

# SANCTUS

## **Experience the Power of God's Mercy**

This is a parish-based retreat designed to help people learn about self-giving love and the Paschal Mystery

### **Overview**

- This retreat is designed to be organized and hosted by leaders from local parish communities. Groups of neighboring parishes may also work together to plan and host these retreats.
- The host parish needs to have at least two rooms available (adjacent if possible) capable of holding about 50 people (new participants plus the team) at tables. The tables should be round if possible, but if not, rectangular tables will also work.
- This kit contains the schedules, check lists, outlines for all the talks, and reproducible prayer services and handouts.
- The maximum number of new retreatants is about 35. If you have too many retreatants, the time needed for personal sharing will run too long into the evening.
- Sanctus is a one-day retreat, usually scheduled for Saturday, running from 8 AM to about 9 PM. It can be offered frequently throughout the year, allowing as many in the parish to participate as want to.
- Many parishes provide a fund for baby sitters to which various organizations in the parish contribute. This fund is used to help parents who could not otherwise afford sitters for the entire period of this retreat. Because of concerns for child safety, it works best to simply allow parents to arrange for their own child care and reimburse them if needed.
- We are in debt to various other retreat movements on which Sanctus Retreat is modeled, in particular TEC – Teens Encounter Christ – and Cursillo.
- Two liturgical celebrations are part of the retreat. An optional celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the closing Mass.

### **Notes**

Making retreats part and parcel of parish life is on a par with all other forms of faith formation.

For Christians, the retreat has long been a way for people to refresh and deepen faith. Retreats offer people a chance to share with others a faith journey that is otherwise often lived alone.

## Who should attend?

- **All parish leaders** should be the first to be invited. Whether serving on leadership groups or in various volunteer ministries (such as liturgical roles, catechesis, or pastoral care) each active member of the parish will benefit from making an annual retreat. It helps them deepen their communion with Christ and the church.
- **Parents of children** who are in religious education, especially those preparing for first reconciliation or Eucharist. It will greatly assist them to be ready as their child's "primary teacher" to deepen their own communion with Christ and experience again the sacraments as this retreat celebrates them.
- **Couples as a Household.** We recommend that you invite couples to attend this retreat together, even if one of them is not Catholic. We are seeking to build "households of faith," which is very difficult when one member deepens his or her communion with Christ but the other does not.
- **Those preparing a child for baptism.** What better avenue of faith growth is there for young couples than to deepen their communion with Christ through a retreat? It will make the baptism of their child more intentional and meaningful. Simply make this retreat part of their preparation process.
- **Youth and young adults** from age 19 and higher. Nothing is more important to young adults than learning the art of self-giving love and linking one's life to the Paschal Mystery. For high school students, it is best to host a Sanctus Retreat specifically for them.
- **Those preparing for matrimony.** This is a very strong and powerful way to introduce faith into the marriage preparation process. By sharing their faith together, you greatly increase each couple's chances for a long marriage. Simply make this retreat part of their preparation process.
- **Those who are making their way into the church,** either for the first time as they seek full communion coming from another Christian tradition, or the fully initiated Catholic who has simply not darkened our doorway for a while. The retreat process is very powerful in shaking off the myths and fears of being an active Catholic.
- **Any interested member of the parish.** Don't forget to invite older adults, widows, single persons, the morning Mass crowd, and members of parish societies and social organizations.

## Room setup

- A private conference room is needed with round tables, seating for 6 retreatants plus one leader per table. There will also be a podium, and a small table on which the Sacred Scriptures will be placed, along with a candle. If the lights in the room are bright overhead lights that cannot be dimmed, then bring in lamps to light the room with a more intimate lighting scheme.
- A private dining room, separated from the conference room. The tables here need not be round.
- The use of the church for the closing Mass is optional. It's also possible to celebrate it right in the conference room where it would be more intimate and private. This is the Mass of the weekend on which the retreat occurs.

## The Retreat Team

- **A Retreat Leader** for each weekend who may also give some of the talks and lead the large-group sharing. It is good to rotate the Retreat Leader role to prevent any one person from making this his or her personal ministry.
- Three or four other **Speakers** to give the talks which the Retreat Leader does not give. These speakers also double as table leaders.
- **Table Leaders** who will lead all activities at the table level; one leader is needed for each small group.
- **A Host Team** of five to six people, which will provide for hospitality, meals, and general setup and cleanup.
- Note: The host team itself may wish to plan prayer, reflections, and especially sacrifice on behalf of those making the retreat.
- **A Retreat Prayer Coordinator** who will coordinate inviting prayers and good works from the community to support the work of the retreat.
- **The pastor or other priests and liturgical musicians**, who assist in the planning and celebration of the closing Mass.

## Materials needed

- A small table to serve as an altar for the enthronement of Sacred Scripture. You will also need a Bible, candle, and bowl of holy water. These can be placed on this altar.
- Paper and pens at each table for note taking.
- It really helps to decorate the meeting and dining rooms, to make them welcoming and appealing.
- Tent-style name plates for each table, one per table, on which the small group will write its chosen table name.
- Name tags for all, including all the leaders.
- Reproducible handouts which are included in this kit.
- Dining room essentials, snacks, beverages, and food for meals.

