

Comprehensive Youth Ministry

Youth ministry is more than programs and events. It is “the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people, and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community.” (*A Vision of Youth Ministry*, p. 6, quoted in RTV 1). To be most effective, this is a ministry to, with, by, and for young people that involves their families, their parish community, and the larger community. At the heart of ministry with young people is the presence of caring, supportive relationships where youth experience the Good News in the flesh.

A comprehensive approach to youth ministry utilizes the eight components identified in *Renewing the Vision* as a framework: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship. These components guide our efforts in proclaiming the Good News, connecting young people with the faith community, and calling our young people to the challenge of discipleship.

- “The Ministry of Advocacy engages the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community” and within society. (RTV, p. 27) The ministry of advocacy includes protecting the sanctity of human life, speaking with and on behalf of young people, empowering the voice of young people, and developing partnerships in building a healthy community.
- “The Ministry of Catechesis most effectively promotes the faith development of young and older adolescents when the curriculum is focused on important faith themes of the Church and on the developmental needs and life experiences of adolescents.” (RTV, p. 30) It helps young people enrich and expand their understanding of the Scriptures and the sacred tradition. It provides a healthy future by encouraging youth to live faithfully in providing real life applications so that they may grow as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives.
- “The Ministry of Community Life builds an environment of love, support, appreciation for diversity, and judicious acceptance that models Catholic principles; develops meaningful relationships; and nurtures Catholic faith.” (RTV, p. 34) This included relationships between youth and caring adults, but not exclusively.
- “The Ministry of Evangelization shares the good news of the reign of God and invites young people to hear about the Word Made Flesh.” (RTV, p. 36) Drawing from Jesus’ example, evangelization involves the community’s pronouncements and living witnesses of adults and young people that the reign of God is realized in and through Jesus. The ministry of evangelization incorporates several essential elements: witness, outreach, proclamation, invitation, conversion, and discipleship.
- “The Ministry of Justice and Service nurtures in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching; empowers young people to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the

causes of human suffering; and infuses the concepts of justice, peace, and human dignity into all ministry efforts." (RTV, p. 38)

- "The Ministry of Leadership Development calls forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities." (RTV, p. 40)
- "The Ministry of Pastoral Care is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus' care for people, especially those who were hurting and in need." (RTV, p. 42) It involves promoting positive adolescent and family development through a variety of positive adolescent and family development through a variety of positive (preventive) strategies, caring for adolescents and families in crisis through supports, counseling, and referral to appropriate community agencies; providing guidance as young people face life decisions and make moral choices, and challenging systems that are obstacles to positive development.
- "The Ministry of Prayer and Worship celebrates and deepens young people's relationship with Jesus Christ through the bestowal of grace, communal prayer, and liturgical experiences; it awakens their awareness of the Spirit at work in their lives, it incorporates young people more fully in the sacramental life of the Church, especially Eucharist; it nurtures the personal prayer life of young people, and it fosters family rituals and prayer." (RTV, p. 44)

The Ministry of Advocacy

Open your mouth in behalf of the [mute], and for the rights of the destitute; Open your mouth, decree what is just, defend the needy and the poor (Prv 31:8–9).

We seek to shape a society—and a world—with a clear priority for families and children [adolescents] in need and to contribute to the development of policies that help families protect their children's lives and overcome the moral, social, and economic forces that threaten their future. . . . As believers and citizens, we need—each of us—to use our values, voices, and votes to hold our public officials accountable and to shape a society that puts our children first (*Putting Children and Families First*, pp. 1, 7).

The ministry of advocacy engages the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community. It places adolescents and families first by analyzing every policy and program—domestic, parish-based, diocesan, and international—for its impact on adolescents and families. Poor, vulnerable, and at-risk adolescents have first claim on our common efforts. The ministry of advocacy struggles against economic and social forces that threaten adolescents and family life, such as poverty, unemployment, lack of access to affordable health care, lack of decent housing, and discrimination. The ministry of advocacy supports policies and programs that support and empower adolescents and their families and works to overcome poverty, provide decent jobs, and promote equal opportunity. In all advocacy efforts we must remember to focus on adolescents and families with the greatest need. This is the "option for the poor" in action (*Putting Children and Families First*).

