sharing	Meeting room
10:00 PM	End for the night - everyone sleeps at their own homes	

Friday evening

6:00 PM	Supper (served and cleaned up by host team) prayer before eating at the tables after eating: brief mystagogia	Dining room
6:45 PM	Third session - "The Mercy of Christ"	Meeting room
7:45 PM	Break (refreshments served by hosts)	
8:00 PM	Fourth session - "Mercy in the Community" The Sacrament of Reconciliation, form 2	Meeting room Church
10:00 PM	End for the night - everyone sleeps at their own homes	

Saturday morning

8:00 AM	Breakfast prayer before eating at the tables after eating: brief mystagogia	Dining room
8:45 AM	Fifth session - "Christ Have Mercy"	Meeting room
10:15 AM	Break with substantial snack	Dining room
10:45 AM	Sixth session - "A Plan for Daily Life" The closing message from the Retreat Leader	Meeting room
11:30 AM	Closing Eucharistic liturgy <i>This is a special liturgy for the retreat and may not take the place of the Sunday obligation.</i>	Church



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Preparation

Six weeks before the retreat:

- Announce the retreat in the parish. Scheduling will have to be done far in advance to have the needed spaces and people available.
- In many parishes, these retreats will be needed in a variety of languages. Even though immigrants eventually do speak English, most of the time they pray and live their daily faith in their native tongue. You have permission to translate any part of these notes for use in another language.
- Invite people who want to participate to sign up formally and pay a small fee, about \$20, to defray the cost. Have a small fund available for those who cannot afford to pay.
- Give personal invitations to all parish staff, elected leaders, and other leaders in the community. Encourage married couples to attend together. The expectation should be that anyone involved in parish life prepares for leadership by making a *Christ Have Mercy* or *Living Christ* retreat.
- Limit the number to about 40, in eight groups of five, plus the table leaders.

One month before the retreat:

- Recruit the host team to help with set up, clean up, and meals - probably about 5 people. This team can be given all responsibility for this work.
- Recruit a Retreat Leader - someone with experience in leading group process and who has already experienced conversion to Christ.
- Recruit Table Leaders to lead table discussions. If necessary, these can be people making their first *Christ Have Mercy* retreat or people who have already made a *Living Christ* retreat.
- Schedule a two-room space, one to serve as a dining room, near the kitchen, and the other to serve as the meeting room. Snacks will be set out during most of the retreat as well. These can either be on a table in the meeting room or in the dining room. It's necessary for both of these rooms to be private from other parish events. And it's necessary for the meeting room to be available for the entire three day period because people will be leaving things on the tables, hanging papers in the room, and so forth.
- Also schedule the Church if possible for Reconciliation on Friday evening and again for the closing Eucharist on Saturday at 11:45 AM. If there are conflicts with weddings or funerals, other rooms can be used for the retreat because of the smaller number of people.

- Schedule the pastor and possibly other priests (depending on which form you use) for the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Friday evening at 8:30 PM.
- Schedule the pastor or another priest, plus liturgical musicians for the closing Liturgy on Saturday at 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM.
- Plan for a way to invite the whole community to be in prayer and vigil during the entire retreat period. The Retreat Prayer Coordinator will be responsible to bring the community together in vigil with the retreatants.
 - One way: distribute vigil candles and prayer cards. Ask people to use them at their table during meals throughout the retreat period.
 - Another way: invite members of the community to offer up works of justice, mercy, and holiness - and communicate that to the retreatants by way of a simple note which will be read during the retreat.
- The meals are a key part of the retreat experience. They can be simple but elegant. Encourage the host team to develop menus that are easy to prepare and serve.

One week before the retreat:

- Confirm with all parish staff members who will be involved to make sure they know the precise time and place they will be needed.
- Meet with the Host Team to double check all details and supply lists.
- Shop for the needed supplies.
- Review your list of participants and break them into appropriate groups.
- Take a deep breath and relax - the Holy Spirit will be in charge of what happens.



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Guide to the First Session: Thursday at 6:45 PM

“Introductions”

Folks arrive and are greeted by the team. They get a name tag. The first event is supper. Many of these folks won't know each other very well - and this meal is the way for them to begin to enter into the retreat. Just as the eating is finished but before anyone leaves the table, take a moment to go around the tables to each person one by one and invite them each to just take a deep breath and share their name and one significant thing that happened to them that day. Keep this light and quick, if possible. It has to move fast to keep us on time.

After supper, adjourn to the meeting room where they go to their tables. It's probably best to pre-assign table seating so that there is a good mix of gender, age, and backgrounds on each table. If the pastor or other parish staff are making this retreat, they simply take their place at a table like anyone else. Once everyone is settled, we are ready to begin.

The Retreat Leader welcomes all.

- Tells a little about him or herself, background in the parish, desire to grow in the mercy of Christ, love for the church, family details, hopes for this retreat. Not too pious at this point or some people might be put off.
- Explains the schedule a little, but only sketchily. Do not give the details or announce beforehand about sacraments, meals, or the topics of the reflections. Let the retreat unfold for the participants a little at a time to keep them focused on the present moment.
- Gives the “community guidelines” for this retreat
 - Be kind to each other at all times.
 - Be honest - everything we hear here is confidential.
 - Work hard at this process of growing closer to Christ.
 - Listen closely to each other.
 - Speak clearly, charitably and briefly when it's your turn.
 - Be open to the Spirit in our midst.
 - Don't keep the group waiting - be on time.
 - Keep confidential everything you hear in this retreat.
- Asks each group to quickly (in three minutes, timed by the Retreat Leader) choose a group name and write it on a name plate for the table.

