

St. Margaret Mary Parish Youth Ministry Handbook

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Overview

St. Margaret Mary Parish has strongly supported the youth of our parish through the development of a comprehensive youth ministry program over the last several decades. In an effort to nurture a more systematic and consistent approach, we have combined the Junior High and Senior High programs under one office. This document should provide you with a thorough understanding of the scope of this program and its expectations. SMMP Youth Ministry is supported by two administrative assistants, Arlene Serio and Mary Costello. For any assistance or questions, please contact the Director of Youth Ministry or Religious Education Office.

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Vision

The Catholic bishops of the United States defined Catholic youth ministry in the 1997 document *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (RTV). This document provides a structure for the ministry as well as a language, theology, and pastoral approach for responding to the personal and spiritual needs of today's adolescents.

Three interdependent and equally important goals guide the Church's ministry with adolescents. These goals state what it means for the Catholic community to respond to the needs of young people and to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community. They express the Church's focus for ministry with adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing the programs, activities, and strategies to reach these goals.

Goal 1: To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.

Goal 2: To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.

Goal 3: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Ministry with adolescents utilizes each of the Church's ministries—advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship—in an integrated approach to achieve the three goals for ministry. They provide a structure for the Church's

ministry with adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing programs, activities, and strategies for each component. Each ministry component supports and enhances the others. A comprehensive ministry with adolescents provides balance among all eight components.

Advocacy

Catechesis

Community Life

Evangelization

Justice and Service

Leadership Development

Pastoral Care

Prayer and Worship

For the complete text of *Renewing the Vision*, please visit the following link:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/young-adults/renewing-the-vision.cfm>

Goals

Through the help of the parish staff, parents, adult volunteers and peer leaders, we hope to respond to the needs of our youth and their families and impassion their earnest desire to know our God and participate in the life that God calls us to.

Program Descriptions

Threads

Our parish hopes that all families will embrace lifelong catechesis in a variety of forms. We support intergenerational faith formation through our Threads nights which take place several times throughout the year. These family focused nights usually include a meal, prayer, and whole community catechesis. All ages are welcome to join us in prayer. This year they will take place on October 26th, December 14th, and February 22nd. We hope to see you there!

Junior High Catechesis

We invite all 6th, 7th, and 8th graders into our weekly sessions to address four areas of their development – Prayer, Community, Service, and Faith Learning. Small groups spend time integrating their faith into their everyday lives through prayer and discussion. They are facilitated by parents and young adults who have a passionate faith and know how to create a safe environment for our youth to grow. Groups meet

on Mondays at 4:30 and 7:00 pm and Wednesdays at 4:30 pm. Please see the curriculum section for more information on the resources used.

Junior High Retreat

We will be hosting a one day retreat for all junior high youth facilitated by peer leaders and catechists. Throughout the day, we will be learning about scripture, playing games and sharing prayer.

Just5Days

Just5Days is a five-day experience of service, hands-on learning activities, prayer and liturgy, and community building designed for groups of middle school youth and their adult leaders from Catholic parishes and schools. The Just5Days program is designed to meet their developmental needs—with engaging learning, the right amount of sleep, time for play, service that is appropriate to their age and skill, and prayer and faith conversations that will capture their imagination and their heart. This year we will be going to Springfield, IL the week of July 15-19.

High School Catechesis (Quest)

Freshman and sophomores in high school have an opportunity to join faith sharing communities that meet twice a month in a parishioner's home. Their primary focus is on catechesis but they will spend time sophomore year preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Throughout the year, they will also be participating in service learning and prayer experiences.

Young Neighbors In Action (YNIA)

YNIA is a weeklong service learning experience that balances Scripture and Catholic social teaching, direct service, and a justice consciousness. High school teens will have the opportunity to work in community organizations to understand how social change takes place at many different levels. During the week, they will be challenged by our Church's teachings about rights and responsibilities, solidarity, and caring for creation. They will also spend time with other parish groups in dialogue and prayer, making friends from across the country. We will be going to the Winnebago Native American Reservation in Omaha, NE the week of July 21-27.

Clintwood Young Adult Trip

For the last fifteen years, SMMP has worked with Sister Jean to offer invaluable services to the community of Clintwood, VA. These adults will spend a week repairing homes and immersing themselves in the Appalachian culture. This trip is open to graduated seniors and older adults and will take place the week of June 22-29.

Alpha Retreat "Fear Not; I am With You"

Our freshman retreat, ALPHA, focuses on the teen's current faith level and relates how our daily decisions can affect our relationship with God. Trust, loving others, accepting ourselves, and other areas are explored. This retreat is facilitated by the Peer Leader group and is typically held in November.

