

# Peer Ministry

## **Peer Ministry is for teens that are...**

Seeking greater involvement in their church

Wanting to share their gifts and talents

Desiring a deeper relationship with God

Willing to participate in Christian service, faith witness, and leadership

## **What is Peer Ministry?**

It is an opportunity for middle school and high school youth to respond to their baptismal call to be a priest (servant), prophet (faith witness) and king (leader) among their peers in youth related events and activities at Ave Maria and in their community. Peer ministers serve as leaders for youth groups (middle school and high school), retreats, service projects, and other youth related activities.

## **Why should I get involved?**

You should be a peer minister if you possess the passion and courage to preserve and grow in your relationship with God, serve others, witness your faith (share and spread the Good News), and to build skills to be a leader. It is a good way to invest in your church and community, as well as developing long-lasting friendships. Peer Ministry will provide opportunities in building skills and resources that will be useful for the rest of your life. (For example, deepened faith life, college applications, job applications, skills/experiences to add to your resume)

## **Who can be in Peer Ministry?**

Middle School Peer leader: Any mature teen (grades 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) that is interested in serving others.

High School Peer Leader: Any mature teen (grades 10-12) that is interested in serving others

## **What Is Expected of Me?**

A willingness to serve, care for others, ability to interact with peers, clergy, adult ministry members and/or leaders, model Catholic values, and a desire to grow in faith.

Attend Peer Leadership retreat which is scheduled for August 24-26<sup>th</sup> @ Ponderosa Retreat Center.

Attend Tuesday night meetings from 6-8pm. If you are not present for a meeting you will be unable to take a lead in the formation night being planned.

Be present regularly at Youth Formation Nights and when necessary arrive around 3:30pm (or at the designated time) and stay until 7:45pm (There is a debriefing time after Formation and this is crucial in developing as a leader and for the team to reflect on the activities of the night)

Must be willing to be in front of your peers and lead activities. We will train and prepare you for doing these so if you have some fear of this that is okay. We will help you BUT need your commitment in being willing to do it.

Attend parish activities. Mass EVERY week is expected but other activities the parish offers is based on your family's availability.

Be a positive example to the youth in our parish. This is whether you are at church, school, or with your family, you represent yourself as a Peer Minister.

While we understand the other commitments you may have we are asking for Peer Ministry to be a priority on your list of activities. We expect fewer than 3 absences.

## **Peer Ministry: Rooted in Baptism**

Peer Ministry is more than some leadership group or training program for teens. It is about teens and adults committed to continuing the work of Christ. It is about helping others grow closer to God and His Church. Vatican II helped reaffirm and sharpen the call to ministry in all the baptized; the call of bringing all into relationship with the Father through Christ. Each of us by virtue of our baptism has become a new creation. We have become co-heirs with Christ to the Kingdom, not simply creatures or slaves to God, but children to the Father. We are able to participate in the very divine life of God and become living temples of the Holy Spirit. We are other Christs in the world. Christ the High Priest, Christ the Prophet, and Christ the King lives and dwells through the Holy Spirit in a very real and permanent way within each one of us. His priestly, prophetic, and kingly missions continue through us. These missions can help inform our understanding of peer ministry. The sacrament of baptism bestows various gifts upon us not for our own selfish end, but to become more and more like Christ the High Priest, Christ the Prophet, and Christ the King. Every Christian is baptized priest, prophet, and king. The Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) identifies priests, prophets, and kings as the key figures God used to help bring His people to Him. God gave His people these individuals to help bring them into closer relationship.

Christ is the fulfillment of each of these groups. Christ as priest offers the perfect sacrifice, himself on the cross. Christ as prophet lives in perfect relationship and faithfulness to God, calling others into right relationship. Christ as King has conquered the enemy and given direction and purpose in our lives. As another Christ in the world we share in these three roles of Christ; priest, prophet, and king. Teens in peer ministry seek to intentionally live out and exercise these roles within their parish community.

### **Priest**

Priesthood is most associated with sacrifice, offering something to make better the relationship between God and His people. Christ's sacrifice of himself is the perfect sacrifice. Today, priests in persona Christi, in the person of Christ, make present again that very sacrifice of Christ. A priest is not ordained for himself, but for service to the People of God. Through the priesthood, the Sacraments are made accessible to others so that the Faithful might be transformed and grow in relationship with God.

Practically speaking, priests help others get closer to God through opportunities to encounter God. A priest cannot make someone have a God encounter; that is between the person and God. However when a person is open to encountering God they are transformed through the experience! The main role of a priest is service; service that leads to holiness or closeness to God for the Faithful and himself. When the priest serves in love the ministry becomes an opportunity for him to grow closer to God.

