

Archdiocese of St Louis Bicentennial Youth Ministry Session

ABOUT THIS YOUTH SESSION

This session is designed to be used in conjunction with the Archdiocesan Bicentennial Year: In 2026, the Archdiocese of St. Louis will joyfully commemorate the **200th anniversary of its founding as a diocese in 1826**. This once-in-a-generation Jubilee is an invitation for every parish community to enter more deeply into the mystery of God's enduring presence among us and to celebrate the vibrant, living history of Catholic faith in our region. Many of the ideas in this youth session are taken directly from the Bicentennial Celebration Playbook.

GATHER

Welcome and Introductions : Gather the teens into the main meeting space, welcome them, and make any necessary introductions.

Game: Minute to Win It Tournament (Optional) Play this game or another of your choosing

- *Note: This can be played in teams or with individuals. If played in teams, one or more players from each team can be selected to compete in each challenge. Some challenges are listed here, but you can come up with your own or find many other "Minute to Win It" game challenges online.*

Directions: The goal of this tournament is to be the first person or team to reach a total of 200 points! Set up 4-8, 60 second challenges with each challenge worth 50 points. Individuals or teams compete, and the **first person or team to 200 points wins!** If you have a limited amount of time or no one person or team is approaching 200 points, make the last challenge worth 200 points. If you choose to give prizes, consider giving the winning person or team 200 tootsie rolls or 200 of an item of your choice.

- **Cookie Face:** Place a cookie on the forehead; players must use only facial muscles to move it into their mouth in 60 seconds or less. If it falls, they must start over.
- **Junk in the Trunk:** Tissue boxes filled with 8 ping-pong balls are strapped to players' backs (at the waist). They have 60 seconds to shake, dance, and jump to get all the ping-pong balls out without using their hands.
- **Defy Gravity:** Players must keep two or three balloons in the air for 60 seconds using only one hand.
- **Bottle Flip:** Standard water bottle flipping, players aim to land the most successful flips on a table in 60 seconds.
- **Chopstick Pick-Up:** Using only chopsticks, players transfer as many marshmallows as they can from one plate to another in 60 seconds.
- **Penny Stack:** Players stack as many pennies as possible in 60 seconds using only one hand.
- **Balloon Blower:** Players use the air from a balloon to blow plastic cups off the edge of a table in 60 seconds or less.
- **Nose Dive:** Players use petroleum jelly on their noses to transfer as many cotton balls as they can in 60 seconds from one plate to another.
- **Stack Attack:** Players must stack several plastic cups into a pyramid and then dismantle them into a single stack in 60 seconds or less.
- **Mummy Wrap:** Teams race to completely wrap a teammate in a roll of toilet paper in 60 seconds.

After the game ends, transition into an opening prayer and the Proclaim section.

Alternative Idea:

- **200th Anniversary shirts or posters:** Much like young students would do on the 100th day of school, have teens make a poster or shirt with 200 items of their choosing (cheerios, pennies, buttons, etc.). They can bring or wear them to this youth session and explain why they chose the item(s) they did. Have a contest for the most creative poster or shirt – have the core team and/or Pastor be the judges.

Opening Prayer: Let everyone know that this time will be about celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Begin with the following prayer (distribute prayer cards to everyone so they can pray along if you have them).

Heavenly Father, you are the giver of all that is good.

We give you thanks for 200 years of faith, grace, and mission in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

As we celebrate this bicentennial, we remember with gratitude and thankfulness, all those who have helped to build the Church here: clergy, religious, and lay faithful.

Strengthen us in our resolve to carry forward their legacy with love and courage.

Through the intercession of Saint Louis, our patron and king, Saint Vincent de Paul, and Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, give to us hearts rooted in justice, holiness, and charity.

May we continue to be a beacon of the Gospel in our time, faithful to Christ and alive in the Spirit.

Bless our archdiocese with unity, renewal, and vocations as we journey into the future.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Saint Louis, pray for us

Saint Vincent de Paul, pray for us

Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, pray for us

PROCLAIM

The Bicentennial Jubilee theme “**Rejoicing in God’s Radiant Light. A Legacy of Faith. A Future of Hope.**” reflects our deep gratitude for the past and our bold trust in what lies ahead. As we honor two centuries of faith, the Bicentennial Jubilee calls us to shine brightly in the present and carry that light forward for generations to come.

