

Office of
Youth
Ministry

Newsnotes

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June, July

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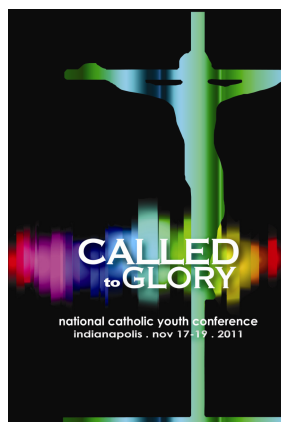
If you have articles, web sites, information, questions, or observations about our newsletter feel free to contact us at
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NCYC Indianapolis

Greetings from your conference co-coordinator, bringing you good news from the Office of Youth Ministry about the up and coming **National Catholic Youth Conference**, to be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, on **November 17-19, 2011**.

This year we have decided to do things a little differently. We will take care of Conference business for you as it pertains to hotel accommodations, souvenirs, group gatherings and meals, and registration. However, because we cannot negotiate a better price with the airlines by bargaining for group rates, we have decided that it is more economically feasible for you to book your own reservations on the internet. You can save booking fees, and because you are working with smaller numbers, you have a better chance of getting better rates and times. It will also allow you to utilize credit cards which you have not been able to do in the past. Additionally, if you have parishioners who will donate frequent flyer miles to your cause, you can utilize them if you are not locked into a specific airline. We have had parishes that actively campaigned for those gifts and have been able to fly their delegation for free. You may also have individuals who work for an airline and are related to members of your group. Overall, we feel that this method will give you

more flexibility in dealing with the airlines. We will by request, however, handle the airline booking for you.



There are a couple of restrictions, however, that will go with your freedom of choice. **No teen will be allowed to fly without an adult chaperone.** Your group should attempt to fly together. I will need a copy of all flight arrangements and your group should plan to arrive by 5:00 p.m., on the day of the conference. The opening session begins at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 17th. Registration materials will await you at the hotel. Because of added airline fees, encourage everyone to bring one carry on bag and save the luggage charge. Hotel rooms will have hair dryers and they won't be going back and forth to the hotel to change clothes. This promises, as always, to be a

wonderful experience for you and your teens. You will note that chances are **your teens will miss two days of school** – Thursday and Friday. They should be guided in proper procedure for early discussion with their principal and teachers. If they are involved with athletics and playoff games, it would not be advisable for them to sign up for this conference.

To date, this will be the most expensive trip for us because of the economic climate in our country, so it will take creative planning on your part to make this happen. **The cost of the trip, not including airfare, will be \$475 per person.** That amount will be due over a period of three months, June, July, and August.

Adults should also take the opportunity to apply for the Archbishop's Appeal financial support for their registration fee. The form for this is on line: www.archsa.org/oym

As always, I stand ready to aid you in any way that I can by suggestion or assistance. Do not hesitate to involve your teens, their parents, and your parish friends in your endeavor. The experience of this faith-filled conference is well worth the effort and can really be a life-changer for the teens.

Click [HERE](#) for more info

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Contrary to popular belief in youth ministry: By Mark Hart Feb 2, 2011

1. Big numbers don't mean you're doing good youth ministry.

Some parishes draw big groups strictly because of parish demographics, others because of the younger ministry programs feeding it. Still others pull numbers because there are no other viable or relevant ministries in neighboring parishes. Now, don't get me wrong. Numbers can reveal things – like how you are doing in outreach, the quality of programming and if your evangelization efforts are effective. Strictly speaking, though, numbers tell you about bodies...not necessarily souls.

2. High school teens don't just want to be entertained.

Teens care about truth and living a moral life. They get enough entertainment – and it's higher-budget and higher quality than a rural or suburban parish can compete with. If the Gospel bores a teen, that's not God's fault – it's ours. How we communicate the truth — in its revelatory fullness — with passion and joy, refusing to water it down...that engages a young soul for the long haul.

3. Middle school teens are capable of amazing depth.

Never sell middle-schoolers short. They might resemble sugared-up pinballs bouncing off the walls of the parish hall, but they can be still; they can pray! Never write them off as spiritually immature or shallow. They need to be engaged differently...but they do need to be engaged.

4. Diocesan Directors are not your enemy.

These men and women are expected to serve the Bishop, every parish (with varying needs and existing support structures) and every youth minister and catechist in the diocese with little or no staff, budget or support. No, they're not perfect, but neither are you. Offering to pray with them and asking how you can help will quickly change your perspective...and, often, your appreciation.

