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Foreword

LIVING THE VISION FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Leadership for Catholic Youth Ministry was published in 2008 for parish leaders who strive to provide vibrant and dynamic ministry for adolescents. As authors, we are delighted that the insights and practical guidance provided has struck a chord. This book has become a foundational resource for parish teams as well as for training programs provided by dioceses, universities, and ministry centers. The heart of this book is the lived practice of ministry with youth as inspired and guided by *Renewing the Vision—A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*.

Renewing the Vision was approved and published in November 1997 by the United States Catholic bishops. Since that time, this document has sold over 126,000 copies in print form in addition to hundreds of thousands of downloads. More importantly, the insights of this document have spread to parishes small and large throughout the United States and to most English-speaking nations around the world. Many people credit *Renewing the Vision* with strengthening and transforming Catholic youth ministry. This document provides a compelling vision for ministry with youth and for parish life that includes youth as full members of the community. It also provides a common language and framework for envisioning and building a ministry with youth that is responsive, inclusive, and comprehensive.

It is striking how enduring the document has become. Many documents of the bishops' conference are received by the field with initial enthusiasm but receive little attention after the first few years of implementation. *Renewing the Vision* continues to be a driving force in leadership training, resource development, and parish renewal of ministry. This document is also the focus of dialogue and debate, conversations that point toward the growing edges of the vision for Catholic youth ministry.

As we present this second edition of *Leadership for Catholic Youth Ministry*, it seems fitting to recall the past sixteen years of *Renewing the Vision*, analyze our current context, and look ahead to future ministry opportunities. Let's look together at areas of ministry that are challenging and chart a path for continued growth in our pastoral ministry with youth.

The Growing Edges of Renewing the Vision

Evangelization—Identity of Church and Component of Youth Ministry

Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection. *EVANGELI NUNTIANDI, n. 14.*

In *Renewing the Vision*, evangelization is a component of youth ministry. Within this description, readers are told that evangelization is “the energizing core of everything we do” in youth ministry. Still, some readers of the document would not fully appreciate the importance of evangelization. Evangelization is the deepest identity of the Church and should be given this sense of priority. Even though evangelization is present within all of the components, describing it as a component does remind leaders that it is important to attend to evangelization in an intentional way and to include elements of evangelization that are distinct from other aspects of the ministry. As we continue to explore the context and direction for evangelization of youth and their families, it will be essential that our vision for youth ministry is communicated with both of these concepts in mind: first, all of youth ministry is evangelization, which means we should be evangelizing through every aspect of our ministry, every interaction, every relationship, and every contact; second, evangelization should be intentional

ISSUE:

Evangelization is described by Church documents as the “deepest identity” of the Church, yet it is described as a component of ministry within *Renewing the Vision*.

and have distinctive elements within youth ministry so that we continually reach out to youth and families beyond those who present themselves.

Recognition of the Cultural Context for Youth Ministry in the United States

In many ways, *Renewing the Vision* was pioneering in its inclusion of multiculturalism and the practical ways that cultural diversity is integrated within the document. The document was published in English and Spanish and provides a solid direction for ministry with youth of diverse cultures:

Effective youth ministry should help all young people to feel comfortable and welcome so that they can develop their identity by affirming and utilizing the values and traditions of their unique culture, and the gifts and talents they offer to the entire faith community.

RENEWING THE VISION, P. 23

ISSUE: Though *Renewing the Vision* includes a theme of multiculturalism and provides numerous references to cultural diversity and the eradication of the evil of racism, the treatment of cultural diversity within the document does not reflect the current reality of the context for ministry with youth in the United States.

The references in *RTV* are intended to help parishes address important questions: How do we include youth of different cultures within youth ministry? How do we minister to youth from diverse cultural groups? It is clear that the questions addressed by the document are different now than they were in 1997. The ministry context and paradigm of *RTV* comes largely from suburban, white, middle class parishes and does not fully reflect the significant history, tradition, resources, challenges, and opportunities provided by the many cultures within the United States, especially considering that youth from diverse cultures now constitute the majority of Catholic young people rather than a minority group.

The current pastoral situation now goes beyond considerations of inclusion and context. In this moment, how do we foster a genuine national dialogue that considers not just the contributions of individual youth but the contributions of ethnic communities with long-standing traditions of ministering with youth? How can we empower parishes that have more than one ethnic community to

develop ministry with youth that reflects the possibilities for connection and the needs of each community? How do we work to ensure that leaders are formed with the cultural competencies needed for leadership of communities that include more than one cultural group?

These questions lead to an essential conversation where communities can share their strengths and challenges and find ways to build ministry with youth in shared parishes with leaders who have the skills and openness needed to engage and minister with diverse communities.

Role and Priority of Catechesis

In the earlier description of the history of the document, it was noted that CCD or religious education was one of the three main ways that the Church ministered to youth prior to the naming of a description of youth ministry within *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. This is part of our history and part of what distinguishes Catholic youth ministry from the ministry provided by mainline and evangelical churches. Studies of effective youth ministry and research with youth indicate the importance of catechesis as the heart of youth ministry. In addition, the *National Directory for Catechesis* describes the placement of catechesis:

ISSUE: For many bishops, pastors, diocesan leaders, and parishes, the priority in ministering with youth is catechesis, faith identity, and knowledge of the Catholic faith. In practice, many parishes put most of their emphasis on confirmation preparation programs that are primarily catechetical. In *Renewing the Vision*, catechesis, like evangelization, is one component of eight.

“... adolescent catechesis is most effective when situated within a comprehensive program of youth ministry that includes social, liturgical, and catechetical components as well as opportunities for service.”

NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS, p. 264

This directive reminds us that youth ministry is broader than catechesis, even if catechesis is provided in a way that includes many dimensions. In other words, it isn't enough for parishes to provide catechesis or confirmation preparation in a youth ministry style. To be truly effective and responsive to youth, catechesis

should be provided as a priority component within a ministry that has many dimensions. Parish communities across the United States have demonstrated that effective adolescent catechesis relies on the context of comprehensive youth ministry and the intentionality of a systematic approach. When asked about effective youth ministry, pastors, parents, parish leaders, and youth agree that learning and growing in faith is at the heart of ministry with young people. This experience matches with the direction provided by national documents for catechesis and youth ministry, which converge around two important insights.

First, youth ministry is effective when evangelization and catechesis are at the core of all pastoral efforts. Second, catechesis for youth happens most effectively in the context of broader youth ministry efforts. Within this context, informal catechetical moments help youth to make the connections between faith and life. Systematic, intentional catechesis helps youth develop as followers of Christ who grow to know, love, and live their Catholic faith. It leads them to ongoing conversion. Working together, these elements forge a connection for youth where faith becomes their compass for life, and formation in the faith becomes a lifelong journey.

Pastoral Care and Catholic Identity—General Good versus Specific Good

Many pastoral leaders feel that the formation of authentic Catholic identity is the highest priority for ministries with youth and consequently see all other initiatives as a distraction. Other leaders see the promotion of healthy adolescent development as recommended in *Renewing the Vision* to be a natural and important way to stand with youth and their families in the important transition to adulthood. These efforts flow

ISSUE: *Renewing the Vision* highlights the resources provided by the Search Institute that promote healthy youth development. Some leaders question the importance of these efforts in comparison with the urgency of forming Catholic faith identity in youth. Parishes who utilize community resources such as the Assets approach provide helpful service to youth and families by promoting healthy development, but do these efforts sacrifice or hinder our intentions to evangelize and catechize youth?

from the directives in the Advocacy, Justice and Service, and Pastoral Care components and provide a practical witness within our evangelization efforts.

This is a tension that deserves thoughtful reflection, which could lead to renewed practices that are intentional about evangelization as we provide pastoral care for youth and support for families. The relationships of trust that are built through this support could lead to greater participation and formation as youth and families rely more and more on parishes as a source of support, community, and faith growth.

An Ecclesiology of Parish Life—An Idealized Parish Community

In many ways, this issue is the shadow side of a great strength of *Renewing the Vision*, which provides a profound and compelling vision for parish life that is nearly unparalleled among Church documents. Many trainers and leaders have applied the insights of RTV far beyond youth ministry by suggesting that this vision with its pattern of responsiveness, goals, settings for ministry, themes, and components could describe all of parish life. However, this positive view of parish life can lead to frustration because the challenge of providing youth ministry in parishes who are struggling is clearly a different challenge than providing for youth ministry in a parish where ministries are flourishing.

These differences were highlighted in *Effective Practices for Dynamic Youth Ministry*, which pointed out that the challenge for parishes with vibrant ministry is to include youth in the parish and to continually reach out to youth and families in the community (*Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004, pages 75-76*). For parishes with developing ministry, there is a much greater responsibility to provide the spiritual support and nurture that is not found within parish life

ISSUE: The description of parish life provided within *Renewing the Vision* is very positive and does not acknowledge the challenges many parishes face in leadership, vibrancy, and effective programming. Some who may read RTV without any knowledge of parish life in the United States could have the impression that all parishes are flourishing communities with robust pastoral ministry whose greatest challenge is the inclusion of youth within the ministries and life of the community.

as a whole. For these parishes, the first priority is the spiritual formation of team members and families of youth. These insights were also found in the dialogue of the symposium for the *Effective Practices* project, during which many leaders suggested that the spiritual formation of the leaders and teams who work with youth should be considered the first goal of youth ministry because leaders can't give what they don't have.