We are baptized into the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Peer Ministry provides opportunities for teens to live out their baptismal priesthood. Peer Ministry teens create and direct experiences to the parish and community so that those who participate might be transformed through the experience. Peer ministry teens too are transformed through their gifts of service. A person in peer ministry needs both the desire for service and correct motivation. Individuals that are primarily concerned with how peer ministry serves their needs and purposes are missing the point and will probably be disappointed if they never move beyond this perspective. Peer Ministry is not meant to be about "me" because service is about the needs of others. Service is looking out for the needs of others and helping them grow in their relationship to Christ and others. Service is an intentional expression of our desire to help others grow closer to Christ.

Service for a teen in peer ministry can look like many things, but the primary question each teen is asked to start with in any situation is, "How can I help?" It is important to start with basic needs when helping others. Service starts simply with basic needs of others and then moves towards spiritual needs. It begins with hospitality. Hospitality meets the basic physical and mental needs of people. Once the basic needs are met the peer minister then asks "How can I help this person/event/experience become an opportunity to experience God?" How can I

help others experience God and thus grow in faith? Do I need to help people reflect on what they have done? Do I need to point out explicitly how the experience connects to Christ's teachings or actions?

## **Prophet**

Prophets in the Scriptures reminded people that God is God and we are not. We need to listen to God by following His commandments and trust in him when times are difficult. A prophet speaks up against injustice or behaviors that separate us from God or others. Prophets witness to what correct relationship with God looks like. A prophet calls people to live justly and correctly by their witness and words. Jesus' life, teachings and example is the fulfillment of the prophet role. Jesus' witness of love, trust, faithfulness, and justice reveal to all of us what our relationship should look like with God and others.

Each of us was baptized prophet. A prophet is not a psychic that foresees the future so much as a person with common sense that recognizes poor choices in their own lives and others. They speak out against injustice. Injustice is the opposite of justice. Justice is giving and receiving what is right to others. It is being in right relationship with others, treating others as Jesus would and holding people accountable when they fail to do so. Now more than ever being a prophet is a challenge for our culture. In an individualized private culture where everyone's choices and behaviors are "ok", as long as they don't impact me, it is difficult to witness explicitly to others. Living our lives quietly is no problem and comfortable for us. To be a prophet that speaks out against injustice or poor choices takes a lot of courage and risks being made fun of or excluded from the group. Prophets have often been persecuted and even killed when they spoke up against strong forces of injustice. Nor are the prophets well received by others who knew them before they became a prophets. Peer Ministry teens are expected to be prophetic in their lives through their example of treating others rightly and witnessing to right relationship with God and His Church. When a peer minister shares a message of faith with others they are really witnessing and encouraging others in their relationship with God. Sharing our faith with others and how we should live it out is prophetic. Even more simply, when a peer leader treats others with care and attention they are being prophetic.

We do not expect a peer leader to run in the streets like prophets of old shouting "repent". We do expect them to witness by their choices and words they choose. The witness of a teen to other teens is far more powerful and meaningful than an adult witness. Young people are highly idealistic and motivated by a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of others. Like prophets they are idealistic about things working out for the best. They are generally hopeful about the future. They are sensitive to hypocrites and respect integrity.

## **King**

A hope throughout the Scriptures starting with King Saul was that God would take a more active role in leading His people. Some hoped that God himself would come down and lead His people to freedom. Kings were practical law givers and enforcers blessed by God to help bring order and harmony to the people of Israel. God's people hoped for a great leader or Messiah sent from God to help them during times of trouble or persecution. Jesus was understood by many to be that person. The Jewish people were being oppressed by the Romans and people thought Jesus would lead them as King to freedom as a nation. Jesus' kingly leadership though was meant not for this world simply but for all of creation, all of time. He is King over hearts and minds, not just geographical regions. His leadership was one of love and service, not domination and control. As King, He frees us from sin and eternal death. His rule over our lives frees His subjects. As a King Jesus is responsible for His people and continues to care for us. As Shepherd, He sought out the one lost sheep. In turn, we have responsibilities and obligations also to Jesus. Jesus' teachings guide us into true freedom. His teachings and responsibilities of leadership He entrusted specifically to His apostles which continues today. Jesus does not abandon us and seeks to guide us through changing times through the church. Each of us was baptized into the kingly role of Christ. In a special way ordained people bring leadership and direction to the faithful. It is our "kingly" responsibility to provide leadership in the world creating a society and culture that is good and just. Exercising our baptismal kingly role is one of guidance and direction to those around us. Peer Ministry seeks to give teens the opportunity to learn and apply the skills of leadership in youth related events. Leadership can range

