



Catholic Church



Sacred Heart Youth Ministry Program

Our mission here at Sacred Heart Life Teen Youth Ministry is to unite teens to Christ by greater knowledge and love through engaging catechesis and witness in deep personal relationships. We believe that Christ passionately desires a relationship with young people. Through this relationship with Jesus, teens can come to a greater understanding of their lives, their purpose, morality, servant leadership and many other fundamentals. As they begin to embark on the quest to define themselves, these qualities, along with the irreplaceable strength that comes from knowing God, will form the building blocks for them to create a solid foundation in their lives. By working as a community we can come to give these teens a faith life which has the power to drive their growth for the rest of their lives.

Within this mission of drawing teens into Christ our parish has decided upon three goals based on the goals set by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. These goals are achieved to varying degrees and in a number of different manners throughout the program we have established. They act as a focus for the overall course of the program, stretched out to cover the entire high school experience of the youth here at Sacred Heart. Because of this broad view, the full integrity of what is accomplished by our individual events can be lost at times. For this reason we have compiled a detailed breakdown of our program and the ways in which it develops these three fundamental goals. Our hope is that by understanding the purpose of everything we do within youth ministry, we may come together as a community, supporting one and other for the sake of our youth. Together we can guide our teens to Christ, the one who says "Let the children come to me." Lk 18:16

Goal 1: To unite our teens to Christ, enabling them to live as faithful and knowledgeable disciples of Him.

"But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?" -Rm 10:14-15

We have been sent to share Christ with the youth. Our aim is to give each teen a real chance of not only knowing Jesus, but of creating a lasting relationship with him. Like the faithful sower, we want to prepare the fields of the youths' hearts and plant the seeds of faith which God can then grow. This is a process which requires instruction and teaching as well as prayer and witness. Christ forms the core of our ministry and so we are constantly striving to find ways to bring the youth to Him. He will be with them long after their short term with us is over. It will be the relationship they build with Him and their habits of discipleship that get them through the good and the bad of life. We are working not to create youth groupers, but faithful Christians.

There are a variety of ways in which our program strives to achieve this first goal. The first and primary method is through our main **Sunday Life Nights**. Built around lessons teaching the fundamentals of our Catholic faith, these meetings are geared towards an educational experience of Christ. Within these nights we use fun and engaging methods to draw

teens into a greater understanding of their faith, one which they will hopefully be able to retain and fall back upon. We also try to offer ideas for realistic application of the things which they learn so that their faith is not just something stored at church, but rather something they truly live out in their day to day lives.

The **Periodic Encounters** also offer a chance, for those who wish to go deeper, to pursue Christ in a more intellectual way. In these programs we will delve deeper into the plethora of resources the Church has to offer her faithful in order to bring them to God. Whether it is a study of the saints, unpacking parts of the Bible, other teachings of the Church, or even a discussion on a good book, these optional events will allow the youth to engage themselves beyond what is offered in the Sunday lessons.

Adoration and Praise nights allow teens to enter into prayer with our Lord. Since prayer forms the basis of any good relationship with God, we want to give our teens as many opportunities to enter into that conversation as well as expose them to the rich variety of ways to pray. As in all skills, pray is learned and advanced through practice and by example. These are the events where real change takes place and God himself can work within His children.

The **Steubenville Summer Conference** is especially pertinent to this goal. The conference both teaches on different subjects of the faith and gives outstanding opportunities for the youth to encounter Christ through prayer and praise. It is an intense weekend, but it has consistently born fruit in the lives of teens, and can be a golden moment for any teen striving to know God better.

Goal 2: To bring the youth into active participation within the Church and this parish community.

“Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and said...Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.” –Jn 17:1, 11

The communal aspect of the faith is vital. We are saved together, and no man is saved completely by himself. If our youth are to truly be formed, they must be integrated into the parish community as real participants. Especially given the heightened value of social encounters within teens’ own perceptions, it is imperative that they be given a community in which they can find acceptance and growth. It is not only the teens who benefit from such a relationship. The parish as a whole gains from every individual who takes a more active and involved role in the faith. As the youth get more excited about the parish community, the community will get more excited as well, which in the end feeds a deepening spiral of excitement for the faith.

The first part of this goal is establishing a close community amongst the teens themselves. If they feel they are in an environment where they are accepted and affirmed in their faith, they will be more confident in living it out amongst their peers. This is why we strive to have **community nights** throughout each semester; in order to build up those bonds which will be incredibly formative during their teenage years. This also gives our adult leaders the

opportunity to build greater rapport with the youth so that they are better able to serve them throughout their time in this ministry.

Occasionally we will hold **fun events, sports outings and exciting trips** simply to build up that community. These are a great way to show the teens they are loved and help them form relationships all while having fun and enjoying their time together. Our **summer trips** are also based on building community, though many of them also have strong roots in educating the teens as well.

The family is the basic building block of community and one of the most crucial cornerstones to a solid life all around. For this reason, we will strive to incorporate several **family nights and family based activities**. Eventually these teens will leave the youth group, but their family remains forever. We want to help foster those essential familial bonds which can never be replaced by any other group.

The teens are also brought into the community through their participation in the liturgical and practical aspects of the church. Thus we will encourage their **attendance at masses** as well as their volunteering for **service projects and liturgical ministries**. The more involved the youth get, the more ownership they will feel. If we truly want them to enter into this community, we must involve them as much as we can.

Goal 3: To aid in forming each individual's whole person, bringing them greater fulfillment in body, mind, and spirit.

“Get wisdom, get insight. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; lover her, and she will guard you” –Pr 4:5-6

What good is a Christian who cannot function in society? God gave wisdom to men so they might be able to use her to develop all aspects of their life. He does not desire a band of slavish robots that excel in nothing other than prayer (not the prayer is a bad thing to excel at). Each teen has a wide range of gifts, talents and opportunities and God wants to use them all. That is why we as a ministry desire to aid in the development of those aspects. We do not simply want to make good Christians; we want to help form good and successful people. Thus while some aspects of our ministry program may seem to move out of the bounds of strict catechesis, ministering to the youth involves more than just the recitation of religious facts.

There are activities within ministry which naturally build character and teach values. These traits flow naturally from the faith. Thus teens will already be growing through our **service projects, retreats, and lessons**. In addition we strive to **promote leadership and responsibility** within our groups and events so that the youth can develop those pivotal skills they will need in the world. Above and beyond this however, we want to encourage them in their activities outside of the youth program.

We want to support them in school. We strive to build our schedules around their school calendar. We will also look for opportunities at times to use the talents and strengths of our adult volunteers and staff to help the youth in their academic lives. We strive to make it to some of their **extracurricular events, to show our support** of them and the things which they are

pursuing outside of just the youth group. There are even occasions when we are able to use the special talents of some of our teens to enhance our own program, allowing them to take a more active role in the creation of **real life projects** that they will be able to see and take pride in each week.

While this synopsis is not entirely exhaustive, it shows the basic layout and purpose for all that we do here at Sacred Heart's Life Teen. Everything is geared towards making the teens of our parish the most holy and successful adults they can be. We hope that you will join us in this endeavor. Together we can affect a real difference in the life of our parish and our world.