Looking at *Renewing the Vision* through the lens of the New Evangelization

(Evangelization is to be) “new in its ardor, methods and expression” (#6)....

POPE JOHN PAUL II, ECCLESIA IN AMERICA

The New Evangelization provides an opportunity for youth ministry leaders to stand back and consider how our pastoral ministry with youth invites them into a deep relationship with our loving God and empowers them as witnesses. With new ardor, we embrace new methods and new expressions all aimed at helping youth to feel reconciled, embraced, loved, and called.

Embracing this new energy and direction calls us to reach out to youth and families who are practicing in a marginal way or who have fallen away from their practice of the faith. At the same time, we are called to equip those who are faithful to be bold and compassionate witnesses of their faith.

Today, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the “night” contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. **POPE FRANCIS, IN HIS ADDRESS TO BRAZILIAN BISHOPS PRIOR TO WORLD YOUTH DAY, JULY 27, 2013**

Where do We Grow from Here?

We are currently in an amazing moment to lead and support ministry with youth. Pope Francis brings a new energy in the Catholic Church, including her youth ministry, through his direct call to link all evangelization with love,

joy, and reconciliation. He proposes this as the pastoral foundation for all that we do.

Spreading the Gospel means that we are the first to proclaim and live the reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, unity and love which the Holy Spirit gives us. Let us remember Jesus' words: "by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

**EXCERPT FROM THE GENERAL AUDIENCE WITH POPE FRANCIS,
WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2013**

Sharing Christ's love is a personal mandate and is the mission for the pastoral work of all of the institutions of the Church. Youth ministry as proposed by *Renewing the Vision* is a ministry directed outward that seeks, includes, and empowers young people as disciples. This vision is very much in synch with and appropriate to this moment as we see in Pope Francis's comments to the Argentinean youth prior to World Youth Day:

What do I expect as a consequence of the Youth Day? I expect a mess. There will be one. ... But I want a mess in the dioceses! I want people to go out! I want the Church to go out to the street! I want us to defend ourselves against everything that is worldliness... that is comfortableness, that is clericalism....The parishes, the schools, the institutions, exist to go out!

POPE FRANCIS, JULY 26, 2013

As we celebrate, acknowledge, and reflect upon the sixteen years since the publication of *Renewing the Vision*, leaders of youth ministry from parishes, organizations, schools, and universities should see this moment as an opportunity to name a common framework, language, and direction as we embrace new possibilities in our ministry with youth and their families. *Renewing the Vision* is a living document that continues to develop as leaders implement pastoral ministry with youth. As leaders, we continue to write this document through our leadership actions, our innovations, and our continued discernment of the movement of the Spirit. We work together within the Church to help youth encounter Christ and proclaim his love to the world.

Introduction



Youth Ministry as Encounter and Adventure

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

LUKE 1:26-33 (NAB)¹

Youth ministry provides an encounter with the love of Christ and supports youth in the adventure of discipleship. We see this pattern in the exchange between the angel Gabriel and the teenage Mary. Gabriel is speaking on God's behalf and telling Mary that she is beautiful, she is beloved, and God has a plan for her life. All of us, as leaders in youth ministry, are like Gabriel. We speak on God's behalf and share God's love and longing for youth as we invite youth to follow God's plan as young disciples.

To be messengers of God's love and invitation, we need to see youth in the way that God sees them. At World Youth Day in Sydney (2008), Pope Benedict XVI warned youth about those who see them in a narrow, opportunistic way:

Do not be fooled by those who see you as just another consumer in a market of undifferentiated possibilities, where choice itself becomes the good, novelty usurps beauty, and subjective experience displaces truth.²

2 | Leadership for Catholic Youth Ministry

We see youth as God’s beloved and treat them as treasured members of the community as well as coworkers in our mission. This means that we look beyond any singular role of a young person. Dr. Christian Smith, Director for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame, recently wrote to youth workers on this topic:

Young people, especially in view of the gospel, are fundamentally persons, not students.... We should ... push back on society’s labels by insisting that teenagers are referenced by the full depth, richness, and complexity of their personhood. They should be hearing from us: “Unlike most of the rest of society, we understand and value you in the fullness of who you are. Here among God’s people we know you as real human persons—you don’t have to perform to be accepted here. Please be your real selves.”³

To become a sign of God’s love, we also need to see ourselves as a faith community, as revealing the face of Christ to youth.

Part of the vision of youth ministry is to present to youth the richness of the person of Christ, which perhaps exceeds the ability of one person to capture, but which might be effected by the collective ministry of the many persons who make up the Church.⁴

A VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Throughout the documents, and teachings of over three decades of Catholic youth ministry, we see this essential pattern for ministry with young people: provide an encounter with Christ and support youth in their “yes” to the invitation to the adventure of discipleship. This encounter and invitation strengthen the ways that God has walked with young people and their families through childhood and prepares youth for the questions, challenges, and opportunities of adult faithful living. We support youth and their families along this distinctive path that their journey takes during the adolescent years.

To be faithful in our part of facilitating God’s encounter and communicating God’s invitation will take the full breadth of our commitment and resources:

- We need to *cast a wide net*. Viewing all youth as God’s beloved means we go beyond serving just those youth who present themselves. We look at the full spectrum of youth in our community from those in need of healing and outreach to the youth who are ready for engagement in witness, ministry, and service.
- We need to *go deep*. The vision for Catholic youth ministry as presented by the United States Catholic Bishops in *Renewing the Vision: A Frame-*

work for Catholic Youth Ministry and in the *National Directory for Catechesis* focuses on the call to youth in the adventure of discipleship. The consistent messages to young people by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI at World Youth Days have been about challenge and going beyond the expectations of popular culture. Youth are hungry for the challenge of discipleship. They long to experience an invitation that is bold and big enough for their life's dreams and visions. Our efforts in youth ministry should feed that hunger and help youth to grow deeply in their faith.

- We need to *make it personal*. Youth long to experience God in a personal way and to feel personally invited and connected to the faith community. To be personal does not mean that we organize ministries around our personality. Making it personal means that, as a community, we strive to make a personal connection with youth as we help them know Jesus in a variety of ways.
- We need to *put all of our oars in the water, going the same direction*. When faith communities bicker over methodologies and compete for perceived limitations in resources, facilities, and time, we end up going in circles in our efforts for pastoral ministry with youth. Effective youth ministry requires the concerted, collaborative, and coordinated efforts of a faith community that longs to become Christ's love incarnate in the lives of young people today.

The encounter and adventure that God has planned for young people in our communities is within our means. This book is designed to guide leaders as they recall the vision for Catholic youth ministry and seek to make this vision a reality for youth in their parish, school, diocese, and youth-serving agency.



Reading This Book

This book is a group project by the core staff and key adjunct staff of the Center for Ministry Development. Three decades of training, research, and developing resources lead us to provide this book to leaders in Catholic youth ministry. We envision leaders engaging with the chapters of this book in ways that match their individual starting points and leadership needs. Pastors, parish council members, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministry Coordinators, youth ministry volunteers, youth leaders, and parents will all find information and practical ideas.

Each of the four sections of this book provides a different vantage point for viewing the dimensions of Catholic youth ministry. Let your journey with this book begin with the topics you need most and lead you to further explore the growing resources available for leaders in Catholic youth ministry.

Section I: Foundations for Youth Ministry

This section examines the history and context for Catholic youth ministry while looking at young people today, providing a summary of the vision for ministry, exploring the cultural context for youth ministry, and applying the latest research in viewing practical models and elements in effective youth ministry.

Section II: Communities Nurturing Youth

This section examines three essential communities that nurture youth: the peer community, the family, and the parish.

Section III: Promoting Personal and Spiritual Growth of Youth

This section explores several of the components for youth ministry that comprise the foundations for gathered and non-gathered ministry programs and strategies.

Section IV: Planning and Leadership for Youth Ministry

This section provides practical ways to develop leaders and engage in visioning and planning for dynamic ministry with youth.



We're Here to Help with Support on the Web

The Center for Ministry Development has over thirty years of experience helping parishes get started and enhance their ministry efforts. We are supporting this book with planning guides, meeting outlines, power point presentations, and practical tips that will be available to you online as part of your book purchase.

These materials will be provided at a special website designed for this book. Go to: www.cmdnet.org/leadingyouthministry.



Where Should I Start?

In implementing youth ministry, parish communities and leaders have a variety of situations and hopes that guide the place where each needs to start. Each perspective may have a different path through the chapters of this resource. Below you will find a sample for starting points and paths through the chapters that get you started. The remaining chapters will be a resource for the growth for which you are hoping.

We are just getting started in youth ministry.

Start with Chapter 1: A Vision for Comprehensive Youth Ministry, Chapter 3: Understanding Youth Today, and Chapter 5: Models for Effective Youth Ministry. This will give you the big picture. Next, go to Chapter 14: Youth Ministry Leadership, and Chapter 15: Visioning and Planning for Youth Ministry. These chapters will help you organize and begin planning with a leadership team. The remaining chapters will be there to help you continue to grow.

We have a good youth ministry, but we're ready to grow.

Start with Chapter 5: Models for Youth Ministry. Use these ideas to assess your current model and to identify strengths and areas to grow. Use Chapter 14: Youth Ministry Leadership, and Chapter 15: Visioning and Planning for Youth Ministry, to begin a process of including new leaders and planning for enhanced youth ministry efforts. Once you identify the places you need to grow, the remaining chapters will help you.

