

Youth Lenten Retreat

A Servant's Heart



developed by Karen Gavrilovic as part of the
St. Sophia Seminary Youth Ministry Certification Course



Objective/Praxis:

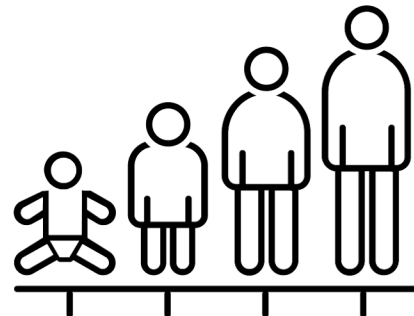
- To give youth a way of thinking about how they may serve others
- To understand that even one person can make a difference in the life of another
- To look for opportunities to serve those God puts in our path.

Focus:

- When we serve others, we model Christ's teaching.

Retreat Outline

- Introductions - Team/Relationship Building
- Prayers
- Discussion on a Servant's Heart and Introducing Focus Points for the day
- Preparing food to host parish coffee hour
- Creating Ukraine Awareness Packets and Cookbooks
- Continuing food preparation
- "Hand"-made sunflowers
- Wrap-up & Debrief
- Hosting Coffee Hour (second day)



Ages 5 -18
Younger children
should be
accompanied by
an adult to the
retreat.

Timing:

- **Half-day retreat 4 hours**
- Saturday Morning Suggested. May also be done on Saturday later afternoon
- Hosting Coffee Hour the following Sunday
- Activities were divided into modules so that if a child was late arriving, or had to leave early, they could easily join or leave at a natural breakpoint. See attachment





Youth Lenten Retreat - A Servant's Heart Retreat Outline

Worship

Begin with a short prayer service in the nave/vestibule asking for a blessing for the day and efforts. While in the nave, sing the Third Antiphon together and briefly discuss the meaning of the word Beatitude (blessedness) and how this antiphon shows the many ways Jesus suggests we may have a “right spirit” for service and the heart of one who serves the Lord.

If possible, have music copies or words for the youth to follow.

End the retreat by reciting together a prayer for a servant’s heart. Remember to blessed any meal. As part of the discussions, you will talk about the blessings that come from serving and the “Be-Attitudes of Service” - a list of ways we serve God with reference to relevant Bible verses.



Preparation/Materials

This retreat required help from the parents the day of the retreat. If creating the cookbook you will need at least 2 weeks of prep time.

- About two weeks before the retreat, ask every family to share one or two favorite Lenten recipes. Copy/print before the retreat and include in the cookbook.
- Purchase needed ingredients for the dishes made for the coffee hour and your retreat lunch. Select items that would be easy to keep overnight and reheat or serve cold, if needed the next morning.
- Perhaps ask families to bring snack and drinks and the youth ministry provide the main dishes (pizza, pasta, etc)
- The service project require a a separate set of materials for the Ukraine awareness ribbons and sunflower seed packets. Printed copies of Prayer for Peace and recipes (see attachments)
- Copy all needed materials including the Servant’s Prayer, list of Bible verse, Prayer for Peace, information for Great Lent Giveaway (recipient), Be-Attitudes”. Templates are attached.
- Review the activity explanation and attachments for full preparations.

Additional: You may offer the cookbooks will be offered in digital form to all Parishioners or prepare extra and sell them to go toward the Great Lent Giveaway or Ukraine effort of your choice.

