

BLOG

Some Parishes . . .

By **Randy Raus** | OCTOBER 2, 2012

In my 24 years of being in and around Catholic youth ministry in parishes around the world, I've observed that:

- Some parishes don't really make reaching out to youth a main priority, opting for the "they will come back once married for the Sacraments plan." (Statistics no longer support this theory.)
- Some parishes wish they had more teens attending Mass, but do nothing to make their Liturgies youth friendly.
- Some parishes don't think they will find volunteers to work with teens so they stick with a solo minister model that often collapses when the youth minister moves on. (The average youth minister stays at a parish less than 2 years citing lack of support as a key reason for leaving.)
- Some parishes are afraid that if they focus more on the teens that the other groups in the parish will be upset, so they "tone down" things for youth.
- Some parishes see the teens not as a vital part of the parish, but merely as free labor to help with the parish picnic, stuff bulletins, and stack chairs.
- Some parishes are afraid of chasing teens away by being "too spiritual," so they end up making the primary programming mostly fun events and the teachings become "Catholic lite." (Teens actually want more not less depth.)
- Some parishes don't place emphasis on reaching out to the teens who are registered but aren't involved at the parish. (On average teens need to be invited 5 times or more before they will say yes and attend an event.)
- Some parishes aren't intentional about challenging young people to discern a religious vocation. (Most Seminarians cite the fact that someone was bold and asked them to consider the priesthood as the key reason they are now in the Seminary.)

- Some parishes don't emphasize a Eucharist centered youth ministry.
- Some parishes place too little value on relational ministry with teens. (Teens are relational in nature, if the Church doesn't foster relationships with teens, they will find relationships elsewhere.)
- Some parishes keep facility usage as a roadblock to the teens rather than creating a welcoming space.
- Some parishes don't send teens to camps, conferences, and mission trips thinking that the teens can't afford them. (Actually, week long experiences are amazing conversion engines for teens. Once families see the transformation, they are willing to support sending teens.)

Fortunately your parish is not like some parishes! Or is it?