

## Best practices for Youth Friendly Masses/Liturgies

Youth Friendly liturgies are vibrant celebrations that speak to young people and challenge them to live as Disciples of Christ. In addition, these liturgies support the full, conscious and active participation of all members of a congregation. Specific components include:

### Engaging Homilies

Effective homilies break open scripture for teens in a meaningful and engaging way. Youth-oriented homilies speak to the teens directly for at least a portion of it; they don't speak at or about teens, but rather with them; teens don't like being preached at, nobody does. Specific strategies incorporated by clergy at the mass include:

- Use of humor
- Use of storytelling
- Use of relevant real-world examples and application.
  - Spend time with teens and utilize the Youth Ministry Coordinator to learn what is relevant to your teens. Culture changes rapidly as does relevance in our modern society.
- Points to consider touching upon include morality, stress, peer pressure, relationships, dating, etc.

### Welcoming Environment

Youth friendly liturgies are welcoming and let youth know that all are invited to celebrate in God's house. Members of the congregation are enthusiastically greeted and embraced to the Eucharistic Celebration. They know they are a valued and important part of the community. Specific strategies include:

- Provide ministers to greet every person before the liturgy
  - Consider using youth ministry leaders and especially other teenagers to greet at Mass.
  - You can also have an information/welcome card that lets visitors or new parishioners know about the youth ministry in the parish and invites new teens to join the parish's youth ministry.
- Inviting teens to sit together, especially if they are at Mass alone can build community and increase participation in Mass.
  - If possible, designate a place to be an unofficial youth section so teens know where exactly to go if they do go to Mass alone.
  - Set a reminder that they are still at Mass and in a prayerful worship space and expect them to act accordingly as teens may tend to talk to each other or act up when they are all together.
- Providing visual aides to encourage the congregation's participation
- Invite youth and all members of the congregation to gather around the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

- Using appropriate use of media at liturgy.
- If the Mass is right before the youth night, an entertaining announcement can be made towards the end of the liturgy to promote the youth night and entice teens who do not normally attend to consider attending.

### Support the mass as liturgical ministers

Teens are encouraged to participate in a leadership role at liturgies, including the opportunity for teens to serve as greeters, lectors, ushers, gift bearers, and Eucharistic Ministers. Specific strategies include:

- Provide opportunities for youth to be trained as liturgical ministers
- Scheduling periodic liturgies at youth events prepared with youth input
- Inviting youth to help prepare the community liturgies.
- Getting your music ministers and priests involved in youth ministry meetings can develop bonds and create more of a personal interest in the youth-oriented liturgy; when the teens know the priests and music ministry team members better, they tend to feel more connected to the liturgy.

### Vibrant Music

Effective use of music at liturgies encourage the active participation of the congregation, while at the same time setting a prayerful and joyous tone in appropriate ways. Music can draw teens in an experience of true worship. Contemporary musical instruments are often used, such as drums and guitars. Specific strategies include:

- Use joyful musicians who pray the music, not just perform and who care about God and the liturgy through their posture during Mass
  - Teens are very observant and aware of whether someone is being authentic or not, especially in matters of faith and worship
  - Teens get excited when the musicians are excited to be worshipping God - faith and joyfulness is contagious
- Inviting youth to participate in musical ensembles
- Encourage assembly singing so that youth feel comfortable adding their voices
- Exploring the use of contemporary accompaniments and focusing on music's sound and pace.
- Teens listen to very well produced and highly engineered music and our musicians have the task of prayerfully leading the congregation in music that can match the interest and appeal that secular music has to teens

### Resources

LifeTeen Youth-Focused Mass: Overview and Direction by Lisa Epperson, December 20, 2009.

Modern Mandates for Music Ministry with Youth by Timothy Westerhaus.

Youth and Sunday Mass: Preparing Youth for Liturgy and Preparing the Liturgy Well. Office of Youth Ministry and Worship, Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1997.