

## **Build or Not**

### **Youth Group and Young Adult Ministry Program**

As we continue to discuss the needs of our parish, let us consider the needs of our Youth Group and Young Adults Group. Youth Group is available to all our youth from 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Young Adults is for College age and recent college graduates. Keeping our young people involved is vital to our parish. Currently the Youth and Young Adults Groups meet the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month from September through May. A safe place for our young people to gather, socialize, play games, have fun **and** share their faith is essential to the growth of our parish. It is crucial that they have place to call their own – a nice space to gather with comfortable seating where they can share and talk, without others walking through their gatherings, on their way to other parts of the church.

We have a very active Youth Group in our parish. Our youth do several community service projects. From our Cardboard City retreat, to Easter baskets for Ministries Unlimited, our Youth are involved in the St. Jerome community and beyond. When St. Joseph's Hall is needed for other events during the time scheduled for youth gatherings, the youth have had to cancel meetings. They have tried to move elsewhere, but that can be difficult when anywhere from 10-35 youth may be gathering at a time. The youth are encouraged to come and participate when their schedules allow, and so the number can vary for each gathering.

Likewise, the lack of a separate gathering space for our youth means that some retreats, such as the extremely popular Luke 18 retreat, are not able to be held at our parish. Other retreats would be a blessing to hold for our youth and young adults – if we just had a space just for them. Trying to coordinate the use of St. Joseph's hall with so many other activities is difficult. We have to consider what activities will be held at the gatherings to know how to have the walls moved yet again, so that space is available for our youth. Space is also needed to store items for these events and retreats. We have a ping pong table and other games that are stored all around the rooms in the basement, but a designated space for youth/young adult supplies is much needed.

Our Vacation Bible School is also a community event that our youth hosts for children in preschool-through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and it is free to all. The numbers vary from year to year, but we have had up to 80 children participating in our Bible School. We have been able to use the sanctuary for large gatherings, which makes it easier to use the downstairs for other activities - Bible stories, activities, crafts and snacks, but even then, our space can be limited. Again, storage space for supplies is needed.

As of now, the Young Adult group meets in the meeting room of St. Joseph's Hall at the same time the Youth Group meets. An inviting space for our young adults to gather, have coffee, share what is going on in their lives and to be support for each other would be beneficial to our parish. Keeping our young people involved gives them the responsibility of knowing they are the Church – now and in the future. They are an important part of our parish. They are needed and wanted. Their opinions matter.

Over the years, several of our youth have gone on to other youth groups in our area that are able to offer much more for the youth. A bigger space at St. Jerome would mean more youth/young adult activities and events can happen, which in turns, brings in more youth. Keeping our young people involved will give them a foundation to continue to participate in parish life, being more involved in the workings of our parish and using their gifts and talents in service to God and one another.