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TOTAL FAITH™ INITIATIVE

The Catholic Youth Bible

Coordinator's Manual

Total Youth Ministry

Total Catechesis

The Catholic Faith Handbook
for Youth

Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

The Total Faith™ Initiative

Total Catechesis

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer

Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments

Catechetical Sessions on the Creed

Total Youth Ministry

Ministry Resources for Community Life

Ministry Resources for Evangelization

Ministry Resources for Justice and Service

Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care

Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship

Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development

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The Catholic Faith Handbook
for Youth

Thomas East with Ann Marie Eckert,
Leif Kehrwald, Brian Singer-Towns, Cheryl M. Tholcke

Laurie Delgatto, general editor

Saint Mary's Press™

This book is dedicated to John and Linda Roberto
on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary
of the Center for Ministry Development (CMD).

To John, founder of CMD, in gratitude for your vision, leadership, and
commitment to empowering leaders for today's Church.

To Linda, in gratitude for your commitment, dedication, and constant care
of the CMD staff and community.



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CD-ROM Contents

The following materials can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM:

- Sessions and Activities Searchable Database
- Strategies and Live It!™ Ideas Searchable Database
- Template for Total Faith™ Index Cards
- Community-Building Activities
- Guides for Youth Ministry Leaders
 - Understanding Youth Today: Younger Adolescents
 - Understanding Youth Today: Older Adolescents
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 - Chapter 10: Inviting, Welcoming, and Encouraging Youth Participation
 - Chapter 11: Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders

Introduction to the Total Faith™ Initiative

Many youth today are waiting to hear the Good News that is ours as Christ's disciples. Youth in our parishes long to grow spiritually and to belong to their family, Church, and local community in meaningful ways. Parents of youth long to experience Church as supportive of and caring about the same things they care about. They hope the parish will offer ways for youth to be involved and to grow in their faith through the presentation of solid content. Parents want to understand youth ministry so they can support and encourage their child's participation.

Parishes want to know how to include youth and how to pass on faith to a new generation. Parish members want to see youth more involved and are worried about the challenges that face today's youth. They know that young people need support from their faith community—now more than ever. Parish youth ministry leaders are generous, passionate, and busy people; they make sacrifices so that youth will have a community to belong to and a place to grow. They need ideas and plans for youth ministry activities—and strategies that really work. They are working toward a ministry that goes beyond just gathering groups of young people; they are working toward a ministry that makes connections between youth and the community.

In 1997 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published its vision and framework for youth ministry that addresses those concerns. In *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, the bishops describe a rich and challenging vision for Catholic youth ministry. Catechesis is at the heart of that vision; throughout the document the bishops urge the Church to guide young people toward a life of fullness in Jesus Christ, and to give them the tools that will enable them to live out that fullness as Catholic Christians. To put it simply, the bishops call young people to embrace their faith as they study it, pray it, and live it. The bishops also challenge the faith community to surround young people with love, care, and attention, and to include youth throughout the life of the parish.

By addressing each of the eight components for comprehensive youth ministry as articulated in *Renewing the Vision*, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps communities implement that vision. It addresses those elements in a way that pays attention to the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral needs of young people. In this renewed vision, catechesis is one component of youth ministry; it is not distinct from it.

The initiative includes a three-part series that brings to the field of youth ministry the ancient yet timeless truths of the Catholic faith. The Scriptures and Tradition are set within a framework that any parish can apply in its everyday ministry with youth. From the initial proclamation of the Good News, through evangelization and outreach to effective catechesis, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative seeks to root youth in and connect them to the unchanging truths of their Catholic faith—while challenging them to apply the words of the Gospel and the teachings of Tradition to their daily lives. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative includes these components:

- ***The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth* (CFH)** and the first edition of ***The Catholic Youth Bible* (CYB)** serve as the centerpieces of this initiative. The *CFH* is an integrated text for youth who are participating in the learning elements of TOTAL FAITH, and all the sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals are linked to this handbook and to the *CYB*, which is considered an important student resource.
- The **Total Youth Ministry** resource manuals address six of the eight components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. (The advocacy component, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and is addressed specifically in the *Coordinator's Manual*.)
- The four catechetical manuals that comprise the **Total Catechesis** series are grounded in the content of the *CFH* and address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

TOTAL FAITH Resources Are Integrated and Flexible

TOTAL FAITH resources are both integrated and flexible. They integrate all the components of comprehensive youth ministry, because many parish youth ministry leaders desire a single resource that addresses all youth ministry components. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps parishes implement comprehensive youth ministry with all its components, including adolescent catechesis, in a way that is seamless.

Because many youth ministry leaders create their own programs by mixing and matching ideas and activities from several sources, TOTAL FAITH resources are created to be flexible. The sessions and activities in the Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry manuals are designed to stand independently, without having to be in a particular sequence or having other content as a prerequisite. This means that you can use a session or two in regular gatherings with youth or combine them into longer programs. For example, you can take an activity from one session and combine it with a prayer experience and a media connection from another session to create your own learning program. In fact, all the session handouts are available on an accompanying CD-ROM in a format that allows you to customize and modify them.

There is more. You can access all the sessions and activities in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals through a searchable database on the *TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM, which is included with this manual.

Total Youth Ministry Resource Manuals

The Total Youth Ministry resource manuals address six of the components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. Another component, advocacy, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and addressed specifically in the *Coordinator's Manual*. The catechesis component is addressed in the four Total Catechesis manuals. You will find the following information in each Total Youth Ministry manual:

- a chapter explaining the component, connecting it to Church documents, and identifying practical ideas and resources
- sessions that can stand alone or be combined with other sessions in the series
- numerous strategies, ideas, suggestions, and resources that go beyond a specific gathering

Following is a brief description of each of the manuals:

- ***Ministry Resources for Community Life*** offers faith communities program resources and strategies to build community among young people and throughout the parish. The resource includes nine gathered sessions to help young people get to know one another, themselves, and the meaning of Christian community. It also contains an outline for an ecumenical event to help build community across denominational lines, and it offers practical strategies and ideas to help manage community issues, make the most of community life opportunities, and encourage intergenerational and family relationships.

Features of TOTAL FAITH

TOTAL FAITH provides the following:

- ◆ an integrated approach to youth ministry that includes attention to adolescent catechesis within the *Renewing the Vision* components
- ◆ flexible resources that match a variety of parish models and styles of youth ministry
- ◆ solid content about the Catholic faith and about numerous topics throughout the components of youth ministry
- ◆ easy-to-use session plans for gathered programs that are adaptable and complete
- ◆ dynamic session designs geared to youth's learning needs
- ◆ resources to support youth learning, including handouts and connections to *The Catholic Youth Bible* and *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*
- ◆ strategies, ideas, and resources that go beyond gathered programs to connect youth to all settings of youth ministry and parish life

- ***Ministry Resources for Evangelization*** offers faith communities tools and program resources to evangelize youth. It offers practical strategies and ideas for outreach to young people, and contains twelve gathered sessions to share the Good News. It also includes a retreat to engage young people in becoming or continuing as Jesus' disciples.
- ***Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*** offers faith communities programs and strategies to engage youth in justice, direct service, and advocacy in faithful, age-appropriate, and proactive ways. This resource contains eight gathered sessions around specific justice issues, an overnight retreat on service to poor people, and two half-day retreats or evening reflections on simplicity and racism.
- At the heart of ***Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*** are twelve sessions designed to equip young people with the tools needed to celebrate their holy goodness and navigate some of life's difficult issues. Session topics include recognizing the goodness in oneself and others, building and maintaining relationships, dealing with tough times, and preparing for the future. The last section of the manual comprises strategies for doing the ongoing work of pastoral care.
- ***Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*** is designed for those who work with and walk with youth in this journey of discipleship. The manual contains three sessions to teach youth to pray and to practice praying in different forms. Eleven communal prayer services are included, which can be used on a variety of occasions throughout the seasons of the year. It also contains strategies and resources to help youth communities develop patterns of prayer and to include youth in preparing prayers and liturgies.
- ***Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*** offers faith communities program resources and strategies to develop youth as leaders within youth ministry programs and the parish. The manual includes four foundational sessions on Christian leadership, ten leadership skill sessions and minisessions, and two sessions to help prepare youth and adults for working together. The manual offers ideas and strategies for creating leadership roles within the parish, inviting youth to leadership, and working with the parents of youth leaders. The plans for implementing sessions and other gathered events are complete, easy to follow, and adaptable to your community.

The Total Catechesis Manuals

The four Total Catechesis manuals address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism*, a faith that is to be believed, celebrated, lived, and prayed. Each catechetical manual is grounded in the content of the *CFH*. Using tested strategies, catechists lead the participants through

creative learning experiences and then invite them to reflect on those experiences. Prayer, the Scriptures, and other elements of the Christian faith are carefully integrated into every manual in the series. These four manuals correspond to the four sections of the *CFH*:

- ***Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*** is a rich course that gives young people a solid grounding in the foundations of Christian morality, to add to what they have already received in their faith community and in their family. The manual presents young people with the fundamental concerns of the moral life in a Catholic Christian context. Above all, the course is an invitation to young people to build God's Reign by loving themselves and others as God loves them. In other words, it is an invitation to become holy, healthy, and happy. In doing so, young people will bring God and the world together!
- From the Scriptures and Tradition, we come to know prayer as our response to God's invitation of covenant and communion. It is both a gift of grace and a determined effort on our part. Prayer involves our whole being—mind, body, and soul. The material in ***Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*** encourages young people to pray as a way to grow in their relationship with God. It gives young people the tools to pray all ways, and always, and enables them to build their relationship with God on a solid foundation.
- ***Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*** addresses the sacraments of initiation, the sacraments of healing, and the sacraments at the service of communion. The sessions share the history of the sacraments, their meaning, the significance of symbols, and the nature of the rite itself. Participants are invited to enter actively into the study of the sacraments, to make connections between the sacraments and their own lives, to reflect prayerfully on the meaning of the sacraments, and to take some sacrament-related action steps.
- ***Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*** focuses on understanding the treasure, the gift, the challenge, and the sacrament that is Church. The young people are supported as they grow in their faith and in their knowledge about the basic truths of the Catholic faith. They are encouraged to make the mission of the Church their own, and challenged to set their heart on all that is good, holy, and true about being a young Catholic in the world today.

The manuals in the Total Catechesis series are STUDY IT! PRAY IT! LIVE IT! resources. The STUDY IT! component comprises a 45- to 60-minute core session that focuses on chapters in the *CFH*. Optional activities, called session extensions, allow you to extend the core session to 90 minutes or longer. The PRAY IT! component offers a 10- to 15-minute prayer service on the session theme, and the LIVE IT! component suggests ways to connect the session topic to parish, community, and family life.

The Manual CD-ROMs

Each manual is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing the full content of its activities. This feature enables the user to provide handouts and resource materials to catechists, adult leaders, parents, and young people in a variety of delivery methods, such as e-mail, Web site posting, and photocopying. Handouts and resources are provided in both printable color and black-and-white versions, and the latter can be customized for the particular needs of your group. You will also find additional resources, hyperlinks to suggested Web sites, and background material for leader preparation.

The Coordinator's Manual CD-ROM

On the CD-ROM accompanying this *Coordinator's Manual*, you will find a searchable database to help you locate sessions and activities in the TOTAL FAITH manuals that can be used to create gathered programs, and ideas and strategies for nongathered programming. The CD-ROM allows you to print brief descriptions of all the sessions and activities found in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals, for use in planning. You will also find PowerPoint presentations to assist you in training your

TOTAL FAITH Sessions Are Easy to Use

The plans for implementing sessions and other gathered events are complete, easy to follow, and adaptable to your community. With the detailed plans provided for the sessions, activities, and strategies in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative, youth ministry volunteers no longer need to be program designers. By using the TOTAL FAITH resources, you can focus on the important task of finding the leaders that make youth ministry happen. Each session includes an overview, a list of materials, preparation steps, and step-by-step instructions for facilitating a session with confidence. Most sessions also include a variety of ways to extend the theme of the session with prayer, related learning exercises, or follow-through experiences.

TOTAL FAITH Sessions Encourage Dynamic Learning

Youth are engaged in active learning with the sessions in the Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry series because the design is built around their learning needs and styles. Every session includes dynamic learning activities that bring young people's experience into conversation with the session theme. You will find that in the different manuals, the instructions and categories will be familiar. Yet in the different components of youth ministry, the sessions have been designed to match what we know about how youth learn in that particular component. For instance, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*, the pastoral circle helps youth engage in critical reflection about topics of justice in today's world. In *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*, each session is built around a Scripture passage and a faith witness. Throughout the Total Catechesis sessions, a praxis approach to learning is utilized to help youth connect what they are learning with their everyday life.

TOTAL FAITH Supports Youth with Resources for Their Faith

Handouts are included in many of the session plans so that youth are provided with the resources needed to support their learning. Participants will also rely on the *CFH* and the first edition of the *CYB*, the foundational texts for the TOTAL FAITH sessions and activities.

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth

This book can stand alone as a reference for young people, but it is intended to be an integrated text for youth who are participating in the

learning elements of TOTAL FAITH. Leaders in youth ministry will also find it to be a helpful resource and guide for sharing and living the faith.

The Catholic Youth Bible

The *CYB* is designed for searchers and committed Christian youth to read and to apply the Scriptures to their life. The Bible is linked to sessions throughout the manuals of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative and therefore is considered a primary student resource.

The TOTAL FAITH Initiative Is Comprehensive

Throughout the strategies offered in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative, parishes are encouraged to go beyond an approach that relies only on gathered meetings. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative also makes connections to families of youth by supporting them with helpful resources and opportunities to gather together. In addition, the initiative suggests a variety of ways to connect youth to the parish community and the wider civic community.

TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual Contents

Chapter 1: “Comprehensive Catholic Youth Ministry”

This chapter provides a description of the purpose, goals, and components of Catholic youth ministry as described in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Renewing the Vision*.

Chapter 2: “With a Solid Catechetical Heart”

This chapter provides direction for catechesis with adolescents today. It also includes a guide to key documents relating to catechesis, practical guidance for parishes in planning for catechesis, and a discussion of models and effective methods.

Chapter 3: “Visioning and Planning for Dynamic Youth Ministry”

This chapter helps leaders plan for and organize youth ministry. Practical resources and exercises are included to provide a way for parish teams to name their vision and set goals for the parish's youth ministry.

Chapter 4: “Choosing a Model for Youth Ministry in Your Parish”

This chapter describes the qualities and elements of effective youth ministry and provides several models for parishes to consider in their planning.

leaders and in program planning, and handouts on a variety of topics to help prepare leaders for their role.

Connections to the *Spirit & Song Hymnal*

Many of the TOTAL FAITH sessions include suggested songs from the *Spirit & Song* hymnal, published by Oregon Catholic Press. This hymnal is designed to enhance prayer and liturgy for gatherings of youth and young adults. For more information about *Spirit & Song*, contact Oregon Catholic Press, at 5536 N.E. Hassalo, Portland, OR, 97213, 503-281-1191 or 800-548-8749, www.ocp.org.

Chapter 5: “Planning a Season of Ministry”

This chapter provides a process for parish leaders to use to plan a season of youth ministry that includes gatherings with youth, connections with families, nongathered strategies, and connections to parish life. Four sample seasonal plans are included.

Chapter 6: “Gathering with Youth”

This chapter suggests various ways to use the TOTAL FAITH resources in gathered programs with youth and their families. The gatherings include youth nights, extended events, and retreats.

Chapter 7: “Connecting with Youth”

This chapter provides ways for parishes to connect with youth beyond gathered programs. It includes ideas and resources for reaching out to youth and a guide to strategies for connecting with youth.

Chapter 8: “Connecting with Families of Youth”

This chapter provides leaders with research on families with teens and ways that youth ministry leaders can partner with parents. Included are suggestions and ideas for using the resources and sessions in the series.

Chapter 9: “Connecting Youth to the Parish Community”

This chapter shares ideas for connecting youth to parish life and building the relationship between youth and the parish community. Opportunities for connections between the generations are identified.

Chapter 10: “Inviting, Welcoming, and Encouraging Youth Participation”

This chapter explores methods and resources for encouraging youth and their families to become involved in youth ministry. It also includes recommendations for welcoming youth and providing hospitality.

Chapter 11: “Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders”

This chapter presents a vision and strategies to empower a variety of leaders to implement youth ministry.

Where Do I Start?

You can use the TOTAL FAITH Initiative resources in your parish in different ways, depending on the needs of the young people and the community. Here are some suggestions on how to start:

- **If you are looking for content to include in an existing youth ministry and religious education program,** you will want to review chapters 5 and 6 of this *Coordinator's Manual* for help in planning and implementing gathered programs for youth.
- **If you are looking for a specific program element, such as a learning activity or a prayer service, for an event or a gathering that you are**

planning, you will want to use the "Searchable Index of Sessions, Activities, and Strategies" feature on the CD-ROM that accompanies this *Coordinator's Manual*. That feature will allow you to locate elements from the sessions that connect with the topic you are looking for.

- **If you and your parish wish to start or enhance the parish's ministry with young people**, you will want to utilize the resources in this *Coordinator's Manual* in a systematic way. Here is a plan to follow:
 1. With your team, learn about youth ministry and adolescent catechesis. Read chapters 1 and 2, and involve others in the helpful exercises provided at the end of the chapters.
 2. Read chapters 3 and 4, and involve other leaders in planning, goal setting, and choosing a model for your parish youth ministry. Use the exercises at the end of chapter 3 to lead others in a planning day. In chapter 4, the section "TOTAL FAITH Connections" tells you how the TOTAL FAITH resources connect with the elements and models for effective youth ministry.
 3. Use the TOTAL FAITH sessions and strategies to plan a season of ministry. Use the process in chapter 5 and the helpful index cards located on this manual's CD-ROM to plan for three months of ministry using the TOTAL FAITH resources and other resources.
 4. Use chapter 6, "Gathering with Youth," to plan for youth nights, extended events, and retreats.
 5. Plan for strategies to help the youth ministry team connect with youth. Use chapter 7, "Connecting with Youth," to locate and plan strategies that go beyond gathered programs and help you connect with youth. The section "Using TOTAL FAITH Resources to Reach Out to Youth" tells you where to find nongathered strategies.
 6. Use chapter 8, "Connecting with Families of Youth," to find ways to connect with families of youth. The section "Using TOTAL FAITH Resources to Connect with Families" tells you where to find specific sessions and strategies to help you connect with families.
 7. Find ways to connect youth with the parish. Use chapter 9, "Connecting Youth to the Parish Community," to find suggestions, ideas, and resources that build the relationship between youth and their parish. The section "TOTAL FAITH Connections" tells you where to find sessions, strategies, and resources for this topic.
 8. Use chapter 10, "Inviting, Welcoming, and Encouraging Youth Participation," to find helpful suggestions for publicizing youth ministry and extending hospitality to youth.
 9. Use chapter 11, "Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders," to access and support leaders in your community. The guides for youth ministry leaders on the CD-ROM will help you prepare leaders for specific roles.

Conclusion

Parishes with dynamic youth ministry surround their youth with loving care. They include their young members in leadership and planning, and respond to the needs identified by their youth. It takes total faith to dream and build ministry with youth that truly empowers young disciples. Our hope is that you will find in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative the help, encouragement, and example that your parish community needs to create or strengthen the youth ministry efforts in your community.

1 Comprehensive Catholic Youth Ministry

Youth, parents, parish communities, and youth ministry leaders long for vibrant youth ministry that engages, inspires, and empowers youth for discipleship and active membership in the community. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Renewing the Vision* provides a vision for this kind of dynamic ministry with youth. In that vision, youth are seen as gifted, growing, and capable of being active disciples. The parish is seen as a place where youth and their families feel welcome and participate actively. Youth ministry is described in that vision primarily as the parish's relationship with its youth, rather than as a program or a collection of activities. Through that relationship the parish community shares faith with young members.

This vision of youth ministry is broad and has numerous possibilities. In considering all the possibilities, some people can become overwhelmed. The possibilities in the vision are not intended as a checklist of things that every parish is required to provide. Rather, the possibilities provide the big picture of what Catholic youth ministry can be. Parishes find themselves in that picture, and develop their ministry with youth by connecting youth to the resources, activities, and people that comprise parish and community life.

Many people describe the vision presented in *Renewing the Vision* as "comprehensive youth ministry." To be comprehensive, parishes develop a mix of strategies and gathered events. They have a regular pattern of gathering with youth, a variety of ways to connect with youth outside of events, a means to connect with and support families of adolescents, and an intentional plan for including youth throughout parish life. The mix and emphasis of those pieces are different for each community. One parish described their youth ministry as a two-step dance, with one step being their ministry directly for teens and the other step being their efforts to connect teens to the rest of the parish's life and ministry.

Renewing the Vision does not provide a rigid program model or a prescriptive method for developing ministry. Rather, it offers a framework, a structure that has room for parishes to develop youth ministry in various

ways. Like the blueprints for building a home, the framework provides five important elements that guide us:

- definition
- goals
- themes
- ministry components
- ministry settings

Let's explore these elements in depth, and look at how the TOTAL FAITH Initiative addresses them.

Definition of Catholic Youth Ministry

The definition of youth ministry offered by the bishops in *Renewing the Vision* is formed by our love for and our commitment to youth: "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" (p. 1).

The bishops remind us to see within youth the incredible potential and capacities they have, and to respond to their present and real needs. Youth ministry does not exist because youth are particularly troubled or needy; youth are growing in ways intended by our loving God. They are encountering the joys that are a natural part of adolescence. In the midst of their growing pains, youth have wonderful gifts to offer. We minister to youth because we are Church and we follow Jesus' pattern: we respond to needs and empower youth to use and share their gifts.

Three Goals of Catholic Youth Ministry

In *Renewing the Vision*, three goals serve as directions for ministry with youth.

Goal 1: "To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today" (p. 9). We know that young people are seeking. They seek to find the adventure of their lifetime. They look for a way to contribute something important to the world. They look for a cause to belong to, a cause in which to place their energy and life. As a faith community, we offer young people the challenge of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This effort includes the following:

- providing a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision for life
- evangelizing youth, drawing young people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- calling youth to discipleship

- providing opportunities for youth to join in service, ministry, and leadership
- providing catechesis for youth
- helping youth explore their vocation

Goal 2: "To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community" (p. 11). We know that young people strive to be part of a community. They long to belong with others. They want to feel connected to people with whom they feel safe. As a Church, we offer young people community. We help them become more connected in their own families, in our parishes, and in the wider community.

Renewing the Vision identifies four important faith communities for young people: the family, the parish, the Catholic school, and the youth-serving organization. We help youth connect to those communities through these methods:

- supporting families of youth with resources, programs, and information
- integrating youth into the life of the parish community
- supporting community life in the Catholic school
- building participation in youth-serving organizations

Goal 3: "To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person" (p. 15). We know that young people are growing. This time in their life brings dramatic physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual changes. As the Body of Christ, we offer experiences and opportunities for youth to grow in positive ways, through learning their faith and by using their gifts in service to others. As a community we use our creativity and resources to respond to youth who are seeking, striving, and growing. We foster this growth through our active engagement of youth in the life of our communities in these ways:

- supporting the development of healthy, competent, caring, and faith-filled youth
- addressing their unique developmental, social, and religious needs
- promoting Catholic identity
- using the asset-building approach to address the obstacles and challenges to healthy development

Seven Themes of Comprehensive Youth Ministry

The themes of the comprehensive vision presented in *Renewing the Vision* provide a guide for ministry development that helps us use all our resources and be inclusive and responsive in our ministry efforts.

Developmentally Appropriate

Effective ministry responds to the developmental growth of young and older adolescents by using programs and strategies that are age appropriate and strategically focused to contribute to the positive development of youth.

Family Friendly

Effective ministry recognizes the family as an important setting for ministry and provides links between the programs of youth ministry and the family home through information sharing, inclusive programs, and resources for families of adolescents.

Intergenerational

Effective ministry utilizes the intergenerational parish community by developing shared programs that include children, youth, and adults of all ages. The intergenerational theme is also addressed by connecting youth to adults in the community, which includes adults mentoring youth, as well as linking youth as mentors with younger members of the parish.

Multicultural

Effective ministry provides for ministry to youth in the context of their culture and their ethnic heritage. Effective ministry also promotes crosscultural understanding and appreciation.

Communitywide Collaboration

Effective ministry promotes collaboration with leaders, agencies, and congregations in the wider community. This collaboration includes sharing information, sponsoring programs, and developing advocacy efforts.

Leadership

Effective ministry mobilizes the people of the faith community to become involved in youth ministry efforts by providing diverse roles and leadership commitments for adults and youth.

Flexible and Adaptable Programming

Effective ministry provides flexible and adaptable program structures and ministry responses to address the variety of youth and families in our communities.

Eight Components of Comprehensive Youth Ministry

The components describe eight 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" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 26).

The components support and enhance one another. Ministry becomes more effective when the ministry response is balanced across the eight ministry areas. This balance is not necessarily achieved by developing separate ministry activities and strategies for each component; sometimes a single event, such as a retreat, incorporates several ministry components. A balanced approach to the following components, taken from *Renewing the Vision*, takes place over a season or year of ministry.

Advocacy

"The ministry of advocacy engages the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community. It places adolescents and families first by analyzing every policy and program—domestic, parish-based, diocesan, and international—for its impact on adolescents and families. Poor, vulnerable, and at-risk adolescents have first claim on our common efforts. The ministry of advocacy struggles against economic and social forces that threaten adolescents and family life, such as poverty, unemployment, lack of access to affordable health care, lack of decent housing, and discrimination. The ministry of advocacy supports policies and programs that support and empower adolescents and their families and works to overcome poverty, provide decent jobs, and promote equal opportunity. In all advocacy efforts we must remember to focus on adolescents and families with the greatest need. This is the 'option for the poor' in action (*Putting Children and Families First*)" (p. 27).

Catechesis

"The ministry of catechesis helps adolescents *develop* a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and *increase* their knowledge of the core content of the Catholic faith. The ministry of Catechesis also helps young people *enrich* and *expand* their understanding of the Scriptures and the sacred tradition and their application to life today, and *live* more faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives, especially through a life of prayer, justice, and loving service. Genuine faith is a total response of the whole person—mind, heart, and will. The ministry of catechesis fosters growth in Catholic faith in all three dimensions—trusting (heart), knowing and believing (mind), and doing (will)" (p. 29).