4. Core Teams need discipline, but not a disciplinarian.

There's usually at least one Core Member at every parish who believes it's his role to be "the enforcer". He's the one who feels the need to be the disciplinarian of the group, ready to "lay the smack-down" on any teen that even remotely steps out of line. Part mall cop, part warden, these guys demand that the teens learn respect without ever offering respect to the teens, first.

5. Youth ministry can work on a small budget.

You don't need a lot of money to do solid youth ministry; you need humble, prayerful hearts and a unified vision. The more people working toward a common goal, the more support will come. God doesn't set you up to fail. He will pick up the tab. He pays for what He orders. Pray before you pay and God will reveal where to spend your money...or who to ask for more.

6. Parents should never be viewed as a problem.

Read the Catechism #2223. If they are failing as primary catechists, then help them; don't blame them. Trade in the lamentations for affirmations (of how challenging it is to raise holy teens in this culture)...and invitations (of how they can get more involved in what you are doing).

Never sell middle-schoolers short. They might resemble sugared-up pinballs bouncing off the walls of the parish hall, but they can be still; they can pray!

7. Just because a parish music group can make a CD doesn't mean they should.

The digital age has made it really easy to cut a CD, but having Garage Band doesn't keep some music groups from sounding like a garage band (sorry if that sounded harsh but the point needs to be made). Often when the music ministry at a parish records their own CD, the line between prayer and performance can quickly blur. I'm not saying it should never happen, but if it's something the Lord wills, He'll make it happen. We can't lose sight of the ministry aspect of the music. The group should be made up of souls who want to serve God invisibly...not (American) Idolically.

8. Fewer Core Members can be a good thing.

Better to have a few dedicated souls than several warm bodies. Nothing causes

interior division faster than when the minority sees themselves doing a majority of the work. If 30% of your Core does 90% of the work, do the math and challenge the rest to step up...or invite them to step down.

9. Bishops are smarter than people give them credit for.

I love sharing a meal with Bishops – you really get to know the guy beneath the mitre. These are some of the funniest, holiest and smartest men I've met; and while I don't always agree with what some of them say or do, not even our first Bishops were perfect (Mt. 26:45-56). Still, there is a grace that comes with that Apostolic office. Pray for your Bishop. Encourage your teens to pray for him. Trust in the Lord's providence and the Church's wisdom. God honors prayerful hearts...and obedient ones.

10. You're not as bad at youth ministry as you fear (and you might not be as good as you think).

The enemy wants you to feel ineffective, unsupported, overstressed and underpaid. While you might be any or all of these things at different times, you cannot let that spirit of fear dictate your ministry efforts. If you take in all the positive evaluations, you have to read all the bad ones too, so don't read 'em...it will leave you more time to read Scripture.

11. A parish cannot afford to go without youth ministry.

Many people believe that parishes are dying for lack of young priests. A wider perspective reveals that parishes are dying, literally, because the young families are abandoning their cradle Catholic roots for nondenominational "fruit". If we want God's priests to hear His call, we have to have opportunities (youth ministry) for them to do so. Youth ministry is not an expense – it's an investment. A parish that cuts this byline from its budget is draping the pall over itself...some might even say that to do so is "a-pall-ing." And finally, no, I don't think I have all the answers. I have fallen into the trap on just about every one of these.

Contrary to popular belief...the one given the microphone or the blog is usually the one who doesn't have all the answers but is open to asking the difficult questions.

Thank you for what you do for the Kingdom of God, which, contrary to popular (secular) belief, does exist on earth and is seen in His Church.

“What? You don't get 500 teens every Sunday at Life Night?”

By **Angela Hamrick** | March 31, 2011

I would guess that all of us have experienced this little monster at some point during ministry. The last time I spotted it was at a gathering of youth ministers in my area. People were sharing what was going on in their parishes, and what new projects they were working on. The ideas were creative and exciting. And all of a sudden, it showed up: ministry envy. At first I thought how cool it was that all these other youth ministers were doing these things with their youth, but then jealousy started to put its foot in the door of my mind. Why am I not creative like that? Why can't I have teens sign up for events like that? Why don't I want to sleep in a cardboard box to raise awareness for the homeless? Why don't I have the energy to do back-to-back retreat weekends?

As I heard these thoughts in my head, I realized I had to put an immediate stop to them. It was relatively easy for me that morning to crush the envy monster, but only because I have had lots of practice over the years doing battle with it.

