



HANDS OF CHRIST Helpful Hints

An Addendum from the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis

The *Hands of Christ* recognition is an outstanding way for all parishes to honor their high school seniors. We are happy to provide this opportunity for you to celebrate your exceptional young men and women and their discipleship.

As you can tell from the outlined criteria, this recognition is reserved for seniors that give consistent attention to worship as well as service in your parish. They are the young people who commit to Sunday Mass and step up to volunteer in a ministry of the parish. They are stewards of their time with God as well as their sharing of time and talent with the needs of the parish and the greater community. They are also young men and women who model Christ-like behavior to their peers. It is suggested that your parish leadership spend time prayerfully considering the gifts of your young parishioners. Below are some strategies that might help you to determine your recipients and celebrate your senior class.

1. The process should begin with the pastor and staff. Be sure to include any volunteer staff that takes a leadership role with high school-aged youth such as the CYO athletic director or the Catholic scouting leader in your parish. A youth minister should spend some time conversing with volunteers who serve on the youth ministry or formation team, those who coordinate liturgical ministries and those who handle other parish ministries such as a social/service ministry; don't forget special interest groups in your parish like a theater group or Stephen ministry. The parish leadership should determine the criteria that is most important to them in affirming seniors.
2. You may decide to open the nomination process to the parish by placing an article in your bulletin. **Please do not directly share the registration link and process with parishioners**, as the final decision for the award recipients should be made BY parish leadership and **submitted only by parish staff**. Many parishes find it helpful to open the nomination process to the public but decide upon the recipients as a parish staff. A benefit of opening the nomination process to the public is the assurance that you have given all seniors an opportunity to be considered and the likelihood of a senior "falling through the cracks" goes down measurably. This also allows for the opportunity to reach out to parishioners who might not be registered and or have recently moved into the parish.
3. Some parishes use a process of nominating seniors and then communicating the nomination to that young man or woman. In turn, the young person is asked to write a short essay about why they feel they should be considered for this recognition. That encourages ownership of the recognition! Nominations are sent into our office once the parish leadership has received the essays and decided on their recipients.
4. Why nominate? Some may think that it is unnecessary to acknowledge a senior's participation in the parish or think it is unfair to single out certain seniors. Recognizing a commitment to the faith is a great way to affirm a young person on their faith journey before an especially difficult period of disconnection and even disaffiliation. As young people go off into the world of adulthood, they may take with them their special encounter with our Bishop and the words they heard in the witness of their peers. It is an excellent way for them to see they are part of the larger church and connected with like-minded individuals. The ceremonies are prayerful and inspiring and a great tool for evangelization!
5. It is also recommended that recipients be acknowledged at the parish. Some parishes choose to have their own Hands of Christ ceremonies with the pastor if the distance or dates are not manageable for diocesan ceremonies. Other parishes acknowledge Hands of Christ recipients at a graduate Mass. Many parishes write a special letter to recipients letting them know the gifts that were observed in nominating them for the recognition. This is a great occasion for the pastor or youth ministry coordinator to make a personal connection with a young person.
6. Every parish is different. Establish the process that works best for your parish and honors the purpose of this special recognition! Our office looks forward to celebrating your young people with you!