As a Church, we need to provide strong moral leadership; to stand up for adolescents, especially those who are voiceless and powerless in society. We call upon all ministry leaders and faith communities to use the resources of our faith community, the resources and talents of all our people, and the opportunities of this democracy to shape a society more respectful of the life, dignity, and rights of adolescents and their families.

The ministry of advocacy includes

- affirming and protecting the sanctity of human life as a gift from God and building societal respect for those who most need protection and support—the unborn, the poor, the disadvantaged, the sick, and the elderly;
- standing with and speaking on behalf of young people and their families on public issues that affect their lives, such as support for education, quality housing, employment opportunities, access to health care, safe neighborhoods, and availability of meaningful community activities and services (We can help lift up the moral and human dimensions of public issues, calling the faith community to informed participation in the political process. We need to find ways to influence the political arena without being partisan: joining legislative networks, community organizations, and other advocacy groups. In election years, we can sponsor educational programs and forums to involve and inform others. Adolescents cannot be heard in the clamor of political and community debate and thus need strong champions for their interests.);
- empowering young people by giving them a voice and calling them to responsibility and accountability around the issues that affect them and their future (This involves education, leadership training, skills building, and organization to mobilize young people for action.);
- developing partnerships and initiatives with leaders and concerned citizens from all sectors of the community to develop a shared vision and practical strategies for building a healthy community. These partnerships also create opportunities for community-wide initiatives to address critical issues affecting adolescents and their families.

The ministry of advocacy encourages the Church to examine its practice of fully integrating adolescents into the life of the Church. How are the voices of young people honored and heard in the Church? How are the gifts, talents, and energy of young people respected and utilized within our faith communities? It is imperative that the Church models what it advocates for society.

The Ministry of Catechesis

Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the Body of Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 4).

The ministry of catechesis helps adolescents *develop* a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and *increase* their knowledge of the core content of the Catholic faith. The ministry of Catechesis also helps young people *enrich* and *expand* their understanding of the Scriptures and the sacred tradition and their application to life today, and *live* more faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives, especially through a life of prayer, justice, and loving service. Genuine faith is a total response of the whole person—mind, heart, and will. The ministry of catechesis fosters growth in Catholic faith in all three dimensions—trusting (heart), knowing and believing (mind), and doing (will). The goal should be to have all Catholic youth involved in some program of catechesis.

The ministry of catechesis with adolescents has several distinct features that give direction to catechetical programming. Specifically, catechesis with adolescents

- recognizes that faith development is lifelong and therefore provides developmentally appropriate content and processes around key themes of the Catholic faith that are responsive to the age-appropriate needs, interests, and concerns of young and older adolescents;
- teaches the core content of the Catholic faith as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—the profession of faith, celebration of the Christian mystery, life in Christ, and Christian prayer—in order to provide a solid foundation for continued growth in faith;
- integrates knowledge of the Catholic faith with the development of practical skills for living the Catholic faith in today's world;
- utilizes the life experience of adolescents, fostering a shared dialogue between the life of the adolescent—with its joys, struggles, questions, concerns, and hopes—and the wisdom of the Catholic faith;
- engages adolescents in the learning process by incorporating a variety of learning methods and activities through which adolescents can explore and learn important religious concepts of the Scriptures and Catholic faith. A variety of learning approaches keeps interest alive among adolescents and responds to their different learning styles;
- involves group participation in an environment that is characterized by warmth, trust, acceptance, and care, so that young people can hear and respond to God's call (This fosters the freedom to search and question, to express one's own point of view, and to respond in faith to that call.);
- provides for real-life application of learning by helping adolescents apply their learning to living more faithfully as Catholic adolescents—considering the next steps that they will take and the obstacles that they will face;
- promotes family faith development through parish and school programs by providing parent education programs and resources, by incorporating a family perspective in catechetical programming, and by providing parent-adolescent and intergenerational catechetical programming;
- recognizes and celebrates multicultural diversity by including stories, songs, dances, feasts, values, rituals, saints, and heroes from the rich heritage of various cultures;
- incorporates a variety of program approaches including parish and school programs; small-group programs; home-based programs, activities, and resources; one-on-one and mentoring programs; and independent or self-directed programs or activities;
- explicitly invites young people to explore the possibility of a personal call to ministry and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the kingdom.

