



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#72 - December 2016

Best Practice: A Busy Person's Retreat

It has long been acknowledged that retreats can be powerfully transformational for people. Many retreat centers report that participation is down in weekend retreats, in week-long retreats: the reality of our busy world.

In some ways, this provides opportunities for parishes: what might be provided in "smaller doses" for the needs of today? This issue chronicles one opportunity (among the many that each of you are already doing) from St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Schenectady, NY.

How did the idea originate?

Kris Rooney, pastoral associate for adult faith formation at St. Kateri, recounts that the idea percolated for her from a few different sources.

Kris participated in the [Adult Faith Formation Symposium](#) in Connecticut in fall 2015. The gathering concluded with time to brainstorm ideas on offerings for folks in different generations and stages of spirituality. One participant mentioned that their parish had prayer stations at a local park that were available on a Saturday for people to drop in anytime within certain hours. That's what started her thoughts to churn.

Second, Kris' study of Fowler's stages of faith and how people desire to use various kinds of methods and activities to explore their prayer life depending on where they are in their journey.

Third, Kris mentions that she had spent a great deal of time listening to parishioners who shared what they have either appreciated that was offered in the past or would like to have offered in the future.

Who was the day planned for?

Busy people! And – there were offerings for the "loyal attendee" as well as opportunities that would speak to those who are "spiritual and not religious."

What did the day look like?

The day was designed so that people were invited to stay for an hour or all day; the day, then, could fit the diverse schedules of people.

- 9:30: Morning Prayer
- 10:00: Free time
- 11:00: Wondering with Mary: Prayer Reflection
- 12:00: Brown bag lunch with coffee and tea provided
- 1:00: Yoga
- 2:00: Lectio Divina
- 3:00: Stations of the Cross
- 3:30: Celebration of Reconciliation
- 4:30: Celebration of Liturgy

A spiritual retreat is where the seekers are seeking God.

It is where God is seeking the seekers.

It is the meeting place

- Sr. Louise Dowgiallo, OSB

Some Notes about the Various Sessions

- The *Wondering with Mary Session*, facilitated by Kris, grew out of her Advent reflection on Mary. The environment incorporated candles and a display of the print "The Annunciation" by Tanner. The format included a scripture passage, a meditation, time for personal reflection on suggested questions with background music, and prayer together. A booklet – which could be written in - guided the participants. This booklet and a copy of the leader's guide can be found at www.janetschaeffler.com; click on AFF Helps.
- Morning Prayer was based on the Liturgy of the Hours and was led by a parishioner who is also a storyteller.

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- Yoga has been offered at the parish in the past with much appreciation from the people. A parishioner who is an instructor volunteered to lead this session.
- Other parishioners led things the various opportunities, e.g. Lectio Divina and Stations of the Cross because they had particular devotion to them in their lives. That was one of the reasons why the day was meaningful and powerful in people's lives: the leaders of each offering were doing something that was a deep part of them and it showed in how they presented it.
- The day provided time and the opportunity for people to choose and participate in activities that interested them, to "do their own thing." Some of the possibilities that were available during these free times were:
 - Walking the labyrinth
 - Adult coloring: coloring pages teamed with Scripture passages to reflect on as they colored
 - Bibles and books of spiritual reading were available
- Kris also created a prayer packet for those who desired something to jumpstart their prayer. A portion of it can be viewed at: www.janetschaeffler.com; click on AFF Helps. Other items which were included in the final copy:
 - Ideas for praying with scripture
 - Various prayers
 - Directions for praying the rosary
 - An examen of consciousness
 - Ideas on centering prayer

Methods of Publicity

Kris utilized various methods of publicity:

- Posters
- Bulletin and pulpit announcements
- Parish Facebook page
- Her personal Facebook page
- Diocesan website listing for events related to the Year of Mercy

- Emails to everyone who has participated in an adult formation offering or group at the parish
- Flyers handed out at all parish meetings

Kris found that personal invitation worked the best.

Another Plus!

Kris points out that a distinct advantage of this day is that it was extremely economical to host. The parishioners that helped wanted to volunteer their

time (although they were sent thank you notes with small coffee gift cards); a free will offering was taken that covered the expenses of everything else.

All Christians need a half hour of prayer
each day
except when they are busy.

