

Retreat Ideas

for Ministry with Young Teens

edited by Marilyn Kielbasa

H E L P

Heads-up | Easy | Low-Cost | Purposeful

Saint Mary's Press®

The publishing team included Marilyn Kielbasa, development editor; Rebecca Fairbank, copy editor; Barbara Bartelson, production editor; Hollace Storkel, typesetter; Cindi Ramm, art director; Kenneth Hey, cover and logo designer; cover images, PhotoDisc Inc.; produced by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

The development consultants for the HELP (Heads-up, Easy, Low-Cost, and Purposeful) series included the following people:

Sarah Bush, Pewee Valley, Kentucky	Jo Joy, Temple, Texas
Jeanne Fairbanks, Tipp City, Ohio	Kevin Kozlowski, New Carlisle, Ohio
Carole Goodwin, Louisville, Kentucky	Jennifer MacArthur, Saint Louis, Missouri
Joe Grant, Louisville, Kentucky	David Nissen, Cincinnati, Ohio
Maryann Hakowski, Yorktown, Virginia	Ruthie Nonnenkamp, Prospect, Kentucky

The retreats in this book were created by the following contributors:

Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart	Maryann Hakowski
Carole Goodwin	Ruthie Nonnenkamp
Joe Grant	

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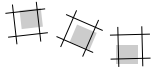
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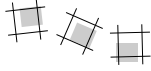
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Introduction

Retreat Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens is one of seven books in the HELP series—a collection of Heads-up, Easy, Low-Cost, and Purposeful activities for young adolescents. These strategies are designed to be used as part of a comprehensive youth ministry program for grades six to eight. The strategies can stand alone or complement a religious education curriculum.

The other books in the HELP series are as follows:

- ☉ *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Family Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Hands-on Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Holiday and Seasonal Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Justice and Service Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Prayer Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*

These books are helpful resources for anyone who works with young adolescents in a church or school setting. They can provide a strong foundation for a year-round, total youth ministry program whose goal is to evangelize young adolescents and support them in their faith journey.

Overview of This Book

Retreat Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens may be used by a coordinator of youth ministry, a director of religious education, catechists, teachers, a parish youth ministry team, or any adult who works with young teens. Ownership of the book includes permission to duplicate any part of it for use with program participants.

The book includes two overnight retreats and four one-day retreats. The themes of the overnight retreats are self-esteem and being true to oneself. The

themes of the other four retreats are Confirmation, discipleship, the Triduum, and leadership development.

Format of the Retreats

Each retreat outline in this book begins with a brief description of its purpose. The next element is a suggested time for the activity. This is flexible and takes into account several variables, such as the size of the group, the number and length of breaks, and the comfort level of the participants. Use the suggested time as a starting point and modify it according to your circumstances.

Next is a description of the size of the group that the retreat was written for. Most of the retreats work with a range of group sizes. If your group is large, be sure to recruit enough adults to help with logistics and supervision. A good rule to follow is that for every six to eight young teens, one adult should be present. The leaders should be trained in the process of the retreat and in the dynamics of small-group leadership.

In some retreats a section on special considerations follows the one on group size. It includes things such as notices about remote preparation requirements and cautions to pay special attention to a particular developmental issue of early adolescence.

A complete checklist of materials needed is the next part of the presentation of every retreat. A detailed description of the retreat's procedure is then provided, followed by alternative approaches. Those alternatives may be helpful in adapting the retreat to the needs of your group and your schedule.

The final element in each retreat offers space for keeping notes about how you might want to use the retreat in the future or change it to fit the needs of your group.

Programming Ideas

The retreats in this book can be used in a variety of ways. Consider the following suggestions:

- ① The program coordinator, catechists, teachers, and coordinator of youth ministry may collaborate to plan a retreat as part of the religious education program.
- ② Plan a daylong retreat during the summer months, when most young adolescents are less busy and may be open to a variety of activities. Youth ministers may use such retreats as part of a strong summer program for young teens.
- ③ Schoolteachers may schedule a day of reflection to supplement their day-to-day curriculum.

Standard Materials

Many of the items in the materials checklists are common to several retreats and other strategies in the series. To save time consider gathering frequently used materials in convenient bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Some recommendations for how to organize such bins follow.