Community Life

"The ministry of community life *builds* an environment of love, support, appreciation for diversity, and judicious acceptance that models Catholic principles; *develops* meaningful relationships; and *nurtures* Catholic faith. The content of our message will be heard only when it is lived in our relationships and community life. To teach compassion, generosity, tolerance, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, and love as gospel values and to

identify ourselves as Christians requires us to live these values in our interactions with young people and in our community life. . . .

"The ministry of community life is not only *what* we do (activity), but *who* we are (identity) and *how* we interact (relationships)" (p. 34).

Evangelization

"The ministry of evangelization shares the good news of the reign of God and invites young people to hear about the Word Made Flesh. Drawing from Jesus' example, evangelization involves the community's pronouncement and living witness that the reign of God has become realized in and through Jesus. The starting point for the ministry of evangelization 'is our recognition of the presence of God already in young people, their experiences, their families, and their culture. . . . Evangelization, therefore, enables young people to uncover and name the experience of a God already active and present in their lives. This provides an openness to the gift of the Good News of Jesus Christ' (*Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization*, p. 15).

"The ministry of evangelization incorporates several essential elements: *witness, outreach, proclamation, invitation, conversion, and discipleship*" (*Renewing the Vision*, pp. 36–37).

Justice and Service

"The ministry of justice and service *nurtures* in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching; *empowers* young people to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering; and *infuses* the concepts of justice, peace, and human dignity into all ministry efforts" (p. 38).

Leadership Development

"The ministry of Leadership Development calls forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents. Leadership roles in adolescent ministry are key. Leaders must be trained and encouraged. This approach involves a wide diversity of adult *and* youth leaders in a variety of roles. Many will be involved in direct ministry with adolescents, others will provide support services, and yet others will link the ministry effort to the resources of the broader community" (p. 40).

Pastoral Care

"The ministry of pastoral care is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus' care of people, especially those who were hurting and in need. The ministry of Pastoral Care involves *promoting* positive adolescent and family development through a variety of positive (preventive) strategies; *caring* for adolescents and families in crisis through support, counseling, and referral

to appropriate community agencies; *providing guidance* as young people face life decisions and make moral choices; and *challenging* systems that are obstacles to positive development (*advocacy*). Pastoral care is most fundamentally a relationship—a ministry of compassionate presence. This was Jesus' caring stance toward all people, especially those who were hurting or in need. Pastoral care enables healing and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships. It nurtures growth toward wholeness" (p. 42).

Prayer and Worship

"The ministry of prayer and worship *celebrates* and *deepens* young people's relationship with Jesus Christ through the bestowal of grace, communal prayer, and liturgical experiences; it *awakens* their awareness of the spirit at work in their lives; it *incorporates* young people more fully into the sacramental life of the Church, especially Eucharist; it *nurtures* the personal prayer life of young people; and it *fosters* family rituals and prayer" (p. 44).

Settings for Comprehensive Youth Ministry

Often, as youth ministry leaders, we limit our thinking about the settings in which ministry to young people can occur. Consider the following four settings, and the possibilities open up.

Youth

Direct ministry to and with youth, using activities and strategies, is the first setting to consider. This is the setting we most commonly associate with youth ministry. It includes the variety of ways we gather young people: youth group meetings, religious education programs, sacramental preparation, socials, sporting events, youth retreats, youth service events, and special youth prayer services. Ministry in the youth setting also includes individualized efforts and ways we connect directly with youth without gathering them, such as e-mail prayer messages or a parish ministry presence at youth football games and concerts.

Family

Ministry in the family setting includes the variety of ways we connect with families of adolescents. This includes providing resources and programs that support parents, as well as strategic opportunities that bring the family together. In this setting we also support the ways that family members minister to and with each other in the home. For example, we can provide suggestions for family prayer or fun time for families of adolescents as they share faith together in the home. With strategies as simple as developing family information packets for youth programs, parents will

know what their children are experiencing, and they will be better prepared to support their children's efforts.

Parish

The parish setting includes the many ways that youth experience ministry through the life of the parish itself. For example, how do we include the gifts of youth and respond to their needs through our parish liturgies? Some communities prepare liturgies that include youth in the liturgical ministries and are intentional about mentioning, in prayers and homilies, people and issues that matter to youth.

The parish's community life also becomes a place to minister to youth when we pay attention to their needs and gifts. When planning events such as a parish mission or a parishwide service event, consider how those events can touch the lives of young people.

The Wider Community

Ministry to youth in the wider community connects youth and families to programs and resources beyond the parish. Examples are participation in interparish, interchurch, and diocesan events, and ways that we can connect youth and families to programs, resources, and events in the civic community. Connecting youth to service in hospitals, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters is a wonderful way for youth to develop their gifts. We take advantage of our shared strength when we come together with other people and agencies in the wider community as advocates for youth.

Conclusion: Putting the Framework Together

Together the definition, goals, themes, components, and settings provide the framework for developing our unique response as a parish community. This framework provides a guide for developing comprehensive youth ministry and is designed to do the following:

- 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 of 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

(Renewing the Vision, p. 20)

A Church that responds to youth by creating comprehensive youth ministry is a place where youth and their families will find what they need to belong deeply, grow in faith, and find a way to share their gifts. Pope John Paul II describes this vision for Church:

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. (1995 World Day of Prayer for Vocations)

Exercises for Sharing the Vision

Sharing the vision for comprehensive youth ministry can help bring your parish on board with your ministry efforts. Consider sharing the information in this chapter with the following groups:

- youth and adult leaders in youth ministry
- parish leaders and parish leadership groups, such as the pastoral council and faith-formation commissions
- parish staff
- parents of youth
- collaborators in the wider community

To share the vision, use the PowerPoint slides that accompany this chapter to enhance your presentation. Consider using the following exercises when you make your presentation. If you are presenting the material all at once, you may wish to focus on one or two exercises. If you are working with a leadership group that will consider this material over several meetings, choose one exercise for each meeting to accompany the particular focus of the chapter.

Exercise 1: Exploring the Definition of Youth Ministry

For this exercise prepare two sheets of newsprint by drawing a line down the middle, dividing each sheet into two columns. On the first newsprint sheet, write "Youth Needs" at the top of the left-hand column and "Parish Resources" at the top of the right-hand column. On the second sheet of

newsprint, write "Youth Gifts" at the top of the left-hand column and "Parish Needs" at the top of the right-hand column.

Present the information from the chapter about the definition for youth ministry; then invite the group to brainstorm answers for each column. On the first sheet, ask the group to identify the needs of youth. Ask them to consider what young people need in order to grow during this time of adolescence. Then ask the group to identify the resources and opportunities of the parish that could be used to connect with youth. After the two columns are complete, ask the group to connect words or phrases between the columns. For instance, the left-hand side may say that youth need "a way to share their gifts." This would connect with the parish resource of "leadership and ministry opportunities."

Repeat this exercise with the second sheet of newsprint by having the group identify the gifts of youth and the qualities or gifts needed by the parish to become a vibrant, faithful, Gospel-filled community. Ask the group to connect youth gifts with parish needs. For example, the youth gift of "creativity" would connect with the parish need for "new ideas." Ask the group what they discovered from the exercise. Restate the definition of youth ministry, and make connections to the exercise. Allow about 20 minutes to complete the exercise.

Exercise 2: Exploring the Goals for Youth Ministry

Before doing this exercise, prepare a sheet of newsprint with the following information:

- adventure (goal of discipleship)
- connection (goal of belonging)
- a safe place to learn and grow (goal of total personal and spiritual growth)

Begin by asking the group to brainstorm answers to the following question: "What do you think youth are seeking?" Record the answers on a separate sheet of newsprint. Present the newsprint that you prepared earlier. Explain that youth seek adventure, which focuses on the goal of discipleship; connection, which focuses on the goal of belonging; and a safe place to learn and grow, which focuses on the goal of total personal and spiritual growth. Compare those descriptions to the brainstormed answers, and make connections between the two lists.

Present the material from this chapter about the goals of youth ministry, and ask the group to identify examples of how the parish helps provide for each goal. Allow about 10 minutes to complete the exercise and additional time for your presentation.

Exercise 3: Exploring the Components of Youth Ministry

If you have enough participants, form eight small groups; otherwise, form pairs to focus on as many of the eight components of youth ministry as possible. Assign a component to each group. Ask the groups to review their component description as found in this chapter and then prepare a brief presentation for the larger group. The presentation could include a key phrase that describes the component, an example of how a parish can minister to or with youth in the component area, and a catchy phrase, slogan, or cheer that goes along with the component.

Allow about 10 minutes for the group to do its work, and then ask each group to give its report. After each group's report, provide additional comments and examples for that component. You can also describe and give examples for the components that did not have a group assigned to them. Allow 30 minutes to complete this exercise.

Exercise 4: Exploring the Youth-Friendly Parish

Renewing the Vision challenges parishes to become "'youth-friendly' communities" (p. 13). Prepare a sheet of newsprint listing these four key words:

- know
- value
- welcome
- include

Begin this exercise by presenting the information from this chapter about youth-friendly parishes. Present the four key words, and ask questions about each word:

- How well does our community know youth?
- How highly do we value youth in our community?
- How do we make youth feel welcome—not just in our programs but in how we welcome youth's ideas and sharing in leadership?
- How do we include youth in our life as a parish? in our programs? in our budget and facilities committees? in our leadership groups?

Ask the participants to assess the parish by giving a rating from 1 to 5 (with 5 being high) for each question. The participants should add the four scores and divide by 4 to get their "youth-friendly" rating. As a group, discuss your ratings for each word. Then ask the group to discuss these questions:

- What are the strengths in our community for being youth friendly?
- What are our weaknesses, and in what areas do we need to grow to become more youth friendly?
- What do we need to change about our community to become more youth friendly?

Allow 30 minutes to complete this exercise.

2 With a Solid Catechetical Heart

If bishops, pastors, parents, and youth ministry leaders agree on any aspect of youth ministry, it is probably that we want our youth to be knowledgeable about their Catholic faith. We want to be effective in helping them understand the doctrines, moral teaching, and sacramental life of the Catholic faith. To accomplish this, the U.S. bishops call for a holistic vision of youth ministry that completely integrates catechesis with all the other components of comprehensive youth ministry (see chap. 1). Yet despite that vision, a disconnect happens all too often between catechesis and the other components.

With this comprehensive vision in mind, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative was planned, from the ground up, to provide a resource that effectively integrates catechesis with the other components of youth ministry. As you read through this manual, you will discover how thoroughly integrated those components are. However, the catechesis component receives some special treatment, for Pope John Paul II tells us that "the Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to his Father after his Resurrection, he gave the Apostles a final command—to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that he had commanded!" (*Catechesi Tradendae* [*Catechesis in Our Time*], no. 1).

It is no secret that catechetical ministry with adolescents faces some big challenges. Yet signs of hope are emerging everywhere. The Church's recent catechetical documents provide vision and direction for renewing catechetical ministry. Many parishes are experimenting and finding success with new delivery systems for adolescent catechesis. Leaders are moving beyond the misunderstandings that suggested youth ministry and religious education were two separate and unrelated ministries. And now the TOTAL FAITH Initiative provides resources whose comprehensiveness and flexibility will make you eager to respond to the challenge of catechizing the young Church.

This chapter starts by looking at the aim, tasks, and content of catechesis. It goes on to explore some qualities of effective adolescent catechesis

and how the TOTAL FAITH resources are designed to support those qualities. Then five different delivery models for adolescent catechesis and the importance of developing a scope and sequence of doctrinal content for your parish's ministry of adolescent catechesis are addressed. Finally, some exercises are suggested for processing this information with your catechetical team.

Keep in mind that like chapter 1, this chapter provides just the ecclesial and pastoral principles on which the TOTAL FAITH resources are designed. The remaining chapters provide the concrete tools for planning and implementing the program.

The Aim, Tasks, and Content of Adolescent Catechesis

The vast amount of written material on catechesis in general, and adolescent catechesis in particular, can quickly confuse and overwhelm the professional minister, let alone the volunteer leaders and catechists. To help you make your way through this sea of information, here are some brief summaries of the important points.

The Aim of Catechesis

How would you explain in a nutshell the primary goal or aim of the Church's catechetical ministry? Pope John Paul II said it clearly in his 1979 encyclical *Catechesi Tradendae*:

The name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ.² (no. 1)

If we take our cue from the Pope, the primary focus of adolescent catechesis is to form young disciples. (Notice the similarity to the first goal of comprehensive youth ministry in *Renewing the Vision*, found in chap. 1, pp. 18–19.)

To understand this aim, it may help to understand that the Catholic Church defines catechesis as a part of evangelization. Evangelization is the first and primary mission of the Church: to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Catechesis begins only after someone has been initially evangelized and is preparing for initiation into the Church through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—but it still retains an evangelistic focus.

Once a person is fully initiated into the Church, catechesis is expected to continue as ongoing education in the faith (see nos. 62–73 of the *General Directory for Catechesis*). But ongoing education in the faith takes on a

different look and feel than catechesis for a person who has yet to be fully initiated.

Putting those ideas into practice means that youth who have yet to be fully initiated into the Church—which most often means youth who have not yet been confirmed—should have a regular and consistent program of religious instruction to prepare them for full initiation.

But Confirmation is not graduation. For youth who have been fully initiated, ongoing catechesis is necessary. But this catechesis can be more seasonal and varied than pre-Confirmation catechesis (see the sidebar "Forms of Continuing Catechesis"). Youth who are confirmed should experience ongoing catechesis throughout their involvement in the parish and its youth ministry. This approach prepares youth for ongoing religious education as an adult.

The Tasks of Catechesis

We now turn our attention to the tasks of catechesis. If our aim is to form young disciples, what catechetical tasks must we be about? The *General Directory for Catechesis* again provides direction by listing six fundamental tasks of catechesis:

- *Promoting knowledge of the faith.* This task has to do with deepening a person's understanding of the Scriptures and Tradition, in order to give witness to what we as Catholics believe.
- *Providing liturgical education.* This task has to do with educating for full, conscious, and active participation in liturgy and the sacraments.
- *Focusing on moral formation.* This task has to do with conversion—helping people make the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes the guiding values of their life.
- *Teaching to pray.* This task has to do with practicing the various forms of Christian prayer—allowing the Spirit to deepen our relationship to the Father and to Jesus Christ.
- *Educating for community life.* This task has to do with learning to live as a genuine Christian community and relating to other Christian Churches without compromising Catholic doctrine.
- *Providing a missionary initiation.* This task has to do with equipping disciples to live their Christian values in educational, business, professional, community, and social settings.

Take a close look at these tasks. Notice how every task has a dimension that is lived out in daily life. Catechesis is not just about memorizing prayers and doctrine. It must contribute to a more faithful living out of the Gospel call as disciples of Jesus Christ. All the Total Catechesis manuals are PRAY IT! STUDY IT! LIVE IT! resources. The STUDY IT! and LIVE IT! components intentionally connect the content of the sessions to real-life values and issues.

The Content of Catechesis

Given the aim and tasks of catechesis, the content of adolescent catechesis begins to become clear. However, the specific structure for that content is provided by the *Catechism*. The *Catechism* is structured around four major parts, called the four pillars of the Catholic faith. Here is a short summary of those pillars.

The profession of faith. The content of this pillar follows the basic structure of the Apostles' Creed. It contains the themes of revelation, salvation history, God the Father and creator, Jesus Christ our redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our sanctifier. It also addresses the sacred Scriptures and the mission and meaning of the Church.

The celebration of the Christian mystery. The content of this pillar is based around the liturgy and the seven sacraments. It addresses the meaning of liturgy and how God is at work in each of the seven sacraments of the Church.

Life in Christ. The content of this pillar addresses the topic of morality. Its themes include the Beatitudes, human freedom, sin, conscience, and virtues. A significant part of the content addresses the morality of specific human acts, using the Ten Commandments as the organizing structure and guide.

Christian prayer. The content of this pillar addresses the topic of personal prayer. The themes include why we pray; types and styles of prayer; Jesus, Mary, and the saints as guides for prayer; and what the Lord's Prayer teaches us about our relationship to God and to other people.

As you develop your plan of youth ministry events and activities, choose a balanced and comprehensive selection of catechetical topics and themes. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative provides an easy way for you to do this. By choosing sessions from all the Total Catechesis manuals over several years, you will provide the necessary balance of content. In addition, *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth* addresses all the essential doctrine of the Catholic faith, as established by the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism.

Qualities of Effective Catechesis with Adolescents

Across the country, many parish leaders for religious education and youth ministry struggle with low attendance, a lack of well-formed catechists, and the perception that Confirmation equals graduation from further religious formation. Those challenges are significant, and must be addressed if we are to make progress in adolescent catechesis. Fortunately, leaders across the nation are experimenting with and researching innovative ways to address those challenges.

In the national research project "Effective Youth Ministry Practices in Catholic Parishes," conducted by Saint Mary's Press and the Center for Ministry Development, nearly four hundred youth, adult leaders, and parish staff members from ninety-six parishes around the country were interviewed about what constitutes effective youth ministry. Among the findings is that effective adolescent catechesis has these qualities:

- It most often begins with real-life issues and connects faith to life.
- It is facilitated by open-minded, authentic, and faith-filled adults.
- It includes community building.
- It includes peer sharing, youth witness, and youth leadership.
- It teaches about Catholic identity.
- It is experiential, active, and innovative.
- It is supported by parish staff, families, and parish communities.
- It doesn't feel like school, that is, it doesn't involve long lectures or too much focus on textbooks.

(P. 6)

If you imagine a setting for adolescent catechesis that embodies those qualities, what do you see? Do you see a traditional classroom in which a teacher is lecturing to students? Probably not. You might see a classroom with an enthusiastic adult leader who is using a variety of activities to actively engage the youth in reflecting on how the content of faith connects to their lived reality. Or you might see a gathering of parents and teens in which teens and adults take turns presenting on a topic related to Catholic identity. Or you might see an overnight retreat that is focused on one of the themes from the pillars of faith. All those are settings in which effective adolescent catechesis can occur.

Planning for Effective Catechesis with Adolescents

One thing should be clear by now: in planning for comprehensive youth ministry, we must be intentional about planning for the component of

adolescent catechesis. As you follow the planning processes suggested in chapters 4, 5, and 6, you will need to make some choices about your catechetical topics and delivery models as you design your parish's youth ministry efforts. Only by being intentional can you be sure your program will have a solid catechetical heart.

To be deliberate about adolescent catechesis, consider some special catechetical concerns before you begin your total youth ministry planning. Here we highlight two of those concerns: your primary delivery model for catechesis and your catechetical scope and sequence.

Primary Delivery Model

In our conversations with parishes that report success with adolescent catechesis, we did not find that they all shared a consistent model for delivering catechetical ministry. By this, we mean the way they provide an intentional time and space for catechesis to occur. Some parishes have success with weekly meeting models. Others experience success by infusing catechesis into youth ministry events such as retreats, monthly gatherings, and service projects. Still others find success by providing religious formation through intergenerational programming.

Let's look closely at five models for delivering adolescent catechesis (knowing that there are endless variations and permutations), and reflect on the strengths of each. Please notice that the same models appear in chapter 4. You will want to look at the descriptions of those models in chapter 4 to see how they also embody comprehensive youth ministry.

Model 1: Weekly Youth Night

In this model a parish provides a weekly youth night, often on Wednesday or Sunday evenings. These gatherings are for all high-school-age youth, and run from 90 minutes to 2 hours in length. The gatherings address several of the components of youth ministry and include catechesis on specific topics, which are offered approximately every other week. Community building and prayer are a consistent part of each gathering. Rotating teams of youth and adults are responsible for planning the meetings, including those that address catechetical topics. This model often uses a scope and sequence that covers topics from each of the four pillars of the *Catechism* every year.

The advantage of a weekly youth night is that it creates an exciting environment in which a large number of young people gather. However, the parish must have a space that can comfortably accommodate a large group. Parishes that employ this model often have large youth rooms, complete with a public-address system. This model seems to work well with mid- to large-size parishes in suburban areas. It also works well with parishes that hold their youth gatherings after a weekly liturgy. Communities that leave one night of the week free from school activities also have a better chance of

success with this model. See chapter 6 for suggestions on developing this model.

Model 2: Small Faith Communities

In this model the regular pattern of gathering is in small faith communities, often called cell groups. Youth who are in their freshman year of high school are divided into groups of ten to twelve members that meet with two adults. The groups meet at the parish or in family homes on a weekly basis. The cell groups stay together for at least two years, if not all through high school. In the first year or two, the adults lead the group that is studying catechetical topics. But after a year or two, the young people take turns leading the discussion and learning process in the group. This model often uses a scope and sequence that explores topics from just one or two of the pillars of the *Catechism* each year.

The advantage of the small faith community model is that it can create close-knit communities of faith. This model works well with large parishes, where because of their size, it is difficult to create a close sense of community.

Model 3: Weekly Religious Education Model

The weekly meeting model is the most familiar model to many adults because it is a model they experienced when growing up—unless they attended a Catholic school. In this model teens meet weekly for a 60- or 75-minute class. The classes usually start in the fall and continue through May, breaking only for holidays. The young people tend to meet by grade level, with each grade studying a different catechetical theme. The scope and sequence of this model usually includes topics from just one or two of the pillars of the *Catechism* each year.

The advantage of the weekly meeting model is that it makes planning and scheduling easier for both families and the program coordinator. The regular and continual contact also provides the opportunity for building relationships and growing community. It seems to work best in smaller, often rural, parishes that have community and family support for ongoing catechesis. Communities that leave one night of the week free from school activities also have a better chance of success with this model.

Model 4: Monthly Events

In this model religious formation is infused in special monthly gatherings that also address other components of youth ministry. The monthly gatherings are for all high school youth, are several hours in length, and may include a meal and liturgy. Each gathering addresses a specific theme and weaves catechetical content throughout the event. Teams of youth and adults plan and lead the gatherings. This model can also use overnight retreats in addition to or in place of the monthly gatherings. The scope and sequence of catechetical themes covers topics from all four pillars of the *Catechism* every year. Samples and possible schedules for this model are in chapter 6.

Some advantages of the monthly-events model are that it plans events for times that do not conflict with the busy calendars of many teens and it provides better opportunities for exploring a topic in depth. This model also avoids the impression that religious formation is just another class. It seems to work best for large suburban parishes that draw teens from many high schools and in parishes where teens are highly involved in after-school activities.

Model 5: Intergenerational

Promoting youth participation in intergenerational faith learning provides another model from which youth can experience catechesis. James W. White defines intergenerational religious education as "two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through in-common experiences, parallel learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive sharing" (*Intergenerational Religious Education*, p. 18). Some parishes are providing intergenerational learning experiences as their primary religious education model. In this way, children, youth, and adults of all ages learn together and share faith. Other parishes offer intergenerational events as a complement to their age-specific religious education efforts.

In either case, such events offer experiences for all ages as well as parallel learning, during which participants meet in their age-specific groups. The focus of the events is applied faith. To work toward that goal, whole-group sharing experiences are offered, as well as reflection and application experiences that help all participants bring their faith experience back home. As youth ministry leaders, we can encourage those experiences and collaborate in leadership of the events that provide dynamic catechesis for youth and promote young people's identification with the parish community.

Scope and Sequence

A program's scope and sequence usually refers to a chart or table that shows at what ages particular doctrinal themes and content are covered in a catechetical program. It is a way of being deliberate about exposing people in the program to a comprehensive treatment of the Catholic faith. You should check to see if your diocese has a recommended or required religious education scope and sequence for senior high. Regardless of your primary delivery model, you will want to create your own scope and sequence as a guide to choosing the topics that will be covered in your program while a young person is in high school. Even though it is doubtful that any one young person would participate in every catechetical opportunity, the parish should make a good-faith effort to provide opportunities for a comprehensive catechetical experience.

There are two approaches for structuring the scope and sequence of your catechetical program. One approach covers topics in one or two themes each year. Each year new themes are introduced, and previous themes are not repeated. A scope and sequence that uses this approach with the Total Catechesis manuals might look like the following chart. Depending on your primary delivery model, the themes might be taught in weekly sessions, they might be infused in retreats and other events, or they may be part of an intergenerational program.

Year	Fall-Winter Season or Semester	Winter-Spring Season or Semester
1	<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>
2	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>
3	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>
4	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>

If you have a graded program, year one would be the ninth-grade themes; year two, the tenth-grade themes; and so on. You would offer four different themes at the same time, one for each grade level.

However, if your program model mixes young people of different grades, year one would be the themes for all grades for the first year; year two, the program themes for all grades for the second year; and so on. At the end of four years; you would repeat the cycle.

