

GOYA Lenten Retreat 2010
"Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me"
Mark 8:34

Overview of the program

The 2010 Metropolis of Atlanta GOYA Lenten Retreat took place at the Diakonia Center during the weekends of February 19-21 and February 26-28. The Lenten Retreat began on Friday evening with registration of the participants, Vespers, an explanation of the rules and expectations of the participants, and icebreakers. On Saturday, the teens started their day with Matins and participated in three separate educational seminars that examined the facts and fiction of our Lord's crucifixion by looking at a variety of Christian films dating as far back as 1905. The teens also experienced a rigorous nature hike around the Diakonia Center as well as small group activities led by Metropolis priests. On Sunday, the teens participated in the Divine Liturgy, actively singing throughout the service, and enjoyed a final fellowship meal before returning to their parishes.

Curriculum

The theme for the 2010 GOYA Lenten Retreat was "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me." These words spoken by Christ in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, call the faithful to deny themselves and follow God. Because the image of the Cross is so prominent in our Lenten preparations and in Holy Week, it became the focus of the retreat. The teens looked at the crucifixion scene from ten different movies. They also viewed factual information about crucifixion as a historical method of torture. The purpose of these viewings was to provide the teens with the means of critically separating fact from fiction in the various cinematic portrayals of Christ's death. Directed instruction was offered before and after each clip, and the teens began to learn the truth that is found in the Gospel. At the end of the day, the teens were separated into smaller groups of middle school and high school students, and these smaller groups had the opportunity to interact with different priests and to ask questions about matters of life and faith. By the end of the retreat, the teens were successfully able to identify inconsistencies in the various film portrayals of the crucifixion, and they learned more about the bible. They also identified a number of burdens and struggles teenagers are facing today and how Jesus Christ can help them take up their crosses.

List of movies (in order of presentation)

- The Life and Passion of Christ (1905)
- From the Manger to the Cross (1912)
- King of Kings (1927)
- King of Kings (1961)
- The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965)
- Jesus of Nazareth (1977)
- Jesus Christ Superstar (1973)
- *Life of Brian (1979)

- *The Last Temptation of Christ (1988)
- *The Passion of the Christ (2004)
- The History Channel: Crucifixion (supplied factual and medical information; used throughout the retreat in between clips)

**These movies are rated R and considered controversial because of their subject matter and use of violence. During the GOYA Lenten Retreat, only the crucifixion scenes were shown and not the entire films.*

***All of these films are available through Netflix.*

Adapting for use in the parish

The GOYA Lenten Retreat curriculum can be easily adapted for use in the parish. DVDs can be acquired through Netflix or other online retailers, and the crucifixion scenes can be shown in any order. An easy way to do this would be to show one scene from a silent film, one scene from a color film (I recommend Jesus of Nazareth), and the crucifixion scene from The Passion of the Christ. The clergy or lay leaders could provide factual and biblical information in between these films and lead a discussion. The Passion of the Christ is a difficult film to watch, but it does lead to a lot of discussion about why extreme violence was used to connect Christ to a modern audience. Many teens understood that they are saturated with images of violence on a daily basis, and the use of extreme violence in The Passion of the Christ was used to provoke an emotional reaction. If possible, supplementing this discussion with portions of the History Channel's documentary on the crucifixion, especially the parts about scourging and asphyxiation, will help teens understand the truth about Roman crucifixion.

Icebreakers

Here is a list of the icebreakers used during the first night of the retreat.

#1 The Best Game

Supplies – The Best Game list

- Arrange everyone into small groups (minimum of 3 per group)
- The facilitator will announce a category (example "Tallest Thumb")
- The groups select one person to represent their team. This person from each group comes forward.
- The judges determine who is the "best" of the category, and that group is the winner.

The Best Game List

1. The tallest...thumb
2. The fastest...crab walker
3. The highest...jumper
4. The fastest...alphabet song singer
5. The fastest...alphabet backwards
6. The smallest...shoe size

7. The farthest...length to throw a paper airplane
8. The largest...bubble to blow with chewing gum
9. The longest...hair
10. The fastest...bible passage finder
11. The largest...cross necklace
12. The loudest...screamer
13. The longest...sustained note without taking a breath
14. The best...fish face
15. The best...animal impression
16. The loudest...whistler
17. The most...hops on one leg
18. The best...cartwheel
19. The longest...fingernails
20. The longest...toenails
21. The best...impression of a famous person
22. The lowest...limbo
23. The most...bat spins
24. The most...coins in their pocket
25. The most...pushups
26. The highest...voice
27. The lowest...voice
28. The best...cartoon voice

#2 Project Runway

Supplies – 1 roll of toilet paper, 1 roll of aluminum foil, and 1 roll of masking tape per group.

- Arrange everyone into teams
- Each team selects a volunteer from the group
- The teams have 15 minutes to create a costume made out of toilet paper, aluminum foil, and masking tape.
- After 10 minutes, the groups have to present their creation on a fashion show runway.
- The judges will decide the winner.

**This game was very popular with teenage girls, and the boys were quick to volunteer to be the models.*