Sample Schedule

- **9:30** Opening Prayer/Beatitudes (Blessing)
- **9:45-10:00** Welcome – catch up with everybody – outline for the day/Icebreaker
- **10:00 – 10:25** Focus on Growing a Servant’s Heart – Beatitudes= Blessings – Service to Others – How do we do it? 1.The Power of One – tell the story of the Starfish; ask questions – see story sheet for ideas 2.St. Theophan – how can we do this? Tell story and talk about the little things we do; service to family, parish
- **10:25 – 10:45** Cooking – Mix Chocolate chip cookie bars (chip away at ego) & Overnight Oats
St. Theophan’s ideas at work – teaches us humility; we also help each other by working together, look where God puts us, might be in a church kitchen, might be anywhere...
- **10:45 – 11:30** – Making Ukrainian Ribbons - Power of One (plus 1 or more) at work – when we have help, we can do more; can’t fix the chaos from war in Ukraine but can help children one at a time with our prayers and charitable collections
- **11:30 – 12:00** – Coffee Hour Food Prep(putting our heart into our work to show love) and Lunch Prep
St. Nektarius of Aegina – our work may be unnoticed or unappreciated but we do it anyway
- **12:00-12:30**Lunch/Clean Up/Wrap Up – Each give me one take away – something you might do differently? Ideas for next church school year, future service projects, retreats.

Closing – “A Prayer for a Servant’s Heart – included in cookbook

Discussion/Activity Outlines

#1 Getting to Know You/Team Building

There are many ice breakers and team building games you can use for your retreat. Choose something depending on the age levels participating and how well your youth already know one another. Look on-line and determine what best suits your needs.



#2 Prayer & Discussion

Begin with your chosen prayers or service. As suggested, sing the Third Antiphon, the Beatitudes with the group to begin discussion. Provide the youth with a brief outline of what they will be doing that day.

Paraphrase the following story of the young girl who was observed tossing starfish back into the sea one at a time adapted from *The Star Thrower* by Loren C. Eiseley or show this video of the story from Katie Ann Green <https://youtu.be/PkVOjvmBLOc>

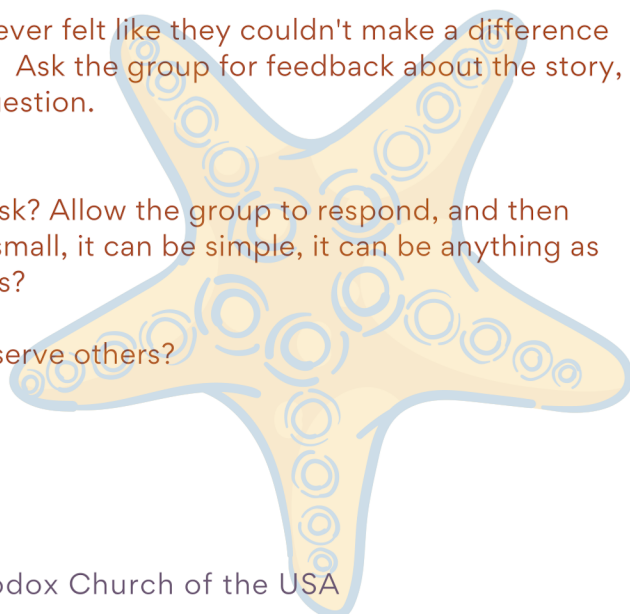
"One Starfish At A Time"[nk1]

One day a man was walking along the seashore. He noticed that during the night many seashells and starfish had washed upon the beach. Enjoying the morning sun and cool sea air, the man walked for miles. As he strolled along, he noticed a small figure dancing in the distance. It made him chuckle to think of someone celebrating life in such an uninhibited way. As he got closer, however, it became apparent that the figure was not dancing. Instead, she seemed to be repeatedly performing some ritual. He drew nearer and noticed that the small figure was a child. She was picking up starfish and tossing them into the surf. He paused for a moment, puzzled, then asked, "Why are you throwing these starfish?" "It's low tide," she replied, "If I leave them on the beach, the sun will soon dry them and they will die. I am throwing them into the ocean so they can live." The man considered her actions, impressed with the child's thoughtfulness. Then he motioned up and down the miles of the beach. "There must be thousands of starfish along here," he said, "you cannot possibly make a difference." The young girl stopped. Her face darkened.

She chewed thoughtfully on her lower lip, "You're probably right," she said softly. She looked down at the sand. Then she leaned over, carefully picked up another starfish, pulled back and arched it gently into the sea. In a tone that was both gentle and bold, she said, "But I made a difference for that one."

Ask the youth what they think the story means. Ask them if they ever felt like they couldn't make a difference or when they felt they could even though it might be a hard task. Ask the group for feedback about the story, allow them time to answer and share their thoughts after each question.