The ministry of catechesis most effectively promotes the faith development of young and older adolescents when the curriculum is focused on important faith themes drawn from the teachings of the Church *and* on the developmental needs and life experiences of adolescents. The following faith themes have demonstrated their significance within the context of lifelong faith development and learning. Their selection is designed to "shed the light of the Christian message on the realities which have great impact on the adolescent" (GCD 84). This framework, organized around the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is offered as the basis of developing a catechetical curriculum for younger and older adolescents. Additional faith themes may need to be included to address local needs.¹⁰

Faith Themes for Young Adolescents

The Profession of Faith

- *Catholic Beliefs*—understanding the Creed and the core beliefs of the Catholic faith.
- *Holy Trinity*—introduction to God's unique self-revelation as three in one and some implications for living Christian faith and spiritual life.
- *Jesus Christ*—exploring the meaning of the Incarnation, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and the call to discipleship.
- *Church*—understanding the origins of the Church in Jesus Christ and understanding and experiencing the history of the Church and its mission.

The Sacraments of Faith

- *Sacraments*—understanding the role of the sacraments in the Christian life and experiencing the Church's celebration of the sacraments.
- *The Church*—understanding the reason for and beauty of the Church; identifying the necessity of the Church for our salvation.
- *Church Year*—understanding the meaning of the liturgical seasons of the Church year and the scriptural teachings presented through the Lectionary.

The Life of Faith

- *Life in the Spirit*—understanding how the Spirit dwells in our midst in a new way since Pentecost and understanding that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
- *The Dignity of the Human Person*—recognizing the divine image present in every human person.
- *Morality and Living a Virtuous Life*—incorporating Catholic moral principles and virtues into one's life and moral decision making.
- *Personal Growth*—discerning the Spirit at work in their lives and incorporating the Catholic vision of life into personal identity.
- *Relationships*—developing and maintaining relationships based on Catholic values and the meaning of Christian community.
- *Sexuality*—understanding the Church's teaching on sexual morality, understanding the Church's positive view of sexuality as a gift from God, and understanding the importance of valuing chastity and sexual restraint.
- *Social Justice and Service*—understanding the importance of respecting the rights and responsibilities of the human person, appreciating our call to be stewards of creation, and discovering and living Jesus' call to a life of loving service.
- *Grace as Gift*—recognizing God's indwelling spirit in our lives and responding to this gift, which justifies and sanctifies us through God's law.
- *Lifestyles and Vocation*—discerning how to live the Christian vocation in the world, in the workplace, and in marriage, single life, ministerial priesthood, permanent diaconate, or consecrated life.

Prayer in the Life of Faith

- *Christian Prayer*—understanding and experiencing the many forms of prayer in the Church—especially prayer through the church year—and the importance of the "Our Father" in Christian prayer.

Faith Themes for Older Adolescents

The Profession of Faith

- *Jesus Christ*—discovering the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and what this means for living in Christ's spirit today.
- *The Mystery of the Trinity*—understanding and experiencing the triune God.
- *Revelation*—understanding the revelation of sacred scripture and sacred tradition.
- *Old Testament*—developing the knowledge and tools to read the Old Testament and to understand its meaning and challenge for us today.
- *The Gospels*—developing the knowledge and tools to read the Gospels and understand their meaning and challenge for us today.
- *Paul and His Letters*—developing the knowledge and tools to read Paul's letters and to understand their meaning and challenge for us today.
- *Faith and Identity*—exploring Catholic beliefs and what it means to live as a Catholic today.