We want to learn about how to include more youth in our ministries.

Start with Chapter 10: Evangelization of Youth. This chapter will put your outreach and invitation into the context of the vision of Church. Continue with Chapter 1: A Vision for Comprehensive Youth Ministry, Chapter 3: Understanding Youth Today, Chapter 4: Ministry with Youth in a Culturally Diverse Church, and Chapter 5: Models for Effective Youth Ministry. These chapters will help identify the diverse starting points and needs of youth in your community. Consider Chapter 6: Building community with Youth, Chapter 7: Connecting with Families, and Chapter 8: Connecting Youth with the Parish Community. These chapters will help provide practical starting points for inviting and responding to youth and their families.

We want to improve our adolescent catechesis efforts.

Start with Chapter 10: Evangelization of Youth, and Chapter 9: Catechesis with Youth. These chapters present the vision for evangelizing and catechizing youth. Continue with Chapter 3: Understanding Youth Today, Chapter 7: Connecting with Families, and Chapter 8: Connecting Youth with the Parish Community to explore the settings for faith learning and the needs of youth and families today. Use Chapter 14: Youth Ministry Leadership, and Chapter 15: Visioning and Planning for Youth Ministry to plan for renewed efforts and include additional leaders.



We Are On This Journey with You

This book is a summary of what we know so far and we hope it provides the beginning of continued exploration and searching. We also hope you find yourself in the questions, ideas, and insights of this book. After all, the direction for this book came from conversations with you, the leaders of Catholic youth ministry. Read the book and talk about it with colleagues. Continue your own searching in this shared quest to bring our best leadership in this shared mission of helping youth encounter Christ and engage in active discipleship.

— ENDNOTES —

1. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Board of Trustees. 1996, 1986. *The New American Bible: Translated from the original languages with critical use of all the ancient sources and the revised New Testament* (Lk 1:26–33).
2. Pope Benedict XVI, Message to Youth, World Youth Day 2008, Sydney, Australia. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080717_barangaroo_en.html (accessed October 23, 2008).
3. Smith, Dr. Christian. “Stop Calling Kids ‘Students,’” *Group Magazine*, Volume 34, No. 6. September-October 2008 (Loveland, Colorado: Group Publications), p. 8.
4. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), 1976, p. 24.

SECTION I

Foundations for Youth Ministry

The challenge of discipleship—of following Jesus—is at the heart of the Church’s mission. All ministry with adolescents must be directed toward presenting young people with the Good News of Jesus Christ and inviting and challenging them to become his disciples....If we are to succeed, we must offer young people a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision that meets their hunger for the chance to participate in a worthy adventure.

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops,
Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, p. 10

A Vision for Comprehensive Youth Ministry

Thomas East

Editor's Note

This chapter explores the vision of Catholic Youth Ministry through the lens of our essential identity as Church. Christ's presence in the Eucharist gathers us and sends us out to respond to and include young people as we continue our mission. *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* guides this ministry and directs us to be goal-centered, comprehensive, and intentional as we strive to respond to and include youth in our communities.

As Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus, so the Church must become today the traveling companion of young people.

POPE JOHN PAUL II,
WORLD YOUTH DAY 1995,
IN *RENEWING THE VISION: A FRAMEWORK
FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY*¹

As a Church, we are asked to travel with today's young people. The process of youth ministry is described within the Gospel story of Jesus walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We meet youth in the midst of their questions. We walk with them and present the fullness of the faith. We stay with them. Together, we break bread and experience Jesus in our midst. Transformed by his presence, we walk with youth as they journey to the upper room and spread the message of their experience of the risen Christ.

To be Church with young people means that we help youth to fully participate in the community that is gath-

ered in Christ's name. We evangelize youth and share the Good News with them in the context of their life and relationships. We catechize youth and help them grow in active faith. We include youth in worship and sacraments. We empower youth to minister to others and to witness to their faith.

The Church as Sacrament

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers several images of Church that help explain the task of youth ministry. One of these images describes the Church as the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world. (See #770–776.) William Shannon explains that “a sacrament is a visible sign of God's presence and action in the world. Christ, because he is precisely that, is the Great Sacrament. The Church is the visible post-Resurrection sign (sacrament) of Christ's presence among his people, leading them to holiness of life and toward the fullness of the Kingdom.”²

Simply put, the Church is a sacrament because it makes Christ present in our world. Through what we believe and how we live as Catholics, we reveal that Christ is present in us and the Church, and Christ acts through us to bring his Good News to the world. Christ works through us, his followers, to continue his mission in the world today.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes this image of Church as sacrament in this way: “Christ himself is the mystery of salvation: ‘For there is no other mystery of God, except Christ.’ The saving work of Christ's holy and sanctifying humanity is the sacrament of salvation, which is revealed and active in the Church's sacrament. The Seven Sacraments are the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the Head throughout the Church, which is his Body. The Church, then, both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies. It is in this analogical sense, that the Church is called a sacrament.”³

The following diagram helps to explain sacrament.⁴ God sent Jesus into the world. Jesus encircled a people in love, called Church. Jesus' love, challenge, and

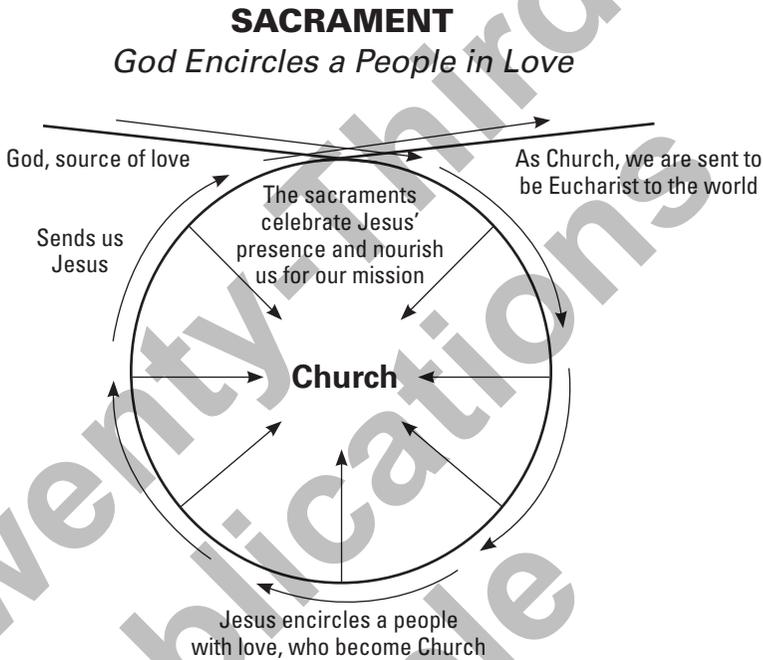
Making the Connection

Renewing the Vision

describes youth ministry as a response to youth's needs and the inclusion of their gifts.

- In your experience of youth, what are their needs?
- What gifts could young people bring to your community?

presence transformed lives and drew them to his teachings and to the community gathered in his name. Jesus instructed the community to rely upon the Holy Spirit and to celebrate his presence. He charged them to go and make disciples. (See Matthew 28:19–20.) He told them to go and be his hands and feet and word of love.



In this diagram, Jesus gathers a people as Church and sends them in mission to continue his saving work. Within the circle, the Church celebrates Jesus' presence through the seven sacraments. These sacraments are intended to strengthen the community gathered in Christ's name and nourish it for the mission of spreading Christ's Word, healing, and transforming love.

Our communion with Christ compels us to go to others and share his love. In *God Is Love*, the encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI, we are reminded that the sacrament of Eucharist radically joins us to all whom Christ calls to himself:

Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself.
I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union

with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself toward him, and thus also toward unity with all Christians.⁵

The implications of this image for youth ministry are rich. First, one must reach out to young people and help them to be drawn to community, to Eucharist, and to the sacraments. One must love young people in Christ's name and share the Good News of the Gospel message with them. The Good News that Jesus shared was practical and transforming. For those who hunger, it is food. For those who are lonely, it is love and friendship. For those who are hurting, it is healing and forgiveness. One must share this kind of practical and transforming ministry to youth through simple presence and through a variety of ministry programs and strategies.

Once youth are part of a community, surround them with love and care and help them to celebrate the sacraments that strengthen everyone for mission. Encourage youth to participate in the life of the community and to join in full participation in the liturgical and service life of the parish. Send youth out to witness to their faith with their families, their peers, and people of all ages throughout the community. Empower youth as Christian leaders and involve youth in serving those most in need in the community. Encourage youth to become advocates for the poor and marginalized and to witness by their lives and lifestyle the life of a disciple. This is what it means to be sent out as sacrament.

Two distinct elements of this understanding of sacrament are (1) staying connected to God as the source and (2) being sent out into the world. To become Christ's love incarnate for adolescents, be sure that we are connected to God as the source of our love. Through prayer, participation in the sacraments, and authentic participation in the community, we remain rooted in God's love. When we lose our connection with God, we become like a lake that has lost its source of life. The lake dries up and everything within it dies. As leaders in youth ministry, we must attend to our own spiritual formation and prayer life to be nourished for our ministry with youth. To be faithful, we must also be attentive to our mission out in the wider community. There are Seven Sacraments designed to strengthen and nourish the community, but the Church itself is called to be the sacrament of Christ's presence for the world. As a community gathered in Christ's name, we are a sign of God's love in our neighborhood and our world. To be authentic as Church, we must reach out and be present in the lives of those who need God's love and healing

touch. We must be sent out into the world. Otherwise, we could become like a lake that has no outlets, which dies because there is no release for the water. The lake becomes stagnant, as can our church. We could be selfishly hoarding the love of God rather than responding to our call to share. Youth ministry describes this process: we love youth in Jesus' name, and we send them out to walk with us and be witnesses and disciples.