Then they need an hour.

- St. Francis de Sales

Responses from the Participants

- On a comment sheet near the labyrinth, many people found it very enriching and prayerful.
- One parishioner wrote to Kris: "I wanted to tell you how much Saturday meant to me and to some of the ladies that I met and spent time with!! The retreat was powerful; it was fun and it was inspiring!!! With ALL the work you put into it, please know that we got so much out of it!! You are so gifted at your career; vocation!! Thank you for your time and efforts (your baked goodies were delicious)!!! I treasure all the references I brought home and will be using them daily....🙏
Again, thank you!

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- Another participant (not from the parish but from a few counties away who saw it on the diocesan website) wrote: "I will never be able to find the words to express my gratitude to you for such a comprehensive, peaceful, calming, informative Retreat for Busy Persons. I was blown out of the water – several powerful presentations and experiences of yoga and the labyrinth. I was full of joy leaving the day, and look forward to another one! As I do not attend your parish, would it be too much to ask if I could be on an e-mail list when there is another one? If I am able, I so would love to be there! The day was absolutely perfect! Each time frame, with free time as well, was beyond all expectations. I can't say enough good things about the program. God bless you with good health, safety and happiness! "

GEMS Wonderings

Now that you've read this issue and are saying, "That's a wonderful day that they offered," before filing it away, you might want to explore:

- What can our parish take away from this? Is there something we can adapt and/or tweak?
- Which of these topics/themes would appeal to our parish? What other topics might be included (for example, centering prayer, coloring prayer, Scriptural rosary, praying, examen of consciousness, faith-sharing prayer, labyrinth, praying with music, praying with photography, Visio Divina, praying with icons, Taize prayer).
- During which liturgical season would this work for our parish?
- Who in your parish could be invited to be leaders for various topics within the day?

GEMS Suggestions

- Another format for a retreat day similar to this might be setting up "centers" throughout the building. The group gathers at the

beginning for prayer together. Then, throughout the day, participants would go to the centers that are of interest to them.

- Not everyone, of course, can come to the parish for a retreat day. Share with parishioners ways and resources to make a retreat at home:
 - <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html>
 - <http://www.goodgroundpress.com/retreats.aspx>

Some Possible Resources to Help in the Planning

- Would you need help in planning Morning Prayer? Check:
 - <http://www.universalis.com/lauds.htm>
 - <http://divineoffice.org/welcome/>
- For help with Lectio Divina:
 - <http://ocarm.org/en/content/lectio/what-lectio-divina>
 - <http://lectio-divina.org/>
 - <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/category/category/lectio-divina>



Adding New Luster to an Old Gem

In **GEMS** issues #3-9, #15-18, #46-48 and # 56-58 we explored hospitality within our parishes and within adult faith formation. You might want to explore these additional ideas:

- 7 Ways to Make Sure Guests Have the Best Experience Possible: <http://visionroom.com/7-ways-make-sure-guests-best-experience-possible/>
- 5 New Ideas for Coffee Hour: <http://www.buildfaith.org/coffee-hour/>

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- Why are Catholics so notoriously bad at fellowship?:
<http://aleteia.org/2016/09/19/why-are-catholics-so-notoriously-bad-at-fellowship/>
- Irritated by chit-chat before Mass? Maybe you shouldn't be:
<http://aleteia.org/2016/10/06/irritated-by-chit-chat-before-mass-maybe-you-shouldnt-be/>



Golden Nuggets from You

“Thanks, Sister Janet. I might use some of the ideas here ([GEMS #46](#)), especially the ones from page 5 at my next lecture. This issue should be required reading for all pastors and ministers of hospitality.”

- *Cris Villapando, Director of Faith Formation,
Diocese of Charlotte, NC*

“This issue ([GEMS #56](#)) is a real GEM. You had to do lots of thinking, research, planning and organization. Bravo!”

- *Judy Holmes, Director of the Cardinal Dearden Project,
Sterling Heights, MI*

“I wanted to let you know that I've passed along to our parish staff members (who create many of our communications pieces) your [GEMS #56](#) issue on the need for the spirit of welcome in parish communications. I especially liked your ‘two things to remember: attitude of gratitude and watch your language!’”

*Faye Akers,
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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found at:

- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>