

ALLOWING GOD ON THE BASKETBALL COURT

By Sr. Laurie A. Orman, RSM

A father comes to me to talk about celebrating the sacrament of confirmation with his children, a mother shares with me how she learned to make the scriptures come alive for her daughter, a grandmother talks about the death of her child and how she feels that her child is still making contact with her through others and evangelizing to the young people to get them interested in attending upcoming events. Sounds like a typical day in youth ministry right? Well it is if you see CYO as part of your comprehensive youth ministry program. These examples occurred while I was ministering on the basketball court of our CYO program. People ask me why I would want to be a part of CYO, and my answer is, “why not”. Why would I not want to include CYO as an integral part of our parish youth ministry program?

Youth ministry is about relationships. Connecting with CYO is a way in which I can help the coaches, youth ministers on the court, to empower the young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today, to invite the young people to be a responsible participant in the life, mission and work of the church, and to foster the total and spiritual growth of each young person that they encounter. Do these goals sound familiar? They should, they are the three goals of a comprehensive youth ministry program.

So, youth ministers, why would you not want to have CYO as an integral part of your youth ministry program? And, coaches, why do you not see your role as a youth minister?

A disciple is a learner; it is someone who has yet to arrive. Discipleship is not a destination but a process of stretching, falling, growing, questioning and advancing to become like Jesus. Our youth, the players, can be disciples on and off the court, by being open to one another and support each other in a loving way like Jesus. To be a responsible participant in the life, mission and work of the church, the youth need to be given an opportunity to share their unique gifts, gifts that can be athletic, spiritual, leadership, and assisting each other on their journey of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. How many of you have older youth as referees and assistants? They are sharing their unique gifts. If youth ministry is about relationships, then isn't the basketball court a perfect place to foster the total and spiritual growth of each player? Doesn't this happen through good sportsmanship with each other and those from other teams and when the teams pray before each game? CYO is a relational program of young people, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends and more. If we can allow God on the court in those relationships, CYO automatically becomes an integral part of youth ministry. So, youth ministers and coaches, take advantage of the ministry of “presence” on the basketball court. You'll be amazed at how enriching it is for your ministry and for yourself.

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