For whatever reason, it can be pretty easy to play the comparison game in ministry. We're looking for affirmation, so we try to measure up to those around us. Sometimes people do this forthrightly, actually declaring how great their ministry—to be able to feel affirmed when the rest of us make remarks laced with jealousy. Sometimes, the envy rises inside ourselves, with those around us completely unaware that it has made its move.

How can we combat ministry envy?

We need to recognize that each of us has different charisms. Because of that, where we each excel in ministry will be different. Also, each of us are at different places in life—whether our age, vocation, experience, and parish make up—and all those factors will also make a difference in the strength of our ministry. Instead of being jealous, we need to celebrate how God has

Why am I not creative like that?
Why can't I have teens sign up for events like that? Why don't I want to sleep in a cardboard box to raise awareness for the homeless?
Why don't I have the energy to do back-to-back retreat weekends?

gifted that other person and encourage them to use their gifts, not tear them down or discourage them because we can't be like them.

At the same time, we need to recognize that we have our own strengths. Usually when the jealousy monster appears, we don't think that the other youth ministers might be jealous of our strengths. We tend to only see our weaknesses, not our gifts. Thus, we can combat the envy by recognizing how God has specifically gifted us, be faithful to whatever He has called us, and, recognize that it is God who has gifted those of whom we might be jealous.

Just as important, we need to re-

member that we are not in competition with each other in ministry. All of us are working for the same goal. Instead of being jealous when someone succeeds, we should be encouraged and excited.

Also, when we hear about great things that others are doing in ministry, we need to view it as an opportunity. Instead of being envious

of their great ideas, we can look on it as a potential idea for our own ministry. Then, instead of walking away feeling deflated, we can walk away feeling excited about the new, potential ideas we have just heard about.

Of course, sometimes the other person is being

proud and trying to make us jealous—not just excitedly sharing. In that case, the best thing to do is to probably pray for them. For whatever reason, they are finding their affirmation and consolation in their ministry, rather than in Christ. Pray that they may come to know how loved they are as one of God's own.

Don't let envy win! If it takes root, it can do some pretty ugly things, taking our ministry off track. Instead of being faithful to what God has called us, we focus on trying to keep up with the parish down the street. So, the next time the envy monster starts to show itself, do your best to quickly shut the door on it.

Schedule of Events

- 9th Baseball Softball coordinators meeting
- 12th—18th San Antonio Neighbors
- 13th Playoff Rosters Due
- 16th Coaches Meeting
- 20th Playoffs Begin
- 28th Youth Serve Training*
- 29th Youth Serve Training*

* go to www.archsa.org/oym for more information

June 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



= youth office event



= CYO event

Do you know how CYO is organized?

The following information can be found in the [CYO Policy and Procedure Manual](#) under Operational and Administrative Procedures. This information is to assist you with working with CYO on any issues that come up in the parish. More information is available on the CYO Archdiocesan website or in the CYO Office.

Parish CYO Athletic Committee (Offices and duties)

President - The President of the CYO parish board leads the committee in seeking children in the parish to register for the CYO sports program, promotes the CYO in the parish, communicates with the parish priest the status of their program, and assists in recruiting coaches and volunteers and is in-charge of the committee meetings. He/she has the responsibility of managing all facets of the parish CYO program, conducts the scheduled meetings, prepares the agenda for the meeting, serves as the primary liaison with the zone officials, the parish priest and the parish community, participates actively as a parish team leader, submits the required reports to the parish office and CYO office, assists in preparing the parish budget, approves the check requests prepared by the treasurer. The president shall not sign any checks or have access to any money of the CYO parish program unless authorized by the parish priest.

Vice President - The Vice President of the CYO parish: assists the president in his duties, and if the president steps down, is removed or resigns this person will assume the president's duties.

Registrar - The registrar: This person registers children in the program sports and works with the president in communicating the sports to their parish, and keeps track of the registered numbers to report to the parish and CYO office. He/she is responsible for registration completion for all teams, checking birth certificates, verifying player eligibility, will complete rosters and submit all documentation to the City, zone and coaches. All registration forms are submitted to the CYO office for approval for roster and scheduling. He/she must have sufficient time to fulfill the registration procedures.

Treasurer - The treasurer: This person processes the money from the registration, uniforms, and fundraisers and he/she forwards their revenue to the parish bookkeeper. This person also tracks all and expenses for the parish and submits check requests to the parish bookkeeper for payments. No treasurer can sign checks unless authorized by the parish priest, all money is held at the parish general account and check requests are made via the parish accountant. A monthly report must be sent to the CYO office of

revenue and expenses per Logos Chart of Accounts along with the checking account statements. He/she produces the parish budget and coordinates the budget with the president, CYO office and athletic director to make sure the CYO program is financially solid.

