



*Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church*  
*Religious Education*

**Parent Handbook**  
**EDGE Grades 6-8**

**2011 - 2012**



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# Contact Us:

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**CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY**

*Leave message to report absences before **EDGE** begins:  
630 - 851 - 3444, extension 201*

*Contact us while **EDGE** is in session:  
630 - 851 - 3444 extension 232*

Our Lady of Mercy Religious Education  
701 S. Eola Road, Aurora, IL 60504

**OLM Website:** [www.olmercy.com](http://www.olmercy.com) *(Go to Middle School Youth Ministry Link)*

**Emergency Closings Website:** [www.emergencyclosings.com](http://www.emergencyclosings.com)

# Parish Mission Statement

*Our Lady of Mercy Parish is a Catholic Community whose mission is to continue the ministry of Jesus to bring forth the Kingdom of God. We do this by striving to be and become a nurturing, celebrating, and serving community that is committed to hospitality and sacrificial giving, vibrant liturgies, quality Catholic religious education, holistic faith formation, and compassionate outreach.*

## Middle School Mission Statement (Grades 6-8)

*The main focus for our middle school ministry is to help our teens find out how to lead a life that Christ would live. In partnership with our parents & our parish community, we hope to help our teens discover their God-given gifts and talents and offer them opportunities to utilize them in service to others. By offering various liturgical, social, and RE events, we can help their faith grow and offer an atmosphere of welcome and acceptance mirroring Christ's ministry to others.*

# Letter from the Middle School Coordinator

Dear Parents:

Welcome to **The EDGE!** And for many of you, welcome back. This will be our fifth year for **EDGE** and the time has flown by! Thank you for registering your teen in **EDGE**. We hope that we can help your teen begin to see what it means to be a follower of Christ. Living that daily can be difficult for most of us. But for a teen in middle school, it can be even tougher.

*Your teen's real strength and foundation of their faith will come from you, their parents. How you celebrate and live out your faith will be a standard for them.*

Your teen will be given service opportunities that are part of **The EDGE Nights** as well as social events during the year. **The EDGE** Nights will also give them opportunities to be in small groups for discussion as well as in large group settings for activities. Understanding their daily lives and how their faith affects that will be at the very basis of our **EDGE** program. Giving them opportunities to experience, celebrate and serve Our Lord is what we hope to accomplish this year.

Our middle school teens are The Church right now! And the parishioners, catechists, volunteers, and Staff of Our Lady of Mercy are dedicated to showing our teens how much they are loved!

Please join us for our parent events, our liturgical events and drop in once in awhile to see what **The EDGE** is all about. We welcome your ideas, concerns, and suggestions. We hope you will find a Christ-like atmosphere of love, warmth, care, understanding, and concern for you and your family.

In Christ,  
Candy Rice  
Middle School Coordinator  
Middle School Coordinator

# What is The EDGE?

## EDGE Events for all 6-8 grades

Edge events occur throughout the year. We have **EDGE Nights** for all teens registered in the program. These nights are throughout the school year, are on Monday nights from 6:30/8:30 PM, and alternate the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays for 7/8<sup>th</sup> grades and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays for 6<sup>th</sup> grade. During these nights, we offer faith formation as well as Liturgical events: Family Mass, Stations of the Cross, Prayer Services, and many educational moments.

In addition, we offer many **socials** where teens may invite their friends to attend with completed permission slips. Some of these are: Kick Off Night, Skiing, Open Gym Night, Bowling, Six Flags, and a Water Park trip. To complete the program we also offer many **service projects** during the year such as Christmas and Valentines for the Troops, Feed My Starving Children, Holiday cards for Seniors, making fleece blankets and more.

