



A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group • 40-50 min.
Designed for Youth

Leader: This is a special winter retreat that will help us to explore the theme, "Embracing Grace in Winter."

Winter is a time of stillness, reflection, and renewal. As we gather to increase our faith and embrace the grace that God offers us in this season.

Learning Grace

All: Dear Lord, as we gather and prepare for this retreat and the winter season, we ask for Your grace to guide us. Help us to open our hearts to the stillness and beauty of winter, and to find peace and renewal in Your presence. Amen.

Reader 1: We all know what winter is, but what about grace. There's a special gift called "God's grace." This is something that we believe in and it's really important. Imagine grace as a beautiful, invisible hug from God that helps us in our everyday lives.

God's grace is like a superpower that God gives us. It's not something we can see or touch, but we can feel it in our hearts. Grace helps us to do good things and make the right choices. It's like a gentle guide that leads us toward being the best versions of ourselves.

Reader 2: How do we receive God's grace? God gives us grace because He loves us very much. We receive this grace in special ways, like:

- ❖ Baptism: When we are baptized, we receive God's grace to help us start our journey as a member of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ Praying: When we pray, we open our hearts to God, and this helps us receive more grace.
- ❖ Sacraments: There are special ceremonies that we have in church, called sacraments, like Communion and Confirmation, where we receive God's grace in a special way.

Reader 3: Why is God's grace important? God's grace is important because it helps us love others and be kind. It gives us strength to do what is right, even when things are hard. Think of it like a flashlight that helps us find our way in the dark. With grace, we can make good choices and be happy.

How Can We Show Gratitude for God's Grace? We can show we are thankful for God's grace by:

- ❖ Being kind to others: When we share and help, we are using God's grace to spread love.
- ❖ Praying: Saying thank you to God through prayer is a great way to show we appreciate His grace.
- ❖ Following Jesus' example: Jesus taught us to love and forgive. When we do this, we are using God's grace wisely.

Reader 4: Remember, God's grace is a wonderful gift that helps us grow and become loving, kind people. It is always with us, and we can always ask God for more when we need it. (Encourage each member of your family to answer the question below.)

- ❖ What do you think of God's grace?

Embracing Grace in Winter

Leader: We are going to make a Gratitude Snowflake. This activity will help us to develop a deeper appreciation for the blessings we experience and adopt a sense of gratitude and connection to God. It's a simple 10-minute craft that combines our creativity with meditation, and appreciation for the season. (Organize and facilitate the craft.)

Materials Needed —

- ❖ White paper, scissors, crayons and/or colored pencils. string or ribbon and a hole punch.

Instructions:

1. **Create Paper Snowflakes** — Begin by folding a piece of white paper in half, then in half again to form a smaller square. Cut out shapes along the folds to create a snowflake pattern. Each snowflake is unique, just like God's grace in our lives.
2. **Reflect on Blessings** — Once the snowflakes are made, encourage each child to think about something they are grateful for or a blessing they have received. This could be a family member, a friend, a favorite activity, or a kind gesture they've experienced.
3. **Write Gratitude Messages** — Using crayons or colored pencils, have the kids write their gratitude messages on the snowflakes. They can use vibrant colors to make their messages stand out and reflect the joy of gratitude.
4. **Share and Display** — Gather the group and have each child share their gratitude message with others. This practice not only reinforces the concept of gratitude but also fosters a sense of community and shared appreciation.
5. **Decorate** — Use a hole punch to make a small hole at the top of each snowflake. Thread a piece of string or ribbon through the hole and hang the snowflakes around the room or on a tree branch. This visual display serves as a reminder of God's grace and the blessings in their lives throughout the winter season.

Meditation:

After the activity, spend a few moments discussing how recognizing and sharing our blessings can help us feel closer to God and more connected to one another. Encourage everyone to continue looking for God's grace in their everyday lives, especially during the winter months.

May this activity help to develop a deeper appreciation for the blessings we experience and adopt a sense of gratitude and connection to God.

Planting Seeds of Grace

Reader 5: Before we end this retreat, we're going to plant symbolic seeds of grace. Write down, on the lines below, one way you plan to embrace God's grace this winter. Keep your note as a reminder to nurture this commitment throughout winter.

All: Dear Lord, thank You for the gift of winter and the lessons it brings. May we carry grace into our lives, letting it warm our hearts and inspire all that we do. Help us to always seek You. Amen.