Athletic Director - The Athletic Director: this position arranges the practice and game sites, umpires, nominates coaches and coordinates with the zone AD for the games and ump/scorekeepers and quality of the practice and game sites and also may work as a Site Coordinator and/or assigns the site coordinators. The AD keeps an inventory of all parish athletic equipment.

Site coordinator - This position stays at the game assigned site and is responsible for: concerns, protest, grievances, crowd control, game starts, game ends, working with umpire on calling due to the weather and are present at the start and the end of the game.

The Parish Minister - The parish minister works closely with the parish priest on bringing Catholic identity to the teams, via retreats, Religious Education, and meetings with the zone minister. Must submit reports monthly on progress (in progress) and must have knowledge of the P&P and the Coach's Handbook.

- 8th Understanding Youth Ministry
- 9th Working with Families and the Community / Growing in Ministry with Youth
- 10th Officers Meetings Pastoral Center
- 11th Life after Confirmation
- 15th Planning Youth Ministry Programs
- 16th Understanding Youth / Working with Groups.
- 20th Spirituality of Coaching
- 22nd Building Community with Youth
- 23rd Evangelizing Youth / Facilitating Learning with Youth
- 25th Millennials: Who are they?
- 27th Transitioning from High school to Young Adult
- 29th Empowering Youth for Justice and Service
- 30th Celebrating Liturgy with Youth/ Praying With Youth

July 2011 Camp ACC

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



= youth office event



= CYO event

From the Director: Summer time is soon upon us- a time to relax, unwind, evaluate and rejuvenate.

I hear laughter! Well that used to be the way that summertime would be in youth ministry. It has now become for many the time to offer outside the box programming and to give youth an experience of Church beyond parish boundaries. What great opportunities! But how about relaxing, unwinding, evaluating, rejuvenating?

As I am still getting settled into the position as Director, I think about all the ideas and goals I have for my new role: bringing in great speakers for the youth spectaculars; developing relationships with youth serving entities within the Archdiocese, regionally and nationally; contacting and connecting with those in parishes who are hired or designated as the coordinator of youth ministry and getting to know the programming that is happening in parishes- catechetical formation and beyond; and supporting those with the responsibility of youth ministry in parishes by suggesting resources, providing training, and encouraging spiritual well being for the person of the minister. I would like to focus on the latter- how you can take time for yourself this **S.U.M.M.E.R.**

Sabbath

“But I work on Sunday!” Well take Saturday for your time to NOT WORK. I understand that it is confusing sometimes to distinguish between our ministry as work or who we are called to be as active practicing Catholics involved at our parish. Sabbath though is not about *doing* but *being*, a resting with God.

Unwind

This happens for everyone differently. I know I always felt better after a program if I evaluated what happened, got those thoughts on paper and could file it away. Otherwise I felt as if a program was left incomplete.

Meditation and Contemplation

How much of your day is spent in silence? With the Blessed Sacrament within feet of some of our offices, can we designate some time in our week to connect to our Lord in adoration? Find a place to sit in quiet for a moment of each day. If you prefer, try journaling.

Experience nature

Take 10 minutes, if you can, to intentionally walk outside for no reason but to be in the presence of God and all that God created. If you cannot spare 10 minutes, make sure that when you are running around you notice the beauty of each day.

Retreat

Get away from the hustle and bustle of every day. Scripturally, we hear of the times when Jesus took time away. You should experience a time of tranquility, reflection and inspiration. If you are coordinating a retreat and do not find the time for these, you need to go on a retreat for yourself!

Happy **S.U. M.M.E.R** and please remember to take care of the person of the minister!

Joan Martinez

Archdiocesan Leadership Team (ALT) We need YOUR Help

Ideally, each parish has youth who form a leadership team in the youth ministry programs. Their insights as to what will attract their peers to participate in events and retreats is invaluable to the planning and execution of successful ministry in the Archdiocese.



To that end we have an Archdiocesan Leadership Team (ALT). It is made up of two representatives from the 14 deaneries of the Archdiocese and representatives from the Catholic high schools. These youth help to plan and run the Youth Spectaculars by previewing speakers, choosing themes, listening to bands, and being present to the youth at the event. They keep the Office of Youth Ministry informed about the latest in youth culture. They even write articles for Today's Catholic newspaper and keep photo records of events.