A clear implication of this image is our call to minister to youth who are in a variety of situations and starting points. Some youth are right in the middle of the circle; they are involved and experiencing ministry in the community. Some youth are also sharing their faith and sharing their time and talents in service and ministry. Some youth are far from the community. They have not experienced the love and care; they have not been included and evangelized. Other youth are right on the line, trying to decide if they belong. Youth ministry is for all of these youth, not just the ones who attend programs. We have a clear call to reach out to those who furthest away from the love and care of the parish community.



Renewing the Vision

Comprehensive youth ministry describes a way for parishes and communities to minister to youth by reaching out to them, inviting them into the circle of community, and sending them out to share their gifts. This pattern of responding to needs and involving young people's gifts is at the heart of the vision statement for Catholic youth ministry. In 1997, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a pastoral plan for youth ministry: *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. In this plan they describe a ministry that empowers youth as disciples, promotes the full participation of youth in the community, and provides for the personal and spiritual growth of young people. The bishops wrote this document to provide direction for the continued development of effective ministry with young people, recognizing the tremendous growth of youth ministry in previous decades. This document affirmed the 1976 document, *A Vision for Youth Ministry*, and called communities to address current challenges and make youth ministry a central concern.⁶

Renewing the Vision expands our vision for ministry with youth in several important ways. First, this vision for ministry involves the whole community and calls parishes, schools, and dioceses to help youth to take their place as active members of the community. Youth ministry flows from the gifts, resources, and

charisms of a local community. Communities will find different ways to organize ministry, which is why *Renewing the Vision* is a framework, not a prescriptive plan or outline. A second emphasis of *Renewing the Vision* is the calling of youth to personal discipleship. Communities need to intentionally invite youth, form them in the faith, and empower them for mission. Throughout the document, communities are challenged to trust youth to join with the adult community as disciples.

What is needed today is a Church which knows how to respond to the expectations of young people. Jesus wants to enter into dialogue with them and, through his body which is the Church, to propose the possibility of a choice which will require a commitment of their lives.⁷

To inspire communities to serve and include youth, *Renewing the Vision* provides a practical framework for utilizing the resources of the community and developing youth ministry. This framework has the following dimensions:

- A definition for Catholic youth ministry that focuses upon response to the needs of youth and inclusion of their gifts.
- Three goals for youth ministry that promote the empowerment of youth for discipleship, the full participation of youth in the community, and the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.
- Seven themes for youth ministry that act as continuous threads to guide all ministry efforts with youth. These describe ministry that is developmentally appropriate, family friendly, intergenerational, multicultural, and collaborative—both within the parish and within the wider community.
- Eight components of youth ministry describe how the Church's ministries work together to include, form, and empower youth. These components are: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship.

Definition of Catholic Youth Ministry

The definition for Catholic youth ministry describes our role as leaders and as a community: "Youth ministry 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."⁸

When Jesus encountered someone in need, he did not see them only as someone needy. He healed them, fed them, transformed their life, and challenged them to join in healing, feeding, and transforming others for the Kingdom of God. Similarly, this definition calls us to respond to the needs of youth, not because they

are broken or needy, but because of who we are: we are a community gathered in Jesus' name. We love youth and respond to their needs by joining in the healing, pastoral, and teaching mission of Jesus. We see in youth not just their needs but also the incredible gifts they have to share with our community today.

To live out this definition, we need to know young people and become aware of their needs so that we can help our community reach out and respond. We also need to learn the gifts of youth and work to make room for young people throughout the life of our parish by including them in leadership committees, ministries, and opportunities to be involved in service and advocacy. There is a beautiful mutuality described in this relationship between youth and the community. The community has resources to offer young people; youth have gifts that our communities need today. Some of these gifts—such as enthusiasm, creativity, new ideas, and hospitality—are exactly the gifts needed by our communities so that we can become truly vibrant signs of God's love in our community. As the Church strives to be the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world, young disciples join with adults in this witness of love.

Goals

Three goals provide direction for youth ministry. The image of church as sacrament presented in the diagram helps to explain the dimensions of these goals.

Goal 1: To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.⁹ The first goal is to empower youth as disciples. In the image, this goal describes those youth who are in the circle and are ready to be sent out as sacrament for the world. Our ministry sends youth out into the community to witness to their faith and share their gifts in service. Youth are also empowered for ministries and leadership within the community.

To empower young disciples, we begin by presenting the Good News in the context of their life and relationships. We help youth to develop their relationship with Jesus and experience the call to discipleship. As a community, we are challenged to present this call to youth as a “worthy adventure.” Youth are asked to commit themselves totally to Christ. Youth are ready to invest their lives in a cause that captures their imagination. As a community, our task is to present the mission of following the gospel in all of its fullness so that youth can join us with enthusiasm. This goal also includes catechesis so that youth can be equipped for discipleship. Ultimately, youth are invited to explore vocations and discern from the variety of ways that God calls us to live as disciples.

Goal 2: To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.¹⁰ The second goal is about promoting participation in community. In the image of church as sacrament, this goal focuses on drawing youth into the circle and helping them to belong deeply to the communities of which they are an important part.

Youth want to belong and want to be part of a community within which they are accepted, valued, and cherished. Four faith communities are described within this goal: families, parishes (including the youth ministry program), Catholic schools, and other organizations that serve youth. Youth are encouraged to enhance their families with their love and their faith. Parishes are encouraged to welcome youth and to become “youth friendly” by providing practical ways for youth to belong and share their gifts. Catholic schools are resources for youth and their families as youth grow in faith. Parishes, schools, and families are called to work in partnership to be stewards of these resources. Youth serving organizations are noted for their ability to reach youth who may be outside of other church structures.

Goal 3: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.¹¹ In the image of church as sacrament, this goal is concerned with helping the youth within the community to experience the love, care, nurture, encouragement, and practical help of the community of faith.

The aim of these efforts is to develop “healthy, competent, caring, and faith-filled Catholic young people.”¹² We seek to help youth experience the growth and develop the strengths that they need to be ready for adulthood as young disciples. To help youth grow, we address their spiritual needs in the context of their everyday life. This includes helping youth to address the obstacles that so many youth face, such as poverty and discrimination. We also help youth to grow in the midst of the conflicting values presented in our media culture and consumer society. Within this goal, we aim to promote healthy adolescent growth, Catholic identity, and Christian discipleship.

Themes

There are seven themes provided in this vision for youth ministry. These themes “... provide a continuous thread that ensures that ministry with adolescents utilizes all available resources and is all-inclusive.”¹³

Developmentally Appropriate Our human development is part of the way God created us. Adolescents journey through an important and dynamic period of

THEMES IN THIS BOOK

The following themes of youth ministry are treated in greater detail in the noted subsequent chapters:

Developmentally Appropriate *Chapter 3: Understanding Youth Today*

Family Friendly *Chapter 7: Connecting with Families of Youth*

Intergenerational *Chapter 8: Connecting with the Parish*

Multicultural *Chapter 4: Ministry with Youth in a Culturally Diverse Church*

Leadership *Chapter 14: Youth Ministry Leadership*

Flexible and Adaptable Programming *Chapter 15: Visioning and Planning for Effective Youth Ministry*

change in their development. To respond to youth from a developmental perspective, we begin by recognizing the growth that has occurred in childhood and the milestones yet to come as adults. Youth ministry recognizes two distinct ministries based upon differing developmental needs. Young adolescent ministry is aimed at youth who are 11/12 to 14/15 years of age. This ministry is also referred to as Junior High Youth Ministry or Middle School Ministry. High school youth ministry is aimed at youth who are 14/15 to 18 years of age. The differences in maturity require different responses, which is why it is important to offer two distinct ministry strategies for these age groups. The developmental perspective also reminds us that it is important to tailor the content and processes of ministry events and strategies to the developmental readiness of the young person. An adolescent's developmental needs will suggest program responses. For instance, knowing that a young adolescent's world is expanding in terms of their relationships provides an opportunity to offer a meeting or retreat day focusing on relationships that are guided by faith. Throughout youth ministry, we must be sure that the activities we use and the content we choose to include are a good match for the young people we are serving.

Family Friendly Youth ministry leaders are challenged to make sure that all ministry efforts are family-friendly. This direction recognizes the Church's long standing belief in the holiness present within families. Families can and do make

a profound difference in shaping the faith lives of their children. Youth ministry should support families in their role of sharing and celebrating faith at home. Parents of adolescents face lots of challenges with little support from society in general. Church can be the place that supports parents by providing good communication, helpful resources, and practical programs of parent education. An important way to be family-friendly is to avoid competing with families for the time and attention of their children by scheduling events in a way that is sensitive to family time. It is about working together and empowering families to share faith.

Intergenerational From studies, we know that youth benefit from intergenerational relationships, and yet most of their lives (school, work, and recreation) are age-segregated. Church is one of the few places where youth experience an intergenerational community intact. Within the parish, there are rich opportunities for involving youth in the intergenerational community as a place to learn the Catholic faith story and to share in leadership. Youth can experience adults as mentors and can provide leadership for children and younger teens. Age-specific programming can sometimes be replaced with intergenerational events that allow for relationship building and celebrations with people of all ages.

