

URBAN CHALLENGE PROGRAM  
ROMERO CENTER MINISTRIES

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Based in Camden, NJ, Romero Center Ministries provides Catholic education and retreat experiences inspired by Archbishop Oscar Romero's prophetic witness.

We seek personal, communal, and societal transformation by living ministry as proclaimed in Christ's Gospel.

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## URBAN CHALLENGE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Urban Challenge Program is an urban, service-learning, immersion experience rooted in the Catholic faith tradition. Offering a point of access to the lives and stories of the people of Camden, NJ, and its surrounding communities, the Urban Challenge Program is a unique educational and retreat opportunity that serves mainly suburban high school and college-aged students.

**The Urban Challenge Program is built upon four fundamental components: prayer, service, education, and reflection.** We hope that incorporating these components in the UC Program will lead participants to future action on behalf of the poor and vulnerable.

**Prayer** allows students a means to focus on their activities and set a meaningful backdrop for their experience in Camden. Prayer includes reflection on Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, and words from figures in our faith tradition— including Archbishop Oscar Romero— whose lives were changed by encountering Christ in the poor.

**Service** is arranged by the staff of the UC Program with the intent of creating a space in which students will not only serve in the traditional sense (manual labor, babysitting, neighborhood clean-ups, serving food at soup kitchens and food banks) but also be present to the personhood of others (by spending time with people at nursing homes, rehabilitation Centers, homeless shelters, drop-in Centers for people infected and affected with HIV and AIDs, etc). These types of service experience allow students to enter into relationships which expose them to the challenges of life in the city of Camden and the sundry issues that confront persons living in America’s inner cities.

**Educational activities** (such as media and simulations, tours of the City of Camden, and creative projects focused on social inequality) aim to work from the starting point of relationships formed at service to increase the knowledge of participants about those issues they have encountered. With those service experiences and educational activities in mind, the UC Program, also, incorporates lectures by local professionals and members of our Young Adult Ministry program. These lecturers address groups with information that will enhance their learning experience and equip them with the insight of people who have actively followed God’s call in their life to realize the way they would live and work in relation to others.

**Reflections** round out the Program and allow students an opportunity to connect faith, service, and education. Through group discussion, students are invited to consider all that has happened – what they have seen, what they have heard, what they have felt – as they have been a part of the Program. They are called to awaken to: the intersection of their life with the lives of those in need, Christ’s call to respond to the needs of others, and the gifts and talents they possess that they might use in the service of that response.

UC Program participants (students and chaperones) are expected to fully participate in all programming. There may be times when participants will feel uncomfortable or unsure of themselves: this is okay. We recognize that everyone has their own story and is at a different place on their journey. We believe that through challenging ourselves to live “outside our comfort zones,” we open up to deepening our relationships with God, each other, and ourselves. The UC Program is available in overnight, weekend, and week-long formats. Please note that there may be multiple groups at the Romero Center at the same time. While groups will not be sleeping in the same rooms, they will likely be together for meals, large group reflection, and for evening educational activities.

**What are the accommodations at the Romero Center?**

Our accommodations at the Romero Center are comfortable but simple. Participants will sleep in same-gender rooms of two or four. There are separate communal bathrooms for men and women. We have large community rooms for reflections and activities, a chapel, kitchens, and dining rooms.



**What does a typical Urban Challenge retreat day consist of?**

The day typically begins at 8:00 AM when all participants gather for morning prayer and reflection. From there, the students leave for their work sites between 9:00 and 9:30 and return to the Romero Center between 3:00 and 3:30 PM. Upon their return, participants will be engaged in a full afternoon and evening of activity for learning and building community. We end the evening with a reflection and prayer. We encourage participants to get as much rest as possible as we maintain a very ambitious schedule!

**What kind of work will I be doing at the service sites?**

We partner with a variety of social service organizations throughout Camden and Philadelphia. The work sites may include: schools and pre-schools, nursing homes, rehabilitation Centers, homeless shelters, soup kitchens and food banks, housing rehabilitation, drop-in Centers for persons infected and affected with HIV and AIDS, and other social service agencies in the area. Some sites require more physical labor than others. More often than not, participants will be asked to be a ministry of presence for those they are serving.

**How safe will I be while in Camden?**

The safety of our visitors is a priority. We are located on a parish campus with much activity. Our building is equipped with an alarm system and secure locks on both our doors and gate. Students are always accompanied by an adult. We work with social service sites in both Camden and Philadelphia with whom we have long-standing relationships. Our staff is here throughout the day and well into the evening; adult chaperones stay with the students overnight. If you have specific concerns about safety, please feel free to contact us so that we can address your concerns directly.

**I am not Catholic. Will I be welcome to participate in the programs that the Romero Center has to offer?**

Absolutely. Our retreats are rooted in the Gospel and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, but we welcome people of all faiths and spiritual traditions, as well as those who are struggling with or discerning their spiritual journey. We strive to provide a hospitable atmosphere to all those who come to Romero Center Ministries, and we promise to walk with you, no matter where you are on your journey of faith.

