

If they stay, they will pray.

Once a young person makes the decision to follow Christ, they experience a thirst for knowing more about Jesus and the Catholic Church. That leads to a desire for catechesis—although they might not use those terms to describe this need. As Bishop Jackels puts it, “We cannot love that which we do not know.” This yearning to learn more about the One who loves them like no other goes hand-in-hand with a response of prayer. The more our minds know, the more our hearts want to know, and that heart knowledge comes through conversations with God---namely prayer.

Eucharist is our source and summit

As Catholics, our highest form of prayer is the Eucharist. This is the “summit and font” of our faith. It is the summit in that everything we do leads up to this high point. It is the font in that it pours forth the graces and strength that we need to accomplish everything else that we do. Doesn't it make sense that our ministry to young people would be structured in a similar way? The focal point that all of our other components point to and flow out of is the Sunday celebration of Mass.

Prayer and worship in Catholic Youth Ministry is not something we “tag” on to the beginning and end of our meetings and gatherings.

Done well, it celebrates and deepens young people's relationship with Jesus Christ. This

component has both communal and personal dimensions. We help young people participate more fully in the sacramental life of the Church, and we help them develop their personal prayer lives.



The reason for our joy!

The prayer style of young people is both beautiful and joyous. Their openness, zeal and sincerity mark their prayers with a refreshing genuineness. And their expressions of prayer, especially through music, are filled with joy. They bring vibrancy to all worship experiences. Inviting young people to prayer is a privilege and a grace for the entire parish. In fact, it is a grace for the world. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI during his 2012 World Youth Day message:



“Christianity is sometimes depicted as a way of life that stifles our freedom and goes against our desires for happiness and joy. But this is far from the truth. Christians are men and women who are truly happy because they know that they are not alone. They know that God is always holding them in His hands. It is up to you, young followers of Christ, to show the world that faith brings happiness and a joy which is true, full and enduring.”

As Christians, we are called to believe in the great mystery of faith, to celebrate it, and to live from it in a vital and personal relationship with our God. This relationship is prayer. As we form our young people in the practice of prayer, we will find the next spontaneous result—**if they pray, they will serve**---which is next month's topic.

May God bless you!
Chris Edmonds