# SANCTUS

## **Experience the Power of God's Mercy**

### **Schedule**

8:00 AM	Breakfast (served by the Host Team) prayer before eating	Dining room
8:45 AM	First session - "Introductions"	Meeting room
9:30 AM	Enthronement of Sacred Scripture	Meeting room
9:40 AM	Break (refreshments served by the Host Team)	
10:00 AM	Second session - "The Journey of Faith" large group sharing	Meeting room
11:30 AM	Lunch (served by the Host Team) prayer before eating this meal may begin slightly late if the sharing runs long	Dining room
12:15 PM	Third session - "Dying in Christ"	Meeting room
between 2:15 & 2:30 PM	Break (refreshments served by the Host Team)	
2:45 PM	Fourth session - "Living in Grace"	Meeting room
4:20 PM	Bringing it all to prayer quiet time followed by shared prayer	
5:30 PM	Supper (served by the Host Team) prayer before eating	Dining room
6:15 PM	Fifth session - "Holiness for Life" works of mercy	Meeting room
7:30 PM	Closing Mass The closing message from the Retreat Leader	Church or other suitable space

# Sanctus Retreat

## Preparation

### Six weeks or more before the retreat:

- Announce the retreat in the parish. You may use the poster and flier we provide for this purpose. Simply complete them with your particular information and you're ready to go.
- 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.
- 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 an annual *Sanctus Retreat*.
- Many parishes schedule 4 or 5 retreats for each year and ask all leaders and volunteers to select one to attend during their fall preparation and leadership meetings. This assures they will have the needed rooms for the day and also allows people to sign up early and get the retreat into their personal calendars.
  - The retreat remains the

same from year to year, even though people repeat it. The themes of dying and living in Christ do not change; they are eternal. We repeat them because each time we pass through these reflections, our encounter with Christ is deeper.

### One month or more before the retreat:

- Recruit the **Host Team** to help with setup, cleanup, and meals - probably about 5 or 6 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 *Sanctus 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 day because people will be leaving things on the tables, hanging

- papers in the room, and so forth.
- Also, schedule the worship space if you prefer it for the closing Mass.
  - Schedule the **Pastor or another priest**, plus **liturgical musicians**, for the closing Mass.
  - Plan for a way to invite the whole community to be in prayer and vigil during the entire day. 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 during the retreat day.
    - 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.
  - The Host Team will also have time for its own spiritual reflections throughout the day. Ask the Host Team leader to prepare prayer and sharing activities for use during downtime in the Host Team schedule.
  - 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.
  - Hold a team meeting to review the schedule for the retreat, discuss the details, and train the small group leaders. Use the small group leader training materials that are part of this kit. Simply distribute the handouts and talk through them together. For an online version of small group training, use the *Come to the Table* | *Ven a la Mesa* training which can be found at this link. <http://pastoralplanning.com./Come-to-the-Table/Small-Group-Leader-Prep.html>. Either click or cut and paste this link into your browser.
  - If you have a small number of people making the retreat, the sharing times will all be shorter than called for on the schedule. Simply adjust the times for this and end the retreat a little earlier.

One week before the retreat:

## Sanctus Retreat

Guide to the Second Session: 10:00 AM

### Talk outline for “The Journey of Faith”

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 Journey of Faith. Keep the introduction short.

The schedule for this talk looks like this:

10:00 introduction to the speaker

10:03 the 15-minute talk

10:18 instructions given for small group sharing

10:20 small group sharing (can be stretched to 30 minutes if needed when not using the large group option)

10:40 optional large group sharing

11:30 dismiss to lunch – pray the meal prayer prior to dismissal

**Purpose:** to help the participants become aware that growing in holiness is a lifelong journey begun at baptism and continuing down through the years. It is intentional and basic. And it is something we share in the parish community. See **Appendix One** for a summary of the pertinent parts of the *Catechism* to help you form your thoughts. Here are your main points:

- Thank everyone for being at the retreat today.
- Our spiritual journey, I suppose you could say, started at baptism for us.
- But many came before us, parents, grandparents, neighbors, all the way back to the time of Christ and beyond.
- Down through history, a parade of faithful people has come to know Christ, to turn their hearts to Christ, and to live according to the teachings of Christ.
- So with us. Pause for a moment, think back over your own journey:
  - Remember religious ed?
  - What religion did you practice as a child?
  - What do you remember about those years in your faith life?
  - What was happening in your family then, or in the world, that affected your faith journey?
  - What were some turning points in your life?