Multicultural In the rich cultural context here in the United States, leaders do not need to make the church more multicultural. We do need to recognize the diversity that is in our midst. Begin with the conviction that God is present in the many cultures that comprise our Church and society. Each culture has a piece of the Good News, which is communicated through the traditions, ethos, and cultural norms of that community. When we approach another culture, we “take off our shoes,” recognizing that we are on holy ground—for our God has already been with the people we are encountering. In ministry with youth, leaders have a tremendous opportunity to build upon the openness and appreciation for diversity that is present in this generation in order to promote awareness, skills, and sensitivity towards the many cultures that comprise our community. Ministry in a multicultural church utilizes the rich and profound resources of these cultures to form faith and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Being inclusive of diversity also includes the ways that we address the needs of youth in the context of their culture and the ways that we promote appreciation of all cultures throughout the ministry.

Community-Wide Collaboration In youth ministry, some of the ways that we would like to respond to youth’s needs and include their gifts go beyond our

parish community's resources. Effective ministry promotes collaboration with leaders, agencies, and congregations in the wider community as a way to join together in serving youth. Collaboration can include sharing information, co-sponsoring programs, and developing advocacy efforts.

Leadership Youth and adults are called to share in leadership to help make youth ministry happen. It is not just about the programs, events, or strategies of youth ministry. It is also the life of the parish community. The coordinator of youth ministry has an important role in facilitating the gifts of the community on behalf of young people. This leader empowers youth and adults to share gifts in a variety of roles within the ministry. An important aspect of all ministry efforts is cooperation; leaders work to make sure that all parish ministry efforts are connected with each other. This ensures that programs are not in competition with each other and do not exist in isolation.

Flexible and Adaptable Programming Communities are directed to create “flexible and adaptable program structures that address the changing needs and life situations of today’s young people and their families ...”¹⁴ Youth’s lives are often filled with competing commitments and demands on their time. The family schedule for the week is complicated and sometimes overwhelming. Youth ministry can work with youth and families to provide different ways to be involved. These differences can include the timing, schedule, or group size. Some programs can be offered as individualized or family-based approaches. Others can be offered as part of a weekly gathering or on a retreat weekend. Some can be geared to large groups; others can be designed for small groups. The key is to have a variety of ways that youth and their families can be involved.

Components

The components describe specific areas of the mission of the Church that work together to provide ministry with adolescents. “These components provide a framework for the Catholic community to *respond* to the needs of young people and to *involve* young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community.”¹⁵ The components describe the ministries of the Church and are not necessarily individual programs or strategies; in fact most youth ministry events include many components working together. Communities are challenged to work toward balance in providing these eight components within their ministry efforts over the course of a season or a year of ministry.

COMPONENTS IN THIS BOOK

The components of youth ministry are each treated with more detail in other chapters of this book. See:

Advocacy Chapter 8: *Connecting with the Parish*

Catechesis Chapter 9: *Catechesis with Youth*

Community Chapter 6: *Building Community with Youth*

Evangelization Chapter 10: *Evangelization of Youth*

Justice and Service Chapter 11: *Justice and Service*

Leadership Development Chapter 14: *Youth Ministry Leadership*

Pastoral Care Chapter 12: *Pastoral Care of Youth*

Prayer and Worship Chapter 13: *Prayer and Worship*

These components are essential within the Church's mission to evangelize and catechize young people.

The most effective catechetical programs for adolescents are integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral ministry for youth that includes catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship.

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS*¹⁶

Advocacy The component of advocacy is speaking up for the needs of youth and their families within the parish community and the wider community. This also includes helping youth to speak for themselves and giving them a voice in leadership structures.¹⁷

Catechesis The component of catechesis is the deepening of the faith of young people through teaching and reflection. Catechesis is about faithfully lifting each other up; it is working towards the transformation of our lives.¹⁸

Community Life The component of community life focuses upon building community on a variety of levels: between young people, with their families, and engaging youth in the broader parish community.¹⁹

Evangelization The component of evangelization is proclaiming the Good News and inviting youth into relationship with Jesus Christ through ongoing witness. Evangelization is the energizing core of all that we do in youth ministry and also refers to specific programs of outreach and witness.²⁰

Justice and Service The component of justice and service is engaging young people in helping and serving other people, and understanding the Gospel call to justice through education and reflection.²¹

Leadership Development The component of leadership development is inviting, training, and supporting adults and young people for leadership in youth ministry and the broader parish community.²²

Pastoral Care The component of pastoral care is providing prevention programs for youth and families, caring for those in crisis, and providing guidance during times of decisions and moral choices.²³

Prayer and Worship The component of prayer and worship helps youth to participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the sacramental life of the Church, provides youth with a variety of communal prayer experiences, and helps youth to develop their personal prayer life.²⁴



A Comprehensive Youth Ministry Mindset

This chapter began with an explanation of church as sacrament. In this image, church is the community gathered by God's love and sent into the world as a sign of God's presence. Youth ministry is an expression of church that focuses on adolescents and their families. This image of church as gathered and sent is bigger than a single program or strategy. It is not the actions of an individual leader. It is not about a particular group of young people. It is the description of all of the efforts that serve youth through the life of the parish or community. If you were to picture youth ministry in your parish, where would the picture take place? Is it a particular room or building where youth often meet? Comprehensive youth ministry describes a ministry that takes place in the parish hall and the worship space. It includes the ministry that happens in family homes and in the schools, on the sidewalks and within the gathering places of the community.

...the comprehensive approach is a framework for integration rather than a specific model. The comprehensive approach is not a single program or recipe for ministry. Rather, it provides a way for integrating ministry with

adolescents and their families into the total life and mission of the Church, recognizing that the whole community is responsible for this ministry.²⁵

Settings for Youth Ministry

Many parishes will choose to have a youth community or youth group as an important strategy within the ministry. This community can become a central strategy that serves as a focus for developing broader youth ministry efforts. It is important that we do not mistake this one part of the ministry for the larger picture. Parishes that are effectively living out this renewed vision for youth ministry have a variety of ways for youth and their families to belong. To minister to the diverse needs of youth and include their gifts, we need to take stock of the different means and settings for ministry with youth. Essentially, youth will experience ministry in four settings:

Youth Setting Ministry directed towards youth as individuals and within their peer group. This includes

- Gathering with youth to provide programs of ministry.
- Being present to youth by going where they are and being part of sporting events or concerts.
- Delivering ministry to youth by providing resources, individualized programs, and small group settings for ministry.

Family Setting Ministry to youth that is provided through their families. This includes

- Supporting families in their ministry with youth at home.
- Providing for strategic gatherings or events with families of adolescents.
- Supporting parents of adolescents with resources and programs, and by connecting parents with each other.

Parish Setting Ministry to youth through the life of the parish. This includes

- Involving youth in parish events in a meaningful way.
- Empowering youth to share their gifts in a variety of leadership and ministry roles.
- Aligning the programming of youth ministry to the events of the Church year and parish life.

Wider Community Setting Ministry to youth that utilizes the resources of the wider community. This includes

- Collaborating with the wider community by connecting youth and their families with the resources of neighboring churches and community agencies.
- Connecting with other congregations and civic agencies to advocate on behalf of youth and their families.
- Participating in inter-parish, inter-church, diocesan, and national programs designed for young people.
- Involving youth in service roles within the wider community.



A Church for Young People

To be responsive and inclusive it will take resources, vision, and leadership. To create comprehensive youth ministry, we will need to be a community that is connected to God's love as our source, that allows Christ's love to encircle us. To be faithful as we help build the Kingdom of God, we must feast upon Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the other sacraments. To be a Church with young people is to draw them deeply to the center of this love and empower them to share their gifts as leaders and witnesses in our community and in our world.

This is what is needed: A Church for young people, which will know how to speak to their heart and enkindle, comfort and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the gospel and the strength of the Eucharist; a Church which will know how to invite and to welcome the person who seeks a purpose for which to commit his whole existence; a Church which is not afraid to require much, after having given much; which does not fear asking from young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as that of the following of the Gospel.

JOHN PAUL II, *WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS*, 1995 ²⁶

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— ENDNOTES —

1. *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), p. 2.
2. Shannon, William H. *Exploring the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995), p. 42.

3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 774. See also paragraphs 770–776.

4. This diagram of Church as sacrament is based on the work of Kenan B. Osborne, OFM. For further explanation, see:

Kenan B. Osborne, OFM, *Sacramental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), especially Chapter 6: The Church as the Basic Sacrament.

Kenan B. Osborne, OFM, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), Chapter 5: The Church as the Foundational Sacrament.

5. Pope Benedict XVI, *God Is Love*, Vatican translation (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), p. 19.

6. See RTV, pp. 1-2.

7. Pope John Paul II, “Youth: Sent to Proclaim True Liberation,” World Youth Day 1995, Philippines, as cited in RTV, pp. 1-2.

8. *Vision of Youth Ministry*, 1976, p. 6 as cited in *Renewing the Vision*, p. 1.

9. RTV, p. 9.

10. RTV, p. 11.

11. RTV, p. 15.

12. RTV, p. 15.

13. RTV, p. 20.

14. RTV, p. 25.

15. RTV, p. 26.

16. *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Publication #5-443, 2005), p. 201.

