Youth Bike Rides

* Open to 6th grade and up.
* 2-day events, 25 miles each day. We average around 10 mph. Rides have been on a Thursday-Friday or Monday-Tuesday.
* Bike helmets are required. I have gotten a little complaining with this requirement, but no exceptions are made; no helmet-no ride.
* We head out around 9 in the morning and will get to our last stop of the day between 3 and 4 in the afternoon.
* All the overnight luggage is packed in a vehicle before we head out and they drive it to the overnight house and drop everything off before we get there.
* Route is planned out ahead of time. Avoiding highways as much as possible (stay on side roads).
* We have a vehicle follow us with their hazard lights on and with a sign saying ‘caution – bikes on road’. This vehicle should either be a truck, van, or pulling a trailer so if someone needs a break from riding, the bike can be loaded and the child can ride in the vehicle until the next rest stop.
* In 2015, we had about 15 youth and about 5 adult chaperones each ride; this is a good ratio.
* A rest stop is planned every 5 to 8 miles (usually at a parishioner’s house or a park). Restrooms are a necessity at these stops. Water and snacks are transported in the vehicle.
* Lunch is one of the rest stops and it is worked out ahead of time with a family or group to provide the lunch.
* When we get to the overnight stop, we have dinner and then a series of activities/games for the kids. A house with a pool is a great choice! Also, a campfire pit is very popular.
* Camping out works the best. Arranging for several campers to be there works best that way you don’t have to worry as much about the tents if the weather isn’t ideal.
* We also had an outdoor movie, but this isn’t ideal because by the time it is dark enough for the movie, it gets pretty late and the kids start falling asleep. If there is a shed or large garage available, this may work better.
* An ice cream stop is very popular and I found having it at the end works better than in the middle of the ride, keeps them motivated!
* I had a t-shirt made for the rides in 2015. I may have drawstring bags made for at least one of this year’s rides as I think these will be popular too.
* All this is a load of fun, but I also incorporate some form of catechesis into the rides. We have prayed a decade of the Rosary at each stop on one of the rides and on another ride, we learned about a saint at each rest stop.
* This year, I may have a discussion/activity about a spiritual or corporal work of mercy at each stop with something that they will collect to help them remember what they are.
* We also incorporated an hour of Adoration after dinner on the first ride. The kids were very respectful during this time, better than I thought they would be.
* On our first ride, we started out by everyone joining the parish in the Thursday morning Mass with a special blessing at the end of Mass. We had Mass at our lunch stop one of the days too.
* Blessing the bikes with holy water before heading out on the first day is a good idea too.
* A celebration pizza party, with ice cream, is a great choice at the end of the ride.
* I will be giving away several bike helmets at our youth days in the coming months to help generate more excitement about the rides.
* For 2015, the rides were just offered to kids in the parish. They are asking if they can bring friends that are not in the parish☺ It will definitely be open to any kids in 2016.
* I plan on having a few loaner bikes for 2016 because I found that some kids don’t have a very good bike for biking 50 miles and this will help.
* I did not charge for these rides, expenses came out of my youth ministry budget. Charging a small amount is not unreasonable since they will get 4 or 5 meals out of the ride along with a shirt or drawstring bag.