To represent the youth of the Archdiocese in various capacities and to encourage the Archdiocese to attend to the needs of youth.

Mission and Goals

- To assist in interpreting the needs of youth and to advocate for their concerns to the Archbishop and Archdiocesan officials.
- To represent the youth of the Archdiocese in various capacities and to encourage the Archdiocese to attend to the needs of youth.
- To further Christian growth through involvement in developing programs for youth. This shall be accomplished through observation, discussion, and action.

In the context of youth ministry, the council works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person in the Archdiocese. It also seeks to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community. (Adapted from the USCCB Document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, 1997)



Try this! An Idea from Youth Specialties

Incredible Prizes!

Have you ever wanted to give away some truly exciting prizes for games and giveaways, but couldn't because of the expense? Then this idea is for you!

Go through magazines or catalogs and cut out pictures of some incredible prizes — a new car, a complete stereo system, a trip to Hawaii. You might also cut out a few less-than-incredible prizes as well — a pair of socks, a can of motor oil, a tube of toothpaste. Seal them in envelopes.

Play your games or have your con-



A good idea for the winners of your games

an incredible prize. When the prize is revealed, you can make a big deal out of it — with all the typical

tests; and when it's time for the awarding of prizes, have the winners pick an envelope.

They can't tell what's in it, but it could be a picture of

fanfare, announce, "CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE JUST WON A PICTURE OF A BRAND-NEW FULLY EQUIPPED WINNEBAGO MOTOR HOME!" or "YOU'VE JUST WON A PICTURE OF TWO POUNDS OF DOG BISCUITS!"

Even though no one is really winning anything, the kids will really get into the competition of seeing who can win the most valuable picture, and all it costs the youth group is a few envelopes and some old catalogs.

Note to Pastors:

As a resource to the parishes, the Office of Youth Ministry seeks to connect with youth ministry leaders to provide training and spiritual growth opportunities. Please encourage your youth workers to attend the *Connect* meetings that will be held this upcoming year. Just like the Priest Deanery Meetings, the *Connect* gatherings will offer youth ministry leaders the support of their peers and the shared wisdom of the experienced minister paired with the energetic new minister. Leaders can use these *Connect* gatherings to be exposed to the “best practices” in youth ministry and collaborate with fellow ministers to share resources enabling youth ministry to be stewardship minded.

These upcoming *Connect* trainings are planned: the resources of the OYM, goals and calendar planning; an advent formation and appreciation for youth workers and their pastors; a retreat for youth ministry leaders and their teams; a listening/ brainstorming session of upcoming parish needs and tools to help parish leaders evaluate their programming. Each gathering will include educational training on *Renewing the Vision, a framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* from the USCCB.

Kick Off Connect

As the year begins, the Office of Youth Ministry will gather youth ministry leaders to distribute the OYM calendar and to describe the services available from our office. We will meet in various deaneries and both day and evening times to connect with as many full time, part time and volunteer leaders as possible. Please encourage your youth ministry leaders to attend one of the following:

Wednesday, August 17 at 10AM at the Pastoral Center

Wednesday, August 17 at 6:30PM at the Pastoral Center

Saturday, August 13 at 9AM at St. Mary’s in Fredericksburg

Saturday, August 13 at 3PM at Sacred Heart in Uvalde

Saturday, August 20 at 9AM at St. James in Seguin

Saturday, August 20 at 1PM at St. Andrew in Pleasanton

Advent Reconnect

This is an evening for parish youth ministry teams to be formed and appreciated for the work you and they do for the youth of the Archdiocese. The Office of Youth Ministry will again offer resource sharing. A special guest speaker

will provide reflection and motivation for ministers in attendance. The date to mark on your calendar is: Friday, December 2 at 6:30PM at the Pastoral Center.

Youth Minister’s Retreat

In looking to support the person of the minister, the Office of Youth Ministry invites anyone who ministers to youth to a daylong retreat. This opportunity allows the youth ministry worker to focus on the balance required and often times neglected in daily life. The reflection promises to be one of contemplation and rejuvenation. Join us on Wednesday, January 25, 2012 from 9AM to 4PM at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Helotes. The retreat leader will be Fr. Raul Salas, OMI.