## EDGE Program-Curriculum

6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Topics	7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Topics
Getting to Know You	Mystery Fun Night
Old Testament	Jesus
New Testament	Living Healthy & Boundaries
Living Healthy	Advent
Advent	Lent-Stations of the Cross
Ten Commandments	Sacraments of Initiation
Lent	Beatitudes
Self Esteem	

**ALL TEENS ARE WELCOME TO BRING FRIENDS TO ANY SOCIAL EVENT, BUT NOT TO EDGE NIGHTS OR SERVICE PROJECTS.**

## Retreats

*Students in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are required to attend a retreat day each year. There will be two retreats offered for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and two offered for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders combined. Information letters and permission forms will be mailed out one month before the event.*

6 <sup>th</sup> grade	Sat. January 21st (8:45-11:45 AM OR 12:45-3:45 PM)	"Self Esteem"
7/8 <sup>th</sup> grades	Sat. March 10th (8:45-11:45 AM OR 12:45-3:45 PM)	"Gifts & Talents"

## Parent Events

We have expanded our **parents evenings** this year. There will be an orientation at the beginning of the year for all 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents. Additionally, throughout the year, we have added some nights for education as well as faith formation that we would like to invite you to. We have some wonderful speakers for these events.

Parent Orientation ( <u>6th grade only</u> )	Thursday, September 8th	7:40 PM
	Saturday, September 10th	9:40 AM

We also have scheduled a **Family Mass** for each grade level. We would like at least one parent to attend with their teen. These masses will be held during a scheduled EDGE Night.

Family Mass for MONDAY EDGE NIGHTS:	Monday, November 7th	6:30 PM
Family Mass for THURSDAY EDGE NIGHTS:	Thursday, March 8th	7:00 PM

## Service

Students in grades 6-8 will be offered service projects within the EDGE program as well as in the parish community:

### **Feed My Starving Children:**

ALL Levels on Monday Nights:	Monday, October 3rd	6:30 PM
ALL Levels on Thursday Nights:	Thursday, October 13th	6:30 PM
ALL Levels on both Nights:	Thursday, February 23rd	6:30 PM

*Please provide your own transportation to and from Feed My Starving Children/Aurora.*

A **summer mission trip** will be offered during the month of June. This three day event will be a local opportunity for our teens to impact the lives of people in our community and even globally! Permission forms and additional info will be given out during March 2012.

## Support from the Parish

Our Lady of Mercy parish is there for you. If you need supplemental materials to teach your young person, such as books, DVDs or handouts please let us know. We have a wide variety of resources available in the office. Finally, if you ever have questions or concerns please feel free to contact the Middle School Youth Ministry Office at (630) 851-3444 x232 OR e-mail at [CandyR@olmercy.com](mailto:CandyR@olmercy.com).



# 6th Grade

## EDGE Calendar for 2011-2012

**KICK-OFF PARENT MEETINGS:**

Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 7:40-8:30 PM

Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:40-10:30 AM

\*\*\*Parents must attend ONE of these meetings to get class schedule, parent handbook and important information on the program.

**KICK-OFF PARTY**

**Monday, September 19, 2011**

All 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to a party to start the year! We will have music, games, inflatables and food in the Parish Life Center from 6:30-8:00 PM.

<b>6<sup>th</sup> GRADE EDGE NIGHTS</b>	
<b>MONDAY NIGHTS</b>	<b>THURSDAY NIGHTS</b>
September 26	September 29
October 24	October 27
November 14	November 17
November 28	December 1
December 12	December 15
January 23	January 26
February 13	February 16
February 27	March 1
March 12	March 15
April 9	April 12
April 23	April 26

**SERVICE PROJECT**

Monday, October 3, 2011

**EDGE Service Night**-All **Monday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
EDGE students—Feed My Starving Children

Thursday, October 13, 2011

**EDGE Service Night**-All **Thursday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
EDGE students—Feed My Starving Children

Thursday, February 23, 2012

**EDGE Service Night**-Open to **ANY** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
EDGE students—Feed My Starving Children

May only be 60 or 90 spots open each session.

