

Bishop Persico's Expectations for a Confirmation Retreat

The Retreat before Confirmation is a valuable opportunity for the students to build community, receive catechesis, and experience conversion. After a good retreat, youth are more fruitfully disposed to receive the grace of the sacrament of Confirmation and more likely to continue their practice of the Catholic faith. In order to accomplish these things, the following are the Bishop's expectations:

- It is valuable to give the group time for joyful interaction, renew acquaintances, and build a sense of preparing for the Sacrament together.
- The goals of the retreat are:
 - to initiate (or deepen) a personal experience of Christian conversion;
 - to have a change of heart (or a strengthening) regarding the sacrament of Confirmation.
- The sacrament of Penance should be offered. Students should receive a comprehensive and compassionate examination of conscience and be encouraged to make individual confessions. This will require adequate time and a sufficient number of priest confessors. Secondary expressions (e.g. symbolic burning of written sins) should never replace sacramental confession, nor seem to the students to be a more effective way to experience God's mercy. If used, such tangential gestures should highlight the real absolution of sin that comes with the sacrament of Penance.
- Normally, Mass should be scheduled as part of the retreat, unless circumstances of time preclude it.
- If possible, young people who have made a significant commitment to Christ and the Catholic faith should be invited to give witness to the young people preparing for Confirmation.
- If possible, students should be reminded of the beauty and value of vocations to priesthood and consecrated life, in addition to marriage.
- The retreat should never be replaced by a day of service. While such a day can be an important part of the Confirmation program, it does not achieve the goals of a retreat.
- This retreat is a unique opportunity for parishes to evangelize their youth prior to Confirmation. Other retreat opportunities (e.g. TEC, youth rallies, etc.), although warmly encouraged, should not replace this unique communal experience.

The Bishop readily acknowledges that there are many creative ways to achieve the goals indicated above. He encourages those in retreat work to share their best ideas with each other for the good of the students. If Confirmation program leaders have any questions about these matters, the Bishop encourages them to speak first with Mary Hickin, Director for Catechesis and Sacraments or Deacon Steve Washek, Executive Director of Faith Formation in the diocesan offices.

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Reaffirmed by Bishop Persico January 2013