URBAN CHALLENGE FEES

#NIGHTS	STUDENTS	CHAPERONES
<b>1 Night</b>	<b>\$90.00</b>	<b>\$65.00</b>
<b>2 Nights</b>	<b>\$160.00</b>	<b>\$110.00</b>
<b>3 Nights</b>	<b>\$235.00</b>	<b>\$155.00</b>
<b>4 Nights</b>	<b>\$305.00</b>	<b>\$200.00</b>
<b>5 Nights</b>	<b>\$380.00</b>	<b>\$245.00</b>
<b>6 Nights</b>	<b>\$450.00</b>	<b>\$290.00</b>

**Total Number of Chaperones\* Required:**

**Co-Ed Group of Minors**

**0–10 students:**

1 male chaperone + 1 female chaperone

**11-20 students:**

2 male chaperones + 2 female chaperones

**21-30 students:**

3 male chaperones + 3 female chaperones

**31-40 students:**

3 male chaperones + 3 female chaperones

**Single-Gender Group of Minors**

**0–10 students:**

2 chaperones (same-gender as students)

**11-20 students:**

3 chaperones (same-gender as students)

**21-30 students:**

5 chaperones (same-gender as students)

**31-40 students:**

6 chaperones (same-gender as students)

**Total Group Fee = (#Nights x #Students) + (#Nights x #Chaperones)**

**We require a non-refundable deposit of 20% of your total fee within ten business days of scheduling in order to confirm your reservation.**

Please take your commitment to your Urban Challenge reservation very seriously. Please do not reserve spots for the Urban Challenge Program that you are not entirely certain you will fill. We turn many students away because of capacity limitations; please keep others in mind when scheduling your group.

Romero Center Ministries’ major source of funding is the Urban Challenge Program, which does not fully cover the cost associated with running the program. We rely on your reservation when budgeting funding for the upcoming fiscal year. Unfulfilled reservations are a significant hardship for the Center.

Thank you for your intentionality in scheduling.

\*While you are welcome to bring more chaperones of either gender, we must have the minimum required number of chaperone of *each gender* in order to accommodate your group. We are not able to make exceptions to this policy. Thank you for collaborating with us to ensure the safety and quality of the students’ experience.

Chaperones must be at least 21 years old. Chaperones must remain for the entire program. Chaperones are responsible for ensuring that participants are well-behaved and actively engaged in their Urban Challenge Experience. Chaperones are responsible for addressing all discipline and medical issues. All groups are responsible for ensuring their chaperones have completed a criminal history background check -- the results must satisfy the Diocese of Camden Policy Regarding Criminal History Background Checks for Employees and Volunteers who have Contact with Children or Young People. For more information on these policies, please see the [Diocese of Camden’s Chaperone Policy, sections V and VI](#). See the [Diocese of Camden’s Standards for Protection webpage](#) for additional information.



## WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

- Sleeping bag or twin-size bed sheets, towel, wash cloth
- Personal toiletries (shampoo & conditioner, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, sunscreen, etc.)
- Journal or notebook
- \$3.00 for social justice activity
- Water bottle (to take with you to the service sites)

### Appropriate clothes:

- Long pants and closed-toed shoes are *mandatory* for all service sites
- Clothes that can get dirty
- Shirts that are modest
- Sandals or flip-flops may be worn at the Romero Center only, not at service sites
- Be prepared for hot, cold, rain, whatever!
- Bring church clothes if you will be here for Sunday morning

## WHAT CAN'T I BRING?

- iPods, MP3 players, etc.
- Cell phones (If you bring one, it will stay in your room at all times and you will leave it at the Romero Center while you're at the work site)
- Anything that is not replaceable or has significant value (e.g. jewelry, computer, etc.)
- A lot of money

## URBAN CHALLENGE CODE OF CONDUCT

The following list is intended to be representative, though by no means comprehensive, of rules and guidelines created to ensure the integrity of the Romero Center Ministries programs and the experience of the participants. *Any infraction of these rules may result in immediate termination of participation in the activities of the program and expulsion from the Center.*

- Be open and immerse yourself in this experience.
- Listen reverently and respectfully to others, including: fellow Urban Challenge participants, chaperones, Romero Center Ministries staff, guest presenters, all guests and staff members at worksites, and anyone else who you might encounter during your Urban Challenge experience.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Pitch in with chores around the Center (e.g. kitchen clean-up, keeping the Center neat).
- Do not flush anything other than bodily waste and toilet paper down the toilet.
- Do not eat or drink anywhere other than the specified dining area on the first floor.
- Report any damage to a Romero Center Ministries staff member immediately.
- Do not have your cell phone on the first floor of the Romero Center or with you at the work site.
- Do not roughhouse, throw balls or other objects, or do anything else that could damage the building, furniture, equipment, or other contents or which could cause injury to yourself or others. Participants will be billed for all damages that occur during their stay.
- Do not open the front door.
- Do not open the windows on the first floor.
- Do not smoke, consume alcohol, or use illegal drugs.
- Do not go into anyone else's dorm room under any circumstances.
- Do not touch anyone else's belongings.
- Do not engage at any time in actions which: endanger yourself or others, are contrary to Catholic teaching, are publicly scandalous, and/or are disruptive to the program.



# Romero Center Ministries

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