**FAMILY MASS**

Monday, November 7, 2011

**Family Mass** 7PM—for all **Monday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
EDGE families

Thursday, March 8, 2012

**Family Mass** 7PM—for all **Thursday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
EDGE families

**EDGE 6<sup>th</sup> GRADE RETREAT**

**Saturday, January 21, 2012**

Two sessions offered: 8:45-11:45 AM and  
12:45-3:45 PM, held in the PLC.

**EDGE meets at 6:30-8:30 PM in Multi-Purpose Room unless otherwise noted.**



## 7th & 8th Grade EDGE Calendar for 2011-2012

### **KICK-OFF PARENT MEETINGS:**

Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 7:40-8:30 PM

Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:40-10:30 AM

\*\*\*Parents must attend ONE of these meetings to get class schedule, parent handbook and important information on the program.

### **KICK-OFF PARTY**

**Monday, September 19, 2011**

All 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to a party to start the year! We will have music, games, inflatables and food in the Parish Life Center from 6:30-8:00 PM.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> &amp; 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE EDGE NIGHTS</b>	
<b>MONDAY NIGHTS</b>	<b>THURSDAY NIGHTS</b>
October 17	October 20
November 7	November 3
December 5	December 8
December 19	December 22
January 9	January 12
January 30	February 2
February 6	February 9
March 19	March 22
April 16	April 19
April 30	May 3

### **SERVICE PROJECT**

Monday, October 3, 2011

**EDGE Service Night**-All **Monday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade EDGE students—Feed My Starving Children

Thursday, October 13, 2011

**EDGE Service Night**-All **Thursday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade EDGE students—Feed My Starving Children

Thursday, February 23, 2012

**EDGE Service Night**-Open to **ANY** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade EDGE students—Feed My Starving Children

*\* Only 60-90 spots available for each night.*

### **FAMILY MASS**

Monday, November 7, 2011

**Family Mass** 7PM—for all **Monday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade EDGE families

Thursday, March 8, 2012

**Family Mass** 7PM—for all **Thursday** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade EDGE families

### **EDGE 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE RETREAT**

**Saturday, March 10, 2012**

Two sessions offered: 8:45-11:45 AM and 12:45-3:45 PM, held in the PLC.

***EDGE meets at 6:30-8:30 PM in Multi-Purpose Room unless otherwise noted.***

# Safe Environment Program for Students

The Bishops of the United States, in response to the tragedy of sexual abuse of children and teens, have mandated the following program to provide a safe environment for students who are involved in parish programs.

- 1) All parish staff members, and any volunteer who is in contact with children/youth undergo a **police background check**.
- 2) All parish staff members, and volunteers who are in contact with children/youth **attend a 3 hour educational program on "Protecting God's Children"**.
- 3) The Joliet Diocese has mandated **an educational program for all children/youth involved in parish religious education programs**. The goal of the program is to provide a way for your child to learn to recognize and respond appropriately and assertively to improper sexual touch and invasion of personal boundaries.

\*\*\*Note: **Junior High Students – Grades 6, 7, and 8**

The mandatory education needed for this level is already provided by school districts 204 & 308. (The written documentation, expected by the Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry showing curriculum covered during these years, has been approved by the diocese and does not have to be duplicated by OLM.)



# Attendance Policy

## Attendance

*We believe that attending RE class is important, especially because we believe in the following:*

- 1. Children learn about their faith, first from their parents, but also from other adults, such as the catechists in the RE program. The class focuses not only on the facts of the Catholic faith, but also on developing one's relationship to God and to other people.*
- 2. The RE class gives students a chance to develop an awareness of the Church Community. Class provides a place to share and discuss one's faith with the other students. **This only happens if the student attends class on a consistent basis.***

*With this in mind we expect that students attend all classes unless they are ill, or an emergency occurs in the family. A sports activity does not constitute an emergency in our opinion.*

*Students are expected to be punctual. In the event of illness or a family emergency, it is the responsibility of the parents to call the RE office **before class begins.***