If you celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation during high school, your scope and sequence might look like this chart:

Year	Fall-Winter Season or Semester	Winter-Spring Season or Semester
1	<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>
2	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>
3	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>	Confirmation preparation
4	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>	<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>

The other approach to creating a scope and sequence is to repeat the major themes each year, usually covering new topics. Revisiting the themes emphasizes their interconnectedness. And changing themes more often during the year can help the program seem fresher and keep young people interested. Again, remember that depending on your primary delivery model, the themes can be covered in quite different ways. A scope and sequence based on this approach might look like this chart:

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
1	faith (<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>)	the Trinity (<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>)	the sacraments of initiation (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>)	an introduction to prayer (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>)
2	Jesus Christ (<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>)	the Catholic Church (<i>Catechetical Sessions on the Creed</i>)	Confirmation preparation	moral truth (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>)
3	the liturgy (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>)	respecting sexuality and life (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>)	types of prayer (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>)	sacraments of healing (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>)
4	honoring God and family (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>)	the Lord's Prayer (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer</i>)	sacraments of service (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>)	the moral life (<i>Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality</i>)

To lengthen each season's theme or the number of sessions implemented, remember that each session in the Total Catechesis manuals always includes ideas for extending the time frame. Consider conducting the core session during one gathering, and then following up with all the session extensions in the subsequent gathering. Enhance the sessions in the Total Catechesis manuals by adding the following activities from the Total Youth Ministry manuals:

For *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*, consider adding:

- "The Importance of Community," chapter 4, in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- "Making Friends," chapter 5, in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- "Catholic and American," chapter 9, in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- "What Would Jesus Do? Gospel and Life Choices," chapter 10, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "A Catholic Approach to Justice and Service," chapter 1, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Life: Who Gets to Choose?" chapter 3, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Children's Rights: National, Global, and Galactic," chapter 4, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Exactly What Is a Just Wage," chapter 5, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Working for the Common Good," chapter 6, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Caring for Creation: Environmental Justice," chapter 7, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "How Can War Be Justified?" chapter 8, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Hunger Among Us," chapter 9, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- "Dating Relationships," chapter 4, in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*
- "Accepting and Honoring Others," chapter 5, in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*
- "Choices and Decisions," chapter 6, in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*
- "Sexuality and Spirituality," chapter 12, in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*

For *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*, consider adding:

- "My Walk with God: Personal Experiences," chapter 3, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "Weathering the Storms: Being Faithful Through Doubt," chapter 11, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "TAPP into Prayer," chapter 3, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- "Praying with Music: Psalms for Today," chapter 4, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- "Praying with Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha," chapter 8, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

- "Praying with Our Lady of Guadalupe," chapter 9, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- "We've Come This Far by Faith," chapter 10, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

For *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*, consider adding:

- "Healed by Jesus," chapter 6, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "Participating in the Triduum: Watch and Pray," chapter 5, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- "Bread: Broken and Shared," chapter 6, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- "Praying During Advent," chapter 15, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- "Return to Me: Reconciliation Service," chapter 16, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

For *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*, consider adding:

- "Made in God's Image," chapter 3, in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*
- "Sharing Our Faith: An Ecumenical Event," chapter 11, in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- "The Good News: Created in God's Love," chapter 4, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "Meeting Jesus," chapter 5, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "Living as a Disciple Today," chapter 8, in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "I Call You Each by Name," chapter 7, in *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

As part of planning for comprehensive youth ministry, create a scope-and-sequence chart for your parish. Perhaps your chart will repeat topics every two or three years, instead of every four years. But you should have your scope and sequence in mind as you plan for each season and each year (see chap. 5).

Conclusion

The challenges facing us in providing effective adolescent catechesis are not insurmountable. Although the aim, tasks, and content remain constant, the methods and delivery systems must adapt to changing times. The resources of Total Faith provide you with approved content in a flexible format so you can focus on identifying the models that will provide success in your parish. But most important, remember that in this work we are only instruments of the Holy Spirit. Consider this exhortation from Pope John Paul II:

When carrying out her mission of giving catechesis, the Church—and also every individual Christian devoting himself to that mission within the Church and in her name—must be very much aware of acting as a living, pliant instrument of the Holy Spirit. To invoke this Spirit constantly, to be in communion with Him, to endeavor to know His authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every catechist. (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 72)

Exercises for Sharing the Vision

Sharing the vision for adolescent catechesis can help bring your parish on board with your ministry efforts. Consider sharing the information in this chapter with the following groups:

- catechists
- youth and adult leaders in youth ministry
- parish leaders and parish leadership groups, such as parish staff, the pastoral council, and faith-formation commissions
- parents of youth

To share the vision, use the PowerPoint slides that correspond to this chapter to enhance your presentation. Consider using the following exercises when you make your presentation. If you are presenting the material all at once, you may wish to use both exercises. If you are working with a group that will consider this material over several meetings, choose one exercise as the particular focus for each meeting.

Exercise 1: Exploring the Models of Adolescent Catechesis

Before you gather with your team, prepare a presentation on the five models for delivering adolescent catechesis that are presented in this chapter. You may wish to create a newsprint flip chart that highlights the characteristics of each model.

When the team has gathered, begin by asking each person to briefly share her or his own experience of catechesis as a teen (remember that it might have been called CCD, religious education, or Confirmation preparation). Ask the teens to focus not on the content but on where it was held, how often they met, and who led the class or meeting. When all have finished, briefly discuss their experiences. Did they all follow the same model as to when and where they met? What were the benefits of the model? What were some drawbacks or negative aspects?

Next, make your presentation on the five models for delivering adolescent catechesis that are discussed in this chapter. After you have presented, ask the group these questions:

- Which model or models intrigue you as possibilities for our parish situation?
- Which model or models would definitely not work for our parish situation?

See if you can eliminate two or three of the models, leaving two or three models that seem like strong possibilities.

Divide the team into two or three groups, and assign each group one of the remaining models. Ask them to discuss their assigned model, using these guiding questions:

- Given our parish situation, what are the benefits of this model?
- Given our parish situation, what are the drawbacks of this model?
- How might this model be adapted or modified to better fit our situation?
- Would you recommend adapting this model? Why or why not?

To finish, invite the groups to share a summary of their discussion. Guide the entire team to a consensus in choosing a particular model.

Exercise 2: Developing a Scope and Sequence for Adolescent Catechesis

Before the session create a large chart similar to the scope and sequence charts in this chapter, but leave the boxes for the catechetical topics blank. You may wish to make copies of the sample scope-and-sequence charts to use as handouts. Also, create a chart that lists the four pillars of the *Catechism* and the Total Catechesis manuals that correspond to each pillar.

When the team gathers, display all the Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry manuals. Begin by inviting the team to look at the content and the topics covered in the manuals. Ask them to make notes about the sessions or topics that they feel the young people need to study the most.

Referring to the chart you created, explain the need to have a plan to provide catechesis that addresses all the pillars of the *Catechism* while a young person is in high school. Explain the difference between the approach that addresses just one or two faith themes each year and the approach that addresses topics from all four pillars each year. As a group, discuss which approach seems most appropriate for your situation.

The final task would be to fill in the blank chart with topics for each season. The goal is to create a chart for a three- or four-year cycle of catechesis. Have the team members refer to the topics they listed when they looked through the TOTAL FAITH Initiative manuals at the beginning of your meeting. Fill in the chart with the names of general topics. Later you can use the chart for choosing specific TOTAL FAITH sessions to create a season of ministry (see chap. 5). Having young people participate with the planning team for this exercise would be beneficial.

3 Visioning and Planning for Dynamic Youth Ministry

What is your parish hoping to accomplish through youth ministry? What are the values that will guide your efforts? Effective parishes take the time to stand back and name their vision, their goals, and their values. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative can help parishes work toward those hopes and goals; this chapter provides the factors required for successful planning, which will help parishes use the resources in an effective way.

Visionary Leadership

Outstanding leaders make things happen. Their passion, vision, and actions make seemingly impossible innovations practical. Those leaders have several things in common. They have a clear purpose that focuses on a need in the community. They can imagine a future in which this need is met, and they can describe the future to others in such a way that they become caught up in the vision. Then those leaders set goals for their mission—goals that inspire, require effort, and yet are attainable. In reaching their goals, they are guided by values. Those values are integrated so thoroughly into every aspect of their work that outside observers can easily name the values in those organizations. Throughout this process the leaders break down barriers, build support for their mission, gain partners who make resources available, and gain followers who join in the mission.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was such a leader. She left a successful teaching ministry to focus on the needs of the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India. Most people took those tragic circumstances for granted, but she envisioned sick and needy people being served. Her solidarity with poor people and her actions on their behalf kept her focused on her purpose, even though her early efforts were wrought with challenge. Her work from the beginning was guided by values and principles that she would not compromise. For instance, in her community, no matter how high their leadership positions, leaders were still expected to spend time in direct contact with the poor people who were being served.

By her actions and leadership, Mother Teresa broke down walls and gained supporters who gave money, provided transportation, and made facilities, food, and supplies available. Her vision and leadership inspired people to join with her and live this mission by the guiding principles and values that became her community's charisms. Her leadership caused the poorest of the poor to be served with dignity, and it inspired millions more to pursue their missions with similar zeal and diligence.

In planning for effective youth ministry using the TOTAL FAITH resources, we can learn from mission-driven leaders. To build a lasting tradition of serving youth in our community, we can emulate visionary and practical leaders. Like them, we know that we cannot go it alone, that to accomplish our mission we need others, and that our vision and leadership style must attract others. We don't ignore the structural or systemic challenges that our mission will face; we know we are making changes, and that change is difficult and resistance must be anticipated. We cannot just talk about our mission; like those outstanding leaders, we must act. Some of their first efforts succeeded and some failed, but they persisted—and so must we.

Factors for Effective Leadership

In Church ministry and in business leadership, practical factors have been identified that help leaders and leadership groups be effective in making changes and accomplishing their mission. The following planning components have been researched and identified so that others can learn from them:

- Name a purpose that meets a real need.
- Be guided by values and principles.
- Envision the future and work toward a clear goal.
- Find partners and discover resources.
- Create a shared plan.
- Build ownership and support.
- Learn from experience.

Those common factors contribute to effective planning for ministry. Attending to those factors does not mean that each individual activity or strategy you attempt will succeed flawlessly. However, when you attend to those building blocks, you set yourself up for success and you learn from your mistakes when they happen. We will briefly explore each of the factors in the following section. The exercises at the end of this chapter provide a process for guiding a team through them.

Name a Purpose That Meets a Real Need

This is an important place to start. Others will want to know why youth ministry is necessary and why the community should invest in the effort. If we are focused on our purpose, we will be able to weather the ups and downs, the successes and failures of our efforts as we grow. Our purpose should identify what is unique about our efforts and should clearly focus on the need we intend to meet.

The most basic flaw in planning occurs when we do not focus on the real needs of the people we aim to serve. Sometimes we focus on what we need as leaders or on what we think people should need. But those are not necessarily the real needs of young people and their families. In youth ministry you are on track when you focus on youth and families and their needs for community, spiritual growth, friendship, life skills, prayer, and a chance to serve others.

For example, sometimes in youth ministry, leaders focus on the need to make the group larger. But this is *our* need, not a real need of the young people. Instead, we must try to learn the basic human needs of the youth who are not participating. By meeting their real needs, the community will grow.

When we name the need we are meeting, we name our purpose and mission, which answers the most basic question: Why do we bother to do what we do? The answer to this question clarifies what plans we will choose and what will attract others to join in our mission.

Be Guided by Values and Principles

The values and principles that guide our work in ministry are often unconscious and unstated. By naming our principles and values up front, we can attract others to the mission and make other opportunities possible. Explicitly naming our values also allows us to brainstorm creatively to identify our resources and develop an action plan. We do not need to censor any ideas prematurely because we know that after we finish brainstorming, we will assess all the brainstormed ideas against the vision for our mission, our goals, and the values that guide us. This step helps us eliminate the options that don't match our vision and values. Our values will also guide us as we include leaders and prepare them to participate in the mission.

Envision the Future and Work Toward a Clear Goal

Effective leaders can describe a place to go and a way to get there. The vision is the place you are going to; your goals guide you in choosing a plan that gets you there. The vision and the goals are intertwined: the vision is like a description of the island where you want to go, and the goals and objectives are like the bridge you build to get from where you are to where you want to be.

To make youth ministry come together, we need to describe what things will be like when youth are a valued part of the parish community and are being guided to active discipleship and spiritual growth. Unless others in the community can see what youth ministry can be like in your parish, it will be difficult to make the changes needed for an effective youth ministry to develop.

To name a vision, consider these three steps:

1. Imagine the project once it is in place.
2. Envision WILD SUCCESS! (Suspend "Yeah, but . . .")
3. Describe and capture as concretely as possible what is going on when this project is successful. What features, aspects, and qualities can you imagine in place?

(Adapted from David Allen, *Getting Things Done*, p. 69)

A clear goal sets the direction toward this vision. A goal should be challenging and yet be something you can accomplish with the resources in your community. A clear goal is one you can communicate easily to others and evaluate afterward. A clear goal should indicate starting points and timing. Many times we will have to adjust our course and adapt, but if we are attending to a real need, our goal should keep us on track.

Find Partners and Discover Resources

We often miss this step. Many people in ministry are more accustomed to the adage "Just do it." Before we launch into our goals, it is helpful to find out what resources we have and who else could help us. That includes research into our parish and the wider community. To identify partners and resources, we look for people and organizations whose mission overlaps ours. Who in our parish wants to see youth become active disciples and grow in faith? Who else cares about youth in our community? Those questions can help us find the people we need, the facilities we need, and the resources we need to grow youth ministry.

Create a Shared Plan

This step requires the creative energy that comes from brainstorming. What is possible? What could we do? How can we make a difference? To encourage a team to brainstorm, allow for any and all ideas to surface and be explored. After all the ideas are on the table, compare them with the need, the vision, the goal, and the values.

In brainstorming ideas, consider these four ways to meet your goal and respond to the need:

- *Create a new program.* Meet the need by creating a new program from scratch.

- *Link people to a program in the community.* Organize ways to connect people to good programs that are sponsored elsewhere in the church, the school, or the community.
- *Change an existing program.* Include more people, include a special topic, or improve a program to meet a new need or to better meet present needs.
- *Advocate for change.* Petition, write letters, or organize presentations that promote a change in the community, parish, or youth group.

A second aspect in creating a shared plan is developing the timeline and responsibilities for the leadership tasks in the plan. This is the guts of the plan. Who will do what by when? If that is not determined, the plan will languish and fail. The shared plan must include details of timelines, resources needed, leaders needed, facilities available, and leadership tasks.

Build Ownership and Support

This factor has two important aspects. The first aspect is communicating with the people who will be served or affected by our plan. We need to tell people what we are trying to do. We need to ask for input, advice, and consultation so that we match our response to the real needs of the community. In youth ministry this means that we listen to and communicate with youth and their families to build support and momentum.

The second aspect is that we need the support of many people to make the plan come together. We communicate our plan to and ask support for our plan from the gatekeepers in our community, people whose support can make or break our efforts. To gain the support of the gatekeepers, we share our vision, goals, and values, consult with others as we proceed, thank people when they help, and include others in our mission.

Learn from Experience

An important part of planning is evaluating: What can we learn from our experience? This includes evaluating the particular activities and strategies as well as the overall youth ministry program: How well did we meet our goal? What would we do differently next time? It also includes evaluating our process: How well did we work together? What can we do differently next time? How can we use our resources more effectively?

Conclusion

As you plan for dynamic youth ministry, use the principles and exercises in this chapter to develop a vision for the future of youth ministry in your parish. That vision will guide your team as you choose your model for youth ministry (chap. 4), plan for seasons of ministry (chap. 5), and plan to

implement individual events and strategies from the TOTAL FAITH Initiative.

When those who are in need come to us and share their story, our response is natural. From our compassion we share what we have. Our parish community knows that youth need ministry. We respond to youth when we build a bridge between our community and the youth we strive to serve. One way to build the bridge is to remove the mystery of effective ministry. Effective youth ministry is not just one thing, and it is not something that only the "experts" can do. Youth ministry is the natural response of our parish community to the needs and gifts of the youth in our midst. When we hear the story of our young people, we can respond by sharing from the bounty of gifts with which God has graced our community. To share from those gifts, leaders inspire and energize the community. We help people know that youth ministry is important and possible. We stir the energies of the community.

Exercises for Visioning and Planning

Visioning and Planning as a Youth Ministry Team

To make the factors for success a part of your planning, spend extended time together as a youth ministry team to name a vision and set goals. Plan for at least a daylong planning session or a weekend together, if possible. Work on the following tasks during your time together:

- *Task 1: Identify your purpose and name the needs.* Discuss the needs of youth, their families, and the community. From this discussion choose one or two sentences that answer the question "Why do we do youth ministry?"
- *Task 2: Name your values and principles.* This part of the process answers the how question: "How will we go about accomplishing our purpose?" Discuss the core values and principles, the timeless things that never change in your youth ministry. Consider using the exercise "Naming Core Values," on page 49.
- *Task 3: Envision the future and name your goals.* Choose two or three goals for the coming year that work toward your purpose. Keep in mind the difference between your purpose and your goals: A purpose can never be exhausted or accomplished; it is like the horizon, always before you. Goals are reachable but require considerable effort, like a mountain you need to climb; eventually you will reach the top and choose another goal. Once you have selected goals, envision the future. Discuss what things will be like once the goal is accomplished. Consider using the exercise "Extra, Extra, Read All About It," on page 48.

- *Task 4: Identify partners and resources.* Now that you have named your vision and your goals, you can ask the team, "Who else shares these values and cares about this mission?" Brainstorm other people, organizations, and resource agencies that could help you accomplish your goal. Consider using the "mind map" exercise that follows to help you brainstorm.
- *Task 5: Build ownership and support.* This step has two parts. First, consider youth and their families: How will we gain ownership among youth and their families as we develop our youth ministry? How can we listen to youth and their parents? How will we communicate the plans for growing youth ministry? Second, consider developing the support of the gatekeepers in your community, people who have formal or informal roles that can either make resources available or make it hard for youth ministry to happen. Brainstorm a list of those people and organizations, and plan for ways to communicate with them to develop support for youth ministry among them.

After completing those tasks, you are ready to develop your plan for youth ministry for the year, including a plan for each season. To do that, use the process in chapter 5 of this manual. Those plans, guided by your vision and goals, will help you create, adapt, and learn along the way to dynamic youth ministry.

Visioning Exercises

Use the following exercises in conjunction with the process in the previous section, or by themselves, to help your team develop a vision for your parish's youth ministry.

Extra, Extra, Read All About It

When you envision your project serving youth, what are the headlines? This exercise helps youth and adults envision youth ministry in the future and clarify the goals and the mission of your efforts. Divide the participants into small groups of four to eight people, with a combination of youth and adults in each group if possible. Give each small group one or two sheets of newsprint and a pack of colored markers.

This is the group assignment: Imagine yourselves five years in the future, after we have implemented many of our dreams and plans for youth ministry. Our team is the staff of a newspaper that plans to publish a special edition about youth ministry in our parish. What are the headlines? What are the stories? What is newsworthy? Using the newsprint and markers, create a newspaper that describes youth ministry in our community in five years. Consider including these features:

- interviews with youth, parents, and parish leaders
- stories about youth ministry in the community

- a story about the changes in parish life
- pictures of youth participating in youth ministry

Allow 30 to 40 minutes for the groups to complete their work. After that time ask each group to share the headlines from their newspaper in a brief report, and then post the newspapers on the wall. After each report ask the group as a whole to shout out, "Extra, extra, read all about it!" After hearing all the reports and allowing some time for individuals to read the reports, lead the group in discussing common and surprising elements of their future vision. Ask the group to summarize the key points: What does this tell us about what we want to focus on in the next five years?

Naming Core Values

Use this exercise to name the values and principles that guide your vision. Distribute several 5-by-8-inch index cards and a marker to each person. Have each person identify three to five values that should guide youth ministry in your parish. Write those values on the index cards. Allow 5 to 7 minutes of reflection time for the cards to be written, while playing reflective music quietly in the background. Post the cards using this process: Have one person share one value that is especially important to them. Post that card on the wall. Ask other members if they have a similar or related value. Post those cards close to the original card. Continue with the next person and card until all the cards are posted.

After all the cards are posted, give each person a sheet of ten label dots, using one color for adults and another for youth. Have each person use their dots to prioritize the values. Each person can use their dots to select values in whatever way they wish: they can put all ten on one value or one or more dots on each of several different values. After all the dots are placed, involve the group in identifying their prioritized values. After several values have emerged as priorities, invite the members to advocate for values that are left out. At the end of the process, check in with the group to be sure they feel that the right values have been selected.

Mind Map Process for Brainstorming

To identify partners and resources and to create a dynamic plan, you will need to brainstorm ideas. Sometimes it is hard to get a group to start thinking creatively because they are so used to filling in the blanks or repeating what they have always done. One popular method for opening up creativity is a technique called mind mapping. A mind map is a brainstorming process that helps an individual or a group see all the possibilities and relationships between different parts of a plan or topic.

To mind map, write the core idea in the center of a large sheet of newsprint. Equip each person with a marker, and invite the participants to write ideas around the core idea in a free-form fashion. Continue writing ideas about the core idea or about any of the other ideas that surround it.

Make connections between words by drawing lines between ideas that have a relationship to each other. Continue until all the possibilities surface, or the things that you need to make this project dynamic and effective are named.

For example, if you are planning a fall retreat, write "fall retreat" in the center of the page. This might be surrounded by phrases like "up in the mountains," "talk about friendship and community," "new challenges," or "praying outside." Connected to "up in the mountains," you might write the name of a specific retreat center, and make a note to "rent a bus" or "take a nighttime prayer hike." Then you might draw a line from "take a nighttime prayer hike" to "pray outside." (For more information about mind mapping, see David Allen, *Getting Things Done*, pp. 71–72.)

Choosing a Model for Youth Ministry in Your Parish

Where would you start in trying to describe youth ministry in a parish? Youth ministry is more than just gatherings, activities, and events; it's more than the leadership team; it's more than the newsletter or fliers. How do you describe a relationship? Imagine describing your most significant relationship only in terms of when you get together or what you do. It's pretty awkward, isn't it? Youth ministry is more than a program; it's a relationship between the parish and its young members.

Like a relationship, youth ministry has many dimensions. At its heart is a pattern of listening, caring, responding, and sharing. When creating a model for your parish youth ministry, you are choosing a way to put your resources together to build a relationship. The TOTAL FAITH resources will assist you with the many elements that can go into your model, but each parish will find a different way to put the pieces together.

Parishes with Effective Youth Ministry

In a recent study, youth, adult youth ministry leaders, and parish staff members described their experience of youth ministry as a web of relationships. Youth ministry nurtures the relationships between youth and their peers, youth and their families, youth and youth ministry leaders, and youth and the parish community. This was just one image among many that surfaced in interviews done as part of the "Effective Youth Ministry Practices in Catholic Parishes" research project. The project included interviews with nearly four hundred youth, adult leaders, and parish staff members from ninety-six parishes around the country.

Those parishes were implementing a vision for comprehensive youth ministry, but they were responding with different models for their different settings. Project results reveal that parishes with effective youth ministry have these characteristics:

- **Youth ministry is supported and understood by the parish community.** Youth feel valued and welcomed in their parish, and they feel included in parish life. Everything youth experience in the parish is part of their experience of youth ministry.
- **Effective youth ministry responds to the real lives, needs, and interests of youth.** The leadership team for youth ministry knows the youth in the community and provides innovative and changing events, gatherings, and opportunities for involvement that respond to what youth need from the relationship.
- **Effective youth ministry is marked by generous hospitality and intentional relationship building.** Extending personal invitations, providing a warm welcome, nurturing relationships, and building community are all ongoing in youth ministry. Through those actions a web of relationships is nurtured, and through those relationships youth grow personally and spiritually.
- **Effective youth ministry has a variety of ways for youth and their families to be involved.** Youth ministry is multifaceted; there are different ways to be involved and different levels of involvement. The parishes with effective youth ministry also connect with families to promote participation and reinforce youth ministry involvement.
- **In parishes with effective youth ministry, youth are active in making youth ministry happen.** Youth are not passive receivers of ministry, but rather have ownership and shared leadership in the programs, the activities, and community life. In those communities youth witness to their faith with their peers.

(Effective Practices for Dynamic Youth Ministry, chaps. 1–2)

In addition to those characteristics, the parishes also noted specific programs or components in their youth ministry model that led to its effectiveness:

- **Faith formation is the "heart of youth ministry."** These parishes use a variety of methods to evangelize and catechize youth, but each community planned intentionally to share the faith in a way that connects with the real-life issues and concerns of youth.
- **Service experiences are transformational for youth and for those they serve.** Service experiences broaden the perspective of youth and help make faith real. The hands-on experiences of serving develop youth as disciples and help them feel valuable.
- **Youth expressed a strong desire to participate in liturgy that engages their whole person.** Youth want to be part of the parish's celebration of liturgy, and they hunger for music and homilies that touch their souls. Youth involvement in liturgical ministries is important to youth and an important sign of hope for the parish community.

- **Youth retreats were noted to have a unique ability to touch the hearts of young people and to help youth grow closer to God and the community.** Youth describe those events as life changing, and parish leaders noted the changes they saw in the youth and the enthusiasm youth bring to the parish as a whole.
- **Extended trips, camps, national conferences, and World Youth Day were important to youth and to the development of youth ministry.** Those experiences help build community and help youth develop a sense of pride in their faith identity.

(Effective Practices for Dynamic Youth Ministry, chap. 3)

As you can see from these qualities, youth ministry in effective parishes has many dimensions, so that all youth can find a place to fit in, whatever their spiritual needs or hungers might be. And even though the parishes were active, the variety of activities and strategies wasn't overwhelming; youth ministry didn't become a circus.

Those communities also actively avoided developing youth ministry as a parallel youth congregation to the parish community. The need to include youth in parish life is noted in mainline youth ministry publications. Kenda Creasy Dean critiques the separate youth congregation approach in the book *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. She describes this approach as "the one-eared Mickey Mouse model of youth ministry" (p. 31). In this model the parish as a whole (visualized as a large circle) has an attached but separate youth community (visualized as a smaller, attached circle). Youth experience belonging, worship, and service as part of a youth community running on parallel tracks with the adult parish community.

If all our youth ministry efforts separate youth from the rest of the parish, at the end of years of participation in youth ministry, a young person may never make it into the adult life of the parish because it is foreign to them. The energy, style of worship, and network of relationships constitute a whole new world, for which years of youth ministry have not prepared the young person. As Creasy Dean states:

The upshot of the overwhelming dominance of youth-group models of ministry was a deepening chasm between youth ministry and the theology of the church as a whole. When youth graduated from the "youth group"—the only form of ministry many young people had ever experienced—they effectively graduated from church as well.
(p. 30)

To avoid "parallel congregations," we can focus on youth in the congregation at the same time that we provide for ministry to youth with their peers. We still have youth group meetings and we still gather youth,

but we recognize that youth ministry includes more than just one gathering of youth or one kind of activity. To promote that comprehensive approach, effective parishes develop a model for youth ministry that includes the following elements.

A Pattern for Gathering with Youth on a Regular Basis

Regular gatherings can be weekly, biweekly, or monthly. Because youth can count on the gatherings, a community can be nurtured and developed. Parents can also actively encourage participation because it becomes part of the family pattern.

