

If you form them, they will stay.

Let's face it: Young people are really busy these days! As a parish outreach, it is important to keep in mind that what you provide for your teens needs to be relevant and worthwhile. For those of us who serve the Church, there is nothing more precious than our relationship with Jesus Christ. This treasure is what prompts us to want to spend our time helping young people "fall in love with God" either for the first time, or as a renewal of an already firmly established faith formation.



Forming disciples is what it's all about

When people ask me the purpose of Catholic Youth Ministry (CYM), I tell them it is the parish's way of *forming young disciples*. That is the ultimate purpose and goal. It is through the Component of Catechesis that young people develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian Community, and increase their knowledge of the core content of the Catholic faith. It is also where they enrich and expand their understanding of the Scriptures and sacred tradition.

Making it worth their while

Catechesis for young people takes into account the total person—mind, heart and will—and presents the content of our faith in ways that relate to real life issues. Young people are looking for reliable road maps to navigate this crazy world. It is through the Component of Catechesis that we can form them in a faith that will equip them for the rest of their lives. If the catechesis is timely, if it engages their religious imaginations, if it speaks to the silent longings of their hearts—then it will be deemed worthy of their time and attention. And once they understand that those needs are being met, they will want to stay for more.



Will our faith have children?

Today's young people tend to "vote with their feet" and they are leaving the church in increasing numbers. What will help them to stay? Studies have shown that parents play a huge role in influencing the faith practices of their children. Another strong factor is in—you guessed it--- meaningful faith formation! From Carol Lytch in her book *Choosing Church: What Makes a Difference for Teens*:



"...teens with the most consistent exposure to the environment of the church—especially in the areas of church attendance, praying/Bible reading and knowledge of the tradition—were the most likely to remain in the tradition. When this is coupled with meaningful religious experiences the degree of religious loyalty increases even more."

Faith formation is at the very heart of Catholic Youth Ministry. As we continue to develop young Christian disciples, we will find them yearning for deeper ways to express themselves in prayer. It follows then, that **if they stay, they will pray**. That is our topic next month.

May God bless you!
Chris Edmonds