Supply Bin

The following items frequently appear in materials checklists:

- ⊗ Bibles, at least one for every two participants
- ⊗ masking tape
- ⊗ cellophane tape
- ⊗ washable and permanent markers (thick and thin)
- ⊗ pens or pencils
- ⊗ self-stick notes
- ⊗ scissors
- ⊗ newsprint
- ⊗ blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- ⊗ postcards
- ⊗ notepaper
- ⊗ envelopes
- ⊗ baskets
- ⊗ candles and matches
- ⊗ items to create a prayer space (e.g., a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl of water, and a vase for flowers)

Craft Bin

Many of the retreats use craft activities to involve the young people. Consider collecting the following supplies in a separate bin:

- ⊗ construction paper
- ⊗ yarn and string, in assorted colors
- ⊗ poster board
- ⊗ glue and glue sticks
- ⊗ fabric paints
- ⊗ glitter and confetti
- ⊗ used greeting cards
- ⊗ beads
- ⊗ modeling clay
- ⊗ paintbrushes and paints
- ⊗ crayons
- ⊗ used magazines and newspapers
- ⊗ hole punches

- ☉ scissors
- ☉ stickers of various kinds
- ☉ index cards
- ☉ gift wrap and ribbon

Music Bin

Young people often find deep and profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set an appropriate mood for a prayer or activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- ☉ *Fun gathering music that is neither current nor popular with young teens.* Ideas are well-known classics (e.g., *Overture to William Tell*, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, and *1812 Overture*), songs from musical theater productions, children's songs, and Christmas songs for use any time of the year.
- ☉ *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative, or New Age, section of music stores.* Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- ☉ *Popular songs with powerful messages.* If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- ☉ *The music of contemporary Christian artists.* Most young teens are familiar with Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, and Steven Curtis Chapman. Also include the work of Catholic musicians, such as David W. Kauffman, Steve Angrisano, Bruce Deaton, Sarah Hart, Jesse Manibusan, and Jessica Alles.

Other Helpful Resources

In addition to the seven books in the HELP series, the following resources can be useful in your ministry with young adolescents. All the books in the following list are published by Saint Mary's Press and can be obtained by calling or writing us at the phone number and address listed in the "Your Comments or Suggestions" section at the end of this introduction.

Catechism Connection for Teens series, by Lisa Calderone-Stewart and Ed Kunzman (1999).

That First Kiss and Other Stories

My Wish List and Other Stories

Better Than Natural and Other Stories

Straight from the Heart and Other Stories

Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories

The five books in this collection contain short, engaging stories for teens on the joys and struggles of adolescent life, each story with a reflection con-

necting it to a Catholic Christian belief. Each book's faith connections reflect teachings from a different part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The Catholic Youth Bible, edited by Brian Singer-Towns (2000). The most youth-friendly Bible for Catholic teens available. The scriptural text is accompanied by hundreds of articles to help young people pray, study, and live the Scriptures.

Faith Works for Junior High: Scripture- and Tradition-Based Sessions for Faith Formation, by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart (1993). A series of twelve active meeting plans on various topics related to the Scriptures and church life.

Guided Meditations for Junior High: Good Judgment, Gifts, Obedience, Inner Blindness, by Jane E. Ayer (1997). Four guided meditations for young teens, available on audiocassette or compact disc. A leader's guide includes the script and programmatic options. Other volumes in this series, called *A Quiet Place Apart*, will also work with young teens.

Looking Past the Sky: Prayers by Young Teens, edited by Marilyn Kielbasa (1999). A collection of 274 prayers by and for young adolescents in grades six to eight.

One-Day Retreats for Junior High Youth, by Geri Braden-Whartenby and Joan Finn Connelly (1997). Six retreats that each fit into a school day or an afternoon or evening program. Each retreat contains a variety of icebreakers, prayers, group exercises, affirmations, and guided meditations.

Prayers with Pizzazz for Junior High Teens, by Judi Lanciotti (1996). A variety of creative prayer experiences that grab young teens' attention. The prayers are useful in many different settings, such as classes, meetings, prayer services, and retreats.

ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes, by Maryann Hakowski (1999). Eight 90-minute sessions to help bring youth and the Bible together. Each session applies biblical themes to the life issues that concern young teens.

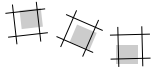
Connections to the Discovering Program

The Discovering Program, published by Saint Mary's Press, is a religious education program for young people in grades six to eight. It consists of fourteen six-session minicourses. Each session is 1 hour long and based on the principles of active learning.