*Report absences before class begins: 630 - 851 - 3444, extension 201.*

***\*\*While EDGE is in session (6:30-8:30PM) Please call 630 - 851 - 3444, extension 232***

*If no call is received and the student is absent, parents will be contacted by the office staff in compliance with diocesan policy.*

***Three absences** will usually indicate the need for a call to the parents by the Director of Religious Education or Youth Ministry. Students may incur no more than **four absences** over the course of the year, unless there are extenuating circumstances.*

***After four absences, a student may be asked to leave the program.***

# Policies & Procedures

## Early Dismissal

*No child will be dismissed without a written note from a parent or guardian which is brought to the RE office before class.*

*Only the RE staff may give permission for early dismissal. Your child will be called to the RE office upon arrival of the parent/guardian. No student will be allowed to leave the parish center unescorted. The person who is picking up the student for early dismissal must come to the RE office to sign the student out.*

## Supervision

*EDGE Nights run from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. Parents are expected to drop off and pick up students on time. If an emergency occurs, call the RE office to inform them of your delay. Please inform the RE office in writing when a person other than a parent is designated to retrieve your child from class.*

## Discipline

In order for each member of a class to learn and grow in their faith, students and catechists will:

- be considerate of the unique qualities of each other
- be respectful of the ideas and questions shared during class
- help others to learn
- be trustworthy and responsible

Parents are asked to cooperate with catechists regarding appropriate behavior in class. If disciplinary problems arise with a student, the student will be sent to the RE office to speak with the staff person in charge. If a problem continues, a staff member will call the parents to discuss the situation, and the student may be asked to leave the program if the child cannot behave appropriately in class.

## Health and Safety

*Please inform the RE staff of any special needs your child may have. This includes learning needs, allergies or medical situations that we need to be aware of to better care for your child.*

***Medication may not be dispensed by the catechists or office staff. If students need medication, parents must make the necessary arrangements for this situation.***

## Emergency Closing Procedures - Fire and Tornado

*In the event of severe or inclement weather, the Directors of Religious Education and Youth Ministry will determine if classes should be held or cancelled. To determine if classes are in session, please check the parish website ([www.olmercy.com](http://www.olmercy.com)) or the Emergency Closing Center information by the following means: Radio Stations – WGN 720 AM and WBBM 78 AM OR Television Stations – [www.EmergencyClosings.com](http://www.EmergencyClosings.com)*

# Traffic Safety Guidelines for EDGE

The Safety of our children is a most important concern for all who participate in the Religious Education Program. In order to ensure a safe and orderly procedure for leaving and picking up students, please read the following directions carefully.

## *To drop off students in grades 6-8 (EDGE Nights):*

- 1) Form a line in the back of the parking lot (and along the sidewalk in front of the PLC)
- 2) When your car reaches the sidewalk, let your student out of the car then pull away allowing for the next car to pull up.

## *To pick up students in grades 6 - 8 (EDGE Nights):*

- 1) Form a line along the back of the parking lot (and along the sidewalk in front of the PLC)
- 2) Leaders will escort students to the pick up (sidewalk in front of PLC) area and wait for parents to pick up children.
- 3) After students are in the car, pull out of the line, using the left lane. Exit the parking lot.

- Do not leave vehicles parked next to the sidewalk.
- Vehicles must not be left running and unattended.
- Be courteous to fellow parents and volunteers.

For the safety of the students:

- students will not be allowed to cross the drop off line at any time!

We appreciate your help in following these procedures, so that all our children can be safe as they attend RE classes.

## Questions?

*If you have any questions concerning the Religious Education program please contact the Religious Education Office at 851-3444 x232. We welcome any feedback you may have about the program.*



## Diocese of Joliet

### Parent Guide: Understanding & Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Diocese of Joliet is committed to promoting an environment that will help ensure the safety of children and young people. If you have participated in a *Protecting God's Children* session, you have already received much information.

This brochure is the next step in our efforts to help keep children safe. You are the primary educators of your children, so it is important that you talk with them personally about their safety. The material in this brochure is designed to give you background information about sexual abuse, to inform you about other ways to keep your children safe, and to provide you with tips for talking to your children.

