



## Ten Guidelines for Retreat Planning

Ten guidelines for successful retreat planning:

1. **Assemble a retreat team to develop a vision for your retreat.** Examples of retreat visions: ‘spiritual renewal’ or ‘a calm, spirit-filled time’.
2. **Seek approval from the appropriate persons in authority** (i.e., pastor, spiritual life committee and parish council). State clearly the purpose, projected income and expenses, and how the retreat fits in with the mission of your community.
3. **Brainstorm to create a catchy theme.** Make an unedited list of ideas, reread them and create your catchy theme (i.e. *Winter Wisdom for Women, Journey through Advent with Mary*).
4. **Let the Scripture verse “many gifts but the same Spirit” guide your planning.** The retreat team includes *Ministry of Mother Sharing* Staff Liaison and people with experience and expertise in 7 areas:
  - Publicity and Marketing – to market the event and to connect with various media.
  - Registration – to handle pre-registration and the registration table at the event.
  - Greeters and Hospitality – must be comfortable welcoming and assisting people.
  - Spirituality discussion and work with Retreat Director on prayer, music and handouts.
  - Food service skills in working with the Knights of Columbus, women’s ministry and staff.
  - Environment – to manage the setup and cleanup with a committee.
  - Financial Manager and Sales Table – to monitor spending and receipts, manage the book sales table, and create a financial report.
5. **Make prayer a central component of the entire planning process.** Use a retreat prayer or write a new one, and distribute it throughout the parish including homebound members. Reserve the chapel or church for specific times (i.e. 11:30 a.m. – noon). Integrate into each meeting a prayer ritual or some reflective prayer (5 minutes).
6. **Contact and work with an approved Retreat Director.** The schedule typically includes registration, a welcome, an opening prayer ritual, candle lighting, presentations, interactive sessions, lunch and a closing liturgical prayer ritual.
7. **Create a beautiful, peaceful environment.** Keep it simple. The hospitality team could create a symbol that could be used throughout the marketing and environment.
8. **Little details can add to the day:**
  - Clean and decorate the restrooms (as many as you need).
  - Provide music during the gathering and at lunchtime.
  - Greet women as they come in and make them feel welcomed.
  - Provide a nametag, colored folder with paper and pencil for note writing.
  - Welcome persons from other denominations or parishes during the initial welcoming.
9. **Seek extra help as needed.** Recruit the Knights of Columbus, Confirmation students and other ministry groups to donate food, help with hospitality, setup, serve lunch and cleanup. When others are involved they tend to market the event to friends and associates and then attend the event.
10. **Solicit feedback from participants and the retreat committee.** Invite each participant to complete a feedback form. Summarize the forms. Have committee review the planning process, the event and the financial reports. Note helpful information from the feedback summary for future retreats.

*Ministry of Mothers Sharing*

*An outreach ministry of the Sisters of St. Benedict of St. Paul’s Monastery*

© St. Paul’s Monastery 2011