The strategies in the HELP series cover themes that are loosely connected to those explored in the Discovering Program, and can be used as part of a total youth ministry program in which the Discovering curriculum is the central catechetical component. However, no strategy in the series presumes that the participants have taken a particular course in the Discovering Program, or requires that they do so. The appendices at the end of this book list the connections between the HELP retreats and the Discovering courses.

Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the retreats and strategies in the HELP series. We are also interested in new youth ministry strategies and retreats for use with young teens. If you have a comment or suggestion, please write the series editor, Marilyn Kielbasa, at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320; call the editor at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail the editor at mkielbasa@smp.org. Your ideas will help improve future editions of these books.



Let Your Light Shine

An Overnight Retreat on Self-Esteem

OVERVIEW

This overnight retreat on self-esteem invites the young people to explore their own personal gifts and encourages them to share those abilities with others. The retreat emphasizes the light of Christ in our life, the special people who bring us closer to Christ, and the ways we can be the light of Christ for others.

Suggested Time

This retreat covers about 13 hours, including recreation and nutrition breaks. It runs for about 4½ hours on the first day, beginning in the evening. The remainder of the retreat takes place on the second day, ending in the late afternoon. If your schedule is different, you may need to adapt the retreat to fit that schedule and maintain the proper flow.

Group Size

This retreat is most effective with groups of twenty or fewer. However, it can be done with any number of young people, divided into small groups, each led by an older teen or adult.

Special Preparations

Well before the retreat, contact the parents of the participants. Ask them to write a letter of love and affirmation to their child, telling their child why and how he or she is the light of Christ for the family. Stress that the letter should be more than just a short note and should truly come from the heart. The teens should not know about the letters until they receive them on the retreat.

Provide clear delivery instructions. Emphasize that every participant must have a letter from a parent. The activity will have to be canceled if even one letter is missing.

Materials Needed

- ☀️ colored construction paper
- ☀️ double-stick tape, straight pins, or safety pins
- ☀️ a large pillar candle and matches
- ☀️ 3-by-5-inch index cards, two for each person
- ☀️ inexpensive notebooks, one for each person
- ☀️ used magazines
- ☀️ scissors, one for each person
- ☀️ glue sticks, at least one for every three people
- ☀️ pens or pencils
- ☀️ colored markers
- ☀️ masking tape
- ☀️ copies of handout 1, "Let Your Light Shine," one for each person
- ☀️ a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective music (optional)
- ☀️ empty baby food jars, one for each person
- ☀️ a variety of brightly colored tissue paper
- ☀️ household white glue
- ☀️ paper plates, one for each person
- ☀️ clear shellac or decoupage covering, such as Mod Podge
- ☀️ paintbrushes, no larger than one inch, one for every two or three people
- ☀️ votive candles, one for each person
- ☀️ one or more strings of Christmas lights with screw-in bulbs
- ☀️ a basket or box
- ☀️ a Bible
- ☀️ one copy of resource 1, "Christmas Island: A Parable of Light"
- ☀️ copies of handout 2, "The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation," one for each person
- ☀️ parish songbooks, one for each person (optional)
- ☀️ newsprint
- ☀️ small prizes (optional)
- ☀️ balloons, one for each person

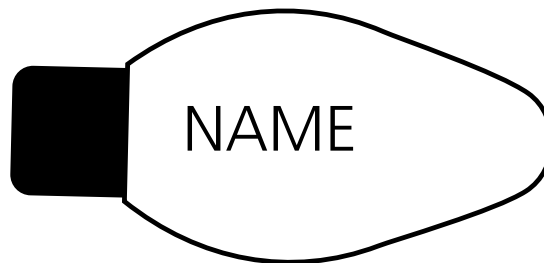
- ☀ small pieces of paper, about 3-by-3-inches, one for each person
- ☀ permanent markers
- ☀ letters from parents
- ☀ blindfolds, one for each person
- ☀ copies of handout 3, "Dimming the Light of Christ," one for each person
- ☀ a flashlight (optional)
- ☀ a large solid-colored bowl (optional)
- ☀ poster board, one sheet for each small group
- ☀ rulers, one for each small group
- ☀ plain paper or notebook paper
- ☀ envelopes, one for each person
- ☀ a wick or taper candle

PROCEDURE

Part 1: Getting Started (90 to 110 minutes)

Welcome, Introductions, and Prayer

Preparation. Using as many different colors of construction paper as you want small groups, cut out name tags in the shape of bulbs from a string of holiday lights, like this:



You will need as many bulbs as young people on the retreat. Cut an equal number of bulbs from each color of paper so that the small groups will be roughly equal in size. Write one participant's name on each bulb.

