

St. Brendan Parish School

Award Category: An innovative project in promoting Catholic identity

Location: San Francisco, California **Students:** 322

Archdiocese: San Francisco **Grades:** K-8

Principal: Carol Grewal **Website:** stbrendansf.com

In-School Youth Ministry

The new pastor of St. Brendan Parish School in San Francisco, CA, wanted to encourage school children to become more involved with the parish. He instituted a Youth Ministry program that met after school and on weekends; but due to the many activities and commitments students already had, attendance was low. Rather than give up on a good idea, the pastor teamed with pastoral associate Sr. Necy Guan and principal Carol Grewal to change the program. Rather than ask students to come to Youth Ministry activities, they would bring the activities to them.

THE ADDITION OF THE SCHOOL-PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAM HAS PROVEN TO BE A VALUABLE COMPONENT OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM.

Parish-trained volunteer leaders meet with students during school hours once a month to help them explore the ways in which God is part of their everyday lives. Student-designed group activities focus on prayer, stewardship, leadership, and more.

Activities have included composing Thanksgiving prayers for a prayer book, creating game shows with religious themes, and creating holiday decorations. Designing Christmas cards for hospital patients, filling Christmas stockings for homeless shelter residents, and making sandwiches for the St. Vincent de Paul Society are among the service activities.

The addition of the school-parish Youth Ministry program has proven to be a valuable component of the religious education curriculum. By participating in both traditional and non-traditional explorations of Catholic identity, St. Brendan's eighth-graders score an average of 20 percent higher than average on the NCEA ACRE test. Growing numbers of students also participate in parish activities outside of school hours.