Spirit Retreat “Using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit”

This is the final preparation before sophomores receive the sacrament of Confirmation. It is held during the month of February or March. The SPIRIT retreat is mandatory for all teens making their Confirmation and takes place during sophomore year.

Peer Retreat

Our Peer Leaders will head out to Dixon Valley Retreat Center to develop their leadership and communication skills while forming a community founded in faith. This weekend away will help them to prepare for the retreats and activities that they will be facilitating throughout the year.

Junior/Senior Retreat

Just as the school year seems like it will never end, we take time to retreat to Dixon Valley for a weekend of prayer and reflection for our juniors and seniors. This retreat is facilitated by the Peer Leader adult volunteers. The theme will alternate every year between Journey and Search.

Youth Center

Tuesday nights are a great time to take a break from the week and come hang out with your church friends. Bring snacks, homework, or your new favorite games to share with everyone. There are plenty of couches and even a Wii, if you need some fierce bowling competition. Doors open at 6:30 pm to all high school youth and don't close till 8:30.

Peer Leaders

It's all about discipleship and this group of dedicated teens know how to do it right. This ministry is open to all sophomores, juniors and seniors and meetings are twice a month during the school year on Sunday mornings. Peer leaders will explore faith issues and develop their leadership skills in preparation for a lifetime of discipleship.

Youth Leadership Conference (YLC)

The Diocese of Joliet hosts an annual conference to train young people to carry on the mission of the Gospel. The weekend of June 28-30, over 700 teens will take over Lewis University for workshops, speakers, and prayer experiences that will bring them closer to each other and our God.

Calendar

Our calendar will be emailed to all youth ministry families as updates are made and will be posted on our website. It is the parents' responsibility to know when and where events are. We are hoping to incorporate an online calendar that you are able to subscribe to also.

Registration

Registration for all activities should take place with the Youth Ministry Office. Forms and information can also be found on our website. Youth will be placed in their groups as registrations are received and as catechists are available. Groups must have a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 participants. Classes will only be open for enrollment if there is a catechist available and students will be placed on a waiting list until more classes can be made available. We will not accept requests for placement with other students or catechists but will take into account any special needs or family situations. Requests for classes based on carpool needs should be made as soon as possible and all applicable registration forms should be submitted together. Please contact us with any questions or special considerations prior to the start of class. Changes to classes after the catechesis year begins will only be made in extreme circumstances and after consultation with the Director of Youth Ministry.

Fees

Tuition for Catechesis and Peer Leader for 2012-2013 is \$155.00 for one child, \$215.00 for two children, and \$275.00 for three or more children. There is also a Sacrament fee of \$30.00 for each Sacrament that is celebrated during the year – 1st Reconciliation, 1st Communion and Confirmation.

Special event registration fees will be determined on an event specific basis. Tuition, sacrament, and registration fees should be paid at the time of registration. If you need financial assistance, please contact us as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Communication Expectations

Our primary method of communication will be through email and our website – www.smmp.com. It is your responsibility to ensure that we have a correct and active email address for you and your family. You should also confirm that our email address (dlawler@smmp.com) has been added to your address book or safe list and does not end up in your spam folder.

Family Involvement

“Contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misconceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescent is their parents.” (National Study of Youth and Religion).

We encourage:

- Parents to take an active role in the participation of their teen.
- Parents to support the decision of their son/daughter to enter the preparation process.
- Parents to share their own faith experiences with him/her.
- Participation in all meetings designed specifically for parents.
- Participation in all major liturgical celebrations as well as weekly Mass attendance.
- A home environment that is conducive to the faith development of the youth.
- Parents to encourage youth to continue their involvement in the church/parish/youth ministry.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on the faith formation publications of Our Sunday Visitor. The junior high catechesis program continues with the Call to Faith Thematic Series which is spread out over three years of classes.

Our high school catechesis program continues with OSV's online program – Call to Discipleship. Teens will continue to explore seven different themes including Revelation, The Trinity, Jesus Christ, The Church, Morality, Kingdom of God and Sacraments.

All of our programs will be supplemented by the Center for Ministry Development's online subscription – Youth Ministry Access which provides valuable resources to all of our adult volunteers.

Sacramental Preparation

During the two year process the teens will be prepared for Confirmation, which is received at the end of sophomore year, provided the teen has been in the program from the beginning of freshman year.

Requirements for Confirmation:

- A willingness by the teen to be confirmed documented by a reflection paper.
- 20 hours of service learning (documented) both freshman and sophomore year.
- Regular attendance at QUEST meetings (3 absences allowed per year).
- Attendance at both the ALPHA and SPIRIT retreats.