Set up tables (preferably round ones) and chairs. Have as many chairs around each table as you want people in a small group.

Set up a prayer space in front of the group with a large pillar candle.

1. As the participants arrive, give each of them a lightbulb-shaped name tag and a safety pin, double-stick tape, or a straight pin to attach the tag to their clothing.

2. Enthusiastically welcome the young teens to the retreat and introduce the team members. Since for some participants this is likely to be their first retreat, you may want to discuss the idea of a retreat with them by asking the following questions:



What is the purpose of a retreat?

What do you think will happen on this retreat?

What do you hope will happen?

What do you hope will *not* happen?

You might also go over some of the basic ground rules for the event and your expectations of them. Keep this presentation upbeat and positive to set the proper mood.

3. Introduce the theme of the retreat by making the following points in your own words:



The theme for this retreat is “Let Your Light Shine.” The retreat focuses on the light of Christ in our life and how that light shines in our relationship with ourselves, others, and God.

The topics include these:

What do you have to share?

How do you let your light shine?

Who are the people who light your way to Christ?

Who are the people and things that put out the light of Christ?

How do you spread the light of Christ at home, in school, and with friends?

It is important that everyone participate for us to enjoy this retreat as a group and as individuals. Everyone’s input is important.

Tell the young people to think about the Christmas lights that their family uses to decorate during the holiday season. Then ask them what happens when one bulb burns out. The answer is that with many brands of lights, all the lights go out when one burns out. Continue with your presentation, making the following points in your own words:



Imagine that we—as a group—are a string of lights. Our faith joins our string of lights together.

Jesus asks us to be a light for all people. Try not to let your light go out. Try not to put another person’s light out. We need to encourage one another and challenge one another on this retreat and in our life.

4. Light the pillar candle in the prayer space. As you are doing so, make the point that the candle reminds us that Christ is the light of the world and that he is always with us. Note that the candle will burn through all the retreat activities to keep the light of Christ shining among us.

Say a spontaneous prayer asking God's blessings on the retreat, on the team, and on the young people, so that everyone will be able to see Jesus in themselves and in others. Invite the young people to pause and silently ask Jesus to answer any special prayers of petition they bring to this retreat. After a pause, end the prayer by saying the following:



We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who is the light of our world. Amen.

Icebreaker: Let Your Light Shine

Preparation. Write each of the following words on six index cards. You will need one card for each young person. If you have more than forty-eight participants, add different kinds of lights. If you have fewer than forty-two, eliminate the appropriate number of lights. Mix up the cards before distributing them.

- ⊙ candle
- ⊙ flashlight
- ⊙ lightbulb
- ⊙ streetlight
- ⊙ night-light
- ⊙ refrigerator light
- ⊙ laser light
- ⊙ fluorescent light

1. Provide each young person with a chair. Ask the participants to arrange the chairs in a circle. Remove one chair from the circle and ask that person to stand in the middle.

Explain that the person in the middle can call out one type of light, two or more types of light, or say, "Let your light shine." Whoever is holding a card matching the light that was called out must get up and find a new chair, as must the person in the middle. Give the following examples:



If the person in the middle calls out, "lightbulb," everyone holding lightbulb cards must find another chair.

If "candles" and "flashlights" are called, everyone holding those cards must find a new chair.

If the person in the middle says, "Let your light shine," everyone must find a new chair.

The person left without a chair is the new person in the center.

No one is permitted to push another person out of a chair. If the teens play too rough, stop the game and ask them to take it easy before resuming play. Allow about 15 minutes for this activity.

Small-Group Formation: String of Lights

1. Ask the young people to find those who have the same color name tag as they do. Once the groups have assembled, direct them each to sit down at a table.

2. Allow a few minutes for each person to introduce himself or herself to the small group. You might ask the participants to share something in addition to their name, such as, the farthest place they have ever visited or their favorite toy when they were five years old.

Tell the young teens that they will be working in small groups for many of the activities and discussions during the retreat. The small groups offer a great place to share ideas, make new friends, and encourage one another to “let your light shine.”