Special Events and Ways to Gather with Youth

These events include all the gatherings of youth that aren't part of the regular pattern. They include daylong service events, Friday night socials, retreats, trips, youth conventions, open-gym nights, and various ways for youth to get together with caring adults. The offerings round out the youth ministry program and provide ways for youth with different interests to participate.

Intentional Methods for Providing Adolescent Catechesis

Adolescent catechesis includes both the informal, teachable moments within youth ministry and intentional faith learning. Through regular gatherings, special events, nongathered strategies, family connections, and the involvement of youth in parish life, youth grow in faith. There are a variety of ways to attend to catechesis. Some parishes infuse a curriculum for faith growth throughout youth ministry. Some parishes provide an intergenerational model for faith formation with youth in events and programs with the whole parish community. Other parishes provide religious education and sacramental preparation as a distinct element of youth ministry. The important common factor is that effective parishes *plan* faith formation for adolescents as an intentional part of their model.

Nongathered Ways to Connect with Youth

There are many ways to minister with youth without having them come to the parish or an event, such as sending things to them: e-mail prayers and greetings, birthday cards, study kits, newsletters, prayer cards, emergency phone number cards, and other resources. We can be present to youth by attending youth events, such as sporting events or concerts, as a youth ministry team.

Ways to Connect Youth to the Life of the Parish

Youth are ministered to as part of parish life. Through the various components of the parish's overall ministry, youth experience ministry side by side with adults and children. Ministering to youth through parish life includes helping youth participate in the sacraments of the parish, especially the Sunday liturgy. It also means including youth in faith-formation events

for the whole parish community. Many parish events become a youth ministry strategy when we are intentional about making sure youth are included in the prayers, stories, examples, and teachings of the event. For example, the parish mission can be part of the youth ministry's Lenten preparations if we prepare the mission speaker to speak to youth in the assembly.

Ways to Connect with Families

Youth are growing in their autonomy, and yet still need their parents as much as ever. To minister to youth in the midst of this paradox, we plan for ways to connect with families by communicating with parents, providing parents of adolescents with helpful programs and resources, considering the impact of youth ministry activities and strategies on family life, and planning occasional gatherings for families of adolescents.

Ways for Youth to Be Involved in Ministry, Leadership, and Service

Besides being ministered to, youth desire a way to share their gifts; they long for a chance to serve. An effective model for youth ministry encourages youth to be involved in liturgical and catechetical ministries, in leadership for youth ministry, in sharing leadership in the parish, and in community service. Those involvements can be introduced by special projects, but for many youth, the involvements become regular commitments. This is especially important for juniors and seniors in high school.

Looking at Different Models

Our research told us that no single model puts all the elements of effective youth ministry together in the perfect way for every parish. In *Renewing the Vision*, the U.S. bishops encourage parish communities to put the elements together creatively, "By offering this framework, we seek to provide direction to the Church's ministry *and* to affirm and encourage local creativity" (p. 20).

Effective parish youth ministry is responsive to youth; by listening and knowing young people and their families, parishes develop a model for youth ministry that works for their community. Those communities provide youth and their families with a combination of continuity and innovation. Continuity comes from having regular patterns for participation and for traditions and events that youth can count on each year. Innovation provides responses to new needs and situations and brings new energy to youth ministry, as leaders and youth try new things.

Consider the following descriptions of how different parish communities put together the elements of effective youth ministry.

Model 1: Weekly Youth Night, Plus!

This suburban parish with 1,500 families provides a weekly youth night on Wednesday nights. The gatherings include a combination of catechesis, which is offered approximately every other week, and the other components of youth ministry. Community building and prayer are a consistent part of each gathering. The announcements that help youth link up with parish events, family resources, and special events are another important part of the weekly gathering. Youth are encouraged—by e-mail notes, a phone tree, and a monthly newsletter—to participate in the gatherings. Each year youth receive a birthday card from the parish and an emergency phone number card with a prayer on the back of it.

Regular events include a social or a community builder, offered on a weekend night once a month. Every other month, service projects are offered on a weekend day or as an ongoing involvement during the week. Sacramental preparation is provided for a variety of youth; youth who seek initiation or first Communion and Confirmation are part of the Christian initiation process with the adults in the community. Confirmation preparation is a six-month process that is offered to youth who are fifteen years of age and older. After Confirmation, youth are encouraged to become lectors, ushers, music ministers, and Eucharistic ministers for the parish liturgies.

Special youth events for the community include a fall retreat for all youth, a leadership retreat, and a mission-service trip in the summer. Parents of youth receive regular newsletters and are invited to participate in a parent-of-teen support group that gathers each fall. Families of youth gather for an annual picnic and sports day each summer.

Model 2: Small Faith Communities, Plus!

This large suburban parish of 2,500 families has a regular pattern of gathering in small faith communities. Youth are divided into small groups of ten to twelve members with two adults each. The groups meet at the parish or in family homes on a weekly basis. Once a month a special event, such as a service event, a community-building social, or a retreat, is held. Different small groups plan, publicize, and lead the special events that are provided for the whole youth community. Catechesis is provided in these small faith communities.

When youth are in their junior or senior year, small groups are formed for Confirmation preparation for those who choose to prepare for the sacrament. Similarly, a small group of youth is in the process for Christian initiation. Weekend retreats are offered each season of the year for different interests or different grade levels of youth. Youth are encouraged to participate in the parish community. One way that is accomplished is to have each small group focus on one aspect of parish life in a particular season. For

instance, one group takes on the role of greeters for one of the parish liturgies for a particular month, while another group assists with the parish food pantry for a season.

Prayer is a special focus of the small groups. Each small group surfaces prayer needs that become part of a book of prayer intentions or part of the Prayers of the Faithful for the parish as a whole. Each group also receives prayer requests from members or groups in the parish, and the groups include those requests in their weekly prayer time. Parents of youth in each small group gather each season for a meeting with the small-group leaders. At that meeting they pray with the parents for youth, talk about the upcoming season, provide parents with resources and at-home ideas, and answer questions from the parents. Small-group leaders make an effort to be present at events for the youth in their group by attending concerts and sporting events. Small-group leaders are also encouraged to write notes, send e-mails, and mail a birthday card and a patron-saint-day card to each youth. Small-group leaders divide their list of youth's names, and call each young person for a check-in once a month.

Model 3: Weekly Religious Education, Plus!

In this small town, the parish focuses youth ministry around a weekly religious education class. The classes run from September to May, between Masses on Sundays and on Monday nights. For freshmen and sophomores, the classes provide a systemic review of catechetical topics. Juniors are invited to participate in a yearlong Confirmation preparation process that includes weekly classes, and seniors are encouraged to work with mentors to participate in service and ministry internships. Three or four youth work with two adults in a particular ministry involvement during the year, and gather monthly for prayer, spiritual direction, and community building. Catechists make an effort to keep in touch with youth outside of class time through e-mails and notes and by attending youth events.

The religious education classes are complemented by various special events. A social is held monthly on a Saturday or Sunday night. Twice during the school year, a special service event is conducted. Each year weekend retreats, which focus on life choices, are held: one for freshmen and sophomores, one for Confirmation preparation, and one for seniors. Parents of youth gather twice during the school year for a meeting that includes prayer and a speaker. Parents also meet with the religious education class catechists once during the year for a check-in. Each month a special youth-planned liturgy is prepared for the parish community by a particular class from the high school religious education class. Youth are involved in the preparation (including creating the liturgical environment) and in all the liturgical ministries.

Model 4: Monthly Events, Plus!

In this rural community, the focus of the youth ministry program is a monthly event. Many families travel a great distance to get to the parish, making weekly gatherings at the parish impractical. The monthly event is held from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on a Sunday, and includes community building, catechesis, and other components of youth ministry. In the evening a special liturgy for youth is held. It is followed by a meal and a closing session.

Each month has a different theme and a different team of adults and youth, who divide responsibilities for planning and implementing the program. In this community Confirmation is provided every other year for seventh- and eighth-grade students, and the community joins with two neighboring parishes to provide a retreat each year in the late spring. Each summer the youth and adults from the parish participate in a mission trip to a community that is in need.

This parish takes advantage of technology to reach youth; each young person receives a weekly e-mail update that includes a prayer, a reflection for the week, community news, and information about upcoming events in the parish. Parents receive an e-mail update monthly that includes links to Web sites, books, and resources that will guide them as parents. The youth ministry pages of the parish Web site are rich with pictures of youth, links to helpful sites, and conversations on topics of faith.

Model 5: Intergenerational, Plus!

In this small urban community, youth are a vital part of parish life. Youth participate in the leadership committees of the parish. They are part of the liturgies—participating in them side by side with adults—the frequent service projects, and other programs of the parish. This parish has monthly faith-formation events that are truly intergenerational; children, youth, and adults of all ages participate together in programs that focus on preparing for events in the liturgical year and for parishwide sacraments.

Confirmation preparation for this community is a family-based program, with families guiding the preparation of their youth and gathering on a regular basis for prayer, support, and community building. Youth are regularly gathered for an open-gym night on Friday when parish facilities are opened to youth from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. Those nights are usually scheduled to take place after high school sporting events and on other occasions when the church wants to give youth a safe place to come and be together with caring adults. Other socials and special youth events are provided quarterly.

The parish staff takes a special interest in making contact with youth. The youth of the parish are divided among the parish staff members, who

meet with the youth at least twice a year and make an effort to contact them throughout the year. The parish staff considers themselves to be the youth ministry team, and provides special programs as needed to help youth with school or to help them find employment and pastoral care assistance. In a similar way, the parents of youth are regularly contacted by the parish staff, which checks in and connects parents with needed resources. One of the key features of the community is an open door to the parish offices. "We don't need to do a needs assessment here," remarked one staff member, "the needs walk in the door, and we listen and respond."

Choosing a Model

One of the things you may have noticed about the parish descriptions is that each parish attended to the elements that have been described as essential for effective parishes. Each parish found a way to provide for the following needs:

- a pattern for gathering with youth on a regular basis
- special events and ways to gather with youth
- intentional methods for providing adolescent catechesis
- nongathered ways to connect with youth
- ways to connect youth to the life of the parish
- ways to connect with families
- ways for youth to be involved in ministry, leadership, and service

To choose your model for parish youth ministry, take time to listen to parish leaders, parents of youth, and youth themselves. Think about your community. Which model fits with the ways your parish gathers and your style of being community? What are the issues and concerns? Various factors about your community could impact and shape your model, including these:

Distance. The distance of families from the parish affects the ability of youth to gather weekly or several times during a week for various programs.

Schools. If significant numbers of youth in your parish attend Catholic high school, youth participation in the catechetical aspects of youth ministry would be affected.

Urban, suburban, and rural. The demographics of your parish will affect the model for ministry. Many urban parishes include a stronger pastoral care focus because youth ministry has been seen as a way to protect youth from violence or challenges in urban life. Suburban parishes often have lots of resources, but also struggle to keep youth and their families from becoming lost within large, mobile congregations. Rural parishes

know their youth by name and by family, but are sometimes challenged by low numbers of youth and low energy in small gatherings. Those parishes make participating in regional or national events a greater priority so that youth don't feel isolated.

Ethnic and racial diversity. The racial and ethnic groups that compose a parish can impact the style of youth ministry and the choice of a model. Different ethnic communities have different styles of ministry with youth. For instance, many African American or Hispanic communities more naturally gather as a whole parish than do many European American communities, which tend more toward schooling and grade-level models for faith formation (see *The Godbearing Life*, p. 212, and *Black and White Styles of Youth Ministry: Two Congregations in America*, by William R. Myers [New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991]). Most parishes include different communities, but it is important to work with the strengths of your parish community so that a model doesn't feel imposed.

Vibrancy of parish life. Another important consideration is your evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of parish life. The study of effective parishes found a correlation between parishes with effective ministries overall and parishes with effective youth ministry. Many of the parishes were vibrant overall, and their youth ministry reflected the general dynamism of the parishes' ministries and the collaborative environment of the parish staff and leadership. Effective youth ministry helps youth move seamlessly from ministry in a peer group to ministry within the parish.

This implies different strategies for parishes at different levels of development. A parish that has vibrant ministry overall should seek first to link youth to the life of the parish, then develop opportunities for youth to be ministered to within a peer community setting in areas that complement their involvement in parish life. Parishes that are still developing vibrant ministry have a greater need to create community, faith education, worship opportunities, and service opportunities for youth within a peer community, while still making the effort to include youth in parish life. In those parishes youth and youth ministry may be an energizing factor in helping to develop more vibrant ministries overall.

Parish Confirmation preparation model. Many parishes have two-year, multifaceted Confirmation preparation programs for high school youth. But the process also consumes most of the parish's energy and leadership that could be put toward the development of a comprehensive youth ministry. Youth's time for parish involvement is also consumed with Confirmation preparation. Often those communities struggle to keep youth involved after Confirmation. To implement a more comprehensive approach to youth ministry, you may need to change Confirmation preparation to a more short-term approach.

Those are some of the factors and implications. To be effective as a parish, choose a model that fits your community, and adapt and innovate within that model as you go along. The process is very much like being a parent—we choose how we will parent: who will watch our children, how we will celebrate holidays, how we will divide responsibilities, how we will discipline. As parents we make choices that match our values, but we shift and grow with those choices as our children grow and change. As youth ministry leaders, we choose a model that matches our values, and we shift and grow so that we can serve and include youth.

TOTAL FAITH Connections

The TOTAL FAITH Initiative was designed to provide parishes with the tools needed for the following aspects of youth ministry:

A pattern for gathering with youth on a regular basis. The Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry manuals contain more than one hundred different sessions that can be included in regular gatherings for youth. Chapter 6 of this manual provides an overview for developing youth gatherings and for using the sessions of the Total Faith resources in gathering youth.

Special events and ways to gather with youth. The Total Youth Ministry manuals include numerous special events and gatherings for youth. In addition, the sessions in the Total Catechesis manuals and the Total Youth Ministry manuals combine in creative ways to develop retreat days and special events. Chapter 6 of this manual provides a variety of ideas for combining sessions and organizing special events and retreat days.

Intentional methods for providing adolescent catechesis. The Total Catechesis manuals offer a systematic approach to adolescent catechesis by providing sessions that match the faith themes recommended in *Renewing the Vision* and that are based on the *Catechism*. Chapter 2 of this manual offers a vision for adolescent catechesis and guides parishes in choosing a variety of methods.

Nongathered ways to connect with youth. Each Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manual includes nongathered suggestions for ways to connect with youth, and chapter 7 of this manual provides additional practical ways to connect with youth.

Ways to connect youth to the life of the parish. Many of the strategies in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals connect youth to parish life within the recommended strategies. Chapter 9 of this manual has suggestions for using the strategies and additional ideas for systematically connecting youth to the life of the parish.

Ways to connect with families. Each Total Catechesis manual includes an intergenerational session that can be used to gather youth with their parents. Each session also has resources and suggestions for at-home ministry. The Total Youth Ministry manuals offer numerous ways to connect with families. Instructions for using those suggestions and other tips for connecting with families are in chapter 8 of this manual.

Ways for youth to be involved in ministry, leadership, and service. The Total Youth Ministry manuals for prayer and worship, leadership, and justice and service offer suggestions for involving youth in liturgical ministries, leadership roles, and ongoing service. Chapter 11 of this manual also suggests ways to connect youth to leadership roles in the parish.

This *Coordinator's Manual* can also assist you in choosing a model by helping you name your vision and set goals for your ministry. See chapter 3 for suggestions and a visioning process. Chapter 5 provides helpful examples of how to use the sessions and resources of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative to plan seasons of ministry for your parish, and the worksheets and the process noted in chapter 5 provide illustrations of different models and gatherings.

Conclusion

In *Renewing the Vision*, youth ministry is described as the "response of the Christian community to the needs of young people, and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger communities" (p. 1). An effective model will provide for this pastoral response and for the inclusion of youth's gifts. Each parish will find its way to dynamic ministry by listening, choosing, and responding, and by including youth and their families.

5 Planning a Season of Ministry

Perhaps one of the most perplexing tasks in youth ministry is devising a yearlong schedule of programs, meetings, strategies, activities, and events. How can we possibly ensure that all eight components of youth ministry are attended to in a year? How can we provide gathered programs for youth and implement nongathered strategies that deliver ministry to youth? How can we connect youth to the parish and make connections to families of adolescents? By using a seasonal approach to planning, not only can we fill in that calendar, we can be creative as well! The seasonal approach suggested in this chapter provides for year-round ministry with youth by breaking up the year into four seasons—fall, winter, spring, and summer—each three months long. Thinking about the seasons helps us connect with the Church liturgical year and with seasonal school activities and holidays that are an important part of the lives of youth and their families.

Planning Process

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - ☐ newsprint and markers
 - ☐ copies of resource 1, "Seasonal Considerations in Planning," one for each person
 - ☐ copies of the planning worksheet for the upcoming season, one for each person
 - ☐ copies of the sample season worksheet, if you wish to have it available
 - ☐ 150 3-by-5-inch index cards
 - ☐ large, blank calendar pages for the three months of the season for which you are planning (create them by enlarging a standard 8½-by-11-inch calendar page)
- Prepare a set of TOTAL FAITH session index cards with the names and short descriptions of all the session outlines in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals. To do that you will need to print the

"Index Cards for a Season of Planning" found on the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM. Once they are printed, cut them apart on the dotted lines, attach them to index cards, and group them according to topic. Or print them on sheets of standard 2-by-4-inch mailing labels; then stick the printed labels on the index cards.

- Because reviewing all the index cards may be a bit overwhelming for your team, consider gathering a few key leaders to choose specific topics and to eliminate others. One approach would be to create session index cards for just the faith theme or themes that you want to focus on in the season. See chapter 2 for information on choosing a scope and sequence for your catechetical topics.
- If you have used the planning process in chapter 3 and have set goals for your youth ministry, post the goals, purpose, and values or mission statement on newsprint. Check the strategies section of each Total Youth Ministry manual for nongathered ideas for reaching your goals. Create index cards that summarize strategies you would like to implement, for example, "train youth for liturgical ministries" (from *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*) or "e-mail youth before exams to encourage them" (from *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*).
- Gather the school calendar and parish calendar for the season for which you are planning. Post on a sheet of newsprint any programs for youth ministry that are already scheduled, for example, a parish picnic, a fall retreat, Confirmation, extended service programs, National Catholic Youth Conference, and so on.
- Make index cards for previous programs, activities, or events that were successful and bear repeating. Include with the TOTAL FAITH index cards those that may fit into your plans for the upcoming season.
- Post a sheet of blank newsprint on the wall.

1. Distribute resource 1, "Seasonal Considerations in Planning," to each person. Ask the team to circle the events or connections on the resource that they believe should be addressed during the season for which they are planning.

2. As each person shares the items they circled on their resources, list the items on the blank sheet of newsprint. Place a check mark next to those items that are mentioned more than once. Ask the team to brainstorm other ideas that are not mentioned on the resource. These could include the parish's patron saint celebration, traditions of your youth ministry, a civic event, or major school programs and events.

3. Distribute a copy of the correct seasonal planning worksheet to each person. Ask the team to brainstorm ideas for activities, celebrations, or

events that would connect youth ministry to families, to the parish, to youth, and to service opportunities. List the ideas on the newsprint. Place a check mark next to the items that are mentioned more than once.

4. Ask the team to work in groups of two or three people. Divide the TOTAL FAITH session index cards among the groups, and ask them to review the cards to determine which ones would fit with the items listed on the newsprint. Allow 10 minutes for this step.

5. Regather the team, and turn their attention to the three large calendar sheets for the season they are planning. On the appropriate dates on the calendar, write in the programs, activities, and events that are traditions or are ongoing for your ministry, as well as holidays and holy days.

6. Invite the team members to tape the index cards they have chosen either next to the month in which the program, session, or activity would best fit or on a particular day, if that is appropriate. [Note. If your ministry has regular youth gatherings (see more about this in chap. 4), some cards will naturally fit on those dates when youth are gathered.] Allow several minutes for the team to accomplish this task. After the team has finished, ask the members to take a few minutes to look at the "first draft" of your season planning.

7. Review each month with the team. It is possible to have more than one good idea to meet a particular need. Ask the team members, "Is this idea, program, or event the best one for what we hope to accomplish?" Look for those ideas that elicit the most energy and excitement from the team.

8. Work with the team to schedule a balance of gathered and non-gathered programming methods. The Total Youth Ministry manuals contain many ideas for nongathered strategies, along with seasonal suggestions:

- *Ministry Resources for Community Life*, chapter 13, "Seasonal Suggestions for Community Building"
- *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*, part B, "Evangelization Strategies"
- *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*, chapter 19, "Calendar Connections Through the Year"
- *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*, part C, "Strategies for Effective Pastoral Care of Youth"
- *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*, chapter 2, "Using This Manual to Develop Youth Leadership"

9. As a team, review and evaluate the plan for the upcoming season and your calendar:

- Does the plan for this season match our purpose and goals for youth ministry? Does it address a variety of the components of youth ministry?
- Does the plan for this season provide a good balance of gathered and nongathered programs and strategies?
- Does the plan for this season consider the lives of the youth and their families during these months?
- Does the plan for this season include parish and community activities?

Based on the team's observations, make adjustments as needed. With plans in place, you are ready to recruit and prepare leaders using the resources in chapter 11 of this manual, and you are ready to invite youth and publicize events (see chapter 10). Where trying to develop a comprehensive ministry for young people in your parish once may have overwhelmed you, you have now accomplished just that for an upcoming season of ministry!

Seasonal Considerations in Planning

<p>FALL (September-October-November) What the Church is celebrating: Ordinary Time Birth of the Virgin Mary (September 8) Catechetical Sunday (third Sunday in September) Respect Life Sunday (first Sunday in October) World Youth Day (thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time) All Saints' Day (November 1) All Souls' Day (November 2) Christ the King Advent</p> <p>Holiday connections: Labor Day (first Monday in September) Columbus Day (first Monday in October) Halloween (October 31) Veteran's Day (November 11) Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November)</p> <p>School connections: back-to-school activities homecoming sports youth newsletter birthday cards meeting the administration at local high schools</p>	<p>WINTER (December-January-February) What the Church is celebrating: Advent Immaculate Conception (December 8) Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) Christmas (December 25) Mary, Mother of God (January 1) Epiphany Ordinary Time Presentation of the Lord</p> <p>Holidays: winter break New Year's Day (January 1) Martin Luther King Jr. Day (third Monday in January) Valentine's Day (February 14) Presidents' Day (third Monday in February)</p> <p>School connections: sports midterm exams</p>
<p>SPRING (March-April-May) What the Church is celebrating: Ash Wednesday Lent Saint Patrick's Day (March 17) Saint Joseph's Day (March 19) Annunciation of the Lord (March 25) Palm Sunday Triduum Easter Ascension (last Thursday in May)</p> <p>Holidays: Mother's Day (second Sunday in May) Memorial Day (fourth Monday in May)</p> <p>School connections: spring break final exams baccalaureate graduation prom</p>	<p>SUMMER (June-July-August) What the Church is celebrating: Pentecost Most Holy Trinity Corpus Christi Ordinary Time Feast of the Assumption (August 15)</p> <p>Holidays: Father's Day (third Sunday in June) Independence Day (July 4)</p> <p>School connections: baccalaureate graduation summer school sports camps band camps back-to-school</p>

Fall Season Planning Worksheet

What to consider in your planning:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <p>Holiday connections:</p> <p>School connections:</p> 	<p>September Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p>
<p>Family connections:</p> <p>Parish connections:</p> 	<p>October Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p>
<p>Youth outreach:</p> <p>Service opportunities:</p> 	<p>November Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p>

***Special gatherings may include** daylong events or retreats, weekend events or retreats, weeklong events or trips, special series or topics, and leadership development.

Sample Fall Season

Here's how the fall season might look:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechetical Sunday (third Sunday in September) • World Youth Day (thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time) • All Saints' Day (November 1) <p>Holiday connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halloween (October 31) • Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November) <p>School connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult leaders volunteer to chaperone the home-coming dance. • Adult leaders attend sporting events in which youth are participating. <p>Family connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send season-at-a-glance youth ministry schedule to parents. <p>Parish connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post bulletin updates and announcements. • Staff a booth at parish fall festival. <p>Youth outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altar society sends birthday cards to young people. • Send out monthly newsletter. <p>Service opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect baby items (bottles, blankets, clothes, diapers) and donate to local maternity home. • Collect and distribute Thanksgiving food baskets. 	<p>September Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.): Week 1: "Let's Get Started" (<i>Community Life</i>) Week 2: "Praying Together" (catechesis: <i>Christian Prayer</i>) Week 3: "I Call You Each by Name" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>) Week 4: "The Forms of Prayer" (catechesis: <i>Christian Prayer</i>) Week 5: Open-gym night Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth and adult leaders are commissioned on Catechetical Sunday. • Leadership development: Leaders should pick an appropriate topic from <i>Youth Leadership Development</i> <p>October Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.): Week 1: "Honoring Family" (catechesis: <i>Christian Morality</i>) Week 2: "Made in God's Image" (<i>Pastoral Care</i>) Week 3: "Respecting Life" (catechesis: <i>Christian Morality</i>) Week 4: "Naming and Claiming Gifts in Self and Others" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>) Week 5: Movie night (theme: moral character): <i>The Emperor's Clothes</i> (PG-13) Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreat day, using "Bread: Broken and Shared" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>) and "Hunger Among Us" (<i>Justice and Service</i>) • Parish celebrates World Youth Day liturgy and hosts celebration of parish youth. • Youth ministry hosts Halloween event for children in the parish. • Leadership development: "Communication Skills" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>) <p>November Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.): Week 1: "The Last Things" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>) Week 2: "Introduction to Christian Morality" (catechesis: <i>Christian Morality</i>) Week 3: "Sources of Moral Truth" (catechesis: <i>Christian Morality</i>) Week 4: (skip due to Thanksgiving holiday) Week 5: "Praying During Advent" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>) Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership development: "Jesus on Leadership" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>) • National Catholic Youth Conference

Winter Season Planning Worksheet

What to consider in your planning:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <p>Holiday connections:</p> <p>School connections:</p> <p>Family connections:</p> <p>Parish connections:</p> <p>Youth outreach:</p> <p>Service opportunities:</p>	<p>December Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p> <p>January Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p> <p>February Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p>

***Special gatherings may include** daylong events or retreats, weekend events or retreats, weeklong events or trips, special series or topics, and leadership development.