- What did you think when you heard what she was doing?
- Do you think she was making a difference? Explain.
- Does working to make a difference always have to be a huge task? Allow the group to respond, and then state in your own words: Making a difference can be something small, it can be simple, it can be anything as long as it is motivated by love. Do you have any thoughts or ideas?
- How can we make a difference?
- What are things in everyday life we can start to do to love and serve others?



Discussion/Activity Outlines

#2 Prayer & Discussion contnued

Introduce St. Theophan's letter to the young lady who asked him how one can person make a difference in a broken world.

You ask, "Must one do something?" Of course one must! And do whatever comes along - in your circle of friends and in your surroundings -and believe that this is and will be your real work. More will not be demanded of you. It is a great misconception to think, whether for the sake of heaven or, as the modernists put it, to "make one's mark on humanity," that one must undertake great, reverberating tasks. Not at all.

It is necessary only to do everything according to the commandments of God. Just what exactly? Nothing in particular - only those things which present themselves to everyone in the circumstances of life, those things which are required by the every day happenings we all encounter.

This is how God is. God arranges the fate of each man, and the whole course of one's life is also the work of His most gracious foreknowledge, as is, therefore, every minute and every encounter.

Let's take an example: a beggar comes up to you; it is God who has brought him. What should you do? You must help him. God has brought the beggar, of course, desiring you to act toward this beggar in a manner pleasing to Him, and He watches to see what you will actually do ...If you do what is pleasing to God, you will be taking a step toward the ultimate goal, the inheritance of heaven.

Generalize this occurrence, and you find that in every situation and at every encounter one must do what God wants him to do. And we know truly what He wants from the commandments He has given us. If someone seeks help, then help him. If someone has offended you, forgive him. If you yourself have offended someone, then hasten to ask forgiveness and to make peace.

-Excerpt from Letter to a Young Girl by St. Theophan the Recluse

He reminded her that we encounter people every day who are sent by God and that each small act of love or kindness we do to help someone else means we are living in His image and taking a step toward Salvation. Ask the youth how the story from St. Theophan might reflect in their life.

Finally, discuss how to make the power of "one" ripple out and grow stronger by working with others, like we do in our church community through our charitable works committee collections, etc. Some answers you might be looking for could be food collections, diaper collections, volunteering at a shelter or the Boys & Girls club.

End the session discussing how we grow our servant's heart when we give of ourselves and our love at home, or at church, and, that by cooking for our church family, we are serving them. Discuss the project second project for the day, raising money for the Great Lent Giveaway which is benefitting special programs and services for youth refugees of the war in Ukraine.

As you move into the cooking portion of the day, continue the discussions. Discuss love and how love for God and one another manifests in our actions towards others.

At lunch, continue the discussion, discussing the challenges that we all face in life, even those who dedicate their lives completely to the service of the Lord. Use the example of the life of St. Nektarius of Aegina who was ridiculed for being so humble and for helping others in ways that seemed beneath a Priest, like giving away his shoes and secretly cleaning toilets to help a sick custodian keep his job. The message here was - it's not always easy to do what the Lord wants us to do and people don't always appreciate it or even notice! If you have an icon or print of one of St. Nektarius (and St. Theophan) have them with you. For your teenagers, make them aware of the movie, Man of God about the life of St. Nektarius. It is available to rent on Amazon. Inform the youth that you will now be putting faith into action.

Give a brief explanation of the Great Lent Giveaway (information www.uocoyouth.org) and about this year's recipient. They will be raising funds and awareness for Ukraine War Youth Refugee Services. They will also be serving the parish by hosting coffee hour!



Discussion/Activity Outlines

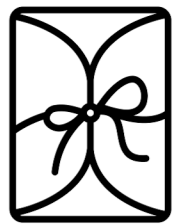
#3 Praxis Activities - details for each is in attachments

After discussion, divide youth into three groups if possible. Each with at least one adult and one teenager or to prepare the food to be served at coffee hour. A suggestion for easy preparation is orange cream overnight oats that could be stored in the refrigerator and warmed up in crock pots and in the morning, Lenten Chocolate Chip Cookies but as bars, or lenten salads. Cooking together is always a wonderful way to make memories and deepen relationships and community! Be sure to have all participant maintain kitchen safety with washing hands, older youth using any sharp utensils and keeping work spaces clean.

