

Good afternoon parents,

I wanted to take the time to inform you about what our high school youth ministry curriculum will look like this semester. This semester, we will be discussing St. John Paul II's "Theology of the Body", and what the church teaches, and why, about major topics concerning the body such as self-identity & dignity, pornography, love & relationships (including how to identify "red flags" of unhealthy relationships), contraception vs. Natural Family Planning, premarital sex, battling addiction, same-sex relationships & the LGBTQIA+ community, divorce, clerical celibacy, women ordination and abortion. Though these are all very heavy, personal topics, the goal is to point teens back to the reality that our bodies were created by God, to glorify Him in all that we are, and to hopefully provide clarity as to why the church holds the teachings that she does regarding all of these issues.

Please know that I have prayed quite a bit about whether to even discuss these things with the teen group, as I know all of it can be very sensitive to discuss for some. I trust totally in the formation and teaching they are getting at home from you, their parents. However, after much discernment, I've felt that these issues are necessary for our youth ministry to discuss with the teens in order to give them the Catholic perspective on what the secular world, and the enemy, are trying so hard to dilute about the sanctity of the human body. I feel that it is our duty, as the youth ministry team of this parish, to tackle these issues that are being so aggressively shoved onto this Generation Z at younger and younger ages. Because of the sensitive material of the semester, just about every topic on our schedule will require written permission from you, the parents, via the permission slip I have attached to this. Teens will not be allowed to participate in classes without permission.

Please rest assured that myself and my core team are all up-to-date on our Safe Environment Certifications, and have reviewed the guidelines of safe environment regulations just this past week to ensure all discussions are safe and appropriate. We will take every precaution and preparation necessary to be clear and concise about church teaching, while being kind and understanding, and to not be crude, crass, disrespectful or inappropriate when discussing these touchy topics. I also plan to have our lesson plans emailed out to you, the parents, the Friday before every week for you to review before dropping your child off at youth group on Sunday so that there is total transparency on what we plan to discuss, and you can make the informed decision if you'd like your child to join in every topic we address. The only thing I ask about that, though, is to not discuss our lesson plans with your child before they've had the opportunity to discuss them at youth group with us and their peers. This is in hopes that they will have full participation and engagement in what we have planned, without any preconceived notions or expectations.

Additionally, my core team and I have decided that many of the topics throughout this semester will best be explained with the perspectives from both men and women, so we will have a man and woman teacher for most topics, and small discussion groups will often be split up between boys and girls for comfortability and to encourage discussion from feminine and masculine

perspectives. An additional goal of this is for the teens to foster a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood with their peers.

I'm also excited to announce that we will have some guest speakers who are far more articulate and knowledgeable than me this semester. I believe the Holy Spirit will guide our group through some of the more challenging discussions I'm sure we're going to have. We're very excited to dive into the divine mysteries of how God created us this semester, and hope it will provide clarity to any teens and/or parents who have been struggling with the church teaching on any of these topics.

Please also note that we do have some fun, more lighthearted activities dispersed throughout to help lighten the load of this heavy content semester. We also plan to incorporate dinner and a fun game/icebreaker each time we meet to ensure the youth group is not only informative, but also fun and comfortable for our teens. I believe both elements are necessary to achieve faith building ministry, especially with young people. We, of course, plan to offer a few service projects, fundraisers, and a big retreat planned this semester as well. Note, our schedule could be subject to change as some fine details are still being worked out, though this is not likely. I will update you should anything change.

I so greatly appreciate all the prayers and support you all have shown this ministry, and I pray to be able to serve you and your families for a very long time. Thank you for all your patience as we've been getting our footing as a youth ministry team post-covid. I ask that each of you please pray and consider donating snacks and/or meals this semester. Thank you so much to those of you who have provided this service in the past, we've found that this really helps bring the youth together in community, and helps them focus when they don't have a hungry belly during class. Please never hesitate to reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or ideas!

God Bless,

Amanda Cardenas & The Youth Ministry Core Team  
Sacred Heart Youth Minister