

St. James-St. Leo Youth Ministry



We share updates to our Youth Ministry Core Team, as we transition this fall with Fr. George at St. Patrick and welcoming Fr. Azam as our new Associate Pastor. These changes ensure a vibrant program for our St. James and St. Leo high school teens.



Our Youth Ministry Core Team for 2025-26

Pamela Smith psmith@stjames-stleo.com
Gennie Holston gholston@stjames-stleo.com
Sheyla Tellez stellez@stjames-stleo.com

As our St. James Director of Religious Education, **Pamela Smith** will continue as the main contact for administration and oversight of Youth Ministry, as part of her responsibilities for sacramental formation for all ages (infant baptism, Faith Formation for Children, OCIA, and adult confirmation). She will continue to attend Youth Ministry gatherings.



Sheyla Tellez and Gennie Holston

As our new Youth Minister, **Gennie Holston** will lead our youth gatherings with her vibrant and outgoing spirit. Gennie grew up at St. James, participated in Faith Formation for Children and Youth Ministry, while volunteering in FFC through high school. Gennie received her BA and teaching credential from Loyola Marmount University in 2020, and has taught at both public and Catholic schools in the LA area for the past five years. Now relocated back here, she teaches 1st grade at St. Patrick School, and has joined our staff to plan and lead our Sunday gatherings.

Sheyla Tellez joins our core team as Youth Minister, partnering with Gennie at our youth gatherings, as well as acting as liaison for St. Leo families and our Youth Team. Sheyla grew up at St. Leo, attended St. James Academy, and has volunteered in Youth Ministry since high school. This year, Sheyla received her BA in Theology and Leadership from St. John Paul the Great University. Sheyla has been on our staff part-time for two years supporting parish communications and tech, and with her gentle spirit, will be an integral part of our Sunday evening gatherings.

Our **Youth Team** plays a vital role. Made up of post-confirmation juniors and seniors, as well as young adults from our parish, they help bridge the large group into meaningful small group experiences. With the goal of making sure every teen is known and welcomed by name, they will lead small group discussions, facilitate activities, and are a supportive presence at every gathering.

Our **Guest Speakers** will bring insight to our Sunday gatherings, welcoming our clergy, youth team, and other parishioners to share their wisdom and experience with our teens.

Parish Support for Youth Ministry - We Need You



Our mission with Youth Ministry is to raise up our next generation to be engaged disciples of Christ.

Attending to the catechetical, spiritual, and social needs of teens takes an entire parish! Whether you are directly involved with teens, contribute financially, or offer consistent prayer, we rely on everyone to ensure that our mission is a success.



What is the plan?

High School Youth Ministry encompasses two-year confirmation preparation, which typically begins in 9th grade.

Our Sunday gatherings are the core element of our high school program. Teens and their families are able to attend 5pm Mass, with teens joining us afterward for dinner and social time. Gatherings focus either on a catechetical topic, or a spiritual theme. A typical catechetical evening would consist of a guest speaker with small group discussion. Our spiritual gatherings would consist of prayer, meditation, music, and adoration. We rely on our clergy, music ministry, and key parishioners to support these catechetical and spiritual evenings. There is always room for fun activities on any evening.

We will also lead our teens on a weekend retreat in February at Whispering Winds. This retreat is a fun, engaging, and truly faith-inspiring experience for teens. This year, we partner at the retreat with St. John, Encinitas.

How can I help?

- First and foremost, we need your **prayers**. Please pray for our teens, our team, and the success of our mission. The consistent prayer of our parishioners is the most powerful support for our program.
- We need **financial support** for the retreat. We do ask parents for fees which cover most of it, but we would like to bring down the \$320 retreat fee for everyone, as well as be able to offer full or partial scholarships so every teen that would like to go on retreat can do so. If you can help with these goals, any amount would be a blessing.
- If you would like to be a **volunteer on our Youth Team**, contact Pamela Smith, psmith@stjames-stleo.com.
- **Parents**, it would be helpful to have all **registrations completed soon**, so we can focus on planning. We will be asking parents to sign up to help serve dinner on Sunday evenings. We also need parent volunteers at the retreat in February.

Register for Youth Ministry

stjamesandleo.org/youth-confirmation
Pamela Smith, psmith@stjames-stleo.com



Donate to Youth Ministry

osvhub.com/stjamesandleo/giving/funds/youth-ministry-fees



Volunteer for Youth Ministry

Pamela Smith, psmith@stjames-stleo.com



Whispering Winds 2025