- What brought you here today?
- Taking the time to think about our journey helps us steer a clear path forward toward Christ. We're all so busy all the time. We run from this to that. We come running into church on Sundays, and then run out and keep the race going. Pausing to savor Christ's love, to become more aware of Christ around us, and to share that with each other is what this retreat is about.
- Here share a **brief** story from your own life about your own journey of faith and how 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. Keep this short and make sure it isn't "about you." It should be an illustration of the journey of faith as you have experienced it.
- After you finish:
- Distribute the **Journey of Faith Inventory** (the handout is within this kit) and ask people to take a few minutes to think through it and jot down some notes. Then the Retreat Leader thanks the speaker and invites each small group to share, giving each person time to speak. Note that this period of sharing tends to go a bit long; people have had a lifetime of experiences to share about. It is important to let the sharing take its time but warn the small groups that we must finish with their sharing no later than 10:40.
- If you're using the large group sharing option, the Retreat Leader announces the large group discussion. Say we will use the same process we did for the Introductions (each group standing, each person speaking). Say that this will give each small group member time to share (briefly) with the large group. Using humor and gentleness, remind people that we don't need to hear *every* detail about their lives.
- Dismiss to lunch after the final small group has shared. If this runs long, the Host Team should be ready to serve lunch a bit late.



# Sanctus Retreat

Guide to the Third Session: 12:15 PM

## Talk Outline for “Dying in Christ”

This is a twenty-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 what it means to die in Christ. Keep the introduction short.

The schedule for this talk is:

- 12:15 the Retreat Leader reconvenes the group & announces this talk
- 12:15 introduction of the speaker
- 12:20 the 20-minute talk
- 12:40 instructions given for small group sharing
- 12:40 small group sharing (flex with this time as needed especially if you’re not using the large group sharing option)
- 1:15 more or less, optional large group sharing
- 2:15 dismiss to a break

**Purpose:** to help participants see that in order for us grow in holiness and live in the light of Christ, we must pass through the Paschal Mystery: we must die to ourselves in Christ. (See **Appendix Two** for material from the *Catechism* to support your talk.) This means we must learn the art of self-giving love. We must learn that the first must be last, the most important must be the servant of all, and we must be aware of our shortcomings in order for us to allow the grace of Christ to really touch us deeply. Here is the flow of your talk:

- We know that Jesus Christ lived and died for others. His teachings and his actions showed a man who wanted to heal, to love, and to welcome others, including outcasts of all kinds.
- His death was part of his life. He was fully human – but in his death, he showed us a way of life. He showed us an act of self-giving love the likes of which we had never seen before.
- But his death reflected his life. Throughout his life he had showed this love and this willingness to die to himself. Again and again, he surprised the people around him and the religious authorities of his day by making part of his family those they had rejected: tax collectors, women, foreigners, the poor, the outcast, and the sick.
- Embedded in a hundred daily occurrences of our lives is a summons to

follow him. If you peer into what's happening in your life and world, you will hear Christ calling you to follow him, to carry your cross as it were, and to die to yourself. We are all called to practice self-giving love, and in each call is also that summons to die.

- Here give an example from your life. Choose something that is not extraordinary; choose something quite common. Tell the story briefly. Here is an example from my life, just to prime your “story pump.”
- *In the early 1980s, I became very aware that many people in Guatemala are living in grinding poverty. It's nothing like the poverty people in the first world endure (which is also bad). In Guatemala, whole families live in huts made of corn stalks, their human dignity compromised by a lack of clean water, and a lack of food and medicine. Infant mortality is very high. Education levels are very low. Generation after generation of fellow human beings is living almost like animals. **Embedded in knowing this for me is a call, a summons. I am called to do something about it. So I am involved with Common Hope, an organization working on the ground there to change this. They're very effective. And here is my dying: they need money. I have to give away my own hard-earned money, more than I'm really comfortable giving. In a way, I wish I'd never learned about this because the call is insistent and strong. I cannot live and eat comfortably any longer, knowing my sisters and brothers are suffering like this.***
- We want you now to think about the events, people, and history of your own life, to peer into that and see how you have been called. In what is your summons to die to yourself embedded? It could be:
  - illness, injury, or an accident
  - a person with whom you've been having difficulty
  - a death or life-threatening event
  - your spouse or partner
  - an aging parent who needs care
  - a job change
  - the news you read in the press
  - or many other places.
- How have you been called to self-giving love? To forgiveness; to generosity with your money, time, or emotions; to give up your prejudices or judgments; to welcome someone into your life; to put aside your dreams and hopes for someone else; to do things you prefer not to in order to care for someone else; to accept yourself as you look

physically and give up being anyone else; to affirm your spouse and not always think of yourself as the one who's correct about things; to be thoughtful of others' needs and life situations, giving them time and support; and so forth?

- In these specific events, people, and actions of your life you will find the call of God to love. This love doesn't hang over your head in the room, like a theological idea; it's real and concrete, taking the shape for you, as it did for Jesus, of the poor, the lame, the outcast, and the hungry.

When the speaker is finished, the Retreat Leader steps to the podium to invite small group sharing again. Each person should respond to the question posed by the speaker. We want people to be specific about these experiences in their lives. If you're using the large group sharing option, tell them we will use the same format for large group sharing as the previous talk.

It may be necessary to remind the small groups once or twice about the time. We want to give each person a chance to share in that small group setting. **This is the most important sharing of the entire retreat.**

**Special note:** Talking about the ways in which we are called to self-giving love can be both joyful and painful for people, sometimes both at the same time. Flex with the time as needed to allow everyone to speak. Keep an eye out for anyone who may be struggling with this question.