

Annual Report – Youth 2020

As we entered the 2020 calendar year, under Father Tommy's guidance, the Youth program was primed to have a great year. The YST had put together an agenda of youth-centered events to re-engage the middle and high school students. We were optimistic that the Youth program was about to re-blossom.

In January, we ended our calendar sales to support a Peace Pole installation in the spring and began planning for the installation when warmer weather arrived.

In February, we held a SouperBowl of Caring event to collect food for the Southeast Gwinnett Co-op and enjoy some skating time at Sparkles. Later in the month, the Youth hosted the Annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. The funds raised would be part of the sponsorship for the upcoming Hunger Walk in March.

March arrived, and the COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us into isolation to control the spread of the virus. The Hunger Walk was canceled, and we quickly decided to continue Youth Group meetings via Zoom, having our first ones in late March.

Using our online resources, the Youth upheld their tradition of performing the Passion Play by recording their parts for the Palm Sunday service. The Youth also recorded the Stations of the Cross for the Good Friday service.

In May, the Youth created an online tribute to their mothers for Mother's Day by "passing the spoon" between the Youth Group members. We also continued the tradition of Youth Sunday, having Jessie Hurst deliver the homily.

As we transitioned into the summer months and social distancing was still being fully enforced, we had to forgo the confirmation class's Pilgrimage. VBS (where many of the Youth would volunteer) moved to an online format.

At the start of the new school year in August, we did not have our traditional Youth Retreat to re-ignite our old Youth group and welcome the new 6th graders. Instead, we continued to have online Youth Group sessions each Sunday. Once we began limited in-person Sunday services, we alternated having in-person Youth group outside on the parish grounds following the same protocols. If we needed to be inside, the Undercroft was arranged so "family pods" could be socially distanced as they worked on the activity or participated in the discussion.

As the year ended, we saw the Youth Group begin to lose "steam," our regular attendance slipped - probably from "COVID-fatigue." However, as we emerge from the social distancing this year, I believe this time of absence from our normal Youth group activities has allowed the Youth to re-focus and discover what they need from our Youth group. Several have been vocal about what they want to do when we are back to "normal" and what they would like to do in the time until it happens.

In summary, despite the challenges that social distancing presented, we still found ways to celebrate our Youth and gather, even with smaller numbers, to engage in formational activities.

I ask the parish to continue to support and pray for our Youth Group, the next generation of the faithful, as they make their journey into becoming adults in Christ.

The YST always welcomes your comments and suggestions. Thank you again for the honor to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

John G. Byron

Youth Liaison and Jr. Warden