PREPARATION: Use the suggestions below to share some of the important beginnings and other moments of the Archdiocese of St. Louis and/or your own parish community. Consider inviting your Pastor or a longtime parishioner to share stories and/or photos. Spend some time exploring how the light of Christ has been shared over the last 200 years within the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

NOTE: *The person or people who lead this portion should include examples of how others have shown them the light of Christ and/or helped them grow in their own faith. They can share examples from the lives of our Archdiocesan patron saints (St. Louis, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Rose Philippine Duchesne) and others who have inspired them to share Christ’s love.*

-Telling Our Story:

From <https://www.archstl.org/about/>: *The Archdiocese of St. Louis has a rich history dating back to its establishment as a diocese on July 18, 1826, when it was carved out of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas. The diocese was elevated to archdiocese status in 1847, reflecting its growing influence in the region. The early Catholic presence was shaped by French and Spanish settlers, and the archdiocese played a crucial role in the expansion of the Church in the Midwest.*

Throughout the years, the archdiocese has been a center for Catholic education, healthcare, and social services, and has been led by notable figures, including Cardinal John J. Glennon and Cardinal Joseph Ritter, who played pivotal roles in advancing civil rights. Today, the archdiocese continues its mission of faith, education, and community service, serving a diverse and vibrant Catholic population in the Missouri region.

St. Louis, Missouri, honors three patron saints: St. Louis IX for his virtues and Christian influence, St. Vincent de Paul for compassion and service, and St. Rose Philippine Duchesne for missionary spirit and education. Together, they inspire a community rooted in faith, compassion, and service.

- You can find more about the history of the archdiocese by visiting this website: <https://www.archstl.org/about/> and clicking on the different time periods listed. What details you choose to highlight might depend on where your parish is located and what significant events you think the young people in your community will find important or inspiring.
- The [Bicentennial Celebration Playbook](#) has information and links to many of the Jubilee pilgrimage destinations. Consider learning about them together and either visiting one or more pilgrimage sites as a group or encourage teens and families to visit pilgrimage sites throughout the year.

-Telling Your Parish Story

From the [Bicentennial Celebration Playbook](#): Every parish has a story, a sacred thread woven through decades of faith, community, and mission. As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, your parish is invited to rediscover and share its own chapter in our legacy.

Begin at the beginning. When was your parish founded? What historical moment was it responding to? Who were its founders and earliest families? What inspired its name? Gather the key moments that shaped your parish over the years. Parish bulletins, sacramental records, and historical photos can help bring this journey to life. Highlight your parish Stewardship Stories, who (individuals or groups) made generous contributions for the stained-glass windows, statues, or specific building projects?

Lift up the voices of your community. Interview longtime parishioners who carry treasured memories. Invite former priests and deacons to contribute reflections or photos. Invite young people to participate by reflecting what the parish has meant in their lives. Consider visual opportunities with images and art. These stories illuminate the faith lived out in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

BREAK

Small Group Discussion: Divide into small groups (or if you are already a smaller group you can have the discussion with everyone). The Small Group Leader should open in prayer and lead the small group discussion related to the talk/presentation.

Questions:

- What stood out to you about the history of our archdiocese and/or parish and why?
- How do you think people will talk about our parish/youth ministry 200 years from now? What would you want people to say?
- What do you think inspired people from the archdiocese or our parish's past in their faith?
- Where have you seen Christ's light in someone at our parish or archdiocese?
- How are you or can you share the light of Christ with others (family, friends, at school, at church, with strangers, etc.)?

SEND

200 Acts of Light: Adapted from [Celebration Playbook for Schools](#)

As a way to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the archdiocese, encourage the group to complete a “200 Acts of Light” project. These are small, meaningful acts that reflect Christ’s love in everyday ways. The goal is simple: Do one thing that brings light to someone else – as an individual, a small group, the whole youth group, or even the whole parish. Have everyone decide on at least one act they will complete in the next day or week.

This project is a joyful way to live the theme “Rooted in Faith. Radiating Christ’s Light.” The acts of light should be joyful, personal, and easy to complete. One small act from each person becomes a shared celebration of who we are and what our faith inspires us to do.

Brainstorm ideas (some are below) to complete an act of light. Decide as a group how you will track these acts so you will know when the group has collectively completed 200. You are of course encouraged to continue completing acts and go beyond the 200, but you can also celebrate as a group when you know you have achieved this goal. Individuals can be challenged to complete 200 acts of light on their own if they desire. Consider finding ways to recognize those youth that do this.

Act of Light examples:

- Offer an act of kindness at home – set the table, clean the dishes, help a sibling, or pray with a parent
- Write a note of kindness, a get well soon, or thank you note to a family member, friend, teacher, coach, priest, etc.
- Spend some time in Adoration praying for a loved one or pray a rosary for someone’s intentions
- Volunteer at a parish event: lector at Mass, help out at the fish fry, or assist with a PSR class
- Plan and carry out a service project in your community
- Offer to tutor or babysit for free
- Help clean and organize the youth room

Closing Prayer: (5-10 min.)

Say a closing prayer thanking God for 200 years of faith and mission in the archdiocese. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to inspire us to share Christ’s light and love with others. If you have time, you can ask for prayer intentions from the group and close with a Hail Mary.