

YOUTH MINISTRY & ADVENT



When I first told my wife that I had been offered the job of Youth Director at Our Lady of the Lake, she almost fell out of her chair. It was earlier that same day that she had texted me:

We need to stop trying to force our future and just surrender it to God.

I'm absolutely delighted to start Youth Ministry here, especially because I sense that our transition from Los Angeles to Portland was nothing short of providential.

Often parents ask me: "*How will you go about shaping our young people?*" or "*What's your ministry style?*" Those are fair questions, but I've never

really thought about Youth Ministry involving specific strategies that would guarantee success.

While there are certainly techniques we can use (and avoid!) to better evangelize our young people, high-energy pizza nights will only go so far. And simply rolling out a litany of doctrines and theological abstractions to memorize will hardly light a fire in their hearts. My job, as I see it, is to "facilitate an encounter with God."

If I can convince young people to believe that there is a God who loves them deeply and wants the very best for them, then I'll sleep well. We can get to the dogmas at some point. We can talk about the rules eventually.

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First and foremost though, I want young people to understand that faith is primarily about trusting a living person. Jesus Christ wants to enter into an eternal relationship with you. I think that if we can get that truth to sink in, it will transform lives and produce fruit that goes far beyond the Youth Room.

The season of Advent, it seems to me, is the perfect time for parents and Kids (really, all of us!) to re-imagine what an encounter with God might look like. Advent is all about preparing for the entering-in of the God who chooses to be with us all on the most intimate level.

Actually, there are three “arrivals” of the Lord we can focus on:

First, we retell the story of the Incarnation: God taking on human flesh and arriving in the form of a helpless baby.

Second, we await the triumphal return of Jesus Christ when the world shall be set aright and when we will live happily and eternally in our heavenly home.

But we can also think of a **third** “arrival” that can take place right now...in our lives.

Advent offers us a new occasion to ask:

Jesus, would you arrive again in my life and transform me? Heal the brokenness, forgive the mistakes, give me the courage to love unconditionally, set my heart ablaze for you, conform my will to yours.

This is what we can pray for each Advent. Indeed, this is what we should be praying for daily! If we can convince

our young people to say these words and to mean them- to be open to that radical encounter with Jesus — then I think we will be doing Youth Ministry successfully.

Luke Brooks is the Youth Ministry Director at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church. Find out more about Youth Ministry at OLL at www.ollparish.com/youth.



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