17. See RTV, pp. 26-28.

18. See RTV, pp. 28-34.

19. See RTV, pp. 34-36.

20. See RTV, pp. 36-37.

21. See RTV, pp. 37-40.

22. See RTV, pp. 40-42.

23. See RTV, pp. 42-44.

24. See RTV, pp. 44-47.

25. RTV, p. 19.

26. RTV, p. 10.

History of Catholic Youth Ministry

John Roberto

Editor's Note

We have come this far by faith. In this chapter, John Roberto weaves together the common themes of some of the central figures in the history of ministry and service to youth.

These insights form the basis for exploring the development of youth ministry from the 1976 document, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, to the renewed vision and efforts today.

There is a rich tradition of ministry with young people throughout the history of the Church. In every era, individuals and communities have responded to the unique needs of young people and guided them toward faith in Jesus Christ. There is a thread of continuity that we can see in the faithfulness of those who continued the mission and ministry of Jesus with young people. Yet every era had to find ways to minister with young people in the midst of a particular social and cultural setting.

Several stories from our tradition will help to illustrate the continuity *and* the unique response necessary to address the lives of young people in a particular social setting.

France 1600 France in the 1600s was a country divided into two classes of people: the very poor and the very rich. Only the very rich could afford to send their

children to school. With a doctorate in theology, John Baptist de la Salle had prepared himself for a powerful position in the church. Urged on by an acquaintance, he founded a school for poor children, began teaching them, and trained teachers to plan lessons and keep order in classrooms. Soon his community of teachers became the “Brothers of the Christian Schools.” They were the first religious group whose special mission was to teach the poor.

Back in those days, classes were taught in Latin. If you did not understand Latin, you could not learn. The brothers began to teach in French so ordinary students could understand. What de la Salle wanted to do—teach poor children—was revolutionary. His belief was that if poor children were given a practical education, they could better support themselves and their families and climb out of the poverty that spawned so much crime and despair. While receiving an education, the children could also learn how to live in the world as Christians. To reach poor children, de la Salle developed much of the approach that has since become standard in schools worldwide. At this time, students were taught, for the most part, one at a time by tutors; this was practical only for the rich and the few. To accommodate the large number of poor children, de la Salle created classrooms with rows of students. A fixed daily schedule of a variety of courses was required in his schools. De la Salle also created commercial or business courses, which had not been offered before. He opened the first teachers’ college, as well as industrial schools for boys. Today, John Baptist de la Salle is considered one of the founders of modern education. He is a patron saint of teachers.¹

United States of America 1700s The United States in the late 1700s and early 1800s did not have the educational system and social services that are widespread today. After the death of her husband and without financial support for her five children, Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton was invited by the rector of St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore to establish a school for young girls from poor families. The school she founded in 1808, near Baltimore, Maryland, was the first Catholic school in the United States. With eighteen other dedicated women, Elizabeth went on to organize the first group of women religious in the United States, the Daughters (or Sisters) of Charity. She started from scratch in the work of building Catholic education. That meant not only starting more schools but also training teachers and writing textbooks herself. Elizabeth Ann Seton accomplished all this in a very short life. She died when she was in her late 40s. Everywhere her community of sisters went they opened schools and taught in orphanages. She and her community are credited with laying the foundation for

the Catholic school system in the United States. Elizabeth Ann Seton is the first person to be declared a saint who was born in the United States.²

Italy 1800s In the 1800s, Italy was experiencing the beginning of the industrial revolution. Teenage boys would leave their poor families in the countryside and come into town searching for work. In the city, these teenagers lived in terrible conditions. Even before his ordination, John Bosco began taking a group of boys out to the country every Sunday for sports, a picnic, songs, and prayer. No one else cared about them. After John became a priest, he housed boys who had nowhere else to live. Then he began programs to train them as shoemakers, tailors, and printers. The training protected them from a harsh world they were too young to face. Many of the boys and young men John assisted were troubled. Often they had experienced abuse or neglect. Somehow John called forth the best in them by affirming them and treating them kindly. Many young people learned about God because of the care they received from John.

The number of young people in John's care grew ever larger. He had trouble finding assistants who understood his gentle teaching methods. Eventually he founded the Salesian Order (named after St. Francis de Sales). He also started a group of laypeople called Cooperators. All were trained especially for this work. By the time of his death, there were some sixty-four Salesian foundations in Europe and the Americas and about 800 Salesian priests. He also founded the Daughters of Our Lady, Help of Christians, to provide the same care and education for poor and neglected girls. Today, these orders serve in schools, colleges, seminaries, hospitals, and missions all over the world.³

United States of America 1800s There was great poverty on Native American reservations in the 1800s. Katharine Drexel was shocked by the poverty she saw. Born into a wealthy Philadelphia family, she was encouraged by Pope Leo XIII to devote her fortune and her life to the poor. In 1891, with thirteen other women, she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. They worked to provide for the needy, and, over time, Katharine donated \$12 million of the fortune she had inherited. Katharine and her sisters first opened a boarding school for Pueblo Indian students in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In time, they founded missions for Indians in sixteen states and nearly a hundred missions for African American children in rural areas and the inner cities of the South. In 1915, she founded a teachers' college that would eventually grow to become the first and only Catholic university for African Americans, Xavier University in New Or-

leans. Despite poor health in her later years, she continued to fight for and fund civil rights causes. Katharine Drexel died in 1955 at the age of 96. People of all races from across the United States journeyed to Philadelphia to attend her funeral. She is the second American-born saint.⁴

Chicago 1930 Chicago in the 1930s was in the midst of the Great Depression. Many families experienced unemployment, financial hardships, and poverty. Young people, without jobs or meaningful activities, turned to the streets, and often to delinquency. Starting with a boxing program to get teenage boys off the streets, auxiliary bishop Bernard J. Sheil eventually launched an organized youth program, which became known as the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO). CYO sought to solve the “youth problem” by offering young people worthwhile activities. The original charter states that CYO was created to “promote among Catholic youth a recreational, educational, and religious program that adequately meets their physical, mental, and spiritual needs in their after-school hours; and without regard to race, creed, or color, to assist those people who are in need; to inspire, direct, and guide the natural creative instincts of young people into those worthwhile channels, which permit the widest expression of personality, individually or in groups, while instilling in the minds and hearts a true love of God and Country.”⁵ The CYO offered a wide-ranging system of social services, community centers, and vacation schools; but its greatest publicity resulted from an extensive and comprehensive sports program that claimed the world’s largest basketball league (430 teams) and an international boxing team. Such CYO ventures included American Indians, African Americans, Asians, and Jews, which catapulted Bishop Sheil to national prominence as a social activist.⁶

What do all these stories have in common? First, we can see that ministry with youth transforms their lives—personally, academically, socially, and spiritually. Second, ministry begins with the reality of young people’s lives and their social-cultural situation. In each story, we see recognition, analysis, and response to the society of the day and its impact on young people. Third, trusting, loving relationships form the foundation for the entire ministry. Fourth, ministry requires great flexibility and adaptability—tailoring programs and activities to the lives of young people. Lastly, we can see that the invitation to follow Jesus and to live as a disciple is situated within a holistic response to the total life of the young person.

In many ways we see reflected in these stories the definition of youth ministry offered in the documents by the United States Catholic Bishops that guide our pastoral ministry with youth, *A Vision of Youth Ministry* and *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*: “Youth ministry 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.”⁷ This pattern of presence and listening, relationship building, attention to the context, response to the needs of young people, invitation into faith and community, and empowerment for ministry is repeated throughout the tradition. It is also clear in the most recent history of youth ministry.



Making the Connection

Heroes and guides in youth ministry have led the way and shaped our vision.

- *Who do you consider to be a model for ministry with youth?*
- *What values and qualities do they exemplify?*



Pastoral Ministry with Youth from 1930 to 1970

From the 1930s through the 1960s, ministry with young people took three distinct forms: Catholic schools (elementary and secondary), the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD).

In most parishes, CYO, which was founded in the 1930s, developed into a weekly program of religious, cultural, social, and athletic activities, adding service to the program mix in the 1960s. An essential component of CYO was leadership training for youth and the adults who worked with them. CYO also pioneered the development of youth retreats in the 1960s through the Search retreat program. Many dioceses developed annual CYO manuals containing program outlines and organizational materials for the weekly meetings.

CCD dates back to the period of Catholic reform in the late sixteenth century, and was the official “agency” for the catechetical instruction of Catholic laity. Pope Pius X in 1905 called for a renewed approach to religious instruction and the establishment of CCD in every Catholic parish. In the United States, CCD was established as an independent apostolate in 1935 with a national director and a publishing division. CCD was seen as the means of instructing youth (and their parents) who did not have the advantage of attending Catholic school. In

most parishes, CCD was organized in weekly one-hour classes of religious instruction. Many parishes had one hour of CCD followed by a CYO program every week during the school year.

This more instructional, programmatic, and organizational approach to ministry with young people was situated within a “Catholic culture” that supported the development of a Catholic way of life in young people. Most Catholic youth grew up in practicing Catholic families where the Catholic faith was lived at home. Youth had more contact with extended family. They attended Mass on Sunday and participated in a wide array of festivals and social gatherings. The home and the parish provided the primary contexts for faith growth. The sense of neighborhood and community played a large role in reinforcing the faith values of the family. The programs of CYO and CCD complemented and extended what was already happening at home and in the parish. They were not replacements.