Activity Two: While the cookies are baking, and after a snack/break, begin the service project. Divide up based on age and also fine motor skills. Younger children may help decorate the clutch back pins and work on assembling and decorating their cookbooks with stickers and drawings. The older/youth teens can form an assembly line making the awareness ribbons and attaching them with clutch back pins to the seed packets .If possible, have the ribbons were precut by adults ahead of time while the youth are in the initial discussion group.

Activity Three: Assemble a fruit salad to be served at coffee hour and "taste tested" at lunch. You could use heart shaped cookie cutters to cut the watermelon pieces into hearts as a reminder that they were growing their servant's heart during the retreat and, as a reminder of the love they put into the food they prepared. This low key activity allowed time for clean up, allowed the kids time to finish assembling their cookbooks and help set up for lunch. It also allows time for part of your youth ministry team to prepare lunch. If the retreat had been longer, your youth could prepare their own lunches.

Finally, have the youth each trace their hands on yellow paper and tell them to look for them the next day! Ccut them out and used straws to make stems and added a brown center to turn them into two large sunflowers that can decorate the coffee hour table to remind everyone of the hands that prepared the coffee hour food. These "hand-made" sunflowers will also show support for Ukraine. Prepare a little note on the vase describing these points.



Wrap up - Debrief - Coffe Hour

While eating lunch begin to wrap up the day. Paraphrase the following in your own words
The problems of our world are way too overwhelming for any one person to make a difference all alone. If just one person saves just one starfish, however, then this world has become a better place. If just one person makes just one person smile or laugh, or feel loved, then this world has grown in joy. If just one person gives to a poor child, visits a nursing home, or cheers a sick person up in the hospital, then this world has increased in love. God doesn't expect us to change the world all by ourselves, but He does want us to try to influence the world in a positive way. Doing all that we can to help make a difference in people's lives is just like throwing the starfish back into the sea.

Ask the youth some question for reflection:

- What was their favorite part of the day? What would they change?
- What is something they will the retreat and how can they live it in their life?
- Some youth may need prompting or be shy than others. That is ok. Encourage them to share if they can.
- Do the youth have any suggestions for future ways they would like to spend time together in the future?
- C lose the retreat by saying the Servant's Heart Prayer.
- Pass out the cookbooks and copies of prayers to the families as they leave the retreat.

At Coffee Hour - Allow the youth to give a brief explanation of their retreat. Have them thank the parish for supporting their efforts and have them pass out the ribbons.

Ask the people if they noticed the watermelon hearts and the handprints. If your youth are on the shy side, have the parishioners ask the children individually what we talked about at the retreat.

Attachments

Lenten Cookbooks

Lenten Cook Books (see photos - these could also be adapted to make great song books, prayer books, etc.)

- 4" x 6" vinyl photo albums - from Dollar Tree
- Recipes from families - Copied to fit 4" x 6" photo sleeves; alternatively families could provide 4x6 cards with recipes
- Back and Front Covers - sized 4" x 6" to reflect theme and identify church and retreat date (see samples attached)
- Prayer for a Servant's Heart - sized 4" x 6" to fit in front or back cover (see sample)
- Be-Attitudes of Service - sized 4" x 6" to fit in front or back cover (see sample)
- Stickers and Pens to personalize cookbooks if desired
- Scissors or a paper cutter (to be used only by an adult)

Instructions: Slide recipes cards into vinyl sleeves. Be sure to put names on outside; decorate with stickers if desired.

Note - there is some copying and cutting to be done by adults or teenagers ahead of time so the cards and other items are ready to be slipped into the photo album sleeves. The cookbooks could also be created shared digitally instead.