The Sacraments of Faith

- *Sacraments of Initiation, Healing, and at the Service of Communion*—understanding the sacraments and how they are both personal and ecclesial, evoking a response from each of us.
- *Worship*—developing an understanding and skills for participating in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the eucharist.

The Life of Faith

- *Catholic Morality*—applying Catholic moral teachings to contemporary life situations as one encounters the many complexities in our world.
- *Conscience, Virtue, and Sin*—understanding and uncovering the desire to turn toward God and to do good and to act in accordance with God's grace, understanding the meaning and impact of sin, and learning to make decisions in accordance with one's rightly formed conscience.
- *Justice and Peace*—understanding that the Catholic faith calls people to work for justice, to pursue peace, and to defend human dignity, and developing skills to act for justice, peace, and human dignity.
- *Lifestyles and Vocation*—discerning how to live the Christian vocation in the world, in the workplace, and in marriage, single life, ministerial priesthood, permanent diaconate, or consecrated life.

Prayer in the Life of Faith

- *Christian Prayer*—understanding and experiencing the variety of Christian prayer traditions and discovering and responding to the Spirit's personal invitation to develop a personal prayer life.

The Ministry of Community Life

... You are a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own ..." (1 Pt 2:9).

The Church is the Body of Christ. Through the Spirit and his action in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, Christ, who once was dead and is now risen, establishes the community of believers as his own Body. In the unity of this Body there is a diversity of members and functions. All members are linked to one another, especially to those who are suffering, to the poor and persecuted (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 805-806).

The ministry of community life *builds* an environment of love, support, appreciation for diversity, and judicious acceptance that models Catholic principles; *develops* meaningful relationships; and *nurtures* Catholic faith. The content of our message will be heard only when it is lived in our relationships and community life. To teach compassion, generosity, tolerance, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, and love as gospel values and to identify ourselves as Christians require us to live these values in our interactions with young people and in our community life. God's reign was proclaimed through the relationships Jesus initiated, and it continues to be heralded every time we witness our belief in him through the relationships in our community. The community life of the first Christians was a sign to everyone that Christ was in their midst (see Acts 2:42–47). The ministry of community life is not only *what* we do (activity), but *who* we are (identity) and *how* we interact (relationships).

Community life is nurtured when the *atmosphere* is welcoming, comfortable, safe, and predictable—one in which *all* adolescents know that their presence is welcomed, their energy is appreciated, and their contributions are valued. Community life is enhanced when leaders promote and model an *attitude* that is authentic, positive, accepting, and understanding—assuring *all* young people that they are valued and cared for as gifted individuals. Community life is encouraged when our *actions* are inviting, supportive, and gospel-based. Community life is created when *activities* build trust and encourage relationships, and are age-appropriate.

The ministry of community life with adolescents has several distinct features that give direction to community life programming. Specifically, community building with adolescents

- creates an environment characterized by gospel values that nurtures meaningful relationships among young people and between adolescents and adults;
- develops the friendship-making and friendship-maintaining skills of young people grounded in Christian values;
- enriches family relationships through programs, activities, and resources to improve skills such as family communication, decision making, and faith sharing;
- provides opportunities for multicultural community building that promote respect for young people's racial and ethnic cultures and develop skills for communication and understanding;
- engages adolescents in the life, activities, and ministries of the parish in meaningful and age-appropriate ways;
- provides avenues for adolescents to participate as members of the faith community and opportunities for the faith community to acknowledge, celebrate, and value its adolescent members;
- guides adolescents in developing
 - a healthy perspective of the joys and pains of relationships
 - skills that promote positive and healthy interaction
 - an attitude of welcoming and acceptance
 - an understanding of Jesus' call to "love your neighbor as yourself"
 - an appreciation for both the uniqueness of individuals and the support of a community united through faith
 - an awareness of the importance of their role as members of the community.

The Ministry of Evangelization

. . . [E]vangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. Its essence is the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, both being the work of the Spirit of God (*Go and Make Disciples*, p. 2).