Youth Ministry in the 1970s and 1980s

The tremendous changes within young people, their families, and the broader society during the late 1960s and 1970s had a tremendous impact on the programs of CYO and CCD. As a result, parishes saw declining participation in CYO and CCD programs. In the statistical survey, *Where Are the 6.6 Million?*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops found “the number of Catholic elementary and secondary age children and youth not receiving formal religious instruction had grown from 3.1 to 6.6 million in the ten years between 1965 and 1974.” Of the total of 6.6 million there were 3.2 million high school age youth not receiving formal religious instruction.⁸

As one approach to parish youth ministry—CYO and CCD—was in decline due to the changing context of ministry, a new approach was being born. Guided by the spirit, theology, and pastoral vision of Vatican II, a new generation of youth ministry leaders began to experiment with new approaches and techniques for working with young people. These leaders worked in parishes, Catholic high school campus ministries, retreat movements such as Search and TEC (Teens Encounter Christ), and in diocesan youth departments. The renewed and expanded ecclesiology of Vatican II provided a solid foundation for constructing a new model of Catholic youth ministry. Changing the language from CYO, CCD, and the youth apostolate to *youth ministry* signaled a significant shift in the paradigm for the Church’s ministry with youth.

The work of this new generation of youth ministry leaders led to the forming

of a national task force to write a vision for youth ministry that “reaffirms and recasts the Church’s ministry with youth.” Commissioned by the USCC National Advisory Board for Youth Activities in 1974, the writing team created a first draft of this new vision, which was widely circulated for review and feedback. Utilizing the feedback from the field, the Department of Education published *A Vision of Youth Ministry* in 1976, which “offers a focus for the work of youth ministry, and sets forth an outline of its major components.”⁹

What is truly amazing is that the document contained no guidelines, no program models, no program ideas, or activities. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* called for a new direction in ministry with youth by blending the best of past efforts with emerging ideas from leaders all across the country. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* articulated the philosophy, goals, principles, and components of a contemporary approach to the Church’s ministry with youth. By presenting a vision, or framework, for the development of ministry with youth, rather than specific program models, it gave focus and direction while allowing local creativity in addressing the needs of young people.

A Vision of Youth Ministry initiated a transformation in the Church’s thinking and practice of youth ministry. Its key insights became the basis for new ways of ministering to young people.

Youth ministry must be theologically and pastorally sound. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* was first and foremost a statement about church and ministry, theologically applicable to all church ministries. The pastoral, integrated vision of Church, as expressed through the seven components, was grounded in a contemporary understanding of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ and his Church. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* made it quite clear that youth ministry is integral to the life of the Church. Far from peripheral to the Church’s concern, youth ministry is *essential* for helping the Church realize its mission with its young members. Youth ministry focuses the ministries of the Church upon this unique stage of life with its distinct life tasks and social context *and* actively engages young people as disciples in the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church.

Youth Ministry is relational. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* re-affirmed that effective ministry with youth was built on relationships. The importance of relationships in ministry was captured by utilizing the Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13–35) as the central image for ministry with youth. Jesus’ encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus after the Resurrection provided clues to ministry with

youth: presence and listening, questioning and responding, interpreting experiences in the light of faith, and celebrating faith at Eucharist.

Youth ministry is focused around specific goals. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* proposed two goals to guide a comprehensive, multifaceted ministry with youth: “Youth ministry works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person. Youth ministry seeks to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community.”¹⁰ These two goals gave specific direction while encouraging leaders in local communities to create a variety of ways to reach their goals. There was not just *one* way to do youth ministry.

Youth Ministry is comprehensive and balanced. One of the most important breakthroughs in *A Vision of Youth Ministry* was the comprehensive framework of seven components: Word (evangelization and catechesis), Worship, Creating Community, Guidance and Healing, Justice and Service, Enablement, and Advocacy. This overcame the fragmented approach to ministry with youth that separated catechetical programs from other youth programs. This comprehensive and balanced approach was an antidote to social-only, athletics-only, or religious education-only youth programming, which had characterized much of parish youth ministry in the 1970s. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* clearly stated that an effective youth ministry demonstrated balance among the seven components and program activities so that the needs of all of the young people could be addressed and the resources of the community wisely used.

Youth ministry promotes the holistic growth of young people in developmentally appropriate ways. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* proposed an approach that attended to a wide spectrum of youth needs and that was also attuned to the distinct developmental, social, and cultural needs of adolescents.

Youth ministry is people-centered and needs-focused. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* put young people first. It emphasized throughout its pages that *programs are made for people; people are not made for programs*. It encouraged a flexible, adaptable approach to youth ministry that was designed to address the real needs and life situations of today’s young people in a particular community setting. In not recommending program models or activities, *A Vision of Youth Ministry* recognized that the day had passed when a single program structure could respond to all the needs of youth.

Youth ministry is family and community-centered. Central to *A Vision of Youth Ministry* was the incorporation of young people into all aspects of church life. One of the two goals in the document focused on drawing young people into responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community. The concept of ministry with families of youth was introduced in *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, beginning the move toward a family perspective in youth ministry.

Inherent in this more inclusive and multidimensional approach to youth ministry was the recognition of the need for collaboration.

No one aspect of youth ministry is independent of others; they are all interdependent elements of a unified total vision. The multifaceted nature of youth ministry requires a process of collaboration among all persons involved in it, rather than fragmentation or competition... Part of the vision of youth ministry is to present to youth the richness of the person of Christ, which perhaps exceeds the ability of one person to capture, but which might be effected by the collective ministry of the many persons who make up the Church.

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *A VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY*¹¹

In 1979, the *National Catechetical Directory, Sharing the Light of Faith*, affirmed the comprehensive, holistic approach of *A Vision of Youth Ministry*: “Youth catechesis is most effective within a total youth ministry.”¹² It went on to say:

Total ministry to youth includes catechetical activities in which the message is proclaimed, community is fostered, service is offered, and worship is celebrated. There is need for a variety of models integrating message, community, service, and worship and corresponding to the stages of development and levels of perception of the young. Guidance and healing, involvement of youth in ministry, and interpretation and advocacy of their legitimate interests and concerns also have catechetical dimensions.¹³

A Vision of Youth Ministry provided the foundation for a dramatic increase in new and innovative pastoral efforts, youth programming, training programs, and resource materials. Over the next two decades, the Church in the United States experienced a tremendous growth of comprehensive parish youth ministries throughout the country, the emergence of the roles of parish coordinators of youth ministry and Catholic high school campus ministers, the development and widespread availability of high quality youth ministry training programs and youth leadership training programs, an increase in the number of effective youth ministry resources, attention to the needs of families with adolescents,

and expansion of the scope of ministry to include young adolescents and older adolescents.

A *Vision of Youth Ministry* also gave birth to two other important documents that developed the Ministry of the Word component of youth ministry: *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis* (NFCYM, 1986), which developed catechetical principles and faith themes for designing curriculum and teaching young people, and *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization* (NFCYM, 1993), which developed the principles and methods for evangelizing young people.

A variety of other developments continued to expand the vision and practice of Catholic youth ministry. The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed an emphasis on family ministry and two important documents from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: *A Family Perspective in Church and Society* (1988) and *Follow the Way of Love* (1994). Catholic youth ministry began to develop a more intentional focus on the parents of youth and on developing a family perspective in youth ministry. The 1980s also saw the increased importance of justice, peace, and service within the Church's ministry. The United States Catholic Bishops issued two landmark pastoral letters: *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (1986), as well as a number of pastoral letters on 100 years of Catholic social teaching and social ministry in parishes. Youth ministry responded by making justice education programs, service projects, and week-long service/mission trips central to a comprehensive youth ministry. Through the 1980s and 1990s, there was a growing awareness of the need to be inclusive of the cultural diversity of young people and to address the specific cultural needs of youth.

All of these developments gave rise to the next stage in the development of Catholic youth ministry.



The New Generation of Youth Ministry: 1990s to 2000s and Beyond

The changing social context for young people in the 1990s meant that youth ministry needed to adapt and respond to new challenges. Society's neglect of young people made the healthy growth of adolescents into adulthood a "troubled journey." Many communities across the United States lacked the social support infrastructure for promoting strong families and positive adolescent development. This dramatic decrease in the social support network was documented

by research by the Search Institute. Their research identified forty developmental assets that described building blocks for positive adolescent development and highlighted the significance of the community—family, school, church, and organizations—in promoting positive growth. According to their research, the vast majority of the nation’s young people lacked the requisite number of assets for healthy growth into adulthood.¹⁴

The new generation of young people, born in the 1980s and 1990s, presented a new set of challenges for all those in ministry with youth. Many of their perspectives, attitudes, and values were fresh and new, and different from previous generations. They brought a different set of needs and expectations. One of their important needs was for a spiritually challenging vision that gave meaning and purpose to their lives and presented a worthy adventure to which they could commit their lives. One of their expectations was for a faith community worthy of their allegiance or loyalty, in which they could become active members. They expected active roles in the ministerial life of the faith community—liturgy, leadership, and service to name only a few. They were looking to be the church of today!

Through his pastoral letters to young people, biennial World Youth Days, and continuous advocacy on their behalf, Pope John Paul II raised the profile of young people in the Church. His emphasis on discipleship and the active participation of young people in the ecclesial community were constant themes in his writing and homilies. These emphases would be reflected in the second generation vision of youth ministry.