Service Opportunities

The Youth Ministry office offers a “Dupage Service Booklet” that lists many places that teens may call on to do service work. There are contacts listed in this booklet to answer any questions you may have. This booklet may be found on the Youth Ministry table in the Parish Center.

Some of our service suggestions include:

- Harvest Sunday
- Feed My Starving Children
- P.A.D.S
- Service Days
- Summer Service Trips
- Sleep-in-a-box

Preparation for sacraments other than Confirmation will be done on a case by case basis. The Diocese of Joliet stipulates that you must be enrolled in the parish catechesis program for at least two years prior to receiving a sacrament.

Behavior and Consequences

All youth participants and their families should conduct themselves in accord with Christian values. We are called to act with respect towards ourselves, our neighbor, and our environment. This includes wearing appropriate dress to all parish events. Any participant that treats another participant or adult in an inappropriate way will first be warned by the adult volunteers, then meet with the Director of Youth Ministry and their parents to resolve the issues.

Confidentiality and Referral Process

In order to create a safe environment for conversations, adult volunteers are encouraged to establish an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality relating to their discussions. Youth are asked to not share information about other peoples' experiences outside of their group. We encourage them to discuss their personal faith journey with their parents in an appropriate way. In the case that sensitive information is shared with an adult leader that implies that a youth may be harmed, may be harming someone else, or may be harming themselves, the Director of Youth Ministry will be consulted and a referral will be made to the appropriate professional.

Absences

All participants are expected to arrive on time and stay for the duration of all youth ministry events. If needed, alternate plans must be made with the Director of Youth Ministry prior to the start of any event and written permission must be obtained. Any absences will be reported to the parents and records will be kept in the youth ministry office. Excused absences include situations such as family emergencies and illness but not sports or other extracurricular activities. After the second unexcused absence, parents will be contacted and we will discuss their continued participation in our programs.

Medical Care

All St. Margaret Mary employees and volunteers are not trained to deal with medical issues and will contact the appropriate medical professionals to deal with any medical needs, including dispensation of medication. Parents should have signed a medical waiver in their registration forms and permission slips. All attempts will be made to contact them in case of emergency.

Emergency Response

In case of an emergency (tornado, etc.), no child will be allowed to leave the building without a parent or a designated adult picking him/her up. We will follow our emergency response plan to ensure that all youth are safe until parents arrive.

In case of emergency closing due to snow or other inclement weather, please check the website:

EMERGENCYCLOSINGCENTER.COM

We will also e-mail and ask catechists to phone parents of students in their class.

Videotaping and Still Photographs

On the Registration Form there was an opportunity for parents to OPT OUT of giving authorization for your child to be videotaped and/or photographed. If you signed the OPT OUT section, please inform your youth so they are aware that they are not allowed to be in any picture. We will try our best to exclude them in group photos, but it will be difficult unless the child knows beforehand that they should not be in the picture.

Transportation

Driving young people in a personal vehicle with drivers other than their own parents is strongly discouraged. However, in exceptional circumstances, this might be the only option. The catechetical leader must approve each instance. In addition, the following is required:

- A completed *General Permission Form (Appendix 12)* and *Medical Permission Form (Appendix 13)* for each participant on each transportation date
- Driver who is at least 25 years old
- Driver who has current valid Illinois State Driver's License
- Vehicle liability insurance valid for the date of transportation

- A copy of the driver's license and current insurance card needs to be on file in the parish. (*Appendix 25 -Driver Information Form*)

Parents sometimes request that their child be allowed to drive him/herself to and from an event. If this happens, parishes are asked to consider the following:

- It is strongly recommended that this practice be avoided if at all possible.
- In extraordinary cases, the director/coordinator of junior high or high school ministry may allow a minor to drive him/herself at the parent's request.
- In this case, the director/coordinator must have a conversation with the parents to confirm their intent for their child to drive.
- Once confirmed, parents should sign a statement indicating their request for their child to drive.
- Minors shall only be allowed to drive with signed parental permission and the restriction that they may not have other minors in the vehicle with them.

Arrival & Dismissal

All youth should enter and exit the building at the Administration Door - Green Trails Lower Level. It is best and safest if the parents would come to the Parish Center to meet their youth and take them to their cars but we understand that is not always possible. If you are unable to come into the building, please make arrangements with your youth for appropriate transportation home. St. Margaret Mary and its volunteers are not responsible for the safety and well-being of youth once they leave the building.

Evaluation

Throughout the year, we will be evaluating all of our programs through written and online surveys. It is imperative that youth, their parents and adult volunteers participate in these evaluations openly and honestly. We can only continue to grow through your involvement.

Adult Volunteers

All adult volunteers must meet diocesan standards and expectations including Safe Environment training, catechist formation, and compliance with all diocesan and parish guidelines.