Sample Winter Season

Here's how the winter season might look:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advent • Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) • Christmas (December 25) <p>Holiday connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Luther King Jr. Day (third Monday in January) <p>School connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a study night with tutors for students preparing for midterm exams; have snacks available. <p>Family connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send season-at-a-glance youth ministry schedule to parents. <p>Parish connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post bulletin updates and announcements. • Help with children's Christmas pageant. <p>Youth outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altar society sends birthday cards to young people. • Send out monthly newsletter. <p>Service opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free child care (with fun activities for children) while parents do Christmas shopping. • Collect socks, gloves, and toiletries for local shelters. 	<p>December</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Week 1: "Jesus Christ: True God and True Man" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: "Praying with Our Lady of Guadalupe" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>)</p> <p>Week 3: "Jesus' Message and Mission" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 4: (skip due to Christmas)</p> <p>Week 5: Open-gym night: volleyball</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice skating and Christmas party • Leadership development: "Prayer Models" (catechesis: <i>Christian Prayer</i>)
	<p>January</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Week 1: "The Liturgical Year" (catechesis: <i>Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: "All Are Welcome" (<i>Community Life</i>)</p> <p>Week 3: "The Good News: Created in God's Love" (<i>Evangelization</i>)</p> <p>Week 4: "Racism: Our Response" (<i>Justice and Service</i>)</p> <p>Week 5: Movie night (theme: racism): <i>Men of Honor</i> (R)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecumenical event: "Sharing Our Faith: An Ecumenical Event" (<i>Community Life</i>) • Leadership development: "Negotiating Skills" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>) and "Trust" (<i>Community Life</i>)
	<p>February</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Week 1: "Faith and Friendship" (<i>Pastoral Care</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: "Dating Relationships" (<i>Pastoral Care</i>)</p> <p>Week 3: "Sexuality and Spirituality" (<i>Pastoral Care</i>)</p> <p>Week 4: "Respecting Sexuality" (catechesis: <i>Christian Morality</i>)</p> <p>Week 5: Movie night (theme: dating): <i>Can't Hardly Wait</i> (PG-13)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership development: "Unexpected Leaders of the Bible" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)

Spring Season Planning Worksheet

What to consider in your planning:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <p>Holiday connections:</p> <p>School connections:</p> <p>Family connections:</p> <p>Parish connections:</p> <p>Youth outreach:</p> <p>Service opportunities:</p>	<p>March Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p> <p>April Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p> <p>May Weekly meetings: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 (when needed) Special gatherings*:</p>

***Special gatherings may include** daylong events or retreats, weekend events or retreats, weeklong events or trips, special series or topics, and leadership development.

Sample Spring Season

Here's how the spring season might look:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lent • Triduum • Easter <p>Holiday connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorial Day (fourth Monday in May) <p>School connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor a baccalaureate Mass for youth who are graduating. <p>Family connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send season-at-a-glance youth ministry schedule to parents. 	<p>March</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Week 1: "Simplicity or Stuff—Which Will You Choose?" (<i>Justice and Service</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: "Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation" (catechesis: <i>Liturgy and Sacraments</i>)</p> <p>Week 3: "Jesus' Death" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 4: "Triduum Participation: Watch and Pray" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>)</p> <p>Week 5: "The Eucharist" (catechesis: <i>Liturgy and the Sacraments</i>)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Return to Me: Reconciliation Service" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>) • Leadership development: "Leading Group Discussions" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)
<p>Parish connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post bulletin updates and announcements. <p>Youth outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altar society sends birthday cards to young people. • Send out monthly newsletter. <p>Service opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble Easter baskets and deliver to homeless shelter for families. 	<p>April</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Week 1: "The Holy Spirit" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: "The Mission of the Catholic Church" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 3: "The Organization of the Catholic Church" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 4: "Who Am I?" (<i>Community Life</i>)</p> <p>Week 5: "The Importance of Community" (<i>Community Life</i>)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreat: "Come and Follow Me" (<i>Evangelization</i>) • Leadership development: "Giving a Witness Talk" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)
	<p>May</p> <p>Weekly Meetings (Wednesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.)</p> <p>Week 1: "Traditional Prayer" (catechesis: <i>Christian Prayer</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: "Praying for Mothers and Fathers" (<i>Prayer and Worship</i>)</p> <p>Week 3: "Faith in the Real World: Faith and Life" (<i>Evangelization</i>)</p> <p>Week 4: "Faith" (catechesis: <i>The Creed</i>)</p> <p>Week 5: Movie night (theme: God's power): <i>Bruce Almighty</i> (PG-13)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership development: "Knowing Adults" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)

Summer Season Planning Worksheet

What to consider in your planning:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <p>Holiday connections:</p> <p>School connections:</p>	<p>June</p> <p>Weekly meetings:</p> <p>Week 1</p> <p>Week 2</p> <p>Week 3</p> <p>Week 4</p> <p>Week 5 (when needed)</p> <p>Special gatherings*:</p>
<p>Family connections:</p> <p>Parish connections:</p>	<p>July</p> <p>Weekly meetings:</p> <p>Week 1</p> <p>Week 2</p> <p>Week 3</p> <p>Week 4</p> <p>Week 5 (when needed)</p> <p>Special gatherings*:</p>
<p>Youth outreach:</p> <p>Service opportunities:</p>	<p>August</p> <p>Weekly meetings:</p> <p>Week 1</p> <p>Week 2</p> <p>Week 3</p> <p>Week 4</p> <p>Week 5 (when needed)</p> <p>Special gatherings*:</p>

***Summer youth ministry plans include** more outdoor activities as well as opportunities for leadership development and service learning.

Sample Summer Season

Here's how the summer season might look:

Nongathered and Connections	Youth Gatherings
<p>What the Church is celebrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pentecost <p>Holiday connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence Day (July 4) <p>School connections:</p> <p>Family connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send season-at-a-glance youth ministry schedule to parents. <p>Parish connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post bulletin updates and announcements. <p>Youth outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host graduation party for eighth graders; invite them to summer youth ministry programs. <p>Service opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take service-learning trip to Mexico. 	<p>June</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday)</p> <p>Week 1: "Music and Me" (<i>Community Life</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: Open-gym night: volleyball</p> <p>Week 3: A day at the lake or beach</p> <p>Week 4: Service project: Community cleanup day</p> <p>Week 5: Movie night (theme: friendship): <i>Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring</i> (PG-13)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Softball game and picnic with incoming ninth graders • Leadership development: "Jesus on Leadership" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)
	<p>July</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday)</p> <p>Week 1: "Catholic and American" (<i>Community Life</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: Open-gym night: Night games outdoors</p> <p>Week 3: Night hike and star-gazing</p> <p>Week 4: Service project: Yard cleanup for older parish-ioners</p> <p>Week 5: Movie night (theme: family relationships): <i>Finding Nemo</i> (G)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping trip • Leadership development: "Unexpected Leaders of the Bible" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)
	<p>August</p> <p>Weekly meetings (Wednesday)</p> <p>Week 1: "Peer Mentors for New Members: Guardian Angel Program (GAP)" (<i>Community Life</i>)</p> <p>Week 2: Open-gym night: Relay games</p> <p>Week 3: Cook-out at the lake or the beach</p> <p>Week 4: Service project: Help out at food pantry</p> <p>Week 5: Movie night (theme: serving others): <i>Men in Black 2</i> (PG-13) or <i>Maid in Manhattan</i> (PG-13)</p> <p>Special gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach trip • Leadership development: "Skills—Attentive Listening, Reflective Listening, Effective Meeting, and Planning" (<i>Youth Leadership Development</i>)

6 Gathering with Youth

One of the most visible signs of a vibrant ministry with young people is the youth gathering. These regularly occurring opportunities allow youth to connect with peers and caring adults and to grow in their Catholic Christian faith. The resources in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative provide ministry leaders with myriad ways of designing effective and creative youth gatherings. The manuals contain more than one hundred sessions, each one providing a 50- to 60-minute program plan with a variety of session extensions. Numerous retreats and extended programs are included, as well as strategies for special events and trips. This chapter discusses and provides suggestions for the following options:

- regular gatherings with youth
- monthly or extended events
- retreats

Regular Gatherings with Youth

Many people associate youth ministry with the weekly or biweekly youth group meeting. We know that youth gatherings can be an important strategy in a comprehensive approach to youth ministry. Youth nights provide an opportunity for young people to gather together for food, fun, and fellowship. In addition to the social elements, ministry leaders also pay attention to the ongoing needs that young people have for building community, for learning about faith and life through creative and thoughtful strategies, and for participating in enlivening prayer experiences. Weekly religious education classes can also use a similar format. Youth gatherings traditionally take place at the parish, where they may be held in conjunction with a youth-involved liturgy. When planning, use 90 minutes to 2 hours as a benchmark for a youth gathering. If your youth gathering occurs between Masses on a weekend or during another short time period, do not worry;

most of the core sessions in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative are 45 minutes long, with suggestions for extending the session as necessary.

Components of a typical youth gathering include but are not limited to these:

- a welcome and introductions (5 minutes)
- community-building activities connected to the theme of the program (15 to 20 minutes)
- content, using one or more of the following methods: presentation, guest speaker, movie clip, discussion, small-group activity, music, and action step (50 to 75 minutes)
- announcements and sign-ups for future programs or events (5 minutes)
- prayer (5 to 15 minutes)
- refreshments (15 minutes)

See resource 10, "Preparing a Youth Gathering," for help in planning a gathered program.

The following elements are important to the success of a youth gathering:

Overall atmosphere. When young people walk in the door of the meeting area, does the setup of the space indicate the focus of the gathering? Think about the theme, and decide how the meeting space can be set up or decorated. When addressing the topic of homelessness, one youth minister and leadership team gathered refrigerator boxes and other large appliance boxes and set up a homeless "city" as the focal point. Are you talking about spiritual heroes and heroines of the Bible? Have your leadership team dress up as the characters and mingle—while staying in character—with the participants as they arrive. Is music playing? Is the setting friendly and welcoming? If the participants arrive early, do you have an activity or something for them to do before the meeting starts?

Welcome. Assign a few members of your leadership team (youth and adults) to welcome the participants as they arrive. Have a table set up at the entrance with nametags and pens, as well as a check-in sheet. Help break the ice by introducing young people to one another.

Preparation. By the time the youth arrive for the program, everything should be set up and ready to go. Being prepared lets the participants know that you are anticipating your time with them and you are ready. Plan to arrive early with other leaders to set up and to take care of last-minute details.

Community builders. For assistance in selecting and leading community builders, see chapter 12, "Creating Community," in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*. A good number of icebreakers and community builders can also be found on the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM.

Monthly or Extended Events

In many parishes a monthly youth gathering or extended event is the norm. Many components of youth ministry can be included in this type of youth gathering. The event may complement faith-formation efforts if you use a weekly religious education program or a faith-sharing series approach to religious education. Following are some ideas for these events:

- Begin your event on Sunday afternoon, and conclude with the evening liturgy at your parish.
- Begin on Saturday afternoon, attend the evening liturgy, and conclude with a movie.
- Hold the event outdoors on a Saturday, taking advantage of good weather (see "Summer Youth Gathering," which follows).

The following examples offer an idea of what a monthly or extended event created from TOTAL FAITH resources might look like.

Fall Youth Gathering (September, October, or November)

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome, introductions: "Let's Get Started," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- 2:00 p.m. "Sculpting Our Prayer to God," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- 2:10 p.m. "Acquaintances, Friends, and Intimate Friends," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*
- 3:10 p.m. Break with snacks
- 3:30 p.m. "Meeting Jesus," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- 4:25 p.m. "Friendship in Jesus," in chapter 7 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- 5:20 p.m. Move to the church for Mass.
- 5:40 p.m. Parish liturgy
- 6:50 p.m. Potluck dinner with families

Winter Youth Gathering (December, January, or February)

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome, introductions: "Circle of Friends," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- 1:30 p.m. "Advertising for the Ideal Society," in chapter 5 of *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*
- 2:15 p.m. "Standing Up for Human Dignity," in chapter 5 of *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*
- 2:35 p.m. Break with snacks
- 3:00 p.m. "A Catholic Approach to Justice and Service," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*
- 3:55 p.m. "Doing Advocacy with Youth," chapter 15 of *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*

- 5:20 p.m. Move to the church for Mass.
- 5:40 p.m. Parish liturgy
- 6:50 p.m. Potluck dinner with families

Spring Youth Gathering (March, April, or May)

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome, introductions: "Lenten Word Scramble" community builder, found on the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM.
- 1:30 p.m. "A New World," in chapter 4 of *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*
- 2:15 p.m. "The Symbol of Water," in chapter 4 of *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*
- 2:40 p.m. "Triduum Participation: Watch and Pray," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- 3:05 p.m. Break with snacks
- 4:00 p.m. "Welcome to the Community": Provide various styles of note cards and colored pens, and invite the participants to write a note of welcome to the catechumens who are preparing for initiation into your parish community. Have a list of the catechumens' names and addresses available for the youth to use. Or, gather construction paper, pens, and stickers, and invite the participants to make bookmarks for the catechumens. Provide a list of brief Scripture passages that are related to faith journey, initiation, welcome, and community to include on the bookmarks.
- 5:10 p.m. Move to the church for Mass.
- 5:30 p.m. Parish liturgy
- 6:45 p.m. Dinner (order pizza to be delivered)
- 7:30 p.m. Movie clips from *Jesus of Nazareth*; see "Media Connections" in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*
- 9:00 p.m. "Good Friday," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

Summer Youth Gathering (June, July, or August)

Because summertime has a different feel to it, youth ministry changes gears and offers outdoor programs and activities. Here's one idea for a gathering:

- 10:00 a.m. Welcome and introductions
- 10:15 a.m. "God and Friends," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- 10:30 a.m. "Sound Scavenger Hunt": Divide the participants into teams of six to eight people, and send them off to record sounds from a "Sound Scavenger Hunt" list you create (for example, drinking from a fountain, shuffling footsteps, chirping birds).

- 11:15 a.m. "Friendship in Action" and "Circle of Friends," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life*
- 12:00 noon Lunch (barbecue hot dogs and hamburgers)
- 1:00 p.m. "Wacky Water Olympics": Devise individual and team water games based on Olympic sporting events.
- 2:30 p.m. Break with snacks
- 3:00 p.m. Movie: *Toy Story 2* (Disney/Pixar, 1999, 92 minutes, rated G).
Talk about what friends will do for one another.
- 5:10 p.m. Move to the church for Mass.
- 5:30 p.m. Parish liturgy

Retreats

Retreats offer young people an opportunity to reflect on the action of God in their lives and to consider their response to God's gift of love. Different retreat models (evangelization, faith-formation, family, Confirmation, intergenerational, leadership) and formats (evening, half-day, one-day, overnight, weekend) provide flexibility in programming and in meeting the needs of youth for a retreat experience. Prayer (both individual and communal), community building, singing, discussion, presentations, group activities, recreation, and reflection are all common components of a retreat experience.

Preparing and Planning a Retreat

Here are ten steps for planning a retreat:

1. Select a retreat planning team.
2. Establish the purpose and objectives for the retreat.
3. Determine program content and format.
4. Recruit leaders for the retreat.
5. Determine the budget for the retreat.
6. Develop a publicity and promotion strategy.
7. Involve parents.
8. Conduct the retreat.
9. Evaluate the retreat.
10. Connect the retreat to other ministry efforts.

For assistance in implementing and developing retreats, see *Getaways with God*, by Maryann Hakowski (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2003).

Sample Retreat Schedules

The following sample schedules give you some ideas for creating your retreats using the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis resources. They are intended only as examples; adapt them for your own needs.

Sample One-Day Retreat Schedule

9:30 a.m.	Arrival, make nametags
10:00 a.m.	Welcome, introductions, prayer, community builders
10:30 a.m.	Topic 1
11:30 a.m.	Topic 2
12:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Topic 3
1:45 p.m.	Topic 4
2:15 p.m.	Break
2:30 p.m.	Closing prayer (or the Eucharist)
3:00 or 3:30 p.m.	Departure

Sample Overnight Retreat Schedule

Day One

9:30 a.m.	Arrival, get settled
10:00 a.m.	Welcome, orientation, introductions
10:15 a.m.	Community-building activities
11:00 a.m.	Topic 1
12:30 p.m.	Lunch and recreation
2:30 p.m.	Topic 2
4:30 p.m.	Break: free time and games
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
6:30 p.m.	Topic 3
8:15 p.m.	Break
8:30 p.m.	Reconciliation service
9:30 p.m.	Video or special program and snacks
11:00 p.m.	Evening prayer
11:30 p.m.	To sleeping areas
12:00 midnight	Lights out

Day Two

7:30 a.m.	Wake up
8:15 a.m.	Morning prayer
8:45 a.m.	Breakfast
9:45 a.m.	Topic 4
11:00 a.m.	Preparation for the Eucharist (or a closing prayer service)
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	The Eucharist (or a closing prayer service)
2:45 p.m.	Group picture; packing up and departure

Sample Weekend Retreat Schedule

Friday

7:00 p.m.	Arrival; unpack and get settled
8:00 p.m.	Welcome, orientation, introductions
8:15 p.m.	Community-building activities
9:00 p.m.	Topic 1
10:45 p.m.	Break with snacks
11:00 p.m.	Evening prayer
11:30 p.m.	To sleeping areas
12:00 midnight	Lights out

Saturday

7:30 a.m.	Wake up
8:15 a.m.	Morning prayer
8:45 a.m.	Breakfast
9:45 a.m.	Topic 2
12:00 noon	Lunch and recreation
2:30 p.m.	Topic 3
4:30 p.m.	Break and free time
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
6:30 p.m.	Topic 4
8:15 p.m.	Break
8:45 p.m.	Reconciliation service
10:00 p.m.	Video or special program and snacks
11:30 p.m.	Evening prayer
12:00 midnight	To sleeping areas
12:30 a.m.	Lights out

Sunday

7:30 a.m.	Wake up
8:15 a.m.	Morning prayer
8:45 a.m.	Breakfast
9:45 a.m.	Topic 5
11:15 a.m.	Preparation for the Eucharist
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	The Eucharist
2:45 p.m.	Group picture; packing up and departure

TOTAL FAITH resources have many ideas you can use to fill in your retreat schedules. Here are some possibilities:

- For icebreakers and community-building activities, see *Ministry Resources for Community Life* on the *TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM.

- For prayer and worship experiences, see *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship* and *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*. In addition, the PRAY IT! sections throughout the Total Catechesis manuals provide numerous possibilities.
- To design an evangelization retreat, see *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*.
- To design a catechetical, or faith-formation, retreat, use any Total Catechesis manual.

One-Day Retreats Using TOTAL FAITH Resources

Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care contains two complete one-day retreats ready for your use:

- "Sexuality and Dating"
- "Managing Stress, Facing Change"

But you can easily create your own one-day retreats using the various sessions and activities in the other manuals. Take a look at the following retreat outlines.

"Who Am I?" Retreat

This one-day retreat outline uses materials from *Ministry Resources for Community Life*, *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*, *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*, and *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*. It is designed for freshmen and sophomores, and at approximately 6 hours in length, it corresponds to a typical school day. To create a longer retreat, you might also add material from chapter 2, "Faith and Friendship," in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*, or session extensions from chapter 5, "Making Friends," in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*. You could also add a movie, such as *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* or *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, followed by a discussion of how the characters, while facing challenges and adversity, come to know who they are. Using TOTAL FAITH resources, the retreat day could look like this:

- Icebreakers and community-building activities from the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM (20 minutes)
- Prayer: "Prayer for a Blessing of Our Time," in chapter 17 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship* (15 minutes)
- Focusing: "True Color Cards," in chapter 3 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (15 minutes)
- Creativity: "Color Groups," in chapter 3 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (30 minutes)
- Discussion: "Jesus Was Human," in chapter 3 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (10 minutes)
- Reflection: "Naming and Claiming My Gifts—Self-Reflection," in chapter 9 of *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development* (10 minutes)

- Lunch break
- Group activity: "God's Revelation and Our Response," in chapter 2 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (45 minutes)
- Group activity: "The Good News About Being Catholic," in chapter 3 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (25 minutes)
- Short break
- Focusing: "Data: The Qualities of a Good Friend," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (10 minutes)
- Discussion: "Research: How You Can Be a Good Friend," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (20 minutes)
- Reflection: "Findings: The Friendship Journal," in chapter 5 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (15 minutes)
- Group activity: "Naming the Gifts in Others," in chapter 9 of *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development* (25 minutes)
- Prayer: "Relationship Builders and Blockers," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (15 minutes)

"Discipleship: Life Choices" Retreat

This retreat outline uses material from *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*, *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*, and *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*. It is designed for juniors and seniors, and at approximately 6 hours in length, it corresponds to a typical school day. To create a longer retreat, you might add material from chapter 13, "Finding Hope," in *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*, or from chapter 8, "Jesus' Message and Mission," in *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*.

- Icebreakers and community-building activities from the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM (20 minutes)
- Prayer: "Naming People Who Are Signs of God," in chapter 17 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship* (15 minutes)
- Object lesson: "Living as a Disciple Today," in chapter 8 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization* (55 minutes)
- Focusing: "Daily Decisions," in chapter 6 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (20 minutes)
- Presentation and discussion: "LISTENing for a Solution," in chapter 6 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (25 minutes)
- Reflection: "LISTENing in the Quiet," in chapter 6 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (15 minutes)
- Lunch break
- Focusing: "Keeping Things Afloat," in chapter 7 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (15 minutes)
- Discussion: "Stressful Issues," in chapter 7 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (30 minutes)
- Reflection: "SOARing Through Life," in chapter 7 of *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* (15 minutes)

- Short break
- Focusing: "Surviving Bad Weather," in chapter 11 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization* (10 minutes)
- Personal story: "Storms and Faith," in chapter 11 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization* (10 minutes)
- Scripture and reflection: "Seeing Past the Storm," in chapter 11 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization* (15 minutes)
- Prayer: "Praying with Music," using Matt. 4:18–22 and 8:18–20 for the Scripture passages, and "Where Are You Going," by Dave Matthews (*Busted Stuff*, RCA Records, 2002) as the song. See chapter 17 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*. (15 minutes)

(These one-day retreat formats are adapted from "Part Four: Planning Youth Retreats Using *YouthWorks*," in *YouthWorks*, rev. ed., page 23.)

Weekend Retreats Using TOTAL FAITH Resources

The Total Youth Ministry resource manuals contain two complete weekend retreats that are ready for your use:

- "Come and Follow Me," chapter 15 of *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*
- "Responding in Service to the Needs of the Poor," chapter 10 of *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*

But you can easily put together your own weekend retreats using various sessions and activities in the other manuals. The search function on the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM allows you to locate individual prayer experiences, small-group activities, presentations, and focusing activities on a wide variety of topics. Here's a sample weekend retreat for your use.

"Claiming My Catholic Identity" Retreat

"Claiming My Catholic Identity" is a faith-formation, or catechetical, retreat, that uses resources from all the Total Catechesis manuals and three of the Total Youth Ministry manuals. In this retreat participants are introduced to six areas of Catholic identity: the Creed, the nature of the Church, the mission of Jesus and our role in it, the Scriptures and Tradition, Catholic morality, and Catholic social teaching.

Friday evening

- Community-building activities from the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM (30 minutes)
- Object lesson: "Beliefs, Practices, and Attitudes," in chapter 1 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (45 minutes)
- Short break
- Object lesson: "The Mission of the Catholic Church," in chapter 12 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (45 minutes)

- Group activity: "The Body of Christ in the Community," in chapter 12 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (30 minutes)
- Short break
- Evening prayer: "I Call You Each by Name," chapter 7 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship* (30–40 minutes)

Saturday

- Morning prayer: "Saying Yes to God," in chapter 7 of *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer* (20 minutes)
- Object lesson: "The Message of Jesus," in chapter 8 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (45 minutes)
- Group activity: "Called to Share the Mission of Jesus," in chapter 8 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (15 minutes)
- Short break
- Focusing: "Are We Ever Alone?" in chapter 4 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (20 minutes)
- Small-group discussion: "Scripture and Tradition Reflection," in chapter 4 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (40 minutes)
- Object lesson: "What Makes an Action Moral?" in chapter 1 of *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality* (45 minutes)
- Lunch break and recreation
- Focusing: "Words of Community Wisdom," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service* (10 minutes)
- Presentation and small-group discussion: "Themes of Catholic Social Teaching," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service* (20 minutes)
- Group activity: "Moving from Word to Witness," in chapter 2 of *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service* (10 minutes)
- Presentation and object lesson: "God's Revelation and Our Response," in chapter 2 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (45 minutes)
- Group activity: "We Know More Than We Think We Know," in chapter 2 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (15 minutes)
- Group activity: "Knowing Jesus, Knowing God," in chapter 2 of *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* (25 minutes)
- Long break (dinner and free time)
- Group activity and object lesson: "Digging for Signs, Symbols, and Rituals," in chapter 3 of *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments* (45 minutes)
- Group activity of your choosing, and snacks
- Evening prayer: "Body of Christ," in chapter 4 of *Ministry Resources for Community Life* (10 minutes)

Sunday

- Morning prayer: "Walk with Me, Lord," in chapter 1 of *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer* (10 minutes)
- Focusing: "One at the Table of Mission," in chapter 1 of *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments* (20 minutes)
- Short break
- Group activity: "Preparing for Mass," chapter 19 of *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship* (60–90 minutes), adapted for the retreat
- Lunch break
- Closing prayer: Celebration of the Eucharist (60 minutes)

(This weekend retreat format is adapted from "Part Four: Planning Youth Retreats Using *YouthWorks*," in *YouthWorks*, rev. ed., page 24.)

Preparing a Youth Gathering

The Basics

Date:

Theme or topic:

Title:

Participants:

Length of gathering:

Resources and materials needed:

Your Detailed Plan

Overall Atmosphere

Who will welcome participants as they arrive? Do you need any activities to welcome them, such as the creation of a nametag or a sign-in sheet? Will music be playing?

Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

Who will make the opening remarks and introductions? Who needs to be introduced?

Community-Building Activities (15 to 20 minutes)

What activity or activities will build community and lead into the topic of the gathering?

Content (50 to 75 minutes)

What content will be covered and what methods will be used to get it across?

Announcements and Sign-Ups for Future Programs or Events (5 minutes)

Closing Prayer (5 to 15 minutes)

Social Time with Refreshments (15 minutes)

Follow-Up to the Gathering

What follow-up needs to take place after this gathering? Should you make phone calls or send e-mails to the young people?

(This resource is adapted from *Youth Evangelization: A Youth Ministry Resource Manual*, by Mary Merkle-Scotland and Reynolds R. Ekstrom [New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1994], pages 63–64. Copyright © 1994 by Don Bosco Multimedia.)

7

Connecting with Youth

One of the key goals of comprehensive youth ministry, as stated in *Renewing the Vision*, is "to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person" (p. 15). That goal has two important elements.

First, the Church is concerned with the whole person: their emotional, intellectual, physical, *and* spiritual development. This holistic approach naturally leads youth ministry to celebrate academic, athletic, and artistic achievements as well as spiritual growth. Youth ministry walks with young people through the good things of life and offers support for those who may struggle during adolescence.

Second, the Church must care for each and every young person. Because not all youth come to church, the Church must reach out and minister to them in their homes, at their schools, in the community, and even in the prisons and detention facilities where young people live.

When the coordinator of youth ministry at a large suburban parish is asked how many young people are involved in youth ministry, she responds, "983." That figure is the total number of youth in the parish. She goes on to make the point that if you ask a pastor how many families are in the parish, he will use the total number of families who are registered in the parish, not the number who show up for Mass or who use envelopes. All those families, not just the ones who are involved in parish life, are under the care of that parish. The same is true for youth ministry. A young person does not need to sign up for, enroll in, or attend a youth ministry program to be under the care of youth ministry in his or her parish.

Comprehensive youth ministry encourages the Church to reach out to young people and invite them into a deeper relationship with God and the parish community, support them through prayer, and celebrate who they are and who they are becoming.

Strategies for Reaching Out to Youth

Reaching out means much more than publicizing programs. Although important, communicating information about programs (by mail, e-mail, or phone) does not necessarily communicate care and concern for young people and all they are experiencing. The following nongathered youth ministry strategies can help your parish reach out to young people without requiring them to do anything in return.

Recruit prayer partners. Pair young people with adult members of the community who are willing to pray for the young people for a period of time. Ask the adult prayer partner to identify himself or herself to the young person with a card or an e-mail message. One parish asked adults to "adopt" a youth during Advent and to communicate their prayers and support throughout the year with cards and phone calls. Another parish used Lent to ask the members to pray for the youth who were preparing for Confirmation, distributing the names of the youth on Ash Wednesday. Find a way to ensure that every young person in the parish has someone supporting and praying for them throughout their adolescence.

Create study bags. Use exam time to communicate your parish's support for young people's academic endeavors. Create a study bag (with candy, a prayer card, pencils, and a personal note) for each young person. Invite parishioners to deliver them to the young people's schools or homes during the week before exams.

Send birthday cards. Birthdays are an ideal time to reach out to youth. Create a list of birthdays, and invite individual parishioners or parish organizations to send a birthday card to each youth. Drop off cards, addresses, and stamps, and invite the individuals to send out cards each week. Or, invite different parish ministries to "take a month" and send out cards for that month. This is a great ministry in which to involve those who are homebound. One parish went beyond birthdays and sent cards to celebrate each young person's baptismal day.

Send newsletters. Send a monthly or quarterly newsletter that highlights upcoming activities and young people's involvement in parish, school, and community events. Celebrate birthdays, athletic achievements, and the "regular" happenings of adolescent life (proms, college applications, receiving a driver's license, starting a job, traveling). Include articles and information on events that are happening in the world or in the lives of young people.

Organize a freshman project. Reach out to those who are graduating from eighth grade. Ask older high school students to contact the eighth graders, talk with them about high school, and answer any questions they might have. On the first day of school, one parish arranged to have high school juniors or seniors paired with the parish freshmen who were entering their high school, to show them around and help them get oriented. See chapter 15, "Peer Mentors for New Members: Guardian Angel Program (GAP)," in *Ministry Resources for Community Life*, for a more complete program for reaching out to youth.

Show signs of support. Ask parish members to show their support when young parishioners are involved in events at the parish, in the schools, or in the community. For instance, parishioners can send letters of support to the high school track team when they qualify for the state tournament, or parishioners can make "Our Parish Loves Our Kids" T-shirts and ask parents to wear the T-shirts when they attend school and community functions. Make sure that someone from the youth ministry team is present when young people appear in a community theater production.

Send Advent or Lent postcards. Send a postcard to each young person during the four weeks of Advent or the six weeks of Lent. Include a Scripture reading and a reflection question that they can discuss with their family, write about in their journal, or pray with.

Create a "brag board." Hang a bulletin board in a community room or gathering area of the parish. Invite parents, families, friends, or neighbors to "brag" about the young people by posting achievements, pictures, birthday greetings, handmade posters, and anything else that highlights the good that young people are doing. Kick off the brag board by ensuring that every family has the opportunity to contribute; then manage it by removing and adding items on a weekly or monthly basis.

Celebrate seniors. As the young people of your parish prepare for life after high school, publicly celebrate their achievements and future goals. One parish decorated a gathering area at the parish with posters of each senior, listing the activities they were involved in during high school, their academic achievements, their college or future plans, and their goals. Another parish created a printed program listing similar information and used it at the baccalaureate Mass. Then it was distributed during the following Sunday's liturgies.

Provide nongathered catechesis. Send home information, stories, reflections, and other print materials that can help youth explore issues and grow in their faith. Create a weekly e-mail that includes Scripture passages, reflection questions, discussion questions, and information.

Using Technology to Connect to Youth

Today we have a simple and effective way of communicating with youth and their families, and after a little work and money, it is free and quick: the Internet. Take the time to create a youth ministry Web site. If you don't know how, you will find that many young people have the needed skills, or you may find someone else in the parish with those skills. Collect the e-mail addresses of all the young people of the parish and of their parents. Though this can take time and effort, the payoff is tremendous. Following are some ideas for using the Web and e-mail to connect with youth and their families.

A youth ministry Web site. Use your Web site to celebrate youth, provide information, and publicize your youth ministry programs. Include all pertinent information for each activity, and make sure the necessary parental permission forms can be downloaded. Through a Web site, young people and parents can get all the information they need to participate without having to track down the youth ministry coordinator or get the information through friends.

Online or e-mail registrations. Invite youth to let you know through e-mail that they will participate in an activity or a program. Some parishes are so technologically savvy that youth can register online for activities. Remember that parental permission forms and medical forms usually need "real" signatures, and therefore cannot be turned in electronically.

E-mail announcements. Three days before a deadline, send an e-mail to all youth reminding them of the activity and the particulars for involvement.

Parent newsletters. Send an electronic parents' newsletter on a quarterly basis. Include these three important areas: articles that are helpful to parents of youth, information about upcoming youth ministry activities, and opportunities for parents to volunteer in youth ministry programs.

Advent or Lenten "retreats." Ask a member of the parish to put together a weekly "retreat" reflection that can be e-mailed to all youth of the parish during the weeks of Advent or Lent.

Asking questions. If you have a group of youth who are most likely to participate in activities, use e-mail to survey them about a program or calendar idea. Give them a day or two to respond, and in a short period of time, you can receive helpful information to guide your planning. See the following information regarding surveying youth about their needs and interests.

Take note of these two cautions about e-mail:

- Send e-mails to *everyone* only when necessary—perhaps only once a month. Give people the option of unsubscribing to your newsletter or other mailings.
- Answer e-mail as soon as possible. If you hope to have youth and parents read and respond to your e-mail in a timely fashion, make sure you do the same. E-mail should be a quick and easy way of getting information, so make sure that someone will be checking and responding to e-mail as quickly as possible.

Information Night for Youth Ministry

To share information and encourage participation in youth ministry and parish programs, host an information night for youth ministry. Some parishes do this once a year, while others do it on a quarterly basis. An information night might take on different styles, but these are some of the necessary components:

- Put forth a concerted effort to invite all the youth of the parish to participate.
- Create opportunities to build community, including activities that help youth learn the names of and develop a level of comfort with other participants.
- Distribute information about upcoming activities, programs, and ministries. Include information about how young people can participate in parish life (including liturgical ministries) as well as in youth ministry.
- Provide written information and the parental permission forms necessary for events.
- Create a calendar of events, including deadlines for participation, if necessary.

Information Night Formats

The information night can happen in a variety of ways:

- Hold a "fun night" once every three months. Fun nights do a good job of inviting participation and building community. Youth know that the night will be full of games, food, and laughter, and that everyone is welcome.
- Host your information night at the start of the school year. Invite parents to attend with the youth. For part of the evening, place the youth and the parents in separate groups. Tell the parents more about the activities, explain the importance of permission and health forms, and invite questions. Tell the youth about youth ministry and parish opportunities. Make sure the night includes community builders and a strong sense of welcome.

- Schedule your calendar so that once every four to six months, you have an activity that will attract large numbers of youth. Use that event to publicize upcoming youth ministry activities, to hand out calendars and written information, and to encourage everyone to participate in the many programs offered through youth ministry at your parish.
- Combine an information night with other mandatory meetings. If youth and their parent(s) are required to attend a meeting in preparation for Confirmation, before a big activity (for example, a mission trip or a national or diocesan conference), or at the start of the catechetical year, use that meeting time to invite participation in other youth ministry activities.

Determining the Needs and Interests of Youth

The best way to find out what youth need and want is to ask them—face to face. Parishes that respond well to the needs of youth are in relationship with them. They talk to them all the time, listen well to their stories to determine future programming directions, ask for their advice, and build trust with them.

If a parish responds well to the initial identified needs of youth (often for recreation, community, or "fun stuff"), the young people will be more likely to ask for things that meet their deeper needs. Because new youth are always joining programs and events, an ongoing part of youth ministry is asking them about their interests and needs. Following are some ways to survey youth and some ideas of what to ask them.

How to Ask

Small-group conversations. The best way to survey youth is to talk with them one on one or in small groups. Consider gathering youth in small groups at a family's home and talking with them about what they would like to see happen in the parish. Be sure to include youth who are not regularly involved. Ask questions such as these:

- What programs would you like to see offered?
- What is something you worry about or wish you could change about yourself?
- For our church to become more youth friendly, what should the parish do?
- When would you be able to participate?

Consider asking a parent to host this conversation over pizza or snacks. Ask a volunteer to write down the responses so that you have an accurate record of the conversation.

Large-group information gathering. When youth are gathered for an event, take 15 minutes to ask them to help set directions for youth ministry. Over the course of a year's programming, ask a series of questions that will help you assess the young people's needs, interests, and availability. Divide them into smaller groups with a question or two, and ask for their feedback. Make sure you respond to their ideas and suggestions throughout the year so that they can see the results of their input.

Written surveys. Some parishes spend a great deal of time and energy creating and distributing a written survey—only to be disappointed by the number of responses they get. To obtain valuable and valid survey results, think about how to ensure that people will fill out the survey and return it. Ask parishioners to complete the survey before or after Mass (or when they are having donuts in the community room), and have the surveys and pencils readily available. Or ask the young people to fill out a survey during a religious education class, a Confirmation retreat, or at another activity where youth are gathered.

Short verbal surveys. Create a short list of questions to ask youth (and a different set to ask adults and parents). Have volunteers ready after Mass to survey attendees as they leave.

Personal conversations. Adults and youth leaders can ask youth about their interests and needs when they are attending other events. Car rides, shared meals, and break times are ideal opportunities to ask youth about events they would like to see in the future. Write down their ideas and suggestions, and act on the information you receive.

Evaluations. On program evaluation forms, include a question or two about events or activities youth would like to participate in and when they might be available if those programs were offered.

Online or e-mail surveys. Create a survey that the youth can take online. The technology itself might encourage them to participate. If creating a survey online is not possible, send it via e-mail to every young person in the parish.

What to Ask

Availability. When are youth available? Some youth are so involved in school activities that they are unable to regularly participate in church activities during the school year, but they may be available during the summer months. Some youth are free after school. For some, weekends are the only times they are available, while for others, that is prime job time.

Interests. What kinds of activities draw a young person to participate? List all the current programs and some ideas for future activities, and ask the

young people how interested they are in those options. Then ask them to list other activities they might enjoy. Ask them about broad categories, such as sports, discussion groups, retreats, service, and trips, to determine their interests.

Needs. What information, guidance, companionship, insight, and direction do young people need? Ask youth about the life issues with which they could use some help. Ask them about their need for information about parish life, faith topics, liturgical events, social skills (the ability to make and keep friends), sexuality issues, justice and advocacy concerns, drugs and alcohol, and other topics.

Using TOTAL FAITH Resources to Reach Out to Youth

The Total Youth Ministry resource manuals are rich in nongathered strategies for reaching out to, welcoming, and inviting young people to fuller participation in youth ministry and parish life. Don't skip the strategy sections of these manuals in favor of the sessions, or you will miss out on many creative and dynamic ways to connect with youth. Here is where to find the strategies in the Total Youth Ministry resource manuals:

- *Ministry Resources for Community Life*, part D, contains eight strategies, including ideas for reaching out to new people, connecting youth to the parish, and building community.
- *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*, part B, has ideas for reaching out to uninvolved youth, for using technology for evangelization, and for building relationships with youth.
- *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*, part D, contains eight strategies, including ideas for celebrating youth involvement in service, advocating for justice, and engaging youth in cultural diversity through family and parish events.
- *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*, part C, contains twelve strategies, with topics that include helping parents and families, networking within the community, promoting positive values, and participating in the life of the faith community.
- *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*, part A, includes two chapters, "Prayerful Youth Ministry" and "Youth and Liturgy: Promoting Full Participation," that contain many ideas for involving youth through prayer and liturgy.
- *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*, part B, lists four strategies for engaging youth in leadership in the parish and in youth ministry, and ways to connect with parents of youth leaders.

Conclusion

A coordinator of youth ministry got a call from a young man a few days after the young man's father had died. The young man needed help dealing with his father's death and wanted to talk with the youth minister. She said, "Yes, of course," but was surprised because she didn't know this young man by name and had no idea what he looked like. She checked her records and found that he had rarely participated in youth ministry programs at the parish and that he hadn't been to an event in more than a year. She met with him and helped him through his grieving process. After a time she asked him why he had called her when he rarely came to youth ministry events at the parish. He responded by saying that every month when he got the youth ministry newsletter, and every birthday and Christmas when he received a card, he knew that he was still a part of youth ministry at the parish. When he needed to talk to someone about a "faith issue," she was the first person he thought of.

Reaching out to *all* the young people of a parish is important. When we reach out, listen, and respond to the needs and interests of youth, we build a trusting and lasting relationship with them. As this story shows, we never know when they will need to rely on that relationship.

8 Connecting with Families of Youth

Parents and families are crucial to the faith formation of their children and teens, and therefore families are crucial to effective youth ministry efforts. Quite simply, a working partnership with parents and families yields a substantially more vibrant and effective youth ministry program.

How do we know that families are so important to effective youth ministry? Aside from the research (articulated later in this chapter), you and your colleagues have told us so. A study commissioned by Saint Mary's Press shows that the youth ministry leader of today understands the need for partnership. The youth ministers surveyed ranked resources on the topic of how parents can understand and be involved in adolescent faith-development issues as their number-one need out of the seventeen they named. The fifth-ranked need was a desire to explore a family-based approach to youth ministry ("Youth Ministry: Attitudes and Opinions," Saint Mary's Press, 2000).

If you are a youth ministry veteran, you know that youth ministry has evolved into a more collaborative process that involves parents, families, and other ministry and community efforts that affect the lives of teens. Even if you are new to youth ministry, you have probably seen that nurturing the faith life of teens requires much more than just a "cool" mentor-style relationship between yourself and the teens. Kids today live in a complicated world; their relationships are numerous, varied, and complex. When the parish, the community, the school, *and* the family work together to nurture teen faith maturity, teens respond and flourish. This chapter focuses on connecting with parents and families of teens and seeks to address questions such as these:

- How can I connect with the families of teens?
- How do I get more parents involved in our youth ministry program?
- How do I get more involved in the lives of parents and families?
- How do families impact the faith growth of teens today?

- How do I assist parents in their role as the primary faith influence in the lives of their teens?
- How do I find time, on top of all my other responsibilities, to work with parents?

A Christian Vision of Family Life

The Christian family is holy and sacred. This is a simple but profound statement that carries far-reaching implications for all Church ministries, including youth ministry. *Holy and sacred* does not mean "problem-free"—not by any means. It does not even necessarily mean "capable of solving our problems." All it means is that we are believers and that the mystery of love has occasionally been encountered among us.

The family is holy and sacred not by pure happenstance. The family must pursue God's presence, which lingers among the ordinary and the extraordinary events of their lives. However weak and imperfect the family may be, intentionality in pursuing God's initiative is key.

In his exhortation on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II states, "Among the fundamental tasks of the Christian family is its ecclesial task: the family is placed at the service of building up the kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church" (no. 49).

In their 1994 pastoral message to families, *Follow the Way of Love*, the U.S. Catholic bishops state quite profoundly the Church's teaching on family, "As Christian families, you not only belong to the Church, but your daily life is a true expression of the Church" (p. 8).

Notice what the bishops did *not* say. They did not say that when Christian families say their meal prayers, when they gather around the Advent wreath, and when they worship at Mass, they are a true expression of Church. Of course all those are true expressions, but the bishops use the term *daily life*. Believing families that seek God's presence in their normal activities—in their daily life—are true expressions of the Church.

As ministry leaders you must give serious thought and reflection to the statement "As Christian families, you not only belong to the Church, but your daily life is a true expression of the Church" (p. 8). If you truly believe this, what would your programs and ministries look like? *Renewing the Vision* states, "One of the most important tasks for the Church today is to promote the faith growth of families by encouraging families to share, celebrate, and live their faith at home and in the world" (p. 12).

Family: A Key Aspect of Youth Ministry

As you build community with teens, you can teach them about Catholicism, model Christian living for them, invite them into Christian service, counsel them through their struggles, and introduce them to a personal relationship with Christ. However, those noble efforts will fade if you do not also nurture the home atmosphere so that it can receive the faith growth that the teen experiences. *Renewing the Vision* also states: "We believe that family life is sacred because family relationships confirm and deepen family members' union with God and allow God's Spirit to work through them. The profound and ordinary moments of daily life are the threads from which families can weave a pattern of holiness" (pp. 11–12).

Research indicates that home life, family life, and parents compose the primary sphere of influence on young people with respect to their personal growth, maturity, and need to wrestle with key life questions. When the chips are down, when young people feel troubled, they most often turn first to their parents. Family ties are stronger, in most instances, than the typical pull of the peer group.

Research on parent-teen relationships shows several simple yet fascinating conclusions:

- Teens want more conversation with their parents.
- Parents want more conversation with their teens.
- Teens wonder why their parents don't open up to them more.
- Parents wonder why their teens don't open up to them more.

Both parents and teens want to communicate with each other, and both wonder why the other isn't more open. In many cases what parents and teens need is a catalyst to get them started. Through the resources of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative, your youth ministry program can be that catalyst. The designated intergenerational sessions provide an arena for parents and teens to come together on neutral ground and create an atmosphere for them to discuss things on a deeper level, one they cannot quite get to on their own.

How to Connect with Families

Perhaps the first step to connecting with families is to know who they are. Parents today are not the same as those in previous generations. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that just over 70 percent of American families with children ages twelve to seventeen have only one child. Among those same families a mere 4.4 percent have three or more children. In 2000 nearly 27 percent of American children were living in single-parent homes. And keep in mind that a lot of "single parenting" occurs in two-parent homes. Also,

many children thrive better in a single-parent setting than in a home where the parents are highly contentious toward each other.

Another notable factor in families today is the high percentage of mothers who are employed outside the home. For example, in the state of Nebraska, nearly 70 percent of children have both parents in the workforce. Statistics also show that increasing numbers of adults are choosing to delay marriage and child rearing, which means that parents of teens today are older than parents of teens in previous decades.

Statistics such as those are helpful, but only to a point. It is up to you to know the families in your community. What can you learn from parish and local census data about the families of teens in your parish? How many of those families have children who are either preadolescent or postadolescent? How many are single-parent families? What percentage of parents are employed outside the home? What specific factors—economic, employment, educational—impact family living in your area? Your responses to questions like these will form a general portrait of families with teens in your community. Once you have the portrait, stand back and take a good look at it. How might that portrait influence the ways you implement comprehensive youth ministry?

Connecting with parents and families does not necessarily mean adding more meetings and events. Start first with personal relationship building. Get to know as many parents as you can, and look for ways to connect them with one another around certain issues and concerns. You may know a family that has successfully negotiated a teenage problem (drugs, poor grades, or curfew breaking, for example) that you could match with a family that is dealing with a similar situation. You thus become the catalyst for effective like-to-like ministry.

Similarly, imagine youth ministry as a vehicle for parental support and networking. Through various communication channels, such as e-mail and phone lists, you can make it easier for parents to connect with one another, share information, support one another in their parenting efforts, and even enrich their faith.

Communicating with Families

In youth ministry we are rightfully preoccupied with helping teens learn about God, come to know God, and engage in works of mercy and justice. Sometimes we leave the realities of family living behind. Sometimes we become a little frustrated with parents and families when they do not seem to embrace our worthy "agenda." And sometimes we cannot understand why our sharing the latest thinking on the theology and pastoral application of the sacrament of Confirmation does not wow them. Yet it is quite natural

and normal that on any given evening, a number of other home concerns will occupy their minds.

The point is that if we want parents and families to embrace our agenda, we must show that we understand theirs. When we demonstrate that we understand and sympathize with all the pressures and challenges they face, and when we express a desire to help and support them in concrete ways, parents will more readily respond to the faith message we have for their teens and for them.

Also, let's not forget the obvious: the need to communicate clearly and often with parents about what we do in youth ministry, why we do it, and our expected, or at least hoped-for, outcomes. This basic strategy can smooth over many tensions and potential conflicts with parents.

Another obstacle to connecting with parents may be feelings of intimidation, as expressed by a young adult who is doing youth ministry in a parish in the Pacific Northwest:

Though I feel perfectly comfortable with kids, whenever I have to interact with their parents, I feel intimidated and tongue-tied. I become very much aware of my own youth and inexperience. Although I know a lot about teenagers, I don't know anything about parenting. How do I connect with them? I feel especially inadequate whenever I need to call a parent to discuss a problem that the teen has or if the teen has been disruptive or has misbehaved. If the parent challenges me at all, I feel utterly defenseless.

Consider these helpful ideas, which were generated by a group of veteran youth ministers:

- Be honest with parents about your youth and your lack of experience in parenting, but remain confident in your understanding of teens and your ability to relate to them in other settings.
- Use partnership language with parents. Let them know that you are trying to work with them in the faith formation of their teens.
- Ask parents questions about their teens. Ask how the young person behaves at home, and compare that to her or his behavior in the parish or youth-group setting. If the teen is exhibiting problem behavior, be clear and descriptive about that behavior. Avoid labeling and interpreting, and allow the parent to come to her or his own conclusion. Close the conversation by asking, "How do you think we can work together to resolve this difficulty?"
- Build relationships with as many parents as you can. Introduce yourself personally whenever it is appropriate. Reach out to parents, and make contact in the same ways you attempt to do so with the young people. Set a goal to have at least one personal interaction with every parent.

- Find something personal and positive to say to each parent about his or her teen. That puts goodwill in the bank if the time comes when you need to call that parent about a problem.
- When working with parent volunteers, exercise the authority that you are entrusted with as the one who is responsible for the youth ministry program. Remember, you know how to do your job; otherwise you would not have been selected. Part of your job involves managing volunteers—some of whom will be parents of teens—who may have strong opinions on how things should be done. Without being abusive or dictatorial, exercise leadership when and where it is needed.

(These ideas are from Leif Kehrwald, *Youth Ministry and Parents*, pp. 112–113.)

Using TOTAL FAITH Resources to Connect with Families

Embedded in the vision of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative is a commitment to partner with parents and families for the faith formation of teens. Perhaps you have already discovered some of these family-friendly components of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative:

- Many of the Pray It prayer experiences found in the Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry manuals are easily adapted for home use.
- Many of the Live It ideas found in the Total Catechesis manuals can easily be done with parents and teens, or in an intergenerational setting.
- Each session in the Total Catechesis manuals has a take-home summary handout with talk points, to encourage family conversation about the session's topics. The handouts are also available on each manual's CD-ROM, so you can customize them and choose a means of delivery that works best for your situation.
- Each Total Catechesis manual contains one session designated for intergenerational use. Many of the Total Youth Ministry manuals also have sessions that are designed for parents and youth or that can be adapted for use with such a gathering. For example, in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*, chapter 7, "Praying Together," is designed to be conducted with teens and adults. The intergenerational sessions provide excellent material for parent-teen-family gatherings, as well as for gatherings of teens and all other parishioners.

Resource 11, "Families and Youth Ministry," at the end of this chapter, can be shared with your youth ministry leaders to help them understand how to connect with families in youth ministry.

Conclusion

Connecting with families isn't one more job in youth ministry—it is a part of your ministry that supports everything you do. Working with families of adolescents is also a way to accomplish your goals for youth ministry. It can take time, effort, and resources, but the connections pay off in serving youth and in strengthening your parish's youth ministry.

The following ideas can be used to connect with families:

- Help parents of adolescents experience Church as being "on their side," that is, show them that you both want the same things for their youth.
- Strive to know the families in your community, and learn more about family life.
- Connect the parents of adolescents with one another as resources and for support.
- Think about families and the impact of youth ministry as you plan for youth ministry events and programs. Communicate to parents what you are doing. Parents can support something when they understand it and feel included.
- Build a bridge between youth ministry involvement and the home by giving parents information and resources that reinforce the content of the activities in which their youth are involved.
- Provide ideas and resources that families can use at home, and sponsor occasional events that gather the families of adolescents.