The ministry of evangelization shares the good news of the reign of God and invites young people to hear about the Word Made Flesh. Drawing from Jesus' example, evangelization involves the community's pronouncement and living witness that the reign of God has become realized in and through Jesus. The starting point for the ministry of evangelization "is our recognition of the presence of God already in young people, their experiences, their families, and their culture. . . . Through the Incarnation of God in Jesus, Christians are convinced that God is present within and through all of creation, and, in a special way, within humanity. Evangelization, therefore, enables young people to uncover and name the experience of a God already active and present in their lives. This provides an openness to the gift of the Good News of Jesus Christ" (*Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization* 7-8).

Evangelization is the energizing core of all ministry with adolescents. All of the relationships, ministry components, and programs of comprehensive ministry with adolescents must proclaim the Good News. They must invite young people into a deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus and empower them to live as his disciples.

The ministry of evangelization incorporates several essential elements: *witness, outreach, proclamation, invitation, conversion, and discipleship*.¹¹ Evangelization with adolescents

- proclaims Jesus Christ and the Good News so that young people will come to see in Jesus and his message a response to their hungers and a way to live. Remember: "There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 22);
- witnesses to our faith in Jesus Christ in all aspects of our lives—offering ourselves and our community of faith as living models of the Christian faith in practice (Young people need to see that we are authentic and that our faith in Jesus guides our lives.);
- reaches out to young people by meeting them in their various life situations, building relationships, providing healing care and concern, offering a genuine response to their hungers and needs, and inviting them into a relationship with Jesus and the Christian community;
- invites young people personally into the life and mission of the Catholic community so that they may experience the support, nurture, and care necessary to live as Christians;

calls young people to grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to make his message their own, and to join us in the continuing process of conversion to which the Gospel calls us;
challenges young people to follow Jesus in a life of discipleship—shaping their lives in the vision, values, and teachings of Jesus and living his mission in their daily lives through witness and service;

The Ministry of Justice and Service

Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the urging of his spirit, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church.

Our efforts to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, comfort the sorrowing, console the bereaved, welcome the stranger, and serve the poor and vulnerable must be accompanied by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering and injustice. We believe advocacy and action to carry out our principles and constructive dialogue about how best to do this both strengthen our Church and enrich our society. We are called to transform our hearts and our social structures, to renew the face of the earth (see *A Century of Social Teaching*).

The ministry of justice and service *nurtures* in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching; *empowers* young people to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering; and *infuses* the concepts of justice, peace, and human dignity into all ministry efforts.

The Church increasingly views itself as a people set aside for the sake of others—a community that stands in solidarity with the poor, that reaches out in service to those in need, and that struggles to create a world where each person is treated with dignity and respect. We are called as a Church to respond to people's present needs or crises, such as homelessness or hunger. We are also called to help change the policies, structures, and systems that perpetuate injustice through legislative advocacy, community organizing, and work with social change organizations. Direct service needs to be coupled with action for justice so that adolescents experience the benefits of working directly with those in need *and* learn to change the system that keeps people in need. Justice and service are central to who we are as God's people and to how we live our faith at home, in our communities, and in the world.

The central message is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be called truly "Catholic" unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace. We cannot call ourselves followers of Jesus unless we take up his mission of bringing "good news to the poor, liberty to captives, and new sight to the blind" (cf. Lk 4:18) (*Communities of Salt and Light*, p. 3).

