



Marist International Community East Harlem



- **Invited to build a Church with a Marian face**
- **A significant evangelizing presence among children and young people in situations of vulnerability.**
- **Interculturality**
- **An emphasis on spirituality**

Youth Ministry at Saint Cecilia



We share moments of spirituality, we work deeper on Christian values, we share personal experiences and we also have activities where we focus on team work, activities that help them develop empathy and solidarity. Most of the members attend as part of the requirements of the parish in order to have their confirmation sacrament, so this argument becomes a challenge for us, How can we encourage teenagers to come to the group because they want to be part of it, instead of attending as a requirement?

It becomes a challenge to be a group where they feel supported, where they feel family, where they feel part of something.



The number of members who attend every session is up to different reasons, some of them come from broken families so they depend on their family set ups, some others struggle with school activities or distances. Most of the teenagers who come to the group have latino origins however the group is open for anyone and we also have some african american teenagers. In most of the cases they are sons and daughters of immigrants without documents, but they all were born in United States.

Even though most of them have similar origins, it is hard to see a deep integration among them, there is no identity as latinos neither as americans. Most of them come from public schools, the few ones who come from catholic schools are not Marists, it is important to mention this because it means that the Marist community in East Harlem is approaching those in the peripheries.



Young Leaders Formation.

Before we meet the teenagers at Saint Cecilia on Fridays, we have meetings with the young leaders in order to provide a space for them where they can express their own needs and feelings in a personal level and in a youth ministry level, it is a moment in which they feel supported, it is also a place to provide formation and strategies to plan the activities for the teenagers group.

Christian values and healthy environments are the main topics of our gatherings, it is an opportunity for us to share what the Marist spirituality and mission means, we share our Marist hearts with them, it is important to mention that any of them have belonged to a Marist school, so they are learning about the Marist life and mission.



They are our hope of a fraternal and solidarity community. Some of the sessions are held at the parish and some others are at our Marist house.

Their commitment reinforces ours to work harder.



Building spirituality and community

Friday mornings our community opens its doors to welcome a group of people who want to develop their spirituality, they are people who want to be committed christians to their own faith and spiritual living, they just needed a place to meet and build a community in support and solidarity. Our role in the catholic church, our role as christians and Marist spirituality are the main topics at our gatherings. We have prayer at the chapel, we develop some topics and we share coffee and life.

The group is becoming bigger little by little, some men are becoming interested in what we do, there have been opportunities where families bring their children and it becomes a moment for them to create some connections. It seems this is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the value of the christian family, it is not just a place for adults but it is a place for children to share with others and to create friendship.



It is a commitment to strengthen the value of the family and our role as catholics.

ESL classes

Together with catholic charities, classes of English as second language are offered to any person who might need it. It is a place offered by Our Lady Queen of Angels school, a Marist brother, a christian brother and three lay women offer they help as english teachers. Most of the students are parents of the school however it is open to everybody. They are given books they need and they are divided into three levels. Besides english classes they have moments to celebrate special occasions, so this means it is also a place to share and build community.



Handcraft Mondays

Every monday, catholic charities offers a space to teach women some handcrafts, it is an opportunity for women to connect with others and to learn something new, the different materials they need and the teacher are provided by catholic charities as well. The last monday of every month they gather in our Marist house to share their experiences, this becomes a chance to meet them, and to listen to them.



Ongoing Formation

As we eat to nourish our bodies it is also important to nurture our souls and to enrich our spirituality. We are willing to keep working on ourselves, we are willing to have more formation and to find places where we can learn more. Retreats and workshops are great opportunities to meet others who work in youth ministry, so we listen to them in order to learn from their experiences and to enrich our praxis, it is a chance to see what others do, it is a chance to see different contexts.