- Then, invites each participant to introduce him or herself: name, family details, life in the parish, hopes for the retreat. This expands what we just did at supper.
 - Note: the process for this sharing will be the same one used throughout the retreat.
 1. Each group begins by sharing at the table, following the directions of the Retreat Leader.
 2. Then, when all are finished, the Retreat Leader calls the whole group to order and invites each group to come to the front together, standing (or sitting if they are not able to stand) in a line, across the room in front of the podium.
 3. Then, one at a time they do their sharing. When all are finished, the large group applauds and the small group goes back to its table.
 - For this first sharing, the small group should first announce its table name and why it was chosen. Then each person should make that slightly longer introduction of him or herself. The leader must keep this process moving along quickly.
- The Retreat Leader asks if there are any questions at this point and when all are satisfied, announces the break, asking people to be punctual at 15 minutes.



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Guide to
Enthronement of Sacred Scriptures
with candle and holy water

After the break:

The Retreat Leader now holds a brief ceremony during which we honor the Word of God. At the ready should be a small table, covered with a decorative cloth. On it, a Bible stand, a candle, matches, and a container of Holy Water.

1. Process with the Bible to the center of the room, holding the Bible reverently above your head and place it on the table.
2. Light the candle.
3. Proclaim a short reading of your choice.
4. Then say that the Bible is the light for our lives and the life of the whole Church. It will also be the center of what we do here in the next three days.
5. Give a very short explanation of why this is so. Then say that baptism is the beginning of our journeys of faith. At Baptism we receive Christ, we are empowered by grace to live in Christ. The water of baptism is a sign of this new life.
6. Then sprinkle all with this water as an opening blessing.
7. This entire opening ceremony should take 10 minutes or less.



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Guide to the Second session: Thursday at 8:00 PM

Talk outline for “Seasons of Mercy”

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

Purpose: to help the participants become aware of

- what mercy is
- how mercy is extended from God to us
- and from us to others and all the world
- our own personal history of mercy – both receiving and giving it

Here are your main points:

- Thank everyone for being at the retreat this week.
- Mercy is the ready willingness to help anyone in time of need, especially through pardon or reconciliation. It is a habitual inclination of the will.
- This means that mercy is an attitude on our part, a way of treating others and the world around us, which comes to us automatically in situations.
- Mercy is the compassionate care for others whereby one takes on the burden of another as one's own. It is an active quality of the virtue of charity, motivated by love. While mercy is often treated as a rather benign term, its power is conveyed more accurately by looking at it in a scriptural context.
- Jesus is the most eloquent witness to mercy in the New Testament. He is never vague in his proclamation of God's mercy, and rather than using parables or discourses, he reveals God's mercy in his everyday relations with people from all strata of society. Jesus is an active agent of God's mercy — confronting the crowd about to stone the woman taken in adultery, meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, weeping with the other mourners at the death of Lazarus, and ultimately taking up the cross laden with the sins of the world and being led to his death.

According to Mt 25:31-46, mercy will be the quality on which the Christian will ultimately be judged. This understanding of the necessity of mercy was

also developed in the early Church, particularly in the Didache, which went so far as to state that those who have no mercy will be condemned.

“Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?’ ...And the king will answer them, ‘Truly, I tell you, as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” (NRSV Mt 25:34-40)

- Mercy goes beyond the issues of who is responsible. Mercy is simply love’s response to suffering. So the Father of Mercy, to relieve our suffering, sent his Eternal Son to be made flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. God the Son, by nature incapable of suffering, became vulnerable for us. He bound the strong man who had tyrannized the human race and paid the debt that the human race hadn’t been able to cover. His rescue mission succeeded at the cost of his life.
- Do you show mercy? Do you withhold mercy?
- Have people shown mercy to you? Have people withheld it from you?
- Here share a brief story from your own life about your own experience of mercy and how your understanding of it has unfolded. Don’t be afraid to share about the rough times, but do not engage in inappropriate self disclosure, the sort of thing which belongs in therapy or the sacrament of reconciliation.
 - An example might be: Your father has always treated you with indifference and inattention, but you show mercy toward him in his own hour of need, even though he has not deserved it.
 - Or: Your child grew up with antagonism toward you. Whatever the cause of that, you continue to offer him or her forgiveness, a hearty welcome, and an open heart.
 - Or: You have a heart for the poor, and believe that you are responsible for the improvement of their lives, even though you do not know them personally.
- After you finish:
- Distribute a Seasons of Mercy inventory (the handout is on the last pages of these notes) and ask people to take a few minutes to think through it. Then the Retreat Leader thanks the speaker and invites each small group to share, giving each person about 3 minutes (20 minutes overall).
- Then lead a large group discussion as above, each small group member is invited to share (briefly) with the whole group about one major turning point in his or her spiritual journey.
- When this is finished: go immediately to the closing prayer of the night, which is called “Compline.” (Compline is an ancient form of liturgical prayer in the Church. It is traditionally prayed to honor the end of the day.)