The ministry of justice and service with adolescents has several distinct features that give direction to programming and action. Specifically, justice and service with adolescents

- engages young people in discovering the call to justice and service in the Scriptures, in the life of Jesus, and in Catholic social teaching;
- involves adolescents, their families, and parish communities in actions of direct service to those in need and in efforts to address the causes of injustice and inequity;
- develops the assets, skills, and faith of young people by promoting gospel values in their lifestyles and choices; by increasing positive self-esteem, self-confidence, and moral reasoning abilities; by building leadership and social skills; by helping them discover their personal gifts and abilities; by helping them learn that they can make a difference in the world and receive recognition by the community for their contributions;
- incorporates doing the right thing with attention to why and how we do what we do (Four elements guide adolescents in moving from awareness to action on issues of justice. *Involvement* helps adolescents connect with justice issues personally and experientially. *Exploration* helps adolescents understand the causes, connections, and consequences of justice issues—expanding their knowledge and moving them toward action with a stronger background and motivation to work for real change when faced with injustice. *Reflection* helps adolescents utilize the Scriptures, Catholic social teachings, and the lived faith of the church community to discern a faith response to justice issues. *Action* helps adolescents respond to injustice through direct service or actions of social change—locally or globally, short term or long term.12);
- involves a supportive community that builds a sense of togetherness, nurtures a life of justice and service, works together to serve and act for justice, and provides support and affirmation;
- nurtures a lifelong commitment to service and justice involvement (This includes providing opportunities, support, and follow-up to help the young people reflect on their experience. People who learn to serve when they are young are more likely to be service oriented throughout their lives.).

The Ministry of Leadership Development

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings by the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit (1 Cor 12:4–7).

The ministry of Leadership Development *calls forth*, *affirms*, and *empowers* the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents. Leadership roles in adolescent ministry are key. Leaders must be trained and encouraged. This approach involves a wide diversity of adult *and* youth leaders in a variety of roles. Many will be involved in direct ministry with adolescents; others will provide support services and yet others will link the ministry effort to the resources of the broader community.

The ministry of leadership development has several important elements that provide direction. Specifically, leadership development

- utilizes adult and adolescent leaders in a variety of leadership roles necessary for comprehensive ministry (These roles include, but are not limited to, ministry coordinators in parishes and schools, school teachers, ministry program leaders and planning teams, overall ministry coordinating team, and support staff.):
 - *The Ministry Coordinator*, must always be qualified and well trained, as well as have an excellent reputation. He or she facilitates the people, programming, and resources of the parish or school community in a comprehensive ministry effort. The coordinator is primarily responsible for facilitating planning, administering programs, developing a leadership system for adult and youth leaders (recruitment, training, and support), and serving as an advocate and link for young people to the faith community and wider community.
 - *A Coordinating Team*, made up of adults and young people, may be formed to work with the ministry coordinator in organizing a comprehensive ministry with adolescents by planning the overall ministry, developing a leadership system, identifying the resources of the faith community, and connecting the ministry with the other ministries and programs of the faith community.
 - *Program Leaders*—adults and adolescents—conduct specific programs and activities within a comprehensive ministry. Program leaders often work with a program planning team who develops, promotes, implements, and evaluates the program.
 - *Support Staff* provide assistance that helps individual programs and the overall ministry function effectively.
- develops a leadership system that invites, trains, supports, and nourishes adult and adolescent leaders and provides for the coordination of leaders throughout a comprehensive ministry;
- develops and nurtures adult leaders of lively faith and maturity with solid theological understandings, relational and ministry skills, and organizational ability appropriate to their particular role in ministry with adolescents;
- empowers all young people for leadership and ministry with their peers—in schools, parishes, and civic communities—by affirming their gifts, equipping them with skills for leadership and ministry, and by placing them in leadership roles or giving them leadership opportunities where they can make a contribution.

We strongly encourage all ministry leaders and communities to call forth the gifts of all young people and empower them for ministry to their peers and leadership in our faith communities. We need their gifts, energy, and vitality. We echo the words of the Holy Father at World Youth Day in Denver:

Young pilgrims, Christ needs you to enlighten the world and to show it the "path to life" (Ps 16). . . . Place your intelligence, your talents, your enthusiasm, your compassion, and your fortitude at the service of life. . . . The Church needs your energies, your enthusiasm, your youthful ideals, in order to make the Gospel of life penetrate the fabric of society, transforming people's hearts and the structures of society in order to create a civilization of true justice and love (August 15, 1993).