As leaders in the field of the youth apostolate, your task will be to help your parishes, dioceses, associations, and movements to be truly open to the personal, social, and spiritual needs of young people. You will have to find ways of involving young people in projects and activities of formation, spirituality, and service, giving them responsibility for themselves and their work, and taking care to avoid isolating them and their apostolate from the rest of the ecclesial community. Young people need to be able to see the practical relevance of their efforts to meet the real needs of people, especially the poor and neglected. They should also be able to see that their apostolate belongs fully to the Church’s mission in the world.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, *LISTEN TO THE TRUE WORD OF LIFE*, 1993¹⁵

This is what is needed: a Church for young people, which will know how to speak to their heart and enkindle, comfort, and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the Gospel and the strength of the Eucharist; a Church which

will know how to invite and to welcome the person who seeks a purpose for which to commit his whole existence; a Church which is not afraid to require much, after having given much; which does not fear asking from young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as that of the following of the Gospel.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, *WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS*, 1995¹⁶

The blueprint for the next generation of youth ministry is found in the pastoral plan of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. Building on the 1976 national document, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, and reflecting over twenty years of experience in developing effective approaches and strategies for ministry with adolescents, *Renewing the Vision* deepened the vision and expanded the scope of Catholic youth ministry. In November of 1997, the assembly of Catholic bishops approved *Renewing the Vision* as their pastoral plan for the future of Catholic youth ministry.

A Vision of Youth Ministry focused attention on youth and new ways to minister with them. *Renewing the Vision* focused attention on the power of community—the church community, the family community, and the wider community—for promoting healthy adolescent development and faith growth. *Renewing the Vision* re-affirmed the truth that youth ministry is the work of the entire Church and that youth ministry is to draw upon the faith, the gifts, the talents, the energies, and the resources of the entire church community.

Several key characteristics gave shape and form to the framework for ministry presented in *Renewing the Vision*:

Youth ministry is focused on young and older adolescents. *Renewing the Vision* broadened the scope of youth ministry to encompass younger adolescents (ages 11-14/15) and older adolescents (ages 14/15 to 18.) Up until this point much of youth ministry was focused on high school youth.¹⁷

Youth ministry is goal-directed. *Renewing the Vision* embraced and enhanced the two goals from *A Vision of Youth Ministry*—identifying assets for healthy faith development and providing direction on the role of families, the parish, the Catholic school, and youth-serving organizations in promoting faith growth. *Renewing the Vision* added a third goal specifically designed to focus youth ministry on promoting active discipleship in the lives of young people, “a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision that meets their hunger for the chance to participate in a worthy adventure.”¹⁸

“Goal 1: To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.”¹⁹

“Goal 2: To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.”²⁰

“Goal 3: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”²¹

Youth ministry is comprehensive in scope, integrating diverse activities into a larger, integrated framework. *Renewing the Vision* fully developed the comprehensive approach suggested in *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. “[T]he comprehensive approach is a framework for integration rather than a specific model. The comprehensive approach is not a single program or recipe for ministry. Rather, it provides a way for integrating ministry with adolescents and their families into the total life and mission of the Church, recognizing that the whole community is responsible for this ministry. The comprehensive approach uses all of our resources as a faith community—people, ministries, programs—in a common effort to promote the three goals of the Church’s ministry with adolescents.”²²

Renewing the Vision presented eight components of a comprehensive ministry: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship. The presentation of each component was grounded in Church teachings and provided specific directions for the development of that component. The catechetical component integrated the faith themes for younger and older adolescents, found in *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*, with the content themes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to provide the basis for an adolescent catechetical curriculum within youth ministry.

Renewing the Vision presented a framework which integrated the eight ministries of the Church with four essential elements or settings for ministry with adolescents: youth, family, church community, and wider community. This is the heart of the comprehensive approach developed in *Renewing the Vision*:

- utilize each of the Church’s ministries—advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship—in an integrated approach to achieving the three goals for ministry with adolescents;
- provide developmentally appropriate programs and activities that promote personal and spiritual growth for young and older adolescents;

- enrich family life and promote the faith growth of families with adolescents;
- incorporate young people fully into all aspects of Church life and engage them in ministry and leadership in the faith community;
- create partnerships among families, schools, churches, and community organizations in a common effort to promote positive youth development.²³

Renewing the Vision proposed flexible and adaptable program structures for developing ministry with youth, including:

- a diversity of program settings: age-specific programs, family-centered programs, intergenerational parish programs, and community-wide programs
- a balanced mix of programs, activities, and strategies that address the eight components of comprehensive ministry
- a variety of approaches to reach all adolescents and their families including large-group gathered programs, small-group programs, home-based programs, one-on-one/mentoring programs, and independent programs
- a variety of scheduling options and program settings to respond to the reality of the busy lives and commitments of adolescents and their families.²⁴

Youth ministry partners with parents in developing the faith life of adolescents by empowering families to share, celebrate, and live the Catholic faith at home and in the world. *Renewing the Vision* moved the family to the center of youth ministry efforts. Reflecting the teachings of the Vatican and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, it affirmed the home as the primary context for sharing, celebrating, and living the Catholic faith, and that parents are partners with youth ministry leaders in developing the faith life of adolescents. *Renewing the Vision* challenged youth ministry leaders to develop a family perspective in the policies, programs, and activities, and to be of service to the family at home.²⁵

Youth ministry engages the power and resources of the intergenerational community of faith. *Renewing the Vision* advocated for a community and intergenerational focus for ministry with adolescents. The whole community—by its way of learning together, living together, serving together, praying together, and celebrating together—helps young people become disciples of Jesus Christ

and members of the Catholic community. Comprehensive ministry integrates youth ministry and young people into the larger faith community and focuses energy on building intergenerational relationships between young people and the community.²⁶

Youth ministry cooperates with community leaders and organizations to promote positive adolescent development and create healthier communities for all young people. *Renewing the Vision* advocated for a collaborative approach between the Church and community organizations. Promoting healthy adolescent development is not only the work of families, parishes, and schools. It requires an entire community. This approach involves advocacy on behalf of young people and their families, connecting with other congregations, and networking with leaders in public schools, youth-serving agencies, and community organizations.

Youth ministry empowers everyone in the faith community to utilize their gifts, talents, and resources in ministry with adolescents. *Renewing the Vision* challenged the entire faith community to assume responsibility for ministry with adolescents. Every member of the faith community has a role to play and special skills, gifts, talents, and resources that can enrich and expand ministry with adolescents.

The relationship between young disciples and their Lord in the Emmaus story was the guiding image for ministry in *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. While still an essential guide image for ministry with youth, *Renewing the Vision* proposed a second image—young people empowered for mission. Just as Jesus sent out the twelve (Lk 9:1–6) and seventy-two (Lk 10:1–12) to carry out his mission, ministry with adolescents empowers young people to proclaim the Good News and to build a world that is more just, more peaceful, and more respectful of human life and creation. “We must ensure that young people are well equipped for their special mission in the world. All of our efforts to promote an active Christian discipleship and growth in Catholic identify must lead toward mission.”²⁷

Promoting discipleship is central as youth ministry embraces a call for renewal of efforts in catechesis. In 2008, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops provided guidance in developing a curriculum within systematic catechesis with older adolescents in their document, *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the*

Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age. Yet, catechesis remains a part of the larger framework for Catholic youth ministry as we were reminded in the 2005 document, the *National Directory for Catechesis*, which affirms the importance of a comprehensive approach for the effectiveness of catechesis with young people:

The most effective catechetical programs for adolescents are integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral ministry for youth that includes catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship.* Such programs aim to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community; and to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.**28



Conclusion

Continuity and newness. Faithfulness and adaptability. Care and challenge. Social reality and hope-filled vision. Formation and transformation. Comfort and empowerment. The tradition of Catholic youth ministry has demonstrated the ability to balance what might seem like opposing tendencies into a comprehensive and holistic response to the total life of the young person. While the Church's ministry must address the newness of each historical event, we have seen the pattern of effective ministry repeated in each era. It is a rich tradition that continues to grow and develop. The foundation is set for the next generation of Catholic youth ministry.

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7. *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976, p. 6.
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8. Paradis, Wilfrid, and Andrew Thompson. *Where Are the 6.6 Million?* Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976, p. 9. This study noted that “these figures are very likely the most optimistic possible and probably minimize the

true dimensions of the problem” (p. 9) due to the self-reporting of participation numbers by parishes and the undetermined number of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools.

9. *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, p. 1.

10. *ibid.*, p. 7.

11. *ibid.*, p. 24.

12. *Sharing the Light of Faith*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979), #228.

13. *ibid.*

14. Benson, Peter L. *The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th to 12th Grade Youth*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1993. This book was the first document in the Search Institute’s research on developmental assets in young people. For more information about developmental assets go to: www.search-institute.org.

See also: Benson, Peter L. *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

15. Pope John Paul II. *Listen to the True Word of Life*, 1993, as cited in *Renewing the Vision*, p. 9.

16. Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, 1995, as cited in *Renewing the Vision*, p. 10.

17. *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997, p. 20.

18. *ibid.*, 10.

19. *ibid.*, 9.

20. *ibid.*, 11.

21. *ibid.*, 15.

22. *ibid.*, 19-20.

23. *ibid.*, 20.

24. See RTV, 25.

25. See RTV, 21.

26. See RTV, 22.

27. RTV, 51.

28. *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 201. Asterisks make reference to these references: **Renewing the Vision*, p. 26; ***Renewing the Vision*, pp. 9-17.