Part 2: Seeing the Light in Yourself (90 minutes)

Notebook Activity: Spotlight on You

1. Give each person a notebook. Place used magazines, scissors, glue sticks, pens or pencils, and other craft supplies on each table. Tell the teens that they are to search through the magazines for words and photographs that describe their abilities and positive qualities, and then cut these out and glue them onto the cover of their notebook. For example, if someone is a serious student and a good friend, she or he should find words and pictures that relate to those qualities. Remind the young people that this activity is not about likes and dislikes. Just because a person likes a particular music group does not mean that it belongs on the cover. A person's collage is about who she or he is as a person.

Allow 30 minutes for the young people to complete this part of the project.

2. Ask the young people to share with their small group why they chose some of the words and photographs. They should share at least five examples, but they are welcome to share everything on their cover if they choose to.

3. Tell the participants to put their name and the date of the retreat on the first page of their journal notebook. On the next page, ask them to write down five items from their collage that they want to try and remember. For example,

if someone put the word *super* on the cover, they may need to remember that they have a lot of good inside them. If someone pasted a heart on their journal, they may want to remember that the love they have needs to be shared with more people.

4. Close the activity by reminding the young people that sometimes we have to put ourselves in the spotlight and take a close look at all the good we have to share and how much we have to offer. Encourage everyone to “let their light shine” throughout the retreat and beyond.

Small-Group Activity: Shed Light on the Matter

Preparation. Identify Scripture passages that include the word *light* as part of the phrase. You will need as many phrases as you have small groups. Here are some examples:

- ☉ You are the light of the world. (Matt. 5:14)
- ☉ The Lord is my light and my salvation. (Ps. 27:1)
- ☉ Your light must shine before all people. (Matt. 5:16)
- ☉ You must live like people who belong in the light. (Eph. 5:8)
- ☉ The light of Christ has come into the world. (John 1:9)

Assign one phrase to each group, and divide the words in the phrase among members of each group. For example, if a group has six members, you might divide the phrase in the following way:

- ☉ The—Lord—is my—light—and my—salvation.

Use a different color of index card or a different color marker for each passage. On each card, write the person’s name on one side and her or his assigned part of the Scripture passage on the other. Scramble all the cards and place them name-side up on a large table.

1. Announce that each person should find the card with his or her name on it. When the participants have found their card, they are to find the other people with cards of the same color or same color of ink in which their names are written. Then they are to unscramble the scriptural verse and stand in order, holding their word(s) in front of them.

2. When all the groups have figured out their scriptural verse, ask them to spend 5 minutes discussing what meaning the passage might hold for them.

After the discussion ask a spokesperson from each group to share some of its responses with the large group. When all the responses have been shared, direct the small groups to tape their scriptural verse together and post it in the meeting room.

Presentation and Reflection: We Are the Light of Christ

Preparation. If possible, recruit an older teenager to prepare and deliver the following witness talk.

1. The purpose of this presentation is to encourage the young people to recognize the light of Christ within themselves. Ask the teen volunteer to make the following points in her or his own words, expanding the points by sharing personal stories and feelings about her or his struggle for self-worth. Direct the presenter to offer strategies for building confidence in everyday life. (If no teen presenter is available, the leader will need to make this presentation.)



God has given us all special gifts and talents. We are each unique and valuable. Each one of us has the light of Christ within us. We need to recognize that light within ourselves.

Think about the following questions:

What are some of your gifts and talents?

How has God made you different from others?

How do you feel about yourself?

Many people put themselves down all the time. For some reason it is often difficult to see the good in oneself. But it is important to feel good about oneself and to believe in oneself.

We also hurt the self-image of others by some of the things we say and do. Give concrete examples of how we can build up the self-image of others.

Jesus built up the self-esteem of others. For example, he ate with tax collectors, made time for little children, and washed the disciples' feet.

We also need to recognize the light of Christ in ourselves and in others and to do whatever we can to let it shine.

2. Distribute handout 1. Invite the participants to take their journal notebook and the handout questions to a place in the room where they can be alone with their thoughts. Encourage them to move away from other people so that they are not distracted. Allow about 10 minutes of quiet time for the teens to write their answers in their notebook. If you have reflective music available, begin playing it at this time.

3. After everyone is finished, call the participants back to their small groups. Encourage them to share their answers to the questions with their small group. However, assure them that they do not have to share everything. Allow about 10 minutes for small-group sharing.