

Planning A Youth Sunday

Anyone who pays the least bit of attention to what is going on in church on a Sunday morning is well aware of the fact that it takes more than just the priest to keep things rolling. There is surely a number of things which other people do during the Divine Liturgy in order to make the Liturgy “work”, such as the servers, singers, readers, and, of course, the congregation itself. There are also things which must be done during the Divine Liturgy of a more practical nature. Candles must be lit, bells have to be rung, collections must be taken, and bulletins should be distributed. In many parishes, coffee hours usually follow the Liturgy, which also involve a number of duties. It takes working as a unified whole to make things run smoothly, and there is generally a nucleus of people in every parish who tend to these details faithfully.

St. Paul teaches us that everyone in the Church has a duty or a function to fulfill in order to keep the Church running smoothly. He writes that we should utilize our time and talents wisely for the building up of the Church, constantly realizing that we are the Church, not just the priest, the choir, or the altar boys. Everyone must do their part in order to make things happen, especially when we gather together for the Divine Liturgy.

An ideal way for teens and college-aged students to get involved in the life of the parish is by designating one Sunday a month as “Youth Sunday.” Several parishes throughout our Diocese already have such a program, during which the young adults assume all of the duties normally assigned to others. In short, on “Youth Sunday,” the younger parishioners ring the bells, hold the cloths during Holy Communion, pass out the bulletins, and help with taking the collections. A variety of other responsibilities are also undertaken, which shall be outlined below.

Getting Started

The first thing to do in organizing a Youth Sunday program is to contact your parish priest. Perhaps your parish youth group or Junior “O” Club chapter could initiate the idea. If you have no such group, talk the idea up with a few others your age first. Your parish priest will be more than happy to get you started, and will offer suggestions on the best methods of organizing a Youth Sunday program.

Once you’ve made your desires known, it’s time to start organizing. Draw up a list of everyone you know who could be involved in a Youth Sunday program. At the same time, make a list of duties and responsibilities which must be carried out. Ask your priest to present your proposals to the Parish Council, or attend a Council meeting yourself and outline your goals and objectives. Once you’ve received their support, start assigning people to various tasks. It helps, too, if you have a coordinator to help plan the schedule and to supervise everyone on Youth Sunday itself.

Use whatever method of contacting people works best in your parish. If there are only a handful of young adults in your parish, contact them by phone and assign specific responsibilities. In large parishes, it works best to simply mail a schedule of responsibilities to everyone, noting the dates on which they are assigned, making sure to list a name and number that can be called in case a replacement must be found.

What to Do

The following is a general list of responsibilities which can be fulfilled by young adults on Youth Sunday. Add to and subtract from the list as local needs dictate.

- Ring bells at appointed times.
- Greet visitors.

- Help with the selling of candles.
- Read the Hours and Epistle.
- Put the Gospel stand in place at the appointed time.
- Take the collection.
- Hold the Communion cloths.
- Distribute the bulletins and antidoron after the Liturgy.
- Host the coffee hour for that Sunday.
- Prepare a special article or essay written by a young adult, and insert it in the bulletin.
- If you have a youth choir, sing part or all of the responses to the Liturgy.

There are a few hidden surprises involved in a Youth Sunday program. You'll see others your age getting involved, many for the first time. You'll find those who had been turned off getting turned on again once they feel a part of things. You'll see a decrease in the complaints that "the kids just don't care." For sure, you'll see a lot of proud grandmas convinced that their prayers have finally been answered!

Why not make a Youth Sunday program your pet project for the coming year?

Check List To Plan a "Youth Sunday"

1. Talk it over with your parish priest.
2. Make list of
 - A. All youth.
 - B. All Sunday duties.
3. Present project to Parish Council.
4. With Parish Council approval, designate coordinator and/or committee
 - A. To assign tasks.
 - B. To give out assignments to youth by phone/email/Twitter/Facebook/whatever works!
 - C. To supervise everyone on "Youth Sunday" itself.