Listening Connect

These gatherings will provide a forum for assessment. What programs went well and which need improvement? The Office of Youth Ministry will provide tools for evaluation and analysis of parish youth ministry as well as an outlet for brainstorming how our office can be a better resource to parishes. Youth Ministry leaders as asked to attend one of the following:

Wednesday, May 2, 2012 at 10AM at the Pastoral Center

Wednesday, May 2, 2012 at 6:30PM at the Pastoral Center

Laying Bricks or Building Cathedrals

Christopher Wren, who designed St. Paul’s Cathedral in London (one of the world’s most beautiful buildings), wrote about the reactions of construction workers who were asked what they were doing. Those workers who were bored and tired responded by saying, “I’m laying bricks” or “I’m carrying stones.”

But one worker, who was mixing cement, seemed cheerful and enthusiastic about his work. Asked what he was doing, he replied, “I’m building a magnificent cathedral.”

Where to Take It from Here... Surveys have found that most people dislike their work. They don’t look forward to going to work; instead they are bored

with it and weary of it. They dream of the state lottery so they never have to work another day in their lives.

God didn’t create us to be bored and unfulfilled by our work.

God didn’t create us to be bored and unfulfilled by our work. He created us to serve him in everything we do, including our work. “Work” in Scripture is another word for “worship.” God wants

us to enjoy our work because our work is what brings glory to God. It’s one way we worship God. Paul wrote that we should be happy in our work because we are not working for men, but for God. (See Colossians 3:23.) In another place he wrote, “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If you look at your work merely as something you do to make a few bucks and survive, you won’t be happy in your work. On the other hand, if you decide to glorify God in your work, you will not only be happy as you work, but God will meet all of your needs as well. From *Hot Illustrations for youth*.



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Youth is the Heart of who we
are

www.archsa.org
/oym

The middle school student is an enigma to many adults, seeming to morph from one day to the next and then back again. In the attempt to bring out the faith of young people and encourage its growth, a number of tools exist to help us to steady the boat and help the student to steer it. As noted in the previous Newsnotes article, four components need our attention as we try to motivate middle schoolers:

- Success – the need for mastery
- Curiosity – the need for understanding
- Originality – the need for self-expression
- Relationships – the need for involvement with others

Having discussed success and curiosity in the last Newsnotes, we move to the last two components.

Originality

Modern educational theory puts a lot of emphasis on “multiple intelligences.” What that means for ministry is that every youth has a unique way of processing information. Some rely on the spoken word, some need to see things in writing, others need to put their “hands

on” a concept, making it more physically evident. In the same way, students express themselves very individually at this age and are quite sensitive to the response to a project or statement they feel is theirs alone. Our job is to recognize the gifts and talents of each child, some of which may not be expressed during the normal course of religious education class or youth ministry activities. A girl may be an excellent quilter or martial artist, or a boy may be an outstanding sculptor or a wilderness explorer. For us to take the time to find out the talents of our youth is essential in their feeling valued within the group, especially if their special gift is not used in the common activities of the group. Further, we need to offer a program that is comprehensive in scope, weaving music, art, drama, and technology with the service, social, and catechetical components. We need to create an audience for each student’s gifts so that their uniqueness can be affirmed. An audience can be just one person who views the work of the youth and encourages it. Middle school students need to feel validated for their differences, not ostracized or ignored, however, it is also essential that they see how the group as a whole can benefit from the expression of their authentic self.

Relationships

Middle School students want to fit in with the large group. They will go to great length to be noticed, and will include even negative behaviors if that does the trick.

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Just a Thought...for Middle School By Barbara Convertino

The “class clown” has found his place, even if it does not advance his status with authority figures, he will risk getting in trouble to get the laugh he wants. In this way he is certain of his role in his community. Our job is to help each youth find a socially acceptable place in the group that reflects their talents and their inherent dignity as a child of God. Dignity is not a common motivator at this age, so we must insist that youth are respectful of each other. While silliness is unavoidable, we need to channel the energy of our groups to validating each other and working together to achieve projects of which youth can be proud.

This component of motivation also serves us well as we program service projects. Middle school kids love to see a visible result of their work and they are empowered when they can reach out to someone else and “change the world.” They seek this adult power and are genuinely proud to have contributed to another’s life. This need allows for programs in which the youth are paired with other groups such as seniors or smaller children in the VBS setting. Look to utilize the energy to interact with others as you set up a schedule of activities and be broad in your choice of groups to partner with.

Motivated youth will be more willing to start activities, participate fully in them, and take pride in their successful completion. Good luck in your efforts to minister to early adolescents, and thank you for committing yourself to this wonderful age group!