Many youth ministers are drawn to youth ministry by their love for young people. That's terrific, but *parents and families must not be left behind*. As unpredictable and sometimes difficult as it can be to work with parents and families, they are needed as partners in youth ministry.

Families and Youth Ministry

The vision is clear: the Christian family is holy and sacred, even amid struggle and strife. This is just as true for families with adolescents as it is for families with small children. Families not only belong to the Church, their daily life is a true expression of Church.

The research is clear: families play a key role in the faith journey of their children and teens. When families engage in certain activities and practices, an effective partnership begins to form between the Church of the home and the Church of the parish, leading to effective youth ministry. If the parish offers only age-specific classes for 60 to 90 minutes each week, it is unrealistic to expect much lasting faith formation to occur.

Families and Faith

In their book *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans*, James D. Davidson and his Purdue University colleagues acknowledge that family religious practice is a key predictor of a young person's adult faith practice:

Respondents who were close to their parents or whose parents frequently talked to them about religion are twice as likely to report high levels of traditional beliefs and practices than those who were not close to their parents or whose parents "rarely" or "never" talked about religion. (Pp. 98–99)

The Davidson study is corroborated by a Search Institute study involving mainline Protestant denominations, which found that the three most important factors empowering faith maturity among young people are family based:

- **Family faith conversations.** Hearing their parents' faith stories is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers. Open-ended discussions on relevant and controversial issues create an atmosphere for dialogue and growth. Though it is important for children to know just how their parents stand on a given issue, it is just as important to allow for a variety of opinions. It is also helpful when parents are willing to share times of doubt and questioning in their own faith journey. Sharing the rough points can create new opportunities for conversation and understanding.
- **Family rituals and devotions.** These activities move from informal conversation to something a bit more structured and intentional. People who regularly have family devotions, prayer, or Bible reading at home tend to have higher faith maturity. Families who take time to reflect on their daily, weekly, and seasonal habits will be likely to discover some opportunities for family ritual.
- **Family outreach and service.** Because they are faced with so many problems of their own, many families are not motivated to serve others. Yet

repeated acts of selfless mercy can transform woes into healing, as well as bring help to those who are in greater need. The most powerful influence on faith and family unity is working together to help others. One sure way to gain a world vision and a desire to serve others is to invite people who represent issues in the world to visit and perhaps share a meal.

(These three factors are adapted from *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage*, by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), pages 174–175. Copyright © 1993 by Search Institute.)

Parish and Families in Partnership

When it comes to empowering young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today, both the home and the parish have the same tasks:

- to teach and model the Catholic faith in a personal and dialogical manner
- to encourage genuine spiritual growth through exposure to prayer, liturgy, retreats, and other Catholic rituals
- to engage in works of mercy and acts of justice for those who are poor and disenfranchised

When the parish and the family work together on those tasks, even greater good occurs. These practical suggestions will help you facilitate that partnership as a youth ministry leader:

- Use all available communication channels (mail, e-mail, phone, Web site) to keep parents and families informed about the youth ministry program.
- Provide ways for parents to help with special events and activities, such as service trips, retreats, and youth liturgies.
- Provide tips, ideas, and lots of encouragement to parents to help them communicate with their teens about what the teens are learning and discussing in youth ministry. In *Total Catechesis*, all the sessions have a summary handout with talk points, which is designed to stimulate further thinking and conversation.
- In addition, these general tips can be passed on to parents to help them stay connected with their teens as they journey through youth ministry:
 - Show genuine interest in the faith-based activities that your teen is engaged in at the parish.
 - Don't ask just the who, what, and where kinds of questions; try to move beyond the facts into feelings.
 - Share your own beliefs, feelings, stories, and experiences in your conversations.
 - Look for ways to draw connections between the parish and your home life. Encourage your teen to be involved in the liturgical life of your parish. Volunteer to be a reader, an usher, or a Eucharistic minister.
 - Remember the power of prayer. As you pray for your teen, pray also for the parish faith community. Pray that all the teens will journey through their high school years with good friends, an openness to learning, and encounters of genuine spiritual growth.

Connecting Youth to the Parish Community

The parish is where the Church lives. The parish is a community of faith, of action, and of hope. It is where the Gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. (*Communities of Salt and Light*, p. 1)

The parish is "where the Church lives," and it is the first home of youth ministry. In parishes that put this vision into practice, youth have a "conspicuous presence in parish life" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 13). In those parishes youth feel welcomed and valued. When those parish communities learn, celebrate, serve, and pray, youth are participating and sharing in ministry and leadership. In those communities, youth ministry relies on some aspects of parish life to accomplish some of the goals of youth ministry. Other components of youth ministry are provided in peer gatherings. One pastor described that approach to ministry this way: "There is a beautiful dance going on between the ministry of youth over on one side, but it is at the same token bringing them in and keeping them part of the larger parish" ("Effective Practices," p. 3).

Youth, youth ministry, and the parish community all thrive when we connect youth to the parish. Youth thrive because they experience consistency between their experiences of youth ministry events and parish participation. Youth also benefit from participating in an intergenerational community. So much of young people's lives is age segregated; the parish is one of the few places where youth can be connected to people of all ages. In the nationwide research study "Grading Grown-Ups: American Adults Report on Their Real Relationships with Kids," the Search Institute highlighted the benefit of those relationships:

There is clear evidence that young people benefit from multiple, sustained relationships outside their immediate family. For example, the Search Institute research has found that the more adults a young person reports that he or she can turn to, the better off that young

person is. Yet just 22% of the youth surveyed reported having strong relationships with five or more adults other than their parents. (P. 5)

The study reveals multiple benefits for youth and for the community when youth are connected across the generations. Youth also benefit because they have a familiar spiritual home to which they can belong after their adolescent years. By participating in parish life, youth are prepared to be members of a parish for life.

Youth ministry benefits when the whole parish community takes greater responsibility for ministry with youth. In parishes that take this responsibility to heart, youth ministry and its leaders don't serve youth in isolation, nor do they feel that they have the sole responsibility for meeting the needs of youth. Everyone in the parish knows and understands the purpose of youth ministry. Everyone welcomes and appreciates youth. In parishes that welcome youth, leaders can be strategic in choosing aspects of parish life in which youth can participate. In one parish, youth served side by side with adults in the justice and service programs. The youth ministry leaders in that community didn't need to plan for youth service programs because they could rely on youth participation in parishwide programs. That focused their gatherings of youth on other components of youth ministry.

The parish benefits when the energy and gifts of youth are included in its ongoing life. In the "Effective Youth Ministry Practices in Catholic Parishes" study, one of the findings focused on the relationship of youth with the parish community. Many adults in those communities desire a youth ministry that is infused in parish life. One staff member described it this way: "So I see them [the youth] involved in the fabric of the parish, inviting people to come together with each other but also inviting us to reflect" (p. 3). Youth bring enthusiasm and creativity to parish projects and activities. Many communities have found that when they make programs, events, and gatherings more open to and understandable for youth, the adults enjoy and understand the events better as well.

In *Renewing the Vision*, parishes are challenged to become youth-friendly communities that welcome youth, value their presence, include them in leadership, and provide for intentional relationship building among the generations. Becoming a youth-friendly parish means the following:

- Youth ministry leaders advocate for youth and their families so that as ministry is planned and implemented, all aspects of parish life consider the needs and gifts of young people.
- Youth are encouraged to participate with other generations in the parish in ministry and in programs that have been designed and planned with youth involvement in mind.

- Youth ministry programming connects youth with other generations in the parish by offering occasional intergenerational events and programs in which youth participate with adults and children.
- Youth are included in ministry, leadership, and service roles in the parish community, working side by side with adults, and youth are also allowed to serve on leadership committees and in groups.
- Youth are involved in leading programs, activities, and ministries for the whole parish community, for example, conducting a youth-led stations of the cross during Lent.
- Youth ministry prepares young people to participate in the life of the Church throughout the year, such as in the events of the liturgical year, in weekly celebrations of the Eucharist, in sacramental celebrations, in parishwide service projects, and in other parish life events.
- The parish offers intergenerational programming that connects all generations for learning, praying, worshiping, socializing, and serving.

Advocacy in Youth Ministry

Compared to other components of youth ministry where youth are gathered, most advocacy happens behind the scenes as leaders build relationships and promote collaboration. Advocacy for youth and their families demonstrates a commitment to stand with those who are most in need in our neighborhoods and in society. In *Renewing the Vision*, parishes are challenged to examine their policies, programs, and ministry initiatives to make sure that youth are considered and included: "The ministry of advocacy engages the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community" (p. 27).

We advocate for youth when we speak for them and when we give them a voice to speak for themselves. Practically speaking, this may mean that when the parish is planning the annual budget for staffing, for buildings, or for a program, youth's concerns are considered. As youth ministry leaders, we advocate for youth by working together with other ministry leaders in the parish, and we communicate a vision for youth ministry in the community. The more the parish knows the aims and purposes of youth ministry, the better they will be able to support those efforts. We also help the parish as a whole become more youth friendly by enlisting the community's commitment to welcome and value youth. One parish encouraged each member of the community to take a pledge, on behalf of their community, to be an asset in the lives of young people by affirming and valuing youth participation.

One youth ministry leader worked with a group of youth leaders to develop a slide-and-music presentation that explained youth ministry and provided a vision for supporting youth. The leader asked for agenda time at a meeting of each parish organization to present the slide show and answer questions. The youth ministry leader also asked what youth could do to support the organization's mission and what the organization could do to support youth and youth ministry. After a few months of communicating with over twenty groups, the support base for youth ministry significantly increased.

Advocacy for youth also means looking at all the leadership and decision-making groups in the parish to see who among those leaders can speak for youth. Sometimes the youth ministry coordinator will be the advocate. In other cases youth can be included in leadership groups and can speak on their own behalf.

Connecting the Parish Community to Youth Ministry

In *Renewing the Vision*, leaders are charged with mobilizing the resources of the parish on behalf of youth. An important aspect of that is connecting members of the parish community to youth ministry programming. One way to do that is by offering intergenerational programs as a part of youth ministry. Once each season, plan an event or modify a youth-oriented event to include adult members of the community and allow for sharing between youth and adults. A faith-formation session could include interviews with parishioners of different ages or a panel of parishioners speaking on matters of faith.

Some aspects of youth ministry can be developed around the special talents or gifts of the adults in the community. For instance, in one parish several parishioners who are talented at making quilts found a way to share their gifts with youth. For several weeks those adults gathered with youth on a weeknight to make quilts, which were then given to teenage mothers through a local Catholic hospital program. In another parish two women had an ongoing commitment to prepare and serve dinner at a local homeless shelter once a week. Two youth helped them once a month for several months, as part of the teens' Confirmation preparation.

Mentoring can also be a powerful way to make connections. Youth can learn ministry roles, prayer styles, service roles, and other faith dimensions through a mentor relationship. In many parishes those relationships become small groups of three or four youth with two or more adults.

Youth in Ministries and in Leadership Roles

Youth have tremendous gifts and capacities to enliven parish life. We can facilitate the sharing of their gifts by first identifying all the possible roles that youth can assume, including serving in liturgical ministries as lectors, greeters, musicians, or artists for the liturgical environment, or assisting catechists with religious education. This can include ongoing service roles in the community as well as new roles created around youth's talents, such as Web site design and maintenance, video production and editing, and photographing parish events, such as drama, music, or art productions.

Another way to share the gifts of youth is to provide opportunities for youth to take the lead role in an event for the parish as a whole. For example, in one parish, the youth created Advent wreaths and a prayer book for all the families of the parish. They then led an Advent prayer service for families and distributed the wreaths and prayer books.

Align Youth Ministry with Parish Life

Take a look at the parish calendar, and ask, "How do we celebrate, pray, serve, and learn as a community throughout the seasons of our year?" Youth ministry programming can fulfill its goals, including faith formation of youth, by using the life and events of the parish to minister with youth. We start by preparing for those events with youth in mind, which means that we make sure those events welcome and attend to the needs of the youth who participate. We also prepare youth to be involved in parish life.

One way to prepare youth is to use the life and events of the Church as a starting point in youth ministry. For example, during Lent, instead of focusing only on youth gatherings, use a gathering with youth to prepare them to participate in Lent with the parish. The week before Ash Wednesday, organize a Mardi Gras party that ends with a prayerful explanation of the season of Lent and the significance of Ash Wednesday. During Holy Week prepare youth to participate in the Triduum. Afterward provide an opportunity for youth to reflect on Holy Week and the Easter experience, and to share their faith connections with one another.

In his book *Educating Congregations*, Charles Foster proposes this approach to learning from the events of our Christian life: "We prepare people for meaningful participation, engage members in the events, help them reflect on the experience, and help them apply what they've learned to their life" (adapted from p. 48). *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*, chapter 5, "Triduum Participation: Watch and Pray," uses that format of

prepare, engage, and reflect. The session can be used with youth or in an intergenerational setting.

Some parishes are adopting an intergenerational model for faith formation. As part of that approach, communities provide events that include time when the generations are together, and parallel sessions in which the participants gather with their peers. Youth ministry in those parishes is enriched by parishwide activities that provide for dynamic faith formation, while leaving other components of youth ministry to youth gatherings.

TOTAL FAITH Connections

The manuals of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative contain numerous resources to help you connect youth to the parish. Each of the Total Catechesis and many of the Total Youth Ministry manuals provide a designated intergenerational session. Consider implementing those sessions in conjunction with your parish's adult education efforts so that youth and adults can learn about and share faith on the same topic once each season. The list of intergenerational sessions can be found in chapter 8 of this manual, on page 104.

The Total Youth Ministry manuals contain numerous sessions, resources, and strategies to help you connect youth to parish life:

- *Ministry Resources for Community Life*, chapter 1, "Community Is Essential to Youth Ministry," includes a discussion of the importance of the intergenerational community. Also, see chapter 14, "Connecting Youth and the Parish."
- *Ministry Resources for Evangelization* has several strategies in chapter 2 for connecting to the parish's role in evangelizing youth, including suggestions for "Evangelizing Young People Online." Chapter 14, "Speaking the Good News: Skills of Faith Sharing," is designed for all adults in the parish who have contact with youth and who could potentially share faith with them.
- *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service* has several chapters in part D that are especially helpful for connecting the parish to youth. Chapter 17, "Preparing Speakers and Panel Members," provides a thorough resource for including parish members in a panel presentation. Chapter 18, "Learning from Other Cultures," helps a parish access the richness of its cultural diversity. Chapter 19, "Calendar Connections Through the Year," provides a complete listing of calendar connections to justice education and service opportunities, and chapter 20, "Recognizing and Celebrating Youth Service," includes ideas for parish recognition of youth.
- *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*, chapter 1, "Pastoral Care and Youth Ministry," provides a vision for the parish's pastoral response to youth and

their families. Chapter 14 includes several strategies for connecting youth to the parish community and for connecting parish resources to youth who are in need. Chapter 16 is a valuable resource for addressing specific youth crisis issues.

- *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*, chapter 1, "Prayerful Youth Ministry," includes suggestions for connecting youth and the parish in prayer. Chapter 2, "Youth and Liturgy: Promoting Full Participation," lists strategies and resources that can help the parish prepare liturgies for youth and prepare the community for youth involvement.
- *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*, all the sessions and strategies promote the involvement of youth in leadership roles. Chapter 1, "The Ministry of Youth Leadership Development," describes the importance of including youth as leaders in the parish. Chapter 3, "Creating Parish Leadership Positions for Youth," provides a step-by-step approach for creating youth leadership roles. Chapter 20, "Knowing Youth," is designed for adults who will work with youth in leadership roles and as committee members. Chapter 21, "Knowing Adults," helps youth recognize their role in the intergenerational community and be open to working with adults.

Conclusion

Meaningful involvement in parish life and the development of intergenerational relationships provide young people with rich resources to learn the story of the Catholic faith experientially and to develop a sense of belonging to the Church. (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 22)

To connect youth to the parish, the parish community must bring its gifts to youth and connect young people with the events of parish life. Youth bring their gifts to the parish community when they share leadership and participate fully. Youth ministry leaders must bring youth and adults in the parish together. For example, a parish has dedicated adults who serve as lectors. Youth ministry leaders can bring those lectors' love for proclaiming the word and their knowledge of that ministry to youth, and they can help lectors by sharing ways to communicate with youth and ideas for bringing out young people's best behavior. Connecting people with the resources they need makes the connections between youth and the parish work.

10

Inviting, Welcoming, and Encouraging Youth Participation

"Come and see . . ." (John 1:39)

We echo Jesus' invitation to the disciples when we invite youth to participate. Technology and the sophistication of desktop publishing youth ministry leaders give more resources than ever for inviting youth and their families to become involved. Yet Jesus' simple words remind us not to lose sight of the most important part of our promotional efforts: inviting youth into a relationship with God through the community of faith. Youth are invited to participate in youth ministry and to develop relationships with their peers and with caring adults. Those relationships deepen their sense of belonging to the parish community and help them grow in discipleship.

Sometimes it is easy to lose that focus on relationships. When no one showed up at an event, one frustrated youth ministry leader commented: "I sent out three hundred fliers. I did all that I can do." It is easy to understand the frustration, but Jesus did not call us to "go forth and distribute fliers." He calls us to go forth and make disciples. Effective publicity shows youth and their families how to become involved and how to take the first steps toward becoming part of the community. To keep our focus on relationships, we must take a personal approach toward communicating with youth. Our invitation helps young people see themselves as part of the community. That personal touch helps them become interested and take the risk of participating.

Building a Foundation for Participation

Follow Jesus' Example

Hospitality is the cornerstone of our efforts. Before publicizing an event, think about how a young person will experience the gathering. Youth need to feel welcome, which means we need to plan our youth ministry programs so that they are hospitable for all youth who attend. Often youth are

encouraged to participate by their parents or friends. They may make a judgment within the first few minutes of arriving about whether or not they belong. We need to plan to make a good first impression. Jesus personified hospitality in the way he ministered in his community. Following are some of the qualities of Jesus' hospitality.

Jesus was especially sensitive and welcoming to those whom the majority of society considered to be outsiders. Consider Jesus' invitation to Zacchaeus and his conversation with the woman at the well (see Luke 19:1–10 and John 4:1–30). How do we make all youth and their families feel welcome and included in our youth ministry efforts? How do we stand with youth as Jesus would?

Jesus cared about the physical needs of those who followed him. Recall Jesus' consideration when he worried about feeding five thousand people on the mountainside (Matt. 14:13–21). We need to be sensitive to people's physical as well as spiritual needs by attending to the environment in which we gather, for instance, by providing snacks and beverages.

Jesus prepared for an important event by attending to details ahead of time so they would not interfere with the event itself. Jesus sent his Apostles into Jerusalem to prepare for the Paschal feast, so that he would be free to share the gift of himself in the Eucharist (Mark 14:12–16). That lesson of preparation is reinforced in the Gospel story of Martha and Mary, in which Martha attended to the details of hospitality while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38–42). If we are Martha types—and can organize the details ahead of time—then we can be like Mary when events happen, by focusing on what is important: the people God is calling to our ministry.

Jesus didn't wait for people to come to him; he went to them. Jesus' ministry took place where the people were. We can practice this by extending our hospitality to the places where youth already are. By being present to youth at their events, at the mall, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and in the home, we can invite them to deeper participation with us.

Jesus never made intrusive demands on people. Jesus laid out his challenge, his vision for building the Kingdom of God, but he didn't coerce, cajole, or manipulate his followers. The rich young man was ready to commit to a Christlike life. Jesus listed for him the radical demands of being his follower: "Go, sell what you own, and give . . . to the poor and . . . then come, follow me" (Mark 10:21). Jesus let the young man walk away, and his only response was sadness. We need to keep the same balance that Jesus demonstrated so beautifully: remain true to the message of Christianity while respecting where each young person is on her or his faith journey.

We must have trust and patience to wait for the right moment for all believers to surrender to Jesus.

The inner peace and joy Jesus exemplified attracted people to him. People sensed how important they were to Jesus. He focused on them, not on his own agenda. We need to give the youth who attend our activities our full and undivided attention. Each one of them should feel special and important.

To put those principles into practice, consider these strategies:

- **Assign leaders to welcome people as they enter.** Youth and adults can help new participants feel at home by introducing them to other youth and adults, by helping them find things, and by guiding them as they sign in and find their place.
- **Provide nametags at every event.** Make the nametags part of the event and part of the community building by asking youth to include different information each time, such as the school they attend, their favorite ice cream, and their dream vacation spot.
- **Include community-building activities.** Use a mixer or an icebreaker to help people get to know one another better.
- **Plan for groupings.** If the program calls for small groups or dyads, find a way to organize the groups yourself so that newcomers are not caught off guard by being told to pick a partner. If the activity is an ongoing one (for example, a weekly Bible study), be careful not to have set groups. Newcomers will sense immediately when their presence throws a group off balance.
- **Check the environment.** Does the environment appear welcoming and attractive? Consider creating a prayer focus that reflects the theme of the gathering. Provide a comfortable room temperature: a cold room can imply a lack of care for people's comfort; a hot room is just plain uncomfortable. Have comfortable chairs and enough space for each person, but not so much that a smaller group feels dwarfed in the room. Set up a circle of chairs for a few less people than you expect, and add chairs as you need them.
- **Provide food, refreshments, and time for socializing.** Youth do not attend youth ministry just for the food, but snacks and beverages help turn a gathering into a celebration and help people feel more comfortable. Snack time provides opportunities for casual conversations, which builds community.
- **Promote involvement, and connect youth to other opportunities.** Each gathering of youth provides a chance to invite them to get involved in other activities. Be sure to set aside time for announcements and a place for youth to pick up fliers and brochures and to sign up for events.

- **Evaluate your efforts and strive to improve your hospitality.** When asking youth to evaluate youth ministry, include a question about the welcoming process. Let the newcomers tell you what was good and what needs work.
- **Make follow-up calls to newcomers.** As a team, plan to call and check in with youth who participated for the first time or who are back after a long absence. The personal touch helps connect youth to the community and provides feedback for the team.
- **Build "welcoming nights" into your seasonal calendar.** Many youth do not participate because they are afraid they might walk into the middle of something that is ongoing. Even though each event is open to new members, scheduling and promoting special times when new participants are encouraged to "come and see" can be beneficial.

Provide for Different Levels of Involvement

Another important factor in youth participation is variety. The youth in our parishes are different from one another, with varied needs and interests. To respond to youth, it is important to have a number of ways for them to be involved. Youth gatherings typically include a regular meeting—weekly, biweekly, or monthly—and special events. The Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry manuals provide content for those gatherings, as well as strategies for involving youth in parish life and ongoing ministry, service, and leadership. By using the resources creatively, you can provide a vast array of gatherings with respect to location, timing, appeal to different interests, and availability among youth. In promoting youth participation, consider these different levels of youth involvement:

- **Leadership youth.** These youth are on your leadership team; are involved in leadership, ministries, and service in the parish; and come to everything.
- **Youth ministry regulars.** These youth participate in activities and programs regularly, often one or more times each week.
- **Occasional youth.** These youth participate occasionally, when it suits their schedules and interests.
- **Noninvolved youth.** These youth know about youth ministry but choose not to become involved.
- **Youth who are off the radar screen.** These are youth that you have no contact with, that do not know about youth ministry and do not participate.

Many youth ministry leaders focus on trying to make all the parish youth become "youth ministry regulars." This, however, can be challenging—if not downright impossible. One reason for this difficulty is that many youth ministry regulars are there because the youth ministry program has become their primary youth community. Their friends are there, and it

is the group they count on to know and be with. But many youth in most parishes already have a primary community of youth to which they belong—through their school, sports teams, and extracurricular groups, or at their workplace. The number of youth ministry regulars will increase when we attend to some of the other levels of involvement, for instance:

- Eliminate the "youth who are off the radar screen" by making sure that all youth and families in the community know how to become involved in youth ministry.
- Talk to "noninvolved youth." Find out why they do not participate and what would interest them. They might help you identify new program ideas.
- Identify youth in the parish who occasionally participate in youth activities and parish life, and connect them with additional ways to participate. Increasing the number of "occasional youth" participants will grow the number of youth ministry regulars.
- Sometimes youth ministry leaders assume that the "leadership youth" will come only from the youth ministry regulars. That isn't always the case; for many youth, sharing leadership is the starting point of their involvement, not the end product. We can involve youth in ministry, leadership, and service roles in the parish as a way to build participation. One place to start is to identify youth who are already involved in some way in the parish, and encourage them to participate in other aspects of youth ministry.

Other Important Considerations

Communicate with Parents

Communicating with parents is a foundational component for promoting youth involvement. Many youth become involved in youth ministry at the encouragement of their parents. To support youth participation, parents need enough information about the program to understand its purpose and to trust that it will be safe and helpful. Keep parents in mind when developing publicity materials and announcements.

One parish developed a strategy that took advantage of the refrigerator door as a family communication center. Each year the youth ministry team sent each family a magnet with the youth ministry theme for the year and contact phone numbers written on it. Each quarter parents received a mailing with information about upcoming events and tips for parenting. Along with the mailing, they received a 5-by-8-inch card with a summary of dates, times, and events on it, which they could place on the refrigerator using their magnet. That way they always knew how to encourage and support youth ministry participation.

Enlist the Help of the Parish Community

Another way to build a foundation for youth participation is to communicate with the adults in your community about youth ministry participation. Every parish has people in it who know youth. Some of those people have official positions, and some of them just get out there and learn names. Every parishioner can look out for youth by encouraging participation in youth ministry. Give the adults the tools to connect with youth they know, and invite them to consider being part of youth ministry. Like parents, the members of the community need to know about youth ministry and how to become involved.

Welcome New Members to the Community

One important strategy for encouraging youth involvement is to welcome youth who are new to the parish. Ask the parish office to alert you when a new family moves into the parish. Develop a welcome kit for new parishioners as a gift from youth ministry. The kit can include information about belonging to the parish, a map of the parish facilities, and coupons for things like "free coffee and donuts" or a "free car wash at the next youth car wash." Include information about participating in and encouraging others to participate in youth ministry. When youth ministry leaders deliver the kits, they can ask if there are adolescents in the family. You can then follow up with invitations and information.