Staff members at the Religious Education Office (815-727-6411) and at the Catholic Schools Office (815-838-2181) are available to help you. Please call them if you have any questions about the material contained in this brochure or if you need more information.

Sincerely,  
Sister Judith A. Davies, OSF

#### **SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

##### **What Is Child Sexual Abuse?**

Child sexual abuse is the use of a child for sexual purposes by an adult or an older, more powerful person, including an older child. *It is a crime in all 50 states.* Sexual abuse is called incest when it happens between family members.

##### **Who Are the Offenders?**

- Most sexual abuse is committed by a person the child knows and trusts.
- Offenders come from all walks of life and from all social and ethnic groups.
- Offenders actively work to develop trusting relationships with children.

##### **Who Is At Risk?**

- Sexual abuse happens to boys and girls from all social and ethnic groups from infancy to 18 years.
- Young children are especially at risk.

##### **Why Don't Children Tell?**

Some reasons children do not tell are:

- They have been taught to obey adults.
- They promised or have been bribed to keep the abuse secret.
- They have been threatened by the offender and are afraid to tell.
- They feel guilty because they believe that the abuse is their fault and are ashamed to tell.
- They are confused because the offender is someone whom they know and trust.
- They have been convinced that the abuse is normal or okay.
- They are too young to know the touching is not appropriate, especially if someone they know and trust does it.
- They don't know the words to tell about the abuse.

##### **Do Children Lie About Abuse?**

Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. More often, they are afraid to tell.

#### **PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN**

Here are some things you can do:

- Educate yourself about sexual abuse.
- Learn and practice specific guidelines for protecting children from sexual abuse.
- Talk to your children about touching safety.

(See *Teaching Personal Safety Skills*.)

- Teach your children personal safety rules before they reach school age.
- Allow your children to participate in personal safety instruction.

### **Safety with Babysitters**

- Ask babysitters for references and check them.
- Interview babysitters in person. Ask how they discipline children. Ask *what if* questions to find out how they would cope with tricky situations.
- Inform them about your family safety rules, including touching safety rules.
- Set other rules for the sitter. (TV, phone use, and friends)
- Make surprise visits to check on them.
- Ask your children what happens when a babysitter is there and whether they like him or her. If they don't like the babysitter, ask for reasons.

*Follow these guidelines even if the babysitter is a family member.*

### **Guidelines for Single Parents**

If you are a single parent and are dating, this brings unfamiliar adults into your home.

- Let your new friend know your family's safety rules, especially about touching.
- Tell him or her that your children have been taught to tell if any of these rules are broken.
- Don't leave your children alone with a new friend until you know him or her well.
- Ask your children if they like the new person and why or why not.
- Watch your children's reactions for clues to how they feel.

### **TEACHING PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS**

Talking openly and honestly sets a tone that helps children feel safe and allows them to talk to you about anything. *Talk with them about touching and private body parts.* Here are some tips:

- Make touching safety a part of your family's safety rules.
- Take advantage of everyday teachable moments: bath time, physical play situations, when a child expresses curiosity about his body or sexuality, and before a child goes out without you.
- Read a book or view a video on touching safety together with your child.
- Revisit the conversation. Don't just talk about this important matter once!

### **Teach Your Children These Rules**

- It is not okay for someone to touch your private body parts.
- It is not okay for someone to touch his or her own private body parts in front of you or to ask you to touch them.
- It is not okay for someone to ask you to take your clothes off or to take photos or videos of you with your clothes off.
- It is not okay for someone to show you photos or videos of people without their clothes on.