Attachments

Ukraine Awareness Ribbons with Seed Packets

- Sunflower seed packets – Dollar Tree 4/\$1.00
- Clutch Back Pins – available on Amazon or Craft stores; I was able to get nice Orthodox style Cross clutch back pin on clearance from a Catholic Supply Store 50 cents a dozen
- Stickers or something to decorate plan style clutch pins if needed
- 7/8” ribbon in turquoise blue – cut into 6” inch strips
- 7/8” ribbon in bright yellow – cut into 6” inch strips
- Strips of paper saying “Pray for Peace; Sow Hope” - precut (see sample)

Instructions: Align yellow ribbon with blue ribbon; twist one side over the other and secure with clutch back pin but don't put back on yet. Punch pin through paper strip and through corner of seed packet and secure with clutch back pin (See photos).



Attachments

Christ is Risen! Resource - UOC Office of Youth Ministry

<https://uocyouth.org/files/Christ-IS-Risen/praxis/Praxis-Session-one-Christ-isRisen.pdf>

Praxis Session One: Fasting and Cooking as a Family!

Main Ideas: Helping families discover ways that they may incorporate fasting into their daily life. Supplies needed: Ingredients for recipes, copies of recipes, copies of binder cover art and resource page (Supplemental Materials), binder for each family (or ask each family to bring a binder).

Preparation: If possible, order the book *Fasting as a Family: Planning and Preparing Delicious Lenten Meals* by Melissa Naasko available at <http://store.ancientfaith.com/fasting-as-a-family/>. If it is within your budget, purchase a copy for each family. There are many websites, blogs and books that provide ideas and recipes for fasting. Ms. Naasko also has a Facebook page (same name as her book *Fasting as a Family*) with regular posts. Ask your parish priest to prepare a short introduction about fasting that can be presented at the beginning of the session. How can fasting enhance your spiritual and family life? Why do we fast during certain times of the year and twice during most other weeks? What makes fasting different from dieting or simply "giving up" certain foods?

Ensure that you choose a date for this session with input from the families to ensure maximum participation. It is suggested to hold this session prior to the Nativity Fast. Ask families to bring one of their favorite fasting recipes (with enough copies for all attending). If time, space, and other logistics allow, consider asking a few people to bring in a lenten dish so that families (especially children) can "taste test" the foods they like and add those recipes to their books.

Another idea is to treat part of the session like a cooking class and have families work together to prepare an entree or meal. Each family could do one task to contribute to the dish or each family could prepare one dish to make a full meal together. Ideally, they could each take something home to have on hand for a future fasting meal. Families may want to try this again a few times during Great Lent to share successful recipes and to share the work of meal prepping.

Introduction: Fasting may seem intimidating to many people, especially families. Today's families often live with very tight and busy schedules. Often, eating together is not accomplished on a daily basis. Food allergies have also become a challenge for many of our families. With all of these factors, throwing the time and forethought needed for fasting may just seem like too much. While there is more to fasting than the list of foods and ingredients to avoid, we know that families are more likely to be successful in this part of their spiritual life when they have easy recipes and simple ingredients on hand.

We hope this Praxis lesson will help to give families choices and opportunities for bringing fasting into daily life. When choosing the recipes for this session, try to choose items that may consider the following:

- Easy Preparation with simple, easy to find ingredients
- Foods that can be kept in the refrigerator for several days and multiple servings (such as salads or casserole)
- Items that could be used in a child/youth's lunch
- Dishes that can be portioned and frozen for future meals. Once the session is over, ask families to choose a dish to prepare for an upcoming coffee social following Divine Liturgy or at a pot-luck evening event. In this way we share and enjoy together as a parish family!