The Ministry of Pastoral Care

The ministry of pastoral care is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus' care of people, especially those who were hurting and in need. The ministry of Pastoral Care involves *promoting* positive adolescent and family development through a variety of positive (preventive) strategies; *caring* for adolescents and families in crisis through support, counseling, and referral to appropriate community agencies; *providing guidance* as young people face life decisions and make moral choices; and *challenging* systems that are obstacles to positive development (*advocacy*). Pastoral care is most fundamentally a relationship—a ministry of compassionate presence. This was Jesus' caring stance toward all people, especially those who were hurting or in need. Pastoral care enables healing and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships. It nurtures growth toward wholeness, and it provides guidance in decision making and challenges obstacles to positive development.

The ministry of pastoral care with adolescents has several distinct features that provide direction to comprehensive ministry efforts. Specifically, pastoral care

- develops the life skills of adolescents, such as relationship building, assertiveness, nonviolent conflict resolution, decision making, and planning;
- guides young people in making important life decisions, such as career and college choices, and discerning their particular Christian vocation;
- fosters the spiritual development of young people and the healthy integration of their sexuality and spirituality;
- creates networks of care and support for young people and their families;
- provides programs and resources for parent education and skills for effective parenting that incorporate understandings of adolescent development and family life cycle tasks;
- strengthens family life by assisting families to improve family skills, such as communication, decision making, problem solving, and reconciliation;
- provides and connects adolescents and families to support services, referral resources, and self-help groups to promote healing during times of loss, sudden change, unexpected crises, problems, and family or personal transitions;
- provides support and enrichment for adolescents and parents experiencing divorce, separation, or family problems; and connects them to appropriate counseling resources;
- collaborates with the wider community in providing direct aid to youth-at-risk in the form of programs, services, and counseling.

Special attention should be given to young people who engage in high-risk behaviors that endanger their own health and well-being. These young people often have multiple problems that can severely limit their futures—fragmented family life, poor school performance, antisocial behavior, eating disorders, sexual activity, sexual confusion as they struggle with identity, and alcohol or drug use, to name several. The Church is called to work with the wider community to address the needs of these young people. Ministry to these young people may be the most important way they will ever come to know and feel the love of God—through people who love them and care for them just at the point when they themselves feel least worthy and lovable.

The Ministry of Prayer and Worship

"Great is the mystery of faith!" The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles' Creed (*Part One*) and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy (*Part Two*), so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (*Part Three*). This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2558).

The ministry of prayer and worship *celebrates* and *deepens* young people's relationship with Jesus Christ through the bestowal of grace, communal prayer and liturgical experiences; it *awakens* their awareness of the spirit at work in their lives; it *incorporates* young people more fully into the sacramental life of the Church, especially eucharist; it *nurtures* the personal prayer life of young people; and it *fosters* family rituals and prayer.

The ministry of prayer and worship with adolescents has several distinct dimensions that provide direction to comprehensive ministry efforts.¹³ Specifically, the ministry of prayer and worship