### **Types of Touches**

Teach your children the names of their private body parts. Help them understand that they are the *boss* of their own body. Explain that there are three kinds of touches:

- **Safe touches.** These are touches that keep children safe and are good for their bodies. Safe touches include hugging, holding hands, pats on the back, and an arm around the shoulder. Safe touches can also include touches that might hurt, such as removing a splinter.
- **Unsafe touches.** These are touches that hurt children's bodies, feelings, or spirits, for example, hitting, pushing, pinching, and kicking. This also includes the sexual touches described in the previous section. Teach children that these kinds of touches are not okay.
- **Unwanted touches.** These are touches that might be safe but a child doesn't want. These include the sexual touches discussed earlier. It is okay for a child to say *no* to an unwanted touch, even if it is from a familiar person.

### **For Young Children**

Young children remember better how to protect themselves from sexual abuse when they learn and practice a few simple steps so they don't have to wonder what to do, or have to stop and think. Children can be taught to follow these three steps when someone breaks the touching rules.

- Say *no* or words that mean *no*.
- Get away.
- Tell a grown-up.

Expand your child's understanding of the third step by teaching the following:

- Never keep secrets about touching.
- Always tell about a touching problem even if it has gone on for a long time.
- Keep telling until someone believes you.

### **Teach Assertiveness Skills**

Children who are assertive are better able to use the safety steps effectively and resist unsafe situations. Assertive behavior includes standing up straight, looking directly at the person and using a strong, clear voice.

### **Safety on the Internet**

It is important for parents to educate children about Internet risks and monitor use of the Internet. Some rules:

- Never give out personal information or use a credit card online without your parent's permission.
- Never share passwords with anyone.
- Never arrange to meet someone in person you have met online unless parents go along with you.
- Never reply to uncomfortable messages. Always tell parents about them.

### **For Teens or Pre-Teens**

Honest, open discussions about sexual values/limits, healthy relationships, and personal safety can make a difference. Teens should:

- Recall that human sexuality is a graced gift from God. Intimate touching and sexual intercourse are morally appropriate only within marriage.
- Know their own wishes, limits and values, and clearly communicate them to their dates. They should listen to their date's limits and respect them.
- Notice if their date is not respecting their limits and wishes or if their date's behavior doesn't seem right.
- Trust their feelings and intuition. If they are feeling pressured into sex, they have the right to say *no*.
- Be assertive and act immediately if their limits are reached, even if it means making a scene.
- Understand that it is never too late to say *no* and never too late to hear *no*.

### **More Safety Tips for Teens**

- Avoid drugs or alcohol, which reduce one's ability to think clearly and manage one's behavior.
- Always pour your own beverages at a party and keep them in sight. Date-rape drugs can be put in drinks and are often undetectable.
- Go to parties with a buddy and look after each other. Always have a safe way home.
- Meet a date in a public place or stay around others.
- Tell someone about the date, where it will take place, and what time it will end.
- Take a cell phone along if possible.

### **The Bottom Line**

- *No* means *no* whenever a person feels pressured about anything and it should be respected!
- If a person says *no* and the other person continues to touch or to force touch it is abusive behavior.
- If a person forces another person to have sexual intercourse, it is rape, a criminal offense.


### **Safe Families**

Being a parent is one of life's greatest challenges. However, if you have a strong relationship built on a foundation of trust, and your children have skills in self-management, relationship-building, and problem-solving, they are more likely to make safe choices and set personal safety boundaries.

*For more tips for parents, please visit <http://www.cfchildren.org/parents/parenttips/>*

***If someone has been abused, contact the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services at 1-800-25ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). The content of this document is adapted from "Keeping Children Safe from Abuse: Tips for Parents and Caregivers" © 2004 Committee for Children www.cfchildren.org With permission from Committee for children and from the Diocese of Springfield, IL.***

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PRAYER FOR PARENTS AND CATECHISTS

Gracious God,  
You created a world filled with beauty and wonder. Help me to hold  
all of creation as precious.

Jesus, our Redeemer,  
You call us to forgiveness, reconciliation and compassion. Show me  
how to give witness to others through acts and attitudes of generos-  
ity and kindness.

Spirit of holiness and truth,  
You urge us to hope and challenge us to love. Help me to be a person  
of justice and mercy.

AMEN





**CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY**