



Help for Getting Started

Welcome!

Thanks for your interest in Just5Days. I really hope that you will be able to bring a group to Just5Days this summer. This resource is designed to help you talk with your parish or school leaders, your young people, and their parents about Just5Days and to get them on board.

We know that experiences that bring young people together for service, prayer, community, and faith sharing can have an enormous positive effect on them. We want to help you provide such an experience to the middle schoolers of your community.

Throughout the process, we are here to help you. You can always call to ask questions, seek an opinion, or clarify information. The Project Coordinator for Just5Days is Susan Searle and the Administrative Assistant is Nancy Flint. Keep our contact information handy!

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There are three parts to this resource:

- Communicating with Parish/School Leaders
- Communicating with Parents
- Communicating with Middle Schoolers

Use what is helpful!

Communicating with Parish/ School Leadership

For some parish leaders, the decision to go or not to go on Just5Days will reside within their control. For others, they will need to convince someone about the importance of this experience, the readiness of the middle schoolers, or perhaps they will need to answer some questions about safety or money or leadership.

If you are someone who needs ownership and/or permission from parish/school leadership to consider attending Just5Days, here are some suggestions:

1. Schedule a meeting with the parish/school leaders who will help make this decision. For the meeting, have the following:
 - a. A copy of the Just5Days Registration Packet (available through Nancy Flint – nancy@cmdnet.org – if you do not have one already)
 - b. Access to the Just5Days video (www.Just5Days.org)
 - c. An estimate of the total cost of the trip (see below)
 - d. A suggestion for which site your parish/school team would attend (with the information from the Registration Packet about that site).
2. Using the talking points below, make a case for why you believe that middle schoolers should have the opportunity to participate. Show the Just5Days video, if possible.
3. Using the talking points below, explain why you would like them to participate in the Just5Days program.
4. Provide information about the program site you would like to go to, the costs associated with participating, and a plan (if you have one) for how that money will be raised.
5. Throughout the conversation, leave time for questions to be asked, ideas to be explored, and doubts to be raised. This will help build ownership for Just5Days by the parish leaders.

Talking Points about the Importance of Middle School Service Experiences

- Middle schoolers love to work on projects, meet people, and make a difference with their time. They deserve the opportunity to do this in a way that will have a positive impact on others and will connect to their Catholic faith.
- Middle schoolers (and younger children) already go to camp and other week-long experiences. They are used to these types of experiences and if we choose wisely, the young people who attend Just5Days will be ready to be away from home and involved in this type of program.
- Middle Schoolers are open to new experiences and are excited about learning new things. We should capture these gifts and provide a Catholic experience that will launch them into a new understanding of what it means to be Christian.
- Middle schoolers are looking for ways to discover who they are and what they are good at doing. Service is an excellent way for them to discover their own

giftedness and to learn to answer the call to live the Good News in our world. Who better to walk that journey with them than us, their faith community?

- Sometimes people wonder why a group would travel to serve the poor when we have needs in our own community. In our own communities, we often don't recognize needs or social issues. Sometimes we need to get out of our comfort zone in order to be opened up to really seeing. When we go into communities and meet the homeless, the poor, and the marginalized face to face and get to know their stories and see them as brothers and sisters...we are able to recognize those needs in our own communities when we come home. Eyes are opened!

Talking Points for Why You Have Chosen Just5Days

- Just5Days is just for middle schoolers. The Just5Days program is designed to meet their developmental needs – with engaging learning, the right amount of sleep, time for play, service that is appropriate to their age and skill, and prayer and faith conversations that will capture their imagination and their heart.
- Just5Days is a Catholic service learning experience grounded in Scripture and Catholic social teaching. Participants will really learn about our Catholic call to respect the dignity of others and to work for the common good.
- Prayer is integrated into each day and is the foundation of the program. Morning prayer and evening prayer book-end the days, and the program culminates in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Your parish or school team will stay together for the week. As an adult leader, you will stay with your team for the week, and never be asked to be responsible for youth from another parish. The Safe Environment rules from your diocese are always respected and complied with at Just5Days.
- Staying with your own youth at the worksites is important – you know your young people and can challenge them, listen to them, encourage them, and see the transformation process happen.
- Just5Days is a program of the Center for Ministry Development. CMD has been providing service learning experiences through the Young Neighbors in Action program since 1993. Just5Days was launched in 2010. Both programs have a solid reputation for providing quality service, experienced and talented program leaders, and a consistent record of providing a safe environment for young people. The Center for Ministry Development is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization.

Budget Considerations

- The cost for Just5Days is \$290 per person.
- If a parish sends a team of 10 youth and 2 adults, it would be \$3480.00 in program fees. These fees cover all supplies, meals, housing, program, etc.
- Teams provide their own transportation during the week, so you can either use personal cars/vans, a parish vehicle, or rent vehicles. These costs will vary greatly depending on the options available to you. Even if using personal cars, you should put money aside to pay for gas, at least \$100 per vehicle. MapQuest can give you a guess at the money you will spend on gas to and from your Just5Days site, but you will also be using your vehicle throughout the week to go to your service site, which will increase your miles.
- Most parishes participating in Just5Days do not need overnight accommodations to reach their Just5Days site, but if you do, CMD will try to help you find a parish that can accommodate you.
- Consider setting aside a small amount of money for a meal during your travel to the Just5Days site, for hospitality during your organizational meetings, and other small expenses, about \$50-\$100.

Additional Things to Know

- When you register for Just5Days, you will receive a Team Preparation Manual that includes a variety of resources to help you prepare for your Just5Days program. The Team Preparation Manual includes:
 - All the forms – permission, health forms, rules, how to pack, etc.
 - Budgeting and fundraising ideas
 - Ways to prepare the families of the middle schoolers
 - Ways to prepare the young people
 - Ways to prepare the adult leaders who will be accompanying the young people
 - Ideas for involving the parish community
 - Information about how to interact with the program team in the months prior to your Just5Days experience
- Our staff will help you make sense of anything that is confusing – Susan and Nancy as you prepare, and your program staff for the specific Just5Days site as the program date approaches.

Communicating with Parents about Just5Days

Parents of middle schoolers will have a lot of questions about Just5Days that they will need answered prior to signing their son or daughter up for the program. This resource gives you information and ideas of how you can answer their questions and assure parents of the good that will come from Just5Days.

An Introduction

Parents want what is best for their children. They want their children to learn, experience new things, have fun, grow, mature, and live their faith. And they want to make sure that all of that happens within a program that is safe, age-appropriate, and faithful to the Church's teachings. Part of your job in communicating with parents is to help them see the value of the program while also helping them to assess whether it is the right program for their son or daughter.

Included below are the following:

1. A sample letter: This should be adapted for your parish, but can be used as an email or letter to parents of youth who might consider participating in Just5Days.
2. An information sheet about Just5Days: This can be included in a mailing, given out at an informational meeting, posted to a website and/or used in answering questions within conversations.

Additional resources:

1. www.Just5Days.org: This website has a video that can be viewed, information about the program, quotes from previous participants, and other resources.
2. Just5Days Registration Packet: Within this packet (pages 8-10) is specific information about the housing for each Just5Days site. Parents will be interested in this information.
3. Brochure: The brochure for Just5Days can be printed on a regular printer (in color or black and white) and is available on our website (www.Just5Days.org)
4. Talking Points: Included above (Communicating with Parish/School Leaders) are talking points that may be helpful in answering a parent's questions.

Sample Parent Letter

Greetings!

[Name of parish/school] is very excited to be participating in the Just5Days program this summer. Just5Days is a summer service program designed just for middle schoolers, sponsored by the Center for Ministry Development. This program provides a five-day experience for middle schoolers that includes three days of direct service to those in need, as well as experiences to help middle schoolers learn about justice and to bring their experiences to God within prayer and liturgy. We are planning on participating in the Just5Days being held in [insert site location] the week of [insert date and any information about travel that would be helpful].

We believe this will be an excellent opportunity for your child [or insert name], and we hope that you will consider having [him/her] participate. [Include information here about why you have chosen to participate in Just5Days, including previous experiences with the program or Young Neighbors in Action.]

Enclosed is some information to help you understand more about the Just5Days program, including the brochure for the program and an information sheet. [Insert time, date, and location of informational meeting if one is scheduled.] The cost for our parish trip to Just5Days is [insert amount that includes \$285 per person, plus travel and other expenses.]. [Insert information about approximate family cost and fundraising options, if known.]

If you and your child decide to have him/her participate in Just5Days, there will be some additional meetings [insert dates or a general time frame] to help us prepare. You will be invited to participate in the learning session that we do in the spring and will also receive some additional information to help you and your child prepare.

I am happy to answer any additional questions that you may have. If you would like your child to participate, we will need to know by [insert date and contact information, and any financial contribution that accompanies their initial registration.]

Sincerely,

Name

Phone number

Email address



Q. What is *Just5Days*?

A. *Just5Days* is a five-day service experience for teams of middle schoolers and adults. *Just5Days* programs are being offered at several different sites within the United States during the summer of 2018. The program anticipates over 1000 participants. *Just5Days* brings a strong, Catholic perspective to the work of assisting people in need.

Q. Who sponsors the program?

A. *Just5Days* is sponsored and directed by the *Center for Ministry Development*, a national, non-profit organization that works each year with over 100 dioceses in the United States, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, and Belize. The *Center for Ministry Development* (CMD) has been providing service learning programs since 1993 through *Young Neighbors in Action*, a program for high school youth that currently serves over 2,500 youth each summer. The *Center for Ministry Development* also provides quality leadership training programs and resources for ministry leaders. Among the programs and resources developed by CMD are the *National Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies Program* (for adults), *Youth Ministry Access* (for youth ministers), and *Fashion Me a People* (for parish leaders). To find out more about CMD, visit www.CMDnet.org.

Q. Where will my child stay while taking part in the program?

A. [Insert information from the Registration Packet (pages 8-10) about your specific site and include the paragraph below.]

All housing sites are located in safe neighborhoods, and the program staff ensures that facilities are locked while participants are away from the building and at night.

Q. What type of service might my child do during Just5Days?

A. Job sites, sponsored by church and social service agencies, differ from place to place. Each parish team will be assigned to one service site that they will visit for three consecutive days, allowing the youth to become comfortable within the service site and see the results of their work. Jobs and sites are selected with safety in mind; all work and travel takes place during the daylight hours. Work opportunities include: soup kitchens, food pantries, nursing homes, homes for refugees, homes for mothers and children, Catholic Worker homes, thrift stores, community gardens, and environmental clean-up projects.

Q. What will my child do when they're not involved in service?

A. Each afternoon, participants will have a chance to talk about their own service experiences that day and learn about what others did. The evenings involve participants in learning more about their Catholic faith and the demands of justice, through presentations, skits, activities, games, and discussions. The day begins with morning prayer and ends with a prayer experience, and the whole week culminates with Mass. Just5Days includes at least two hours a day for recreation, including an hour each evening for recreation and play.

Q. Who will be in charge of my child while he/she is at Just5Days?

A. [Insert the name and position of the parish/school leader of the trip] is leading the trip on behalf of [insert name of parish/school – (and you can also include the names of any other adults you know to be participating)] She/He will be in charge of the group throughout the program, and your child will never be left in the care of an adult who is not from our parish/school.

Q. How do I know that my child will be safe and well cared for during Just5Days?

A. All Just5Days program staff members receive a thorough background check through the Center for Ministry Development. Additionally, all program staff and parish/school leaders (including those from our parish/school) must go through the diocesan Safe Environment training and background check within their home diocese. These adults will always be with your child – at the program site and at the work site – to ensure their safety, both physically and emotionally.

Just5Days provides healthy meals and snacks and participants will have the opportunity for eight hours of sleep each night. Additionally, the program is designed to be engaging and interesting for middle schoolers, with a wide variety of activities to meet the needs of the participants.

Q. Where do I go if I want more information?

A. Parish Leader: [insert name and phone/email]

Website: www.Just5Days.org

Just5Days Program Director: Susan Searle / susan@cmdnet.org

Communicating with Middle Schoolers

There are a variety of ways that you can interest middle schoolers in Just5Days. The following are ideas to help you think about the strategy that will be most useful in your particular situation. Remember, Just5Days is designed for those who will be going into 7, 8, and 9 grades during the summer (or, stated a different way, your school year 6, 7, and 8 graders).

Personal Invitation...

The best way to interest young people in Just5Days is to invite them personally to attend. Consider the following when putting together a list of middle schoolers to invite...

- Invite catechists and middle school ministry volunteers to suggest young people who they think would match well to Just5Days.
- Ask the Catholic school teachers to make recommendations for young people they think will match well with Just5Days.
- Ask the teachers in the public schools that your youth attend to make recommendations to you.
- Consider those young people involved in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, 4-H, and other organizations. Ask their leaders for suggestions.
- Consider those young people who are involved as altar servers or in other parish ministries.
- Consider young people who already volunteer in service, through a family commitment, a school or parish service club, or other opportunities in your area.

Send out a personal invitation to these young people and their parents (see Sample Parent Letter) above. You may wish to personally (face-to-face) invite the young people prior to sending out the letter, giving them a copy of the Just5Days brochure and/or showing them the video (www.Just5Days.org)

Bulletin Announcements/School Newsletters/Facebook

Use the tools at your disposal to get the word out to your parish and/or school community that you are planning a Just5Days trip. This will allow you to reach the most people – making them aware of the experience and allowing young people and/or their parents to express interest. Use the following resources and make them your own...

For Bulletins, Newsletters, Facebook, etc.

Calling All Middle Schoolers... are you interested in making a difference and changing the world? Our parish (school) is planning a trip to (insert place and date) for Just5Days this summer. Just5Days is a five-day service program where

you will be involved in direct service to poor and needy as you also learn about your faith and what it means to follow Jesus. Come to an informational meeting to get all the details to make your summer a summer to remember!

Just5Days Meeting

Date:

Time:

Place:

Bring your parents!

One Last Idea: Be Selective!

Although every young person has gifts to share and needs to be met, Just5Days is not a program that is appropriate for all middle schoolers. You should be looking for middle schoolers who are mature for their age, have the capacity for community living, have a desire to help others, are good group participants, and those who have been away from home previously.

For this reason, you may want to have a selection process that gives you an opportunity to assess the readiness of the young person. This can be done by asking young people to fill out a short questionnaire and/or attend an informational meeting with parents. You should always reserve the right to say no to a young person who wishes to participate if you believe that bringing them will have a negative effect on your parish/school group, the overall experience of all the Just5Days participants, and/or the young person who wishes to attend.