- promotes the authentic participation of youth in liturgy (Parishes and schools can acknowledge adolescent faith issues at all liturgies in ways appropriate to the rites, provide opportunities for young people to be trained as liturgical ministers, schedule periodic youth event liturgies that are prepared with young people's input and assistance, and invite young people to help prepare the community liturgies.);
- attends to the diversity of cultures and ages in the assembly (All liturgy takes place within a cultural milieu and context. Respect for cultures and inclusion of native art, music, and expressions are visible components of vibrant worship. The rites need to reflect cultural diversity through the use of symbols, traditions, musical styles, and native language. Parishes and schools can provide opportunities for liturgical celebrations in which young people of different ethnic groups express their faith in their own language, symbols, and tradition. Parishes and schools can also provide experiences of other cultural worship styles and multicultural liturgies that bring people from all ethnic backgrounds together to celebrate. Adolescents reflect a distinct age group and "culture" within our society. Their language expressions, musical styles, and ways of life are often quite different from those of older generations. Those who prepare the liturgy need to find appropriate ways to incorporate the world of young people into worship, remembering that the "pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be heightened if the texts of the readings, prayers, and songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs, religious dispositions, and aptitude of the participants" (GIRM no. 313). Parishes and schools can explore new music and song texts being composed for liturgy, and invite youth to act as cultural resources—letting the individuals or group know about current trends and expressions that may be reflected in the prayers, songs or rituals.);
- provides opportunities for creative prayer with adolescents in peer, family, and intergenerational settings (Ministry with adolescents fosters and promotes the development of a personal prayer life in young people and celebrates the ritual moments of their daily lives in prayer. The symbols and rituals of liturgy become more meaningful for young people when they draw from their experiences of private prayer. Likewise, private prayer is revitalized by meaningful experiences of the liturgy. Ministry with adolescents also promotes opportunities for communal prayer. The liturgy of the hours, liturgies of reconciliation and healing, ethnic rituals and celebrations, and other ritual devotions allow for creativity and adaptation to the life issues and cultural expressions of young people. Communal prayer provides opportunities for young people of different ethnic cultures to express their faith in their own language, symbols, and traditions and for young people to experience multicultural prayer that brings people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds together to celebrate. Parishes and schools can schedule seasonal prayer experiences for and by youth for the parish community, involve young people in the preparation of prayer experiences for their peers, provide prayer resources, include personal prayer time within programs, and provide prayer mentors for young people. Parishes and schools can provide prayer and ritual resources for home settings that address the unique needs of families with adolescents, the calendar and church year celebrations and rituals, and family rituals, rites of passages and milestones.);
- promotes effective preaching of the word (Parishes and schools can invite young people to reflect on the seasonal readings and to offer suggestions to the homilist for connections to young peoples' lives, provide regular opportunities for adolescents to study the Scriptures, encourage those who preach to use current examples and storytelling techniques, and investigate the developments within culture for their impact on the "vernacular.");
- allows music and song to express the vitality of young people (The music of the young brings freshness and variety to our current musical genres and can perform the same infusion of energy

and vitality to sacred music. Music is a significant part of personal expression for young people and that desire carries over to their participation in liturgy. Parishes and schools can invite adolescents to participate in the choirs and musical assemblies, explore contemporary accompaniments and focus on the song and pace of the music, expand the local repertoire of hymns and songs to include songs that young people would select, and encourage singing by the whole assembly so that adolescents feel more comfortable in adding their voices.);

- prepares the symbols and ritual actions with particular care for their visual dimensions (Today's young people have been educated through multimedia. Their visual sense is one of their primary ways of learning and responding to the environment. Parishes and schools can invite adolescents to assess the visual dynamics of the rituals and symbols prepared for liturgy, provide visual aids to encourage young people's participation, and explore the appropriate use of multimedia at liturgy.);
- develops the interpersonal and communal dimensions of the liturgy. (Parishes and schools can focus on the hospitality provided at liturgy, encourage young people to attend liturgy with their friends, build a sense of community among young people prior to liturgy, minister in a personal way, and affirm the presence of young people whenever possible.);
- provides adolescents with effective and intentional catechesis for liturgy, worship, and sacraments (Young people are catechized by their participation in the liturgy; therefore, care must be taken to ensure that their experiences lead them to greater faith. Adolescents need catechesis for liturgy and the sacraments, but are also catechized by their experiences of liturgy. Through immersion in the symbols, stories, and rituals of the communal prayer life, adolescents gain not only a knowledge but an appreciation of the power of the sacraments. A specific objective of intentional catechesis for liturgy is to assist adolescents in exploring how liturgical symbols and rituals celebrate their experiences of God and life events. Parishes and schools can provide opportunities for intergenerational and family-centered catechesis for liturgy and can offer experiential, liturgical catechesis for young people.);
- apprentices adolescents in liturgical ministries (Ministry with adolescents can advocate for youth involvement in liturgical ministries and connect young people with established liturgical ministers for training and experience of actually performing liturgical ministry.).