

INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY

The EDGE is a Catholic middle school youth ministry experience created for early adolescents in grades six, seven and eight. The EDGE is designed to meet the educational, spiritual, emotional, and social needs of young adolescents. Kids are always welcomed and encouraged to bring their friends to The EDGE.

At this age middle school youth are open to good and bad behaviors as well as positive and negative ideas. Many of the values and beliefs that they held as children are now questioned and challenged. As young adolescents they are trying to figure out who they are and what they believe.

In many respects middle school kids are on the edge because so much is going on in their lives physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially. It can be a very stressful and difficult time for them and their parents. As a Catholic Community, we are going to give our middle school youth The EDGE they need in life: Jesus, The Word, The Eucharist, and the Church!

Within the context of faith, middle school youngsters are moving from a child-like spirituality to one that will hopefully reach its pinnacle, through the work of the EDGE, into an adult faith commitment to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Community.

THE EDGE OVERVIEW

There are four parts to The EDGE:

- A.** EDGE night occurs twice a month on Monday evenings during the school year (13-14 sessions a year). The EDGE also has social and recreational activities designed to create a greater sense of community among our middle school youth and for the kids to have fun and enjoy themselves in a church setting.
- B.** The EDGE offers retreats for each grade level to let them celebrate their faith and develop relationships.
- C.** The EDGE offers middle school youth different occasions to put their faith into action through a variety of service projects and leadership opportunities.
- D.** *NEW this year!* The parent's component is designed to assist parents in raising their middle school youngster. Educational classes and sessions on middle school spirituality, psychology, personality development, and physical development are offered.

THE NEED FOR EDGE

Early adolescence is a very critical and difficult time in a person's life. The operative word in early adolescence is "change," and lots of it! Educators, psychologists, and youth ministers have stated that middle school might be the last great opportunity we

have to positively impact and assist a child in his or her educational, spiritual, emotional, and social development.

Middle school adolescents are trying to figure out who they are and what they believe. They are struggling to put the pieces of their life's puzzle together. It is during this "doubting Thomas phase" that many youngsters become leery of their faith, and begin to question as well as doubt what they believed as children. Those who minister to middle school youth are in the seed-planting business. They are working with kids who still have many significant and important decisions ahead of them, and the ministering adult has the opportunity to plant the seeds of Jesus' love, hope, and peace in the middle school child.

The EDGE provides an unparalleled moment in the life of a middle school youngster to offer guidance, reassurance, and Jesus' love to a group of people who have so many options and choices before them.

THE GOALS OF EDGE

1. To foster a transforming spiritual experience of Jesus through the liturgy, which will allow early adolescents to experience the Word of God and the Eucharist in a deeper and more profound way.
2. To create a positive experience of the Catholic Church for early adolescents.
3. To assist middle school youngsters in gaining an understanding and appreciation of what the Catholic Church teaches and believes.
4. To incorporate the Catholic Church's vision of social justice and peace into the spiritual life of pre-adolescents.
5. To develop an identity in middle school youth and in the Edge ministry as being a vital and visible presence within the parish community.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parental involvement is imperative.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus scolded his disciples and told them: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them." Proverbs 22:6 states, "train a child in the way they should go; and even when they are old, they will not swerve from it." The faith foundation a parent gives a child continues for a lifetime. Middle school is not the time to give your child the option of going to mass. It can create a poor standard of expectation.

The EDGE meets twice a month on Monday evenings. The EDGE needs to be the priority on Monday. Nowhere else in your child's daily life will there be an invitation and challenge to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus and the Catholic Church than at The EDGE.