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Joys and Sufferings of Youth Ministry

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Joys and Sufferings of Youth Ministry

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Recently, I received a youth ministry position at a cluster parish in Palmyra and Marion. During my two months at this parish—St. Anne's Church and St. Gregory's Church—I have had the opportunity to explore the field of ministry, meeting and interacting with many individuals. From these experiences, which have been both joyful and challenging, I have had the chance to learn, enjoy, and grow as a Youth Minister."



Joys and Sufferings of Youth Ministry

Recently, I received a youth ministry position at a cluster parish in Palmyra and Marion. During my two months at this parish—St. Anne’s Church and St. Gregory’s Church—I have had the opportunity to explore the field of ministry, meeting and interacting with many individuals. From these experiences, which have been both joyful and challenging, I have had the chance to learn, enjoy, and grow as a Youth Minister.

To start, thus far, one of the greatest challenges that I am enduring is beginning a job in a new place, where I do not know the area or anyone from the area. Clearly, many individuals starting a new job are also in this predicament. However, in ministry, this creates a greater challenge, for ministry involves working for the people. To overcome this challenge I have attempted to attend as many events associated with the Churches and the youth within the communities as possible. For example, at St. Anne’s Church, I attended a St. Patty’s Dinner/Dance, which was quite fun. Making myself known at events, like the St. Patty’s Dinner/Dance, shows the parishioners that I am serious about my ministry job and that I am willing to participate in the community. In addition, it provides me with the opportunity to learn the parishioners’ names and more about them. Although not all persons entering into a ministry position already know individuals within the community or are a part of the faith community itself, many do have some sort

of connection with the people. Making this connection continues to be a challenge; yet one that I look forward to on a daily basis.

Although there are many joys that I have experienced while working as a Youth Ministry, the one that continues to have an impact on me is knowing that this ministry is making a difference to the youth in Palmyra and Marion. From weekly faith formation meetings to social events, like movie nights and rock-climbing, and retreats to service projects, getting to know the youth and witnessing their outstanding ability to open up and share their faith is a wonderful encounter that I hope will carry on throughout my time in this position. One example of making a difference the life of a teen thus far as a youth ministry is when I participated in a youth retreat with Church of the Transfiguration as an adult leader. One of the youths from Marion participated in this retreat. During the retreat, as she was in my group, I had the opportunity to get to know her on more than a surface level. This experience was an amazing one for both of us, along with all the others who participated, and is difficult to express in words. However, after the retreat, the youth's mother told the staff at Church of the Transfiguration how much her daughter has improved since the youth program started at St. Gregory's and St. Anne's, that her daughter's grades are improving and that she has had a more positive attitude. Knowing that in only a couple months, that this ministry has effected even one youth makes my job worth-while. In fact, it makes it more than worth-while, it makes it a jewel that I will cherish everyday.

Overall, even in the face of challenges, the joy of my job continues to outweigh any suffering. There are obvious sufferings that a person in ministry faces, such as lower income and modeling a faith-filled life, which can include giving up certain activities.

However, in my opinion, these are insignificant sufferings, that one must bear in this field of work. Being a Youth Minister has been and will continue to be an exciting and exhilarating experience.

By: Jodi Rowland

Class of 2004