Session Outline:

- Opening Prayer
- Introduction by Spiritual Father
- Prepare the recipes
- Allow families time to create their recipe books ● Share a meal together!
- Plan your special coffee hour together
- Close in Prayer

Source materials providing inspiration for this retreat are:

Making a Difference - <https://www.goarch.org/-/making-a-difference>

Antiochian Women: The Be-attitudes of a Servant by Joy Corey

Christ is Risen! Resource of UOC of USA Office of Youth Ministry

Office of Youth Ministry - Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA



Be-Attitudes bring Beatitudes (blessings)

(from Joy Corey – The Word – Antiochian Archdiocese of America)

We are to serve God and Him only. (Luke 4:8)

We are to serve God with all our heart. (1 Samuel 12:20)

We are to serve each other in love. (Galatians 5:13)

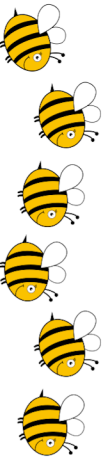
We are to serve God and each other with sincerity of heart. (Ephesians 6:5-7)

We are to serve the Lord with all humility (Acts 20:19)

We are to serve the Lord with gladness. (Psalm 100:2)

We are to serve the Lord with thanksgiving and praise.

(Thessalonians 5:16-19)



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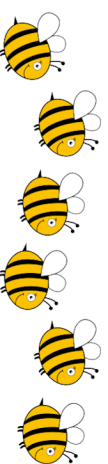
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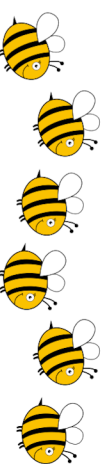
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Prayer for a Servants Heart



Christ our God, we thank you for illuminating our lives
and
setting the ultimate example for us, which is to always do
good unto others and love one another. Please show us
the small ways we can make changes in the world by
serving and loving others.

In the Name of the Father, and the Son
and the Holy Spirit
Lord Jesus Christ, bless us today and every day.
Amen.

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A Prayer for Peace

Lord Jesus Christ, our God, who art the Source of life and peace in heaven and on earth, pour out the grace of your peace on a world troubled by war and hatred. Extinguish the differences and enmity between humans and pour into the hearts of all humility, peace, and goodness. Calm the warriors and give them wisdom. Give help to the suffering, protection to the refugees or homeless, comfort to the alienated and sorrowful, and give us all the will and strength to help, with all our hearts, our brothers and sisters who suffer from war.

You said: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Teach us to seek to acquire peace of heart and peace among men and peoples, for, in the heart in which peace is found, there is no longer enmity, love of dominion or fear, but the consolation of the Holy Spirit, love of God and love of our neighbors.

For this we humbly pray to You, O Christ our God, for peace among men in every country, for peace among peoples, and for the welfare of the whole world, that we may live in harmony and may work without hindrance deeds pleasing to You, glorifying the philanthropic love of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.



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To Serve With...



"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
Joshua 24:15

To Serve With...



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"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
Joshua 24:15

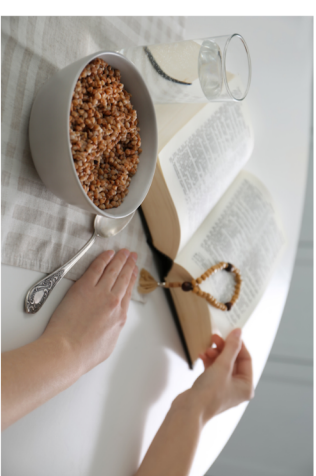
My Parish Family

Lenten Cookbook



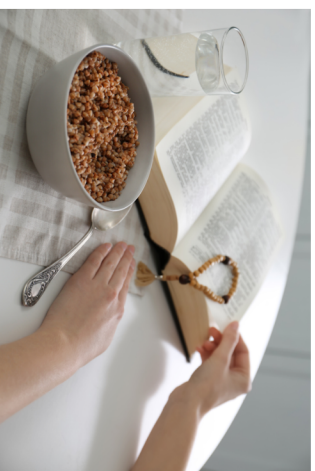
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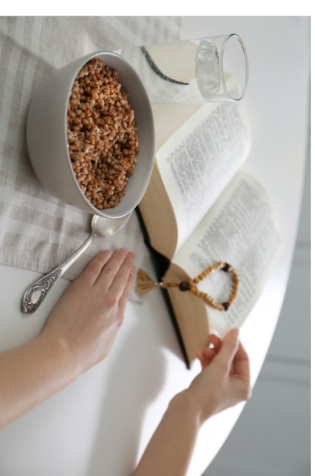
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