

If you build it they will come...

It is no accident that the first pillar of stewardship is hospitality. It is how we live as disciples. It is born from the love we have for Christ, and from the desire to share His loving kindness with all those we meet.

Hospitality which includes a welcoming atmosphere is absolutely essential for developing Catholic Youth Ministry in a parish. If young people don't feel accepted and appreciated by your faith community, they will not show up. However, if they begin to form friendships and find adults willing to listen to them and mentor them—you will not be able to keep them away. Social connections are so important in the lives of young people today (consider the popularity of social media.) They need connections that are genuine, not just virtual, to support them during these challenging times.



More than just fun and games



As a component of Catholic Youth Ministry, community building is a ministry that is often misunderstood as simply playing games and sports, eating food and having a good time. While all of these elements are found in community building, they are not the reason the component exists. Community building in Catholic Youth Ministry is all about teaching young people how to develop positive relational skills grounded in Christian values. In addition, community building sets the stage for a deeper exploration of faith issues among the young people. In other words, they will not share their deeper faith stirrings and questions, until they feel safe and secure with their peers.

Everything we do points to Christ

Community building involves creating a positive atmosphere. *All* personal encounters will affect the experience of community—good or bad. It involves every interaction and *missed* interaction. It is essential that every leader—adult and youth alike—has some training in how to welcome and include participants in the various activities. Attention should be given to how the room is set up, the authenticity of interactions between youth and adults (youth know right away when you are being insincere), and what kinds of activities are provided to encourage an ever-deepening sharing among participants. For example, activities can be selected which gradually move the participants from general “ice breaking” to more information sharing, and finally to deeper faith sharing.



If you build a strong community, they will come. And **if you form them, they will stay.** There will more on that topic next month.

May God bless your ministry,
Chris Edmonds