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***What is Edge?***

Edge is a Catholic middle school youth ministry program. It provides a safe fun place for youth to find solid Catholic community, to get answers to their questions about faith, and, most importantly, to experience Jesus in a profound and personal way. Edge resources speak to the physical, psychological, cognitive, relational, and spiritual maturation of middle school youth. Edge resources make it easier for youth ministers to plan out their semesters of Edge, retreats, and to train a team of adults, the Core Team, to assist them in the ministry. The resources present Catholic teaching in a way that young people can understand.

This means that youth ministers get to spend less time at the desk and more time reaching out to youth. Edge provides many resources and support to help youth ministers reach out to parents and to connect with the families of middle school youth. Edge also connects youth ministers to a veteran team of youth ministers to assist them as well as providing ample opportunities for training. Edge answers the needs of this age group in a catechetical, fun, and relevant way and provides a foundation for youth to continue onto Life Teen. Edge is a great asset to any youth ministry program, as it answers the unique needs of this age group while providing deeply impactful resources.

***Why is Edge Important?***

We all remember that middle school was awkward and difficult. That hasn’t changed. However, societal shifts have made the middle school years more difficult than ever. Today, middle school youth are having experiences that were common only with high school students just 15 years ago. Threats of violence, availability of drugs and alcohol, and pervasiveness of sex and pornography are the new norm. Not only are they faced with these tough realities but they are also in the process of moving from being family-centered to friend-centered.

Peers gain greater influence and parental authority is called into question. As they shift socially they are also experiencing tremendous changes emotionally and intellectually. As they wade through all the difficulties of this time of life, they have real questions and need real answers. If parish leaders ignore the unique challenges of their middle school youth, they risk losing them forever.

**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.

Those who minister to middle school youth are in the seed-planting business. They are working with children 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 consists of:***

**A.** Weekly sessions during the school year except when school is not in session during a particular week. **The EDGE**also has social and recreational activities designed to create a greater sense of community among our middle school youth and for the children to have fun and enjoy themselves in a church setting.

**B.** Occasions for middle school youth to put their faith into action through a variety of service projects.

***The EDGE has 5 goals…***

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 identify middle school youth ministry as being a vital and visual presence within the parish community.