from outspoken and direct instruction or guidance to the quiet modeling of right behavior. A leader need not be an extrovert, outgoing and able to work with large groups. A leader may be a quiet person that provides positive direction and focus to smaller groups or even individuals around them. Jesus' example was not one of show or power, but one of gentle encouragement and deep love for those entrusted to him. Peer leaders are expected to care for those they lead and work towards providing clear leadership to others. A leader shares power and responsibility with others and seeks to use the gifts of others to accomplish tasks. For example, when working with soft spoken teens and large noisy groups, the soft spoken teen need not quiet the room by themselves, but seek the help of louder more outspoken individuals. It is not the responsibility of a teen to do everything, but rather the mark of a good leader to find and use the gifts of others around them.

The priestly, prophetic, and kingly missions of Christ are human expressions of one simple divine goal; gather all things to God the Father. This gathering is not one of possession or ownership, but of mutual love and belonging. Every teen that embraces their baptismal call walks not alone, but with the Holy Spirit. No teen or adult is the perfect servant, witness, or leader. God is God and we are not. Yet, the divine life has been opened to all the baptized and through them Christ's mission continues in mysterious and powerful ways. Scripture is filled with examples of faithful people (priests, prophets, kings) sometimes flawed that brought God's people into closer relationship through their imperfect service, witness, and leadership. God works with our limitations and weaknesses just as much as with our strengths.

**Peer Ministry Application  
2018/19 School Year**

Teen Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teen Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Teen Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will your grade be in the 2018/19 school year? \_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt size \_\_\_\_\_

Which team are you applying for? **Circle One**

Middle School Peer Team: (Must be in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the 18/19 school year)

**OR**

High School Peer Team: (Must be at least a sophomore in the 18/19 school year)

**Employment and/or Volunteer History (if Applicable) attach additional sheets as needed:**

Employed/Service From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name and phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_

Work Performed \_\_\_\_\_ Involving Minors? Y or N

Reason for leaving \_\_\_\_\_

**List three references who are not relatives – examples: scout leaders, coaches, teachers, neighbors:**

Please have each reference you provided, write a letter of reference for you and attach to this application.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Is reference letter provided? Y or N

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Is reference letter provided? Y or N

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Is reference letter provided? Y or N

**Peer Ministry Questions:**

What has drawn you to wanting to be a part of Peer Ministry?

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What strengths do you see yourself offering to Peer Ministry? (Drawing from our call to be Priest, Prophet, and King – see article attached Peer Ministry – Rooted in Baptism)

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What do you see as the role of a Peer Minister?

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What are some of your concerns that might affect your ability to fulfill the requirements of Peer Ministry? (For example.... programs/activities, any fears you might have for being on Peer Ministry.)

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Please list your activities. (This includes but not limited to – school, sports, community, church, family, etc...)

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As a member of Peer Ministry, we are asking you to make a strong commitment to the team. This is a commitment that isn't to be taken lightly. Read each expectation and talk it over with your parents on how you will fulfill each of these requirements. By initialing, you are committed to each expectation.

Teen Parent

- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Attend Tuesday night meetings from 6-8pm (if you are not present for a meeting you will be unable to take a lead in the formation night being planned so everyone must be present)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Have the willingness to help out / lead activities for Ave Maria retreats. This is strongly recommendation as it helps build connection with your peers in a more profound way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Ministry Retreat is MANDATORY (August 24-26<sup>th</sup> @ Ponderosa Retreat Center)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Be present regularly at Youth Formation Nights and when necessary arrive around 3:30pm (or at the designated time) and stay until 7:45pm (There is a debriefing time after Formation and this is crucial in developing as a leader and team to reflect on the activities of the night)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Must be willing to be in front of your peers and lead activities (we train and prepare you for doing these so if you have some fear of this that is okay. We will help you BUT we need your commitment in being willing to do it)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Attend parish activities (Mass EVERY week is expected but other activities the parish offers is based on your family's availability.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Keep team updated on email and/or phone number changes (we correspond with email and texting so it's important that you CHECK your email and respond as needed)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Be a positive example of youth in our parish (Whether you are at church, school, or with your family, you represent yourself as a Peer Minister).
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Ministry MUST be a priority

I have the desire to serve my peers as a Peer Minister and am signing this application as a sign of my willingness to commit to Peer Ministry as well as increasing my relationship with Jesus Christ.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I understand the commitment for myself and my youth and agree to help them in keeping this commitment through communication with the team, in transportation needs, and as well as the time this entails for my youth.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***“Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.”  
-1 Timothy 4:12***