

Self-Directed Retreats

Introduction and Purpose

Many adult Catholics find it difficult to take time away from their work and family life to reflect and pray in a quiet place for any given length of time.

We have developed these suggestions for self-directed retreats to encourage you to commit some time to developing your personal faith using the content of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Recommendation for Parish Use

Parishes can also use the basic self-directed retreat format as a starting point for a broader, parish-based retreat/reflection on *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Select one of the content suggestions for the two-day or weekend retreat using the following structure.

Thursday-Saturday

- Follow the structure for a two-day or weekend retreat.
- Encourage participants to keep a journal and ask them to bring it on Sunday.

Sunday

- Invite all retreat participants to the last Mass on Sunday.
- Host a 2-3 hour session using this basic structure.

Lunch (30 minutes)

Small group discussions (5-6 people)

On Thursday's reflection (20-30 minutes)

On Friday's reflection (20-30 minutes)

Break (15 minutes)

Small group discussions (5-6 people)

On Saturday's reflection (20-30 minutes)

Large group discussion (15-30 minutes)

Closing prayer (15 minutes)

Prayer is an integral part of who we are, what we profess, and how we live. We recommend using traditional prayers of the Church as the opening and closing prayers for the sessions including Liturgy of the Hours or Eucharistic adoration/benediction.

A sample process for the small and large group discussions and the closing prayer is:

- For small group discussions
 - Encourage the groups to share their individual responses to the discussion questions.
 - Further discuss any thoughts or ideas that arise during the conversation.

Resources for the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*

- For large group discussion
 - Invite the small groups to share any insights or key points with the large group.
 - Follow up the sharing with a question like, “What are the implications of our reflection on the life of our parish?”
- Closing prayer
 - Begin with the sign of the cross.
 - Read the meditation from one of the chapters.
 - Pray together a prayers from one of the chapters.

Materials Needed

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Journal or notepad

Pen or pencil

Time Length

We have listed below a variety of time lengths to choose from. We recommend that you choose the length of time that you can comfortably and realistically commit to.

“Year-Long” Retreat

The focus of this “year-long” retreat is to prayerfully and thoughtfully work through the entire contents of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* highlighting one chapter per week.

The “year” that is referred to is actually the 40 weeks between the start of September and the end of May. Because there are only 36 chapters in the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, these 40 weeks allow retreat participants to schedule the 36 weeks that best fit into their schedule.

Seven-Week Retreat

The focus of the seven-week retreat is more intensive than the year-long retreat. The seven-week retreat with direct the participant through the entire contents of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* in seven weeks, but is limited to the weekdays only.

Called to live our faith in our homes and workplace, participants will be challenged to reflect deeply on the content of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* and try to make connections to their own lives.

One Day a Month

Like the year-long or seven-week retreat, a one-day-a-month retreat would focus on one chapter a month of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* with a goal of reflecting on the entire contents over the course of three years.

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Instead of this more systematic reading of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, the retreat participant could also choose individual chapters that are appropriate to his or her experience and needs each month.

See “Retreat of the Month” for suggestions on chapters to use throughout the year.

Two-Day or Weekend Retreat

The time frame of two days or a weekend provides retreat participants with the opportunity to explore a particular topic that is discussed in 2-4 chapters of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Content

Year-Long, Seven-Week, and One-Day-a-Month Retreats

Since the goal of these two retreats is to work through the entire contents of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, we recommend that the participant start with Chapter 1 during day/week/month one, then Chapter 2 for day/week/month two, and so on.

Two-Day or Weekend Retreat

The following chapters would be appropriate for two-day or weekend retreat.

Prayer

Chapter 35. God Calls Us to Pray

Chapter 36. Jesus Taught Us to Pray

Christian Morality

Chapter 23. Life in Christ—Part One

Chapter 24. Life in Christ—Part Two

Eucharist (select two)

Chapter 14. The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ

Chapter 17. The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Christian Life

Chapter 27. The Third Commandment: Love the Lord’s Day

Paschal Mystery

Chapter 8. The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ

Chapter 15. The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ

Church (select two)

Chapter 10. The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ

Chapter 11. The Four Marks of the Church

Chapter 12. Mary: The Church’s First and Most Perfect Member

Resources for the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*

Structure of Each Retreat Session

The following is a suggested structure for reflection each day. We have also included possible adaptations for the year-long retreat. It is assumed that participants will continue their reflection throughout the day. Each session throughout the day should take about 30-45 minutes, depending upon the length of the chapter and the time spent journaling.

Morning

- Begin with prayer, and include the meditation or one of the prayers at the end of the chapter.
- Familiarize yourself with the Discussion Questions.
- Read the story of faith.

Noon/Afternoon

- Read the teaching, sidebars, and culture sections (the text between the story of faith and the discussion questions.) Highlight any significant text or make notes for yourself in the margin.
- If time permits, begin writing your responses to the discussion questions in your journal.

Evening/Night

- Review the doctrinal statements as you prepare to journal.
- Reflect on and write down your responses to the discussion questions in your journal.
- End the day by reflecting on the meditation again and/or using one of the prayers at the end of the chapter.

Adaptation for Year-Long Retreats

Spread out the reflection in the following way.

- Begin each day with the meditation.
- End each day with one of the prayers at the end of the chapter.
- Read one section of the chapter each day.
 - Day One: Story of Faith
 - Day Two: Teaching
 - Day Three: Sidebars
 - Day Four: Relationship of Catholic Teaching to the Culture
 - Day Five: Doctrinal Statements
- Reflect and journal on the discussion question each day.