Hospitality is more about who you are than what you do. To become hospitable, plan for ways to welcome youth and for youth to be involved. Also, plan for ways to communicate with parents as well as ways to help the whole parish encourage youth involvement.

Publicity Strategies for Youth Ministry

Publicity and promotional efforts in youth ministry should accomplish these three things:

- **Generate interest.** Youth should be able to see themselves participating and should have the feeling that they do not want to miss out on being there.
- **Provide clear information.** Youth cannot participate and parents cannot encourage participation if the information is missing or unclear.
- **Make it easy and obvious to take the next step.** Publicity efforts should clearly tell the reader what to do with the information: put it on your calendar, plan ahead, call to register, and so on. Is the notice a preview of something to keep in mind, or is it the invitation to register?

Promotional Strategies

Monthly or Seasonal Newsletters

A newsletter can be an effective way to communicate with youth, their parents, and parish leaders about what is happening in youth ministry. It can also build a sense of community by reporting and sharing about special events and accomplishments in the youth community.

To develop a newsletter, begin by assembling a mailing list so that you can send the newsletter to the youth, their parents, and the leaders in the parish. Decide whether you will send the newsletter by e-mail, by "snail mail," or both. To reflect a comprehensive approach to youth ministry, send the newsletter to *all youth* in the parish, not just to a particular group or to those who register for your program. Develop a team of youth and adults to create the newsletter. Provide whatever leadership and support they need to succeed. The newsletter could contain the following items:

- a calendar that lists upcoming events
- detailed descriptions of programs
- descriptions of parish or wider community events
- a list of opportunities for youth to become involved in service, ministry, or leadership
- news about youth in the community, such as birthdays, accomplishments, or service projects
- tips for parents
- a letter to youth from the youth ministry coordinator or the pastor
- media connections, such as Scripture passages that relate to popular songs, and recommended movies and Web sites
- a list of the volunteers and leaders that are needed for upcoming events
- general information about youth ministry, such as the mission statement, how to contact leaders, and so on

Parish Bulletin

Generally parents read the parish bulletin more regularly and thoroughly than do youth, and youth pay more attention to mail or e-mail that is personally delivered to them. Even if you send a newsletter to youth, it is a good idea to also put things in the bulletin, so that parents and the parish community can stay informed. One way to promote youth ministry involvement in the parish bulletin is to have a special "youth corner," where youth and their parents can find information about upcoming activities. Include all vital information for each event in this section of the bulletin. You can also use it to thank people and groups in the parish for their support of youth ministry.

Program Fliers or Brochures

When publicizing an event, it is easy to overlook vital information. Use this checklist when preparing publicity fliers and brochures:

- the name of the event or program
- the location of the event
- the date of the event
- the time the event begins and ends
- the cost of the event
- the registration deadline
- a list of what the youth need to bring
- the church's name, address, and phone number
- the youth ministry coordinator's name and phone number

Nonprint Ideas

Various nonprinted approaches are available for promoting your youth ministry events and activities. Consider some of these ideas:

- a Web site that describes upcoming events and helps build a sense of community by including topical discussions and pictures from past events
- e-mail reminders to youth about activities and opportunities
- a phone tree to remind youth about upcoming events. To set up a phone tree, divide the list of names of potential participants for an upcoming event among the leadership team, so that each person has a certain number of youth to call; then each person who is called can be asked to call additional youth.
- a telephone hotline with a recorded message that has up-to-the-minute information about upcoming activities
- a parish Web site, bulletin board, or announcements area of the church that can be used to promote events

One parish put its announcements on wheels by purchasing a rolling bulletin board. The youth room was too far away from the parish to attract visitors, so someone would wheel the bulletin board with youth news and upcoming events on it to the parish hall after Sunday liturgies and for larger parish events.

Orientation or Sign-up Meetings

An orientation or sign-up meeting at the beginning of each season of programming is an opportunity to build community, describe all the possibilities for involvement, invite youth to sign up for programs, and have fun together. Involve your youth ministry team of adults and youth by having them explain the programs that are offered in each component. Let your youth leaders motivate other youth to get involved. Consider having a parallel meeting for parents.

Because not all the young people will attend an orientation or sign-up meeting, use a variety of approaches to encourage youth participation. Schedule a brief orientation and registration after the weekend worship services. Call those who did not come, and register them over the phone. Try second announcements and postcard reminders. In addition to those general registration procedures, advertise and promote each program so that you can continue to build youth participation through the year.

Conclusion

Promoting youth participation begins with hospitality, and it grows through effective invitations and publicity. Youth will come to see what is happening in youth ministry when they know what is available, when they trust that they will be welcomed, and when they expect that something meaningful will be there for them.

11

Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders

Youth ministry flourishes when adults and youth assume leadership in the ministry. Without leaders who are willing to plan the calendar, recruit the participants, lead the sessions, send out the e-mails, create the mailing lists, and do all the other necessary leadership tasks, youth ministry can't happen. Using the TOTAL FAITH Initiative is a great way to help answer the "What should we do?" question, but good sessions and strategies will not make good youth ministry without the people to bring those ideas to life. By using the detailed session plans that the TOTAL FAITH resources provide, the youth ministry leader can focus on the important role of finding, preparing, and supporting leaders to make youth ministry happen.

Working with a team of people obviously lightens the load because the work is shared among many adults and youth, but it also is important because of our understanding of Church and the ministry of Jesus. No one adult leader can be everything to everyone. Some youth will immediately connect with someone who is outgoing, while others will respond more readily to a quiet presence. If your goal is to reach out to all youth, you must have a variety of people—of different ages, personalities, and skills—to do that effectively. After all, the Body of Christ is made up of us all!

Leadership Roles for Coordinating Youth Ministry

Parishes that have effective ministry with youth do not necessarily have a paid coordinator, but they always have one person, or a group of people, who willingly take responsibility for the leadership of youth ministry. Let's look at the roles of the coordinator and the coordinating team.

The Role of the Coordinator

"The Ministry Coordinator . . . facilitates the people, programming, and resources of the parish or school community in a comprehensive ministry

effort" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 41). Ultimately someone must be in charge of making sure that the leadership tasks of youth ministry happen. This does not mean that the ministry coordinator needs to do everything! The TOTAL FAITH sessions include a variety of roles: small-group facilitators, faith sharers, session coordinators, prayer leaders, and many others. The strategies in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative invite—even require—parishioners to get more involved in youth ministry. The coordinator, working alone or with a coordinating team (see p. 126), is responsible for the following tasks.

Planning. Chapters 4–11 of this manual outline the tasks involved in preparing for youth ministry using the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals. Decisions must be made about models, the sequencing of sessions, the strategies that will be used, and how to invite and involve youth and their families. The coordinator oversees those decisions, leads the planning meetings, and creates the overall youth ministry plan for the year.

Administration. In today's world, youth ministry cannot happen without paperwork. Parental permission and medical forms need to be collected, volunteers need to fill out forms, background checks need to be performed, mailing lists (including e-mail lists) need to be created, Web sites need to be maintained, supplies for programs need to be gathered, publicity needs to go out, and registrations need to come in. If youth ministry is to succeed, someone must be responsible for making sure that all those behind-the-scenes tasks are happening.

Developing a leadership team. Later in this chapter, you will find outlined many of the leadership roles used in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative. The coordinator is responsible for inviting, preparing, and supporting youth ministry leaders. The final part of this chapter outlines some ways for a coordinator to invite, prepare, and support the adults and youth who will play a role in youth ministry at the parish.

Advocating for youth. One of the most important things a coordinator does for youth ministry is to advocate for and link young people to the many ministries and programs of the parish. The coordinator has a special opportunity to promote collaboration among parish staff and leaders on behalf of youth. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative offers many strategies for involving youth more fully in the life of the parish, for helping the parish be more inclusive of their needs, and for giving youth the opportunity to provide leadership for their faith community. For that to happen, the coordinator must often pave the way by advocating for the strategies, educating the parish staff and leadership, and talking with parish organizations and ministries about new directions.

The leadership tasks of youth ministry are best accomplished by having a team of adults and youth who are willing to work with the coordinator to plan the ministry efforts, administer the programs, build a leadership team, and advocate for youth. An outline of the role of this coordinating team follows.

The Role of the Coordinating Team

"A *Coordinating Team*, made up of adults and young people, may be formed to work with the ministry coordinator in organizing a comprehensive ministry with adolescents by planning the overall ministry, developing a leadership system, identifying the resources of the faith community, and connecting the ministry with the other ministries and programs of the faith community" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 41). One advantage of creating a coordinating team is that you have more people to share in the work, but you also have more connections to people, parish organizations, and resources. Among other tasks, the coordinating team serves as an advocacy group for youth ministry by promoting youth ministry, inviting adults and youth into leadership roles, and advocating for the ministry throughout the parish and the community.

The coordinating team should be made up of people who enjoy planning, administration, and advocacy. One mistake that many parishes make is filling their coordinating team with youth and adults who love to be up front and with youth, but who do not enjoy the behind-the-scenes tasks of the coordinating team. When putting together a coordinating team, look for adults and youth who are organized, who are good at long-range planning, and who have connections in the parish community. Those leaders generally are already involved in youth ministry at the parish, but the team should also be open to others who might bring unique gifts to the team.

The team is usually made up of eight to twelve people. Although youth should be a part of this team, it is also essential that adults make up at least half of the team. Some coordinating team tasks are often best served by adults, such as advocacy within the parish and inviting other adults into leadership for youth ministry.

Youth and Adults as Leaders

The leadership of youth ministry "involves a wide diversity of adults *and* youth leaders in a variety of roles" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 40). Some of those roles are up-front roles in gathered events. Others are supporting roles for the tasks of planning and organizing strategies and gatherings. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative offers ministry coordinators a unique opportunity to involve adults and youth in various well-defined leadership roles. Some of the roles are easily and appropriately filled by youth, but other roles are

probably best filled by adults. Many Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis sessions can be led by one or two leaders, but each session offers opportunities for many people to fill leadership roles.

Youth as Leaders

The "Effective Youth Ministry Practices in Catholic Parishes" research project found that in parishes with effective youth ministry, youth are active in making youth ministry happen; they are not passive receivers of ministry. Those parishes had the following practices:

- Youth have ownership of youth ministry efforts.
- Youth share leadership in programs and visioning.
- Youth witness to their faith with their peers.
- By leading programs, youth grow in their own faith.

(P. 4)

Youth need to be active leaders in youth ministry. They have a way of engaging their peers through personal stories and real-life connections. Plus, their youthful exuberance is hard to duplicate by adult leaders. Young people can be invited to grow in leadership by taking over small parts of the overall Total Youth Ministry or Total Catechesis sessions and working into larger leadership roles. Assign roles by first assessing the current leadership skills and then mentoring and training young people for the skills that are missing.

For instance, a young person who is leading a community builder may need some practice in getting the group's attention, in presenting directions succinctly, or in making connections to the overall theme of the session. Those are skills that can be taught and learned. If the young person already has those skills, perhaps he or she is ready to lead an activity or to help present the content of the session. It is not necessarily better to have a young person lead (especially if he or she is not yet ready), but it is not necessarily better for an adult to lead either. Decisions about leadership roles should be made based on who is best able to lead the activity; at times and in certain situations, a young person will be the ideal leader.

Youth involved in leadership roles in Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis sessions should work side by side with adults, receiving the support, affirmation, and feedback necessary to continue to grow in their roles as ministry leaders. More information about inviting, preparing, and supporting youth as leaders is presented in the final section of this chapter.

Leadership Roles for Youth Ministry Sessions

Assessing Your Leadership Needs

The first task for the ministry coordinator is to read through the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis sessions and determine how many leaders are needed for a particular session. The number of participants, your style of programming, and the specific session you have chosen will affect that decision. In some parishes catechists will facilitate the sessions, and each catechist will be responsible for all the leadership roles for the specific group of youth she or he is teaching. In other parishes the style of youth ministry programming invites multiple leaders in various roles. Regardless of how your program is structured or how many different people provide leadership within a session, the leadership roles that follow are needed in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis sessions. It is not necessary to have a different person for each role, but you will need to determine who is taking which roles and how they will be distributed in your leadership team for the session.

Session coordinator. This leader is responsible for the overall facilitation of the session. He or she should have a clear understanding of the session and all its components. The session coordinator is responsible for coordinating the work of other session leaders, if he or she is working with other leaders. The necessary skills include the following:

- facilitation skills, for conducting large-group conversations
- presentation skills
- an ability to welcome and be open to the ideas and gifts of young people
- an ability to mentor other youth ministry leaders

Prayer leader. This person is responsible for leading the group in prayer and should be familiar with the style and components of the prayer experience. The necessary skills include these:

- presiding skills (the ability to invite the group into prayer and to lead the prayer through words, gestures, and presence)
- an ability to create a prayerful environment
- an inviting attitude, prompting participants to lead in liturgical roles

Community builder. This leader is responsible for facilitating the community builders that begin or occur during a session. This leader should have a clear understanding of the process and outcomes of the community builders. The necessary skills include these:

- an ability to give clear and concise directions
- a welcoming and high-energy presence
- an ability to involve and engage people in activities

Small-group facilitators. These leaders are needed when more than twelve people are participating in a session and when small-group work is part of a session. They help facilitate the activities and discussions with a specific group of youth. The necessary skills include the following:

- an ability to facilitate a group discussion
- an interest in each individual
- an ability to create a safe community

Activity leader. This person takes responsibility for leading one or more of the activities in a particular session. This leader should have a clear understanding of the activity. The necessary skills include these:

- an ability to provide clear and concise directions
- an understanding of group process and how to engage youth in activities
- an ability to manage group behaviors while the group is engaged in an activity

Faith sharer. This leader is responsible for preparing and presenting her or his faith story to the participants in the context of a session. It is important that this person keep her or his story "on target" with the focus of the session. The necessary skills include the following:

- an ability to share one's faith story
- a prayerful and honest presence with youth

Scripture reflector. This leader is needed in the evangelization sessions to provide a reflection on a specific Scripture reading and the faith themes within it. The necessary skills include these:

- a knowledge and love of the Scriptures
- public-speaking skills
- an ability to engage youth through storytelling

Expert presenters. These leaders can be called on to help present the content of a session when specific knowledge of the topic would be beneficial. For instance, a parish may wish to call on a justice expert, a leadership expert, or a morality expert to provide the content for a session. The necessary skills include the following:

- specific knowledge of the topic area
- an ability to present ideas, knowledge, or stories in a way that will engage youth

Other Common Youth Ministry Roles

Hospitality. This leader is responsible for providing and setting up the food and drink for a session. A welcoming person who enjoys providing food will serve well in this role.

Greeters. When youth arrive, these leaders would hand out nametags, greet participants, and engage youth in conversations and introductions. Greeters should be outgoing, hospitable, and able to engage youth in conversation.

Administrator. This leader takes care of the behind-the-scenes work for sessions and activities. He or she gathers the program supplies, handles registration (and permission and medical forms if necessary), and performs other administrative duties. This person should be organized and able to handle details well.

Event planners. These leaders are responsible for establishing the plan for a youth ministry activity or event. They manage the logistics for the event (booking facilities, gathering supplies), create the event plan, and communicate the plans through publicity. They should have good planning skills, be organized, and be able to work with a team.

Chaperones and drivers. These people are responsible for watching over the young people at gathered youth events and for driving to events. They are responsible for managing behavior, for encouraging the young people's involvement, and for ensuring the safety of the young people. Chaperones and drivers should be welcoming, outgoing, and able to enforce rules and guidelines.

Leadership Roles for Nongathered Strategies

Advocates. These leaders are needed to help parishes adopt new attitudes and structures that will make them more youth friendly. Advocates work within parish leadership systems to encourage new ways of involving, welcoming, and supporting youth and youth ministry. Advocates should have a passion for youth ministry, the ability to persuade, and a clear vision of the importance of young people to the parish.

Strategy planners. These leaders help implement nongathered strategies (newsletters, birthday cards to youth). They need not be physically present with youth, but they must have the desire to make a positive difference in young people's lives. Good planning skills, organization, and foresight are often necessary for this ministry.

Inviting, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders

Inviting leaders to join the team is an important part of the ministry. Most leaders (both adults and youth) will not have a great deal of time to offer. Some leaders may be willing to help on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly

basis, while others will be able to help only occasionally. By using the outlines for leadership roles in this chapter, you will be able to give volunteers a brief overview of their responsibilities. The goal is to give the volunteer leaders a clear idea of the session or activity and what is expected of them. This will give them more confidence and a positive experience of working with youth and in youth ministry at your parish.

Inviting Leaders

The people volunteering in a youth ministry program are usually there because someone specifically asked them. Rarely do people volunteer because an announcement was placed in a bulletin. The best and most effective way to increase the size of your youth ministry team is to personally invite people to help. When inviting them, though, it is important to outline what they are being asked to do. If you need a lot of help for a specific event—an overnight retreat, for example—make sure you let people know the amount of time, the number of planning and preparation meetings, and what their responsibility will be. If you need help on a regular basis, outline how much time will be required each week or month and the responsibilities that person may have. It is always easier and more effective to ask people to help with the less demanding jobs. If they succeed in those jobs, they may be interested in taking on greater responsibility in leadership roles.

One way to expand your leadership team is by using your coordinating team to brainstorm a list of other adults and youth who could be invited to work in youth ministry. Ask the staff and key leaders in the community for their recommendations. The list should include more people than those who regularly volunteer for other parish ministries. Try to find ways to involve those who are less involved. Write letters to each person, indicating that they have been recommended as a potential leader and inviting them to consider a leadership position. Enclose a brochure describing the leadership positions (see pp. 128–130). Within two weeks follow up your letters with a phone call to discuss the invitation and, if the person is open to helping in youth ministry, to schedule a one-on-one meeting. If you can get your pastor or the person who recommended the individual to write the initial letter, you will enhance the likelihood of serious consideration of your invitation.

One parish made a list of over two hundred people and then invited them all to a meeting to talk about the importance of youth ministry and the ways they could be involved throughout the year. More than one hundred people showed up at the meeting, and about eighty-five of them were willing to volunteer after hearing about the needs. That may sound too good to be true, but when attendees were asked why they came to the meeting, one participant said simply, "Because you invited me."

It is important that people are well matched to their leadership role, so take the time to ask them what they are comfortable doing, and try to match their current level of leadership and their natural abilities to roles within your programs. For instance, invite someone who loves to bake to help you with hospitality for a weekly youth ministry gathering. Be sure to look for youth who display leadership talents in the youth ministry programs, including TOTAL FAITH sessions; they should be invited to take on official leadership roles when appropriate.

Tips for Searching for Leaders

- Look for people who are interested in youth and in the Catholic faith. Ask adults who are newly initiated into the church (RCIA participants), those who are involved in renewal programs and adult education programs, and those who work with youth as part of their profession.
- Be as specific and honest in your appeal as possible. Clearly state what the job involves and how much time it requires. In many ways you are "selling" the position. You are trying to link the person's interests, gifts, and skills to the positions for which you need leaders.
- Be sure to utilize existing information. Check out the parish census; the time and talent survey; prospective leaders recommended by the parish staff, current adult leaders, or youth; and the names of prospects from leaders in other parish ministries and organizations.
- Recruit by inviting people to respond to the opportunity to serve, not by telling them that they ought to be concerned and involved. If the jobs you design are meaningful, you should be able to enthusiastically approach your parish community with a real offer for people to serve, to grow, and to make a difference in the lives of young people.
- Be enthusiastic! If you and your team are committed to and excited about youth ministry, others will be also. And, most certainly, a lack of enthusiasm will not attract or inspire leaders.

Preparing Leaders

I find the more prepared people are in general the more likely that you'll get them to come back, and you'll have a fulfilling experience as opposed to when you just throw them in there, they're like, "What am I doing?" They want to know specifically what is going to be asked of them and then you train them to do it.

(A parish leader, in "Effective Practices," pp. 37–38)

When you prepare people for their leadership roles, their experience of volunteering is more positive (and the young people have a better experience too). The following three distinct elements help prepare people for leadership in youth ministry:

- **Orientation.** All leaders will need to be oriented to youth ministry at the parish and to working with youth. Orientation may be as simple as a brief meeting or it may involve an extended program.
- **Training.** Many leaders will need some level of training to succeed in their leadership role. The training may happen on the job through a mentoring relationship or through more formal training programs.
- **Spiritual formation.** Youth ministry volunteers should have opportunities for spiritual formation, which may include retreats, shared prayer, and written resources.

Orientation

If you have ever started a new job, moved into a new neighborhood, or started at a new school, you have experienced those first moments when everything is new and you feel a little lost and uncomfortable. When you welcome a new youth ministry volunteer, give him or her the information he or she needs to feel as comfortable as possible. That is true regardless of the role. For example, a driver to an amusement park needs an orientation (perhaps 10 minutes before departure) that would include expectations for youth behavior in the car, directions to the park, emergency phone numbers, instructions on how to handle problems, and other information. Catechists for a six-week program on Jesus will need a longer orientation, including insight into the overall program, their role in it, the resources and materials that are available to help them prepare, how to deal with behavioral issues, and other information. This is important for both the volunteer and the good of the youth ministry program.

You will want the new volunteer to have the following general information:

- *An overview of youth ministry, including the goals and values of your youth ministry.* You will want to include information about the young people's role in the parish, the ways you want your ministry to impact the lives of youth, and the importance of youth ministry for both your parish and the young people.
- *Information about the preferred styles of interaction.* Include the ways that you want young people to be treated, appropriate ways for adults to be in relationship with youth, and guidelines for how youth are to be in relationship with one another.
- *Practical information about the overall youth ministry program and the specific events in which the leaders will be involved.* This should include an overview of the program, a schedule, and the leaders' specific roles in it. If leaders will be working with a Total Catechesis or Total Youth Ministry session, be sure to provide them with a copy of the session outline, highlighting their particular roles if necessary.

Training

Most people do not like to do things that they are not good at, but they will have great energy and enthusiasm for things at which they excel. Ministry coordinators should do everything in their power to help youth ministry volunteers excel, and training is an important part of that effort. Although formal training programs can be valuable, most volunteers receive most of their training on the job or immediately before their involvement. By paying close attention to the ways they prepare people for their roles, mentor volunteers within their roles, and provide evaluation, coordinators can help volunteers (and the young people) have positive experiences.

Leader guides. On the *Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM, you will find handouts describing various common roles in youth ministry that you can print out for leaders. These leader guides correspond with many of the roles described in this chapter. Here is a list of the guides you will find:

- Understanding Youth Today: Younger Adolescents
- Understanding Youth Today: Older Adolescents
- Understanding Youth Today: Generational Insights
- Sharing Faith with Youth
- Leading a Small Group
- Serving as a Chaperone
- Serving as a Driver of Youth to an Event
- Giving a Presentation
- Leading an Icebreaker or Community Builder
- Leading Prayer with Adolescents
- Relating to Youth

Suggestions for using the handouts include these:

- Use appropriate handouts when you prepare a new volunteer or a volunteer that is new to a particular role.
- Use one handout each month as part of leadership training for your youth ministry team. To supplement the handouts with activities, see *All Together Now! A Seriously Fun Collection of Interactive Training Games and Activities*, by Lorraine L. Ukens (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1999).
- Offer a parent night on adolescent development using the three "Understanding Youth Today" handouts and the "Relating to Youth" handout.
- Conduct a chaperone workshop using the handouts "Sharing Faith with Youth," "Serving as a Chaperone," and "Serving as a Driver of Youth to an Event."
- Prepare your retreat team for their roles by using the handouts "Leading a Small Group," "Giving a Presentation," "Leading an Icebreaker or Community Builder," and "Leading Prayer with Adolescents." Also see chapter 19,

"Giving a Witness Talk," in *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*.

TOTAL FAITH connections. In addition to the leader guides, the following tools for training youth ministry volunteers are included in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative:

- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)* is a valuable resource for laying a foundation for the Catholic faith. This book is an integrated text for youth who are participating in the TOTAL FAITH learning elements, and all the sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals are linked to this handbook. This book should be given to each volunteer. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is another valuable resource for volunteers, and it is referenced in the Total Catechesis sessions.
- *The Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)* is designed for searchers and committed Christian youth to read and to apply the Scriptures to their life. Like the *CFH*, the *CYB* is linked to sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals and therefore is considered an important student resource. This book should also be given to each volunteer.
- Each Total Youth Ministry resource manual begins with an introductory article (part A) that provides a foundation for understanding that particular area of ministry. Make a copy of the article, and offer opportunities for questions and discussion about it.
- *Ministry Resources for Community Life* has an article about the five steps of community building (chap. 12), a valuable tool for adults who are working with youth over an extended period of time. Provide a copy of that article, and engage the adults in a conversation about it.
- Chapter 14 in *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*, "Speaking the Good News: Skills of Faith Sharing," will help adults share their faith with youth.
- *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service* has strategies for creating good service projects (chap. 13), for researching justice issues in preparation for presentations (chap. 14), and for preparing adults to speak to youth about justice issues (chap. 17). Provide this information to the adults in those roles.
- *Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care* has valuable information about supporting young people and their families who are in crisis (chap. 16). It includes information about warning signs and how to care for young people who are in crisis. Provide this information to adults who work with youth, and specifically to those who suspect that a teen is in crisis. The opening article (chap. 1) is also a valuable tool for pastoral care issues.
- *Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship* has three valuable articles, located on its CD-ROM, to help leaders learn more about sacramental life, styles of faith, and rituals. Also included are planning tools (part D)

to help leaders integrate prayer into all of youth ministry, as well as how to plan communal prayer and liturgy.

- *Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development* has sessions that can help youth and adult volunteers learn valuable skills for leading small groups, speaking to large groups, planning, and listening, among others. Also included on the CD-ROM is an article on the qualities of a Christian leader.

Spiritual Formation

All volunteers in the Church should have the opportunity to grow in faith through their involvement in parish life. By being intentional about building in formation opportunities, ministry coordinators can help nurture, through their service, the youth and adults who are involved in leadership. In a recent research project, effective volunteers are described as being genuine and authentic, having a passion for young people, and being able to share their faith. To help that to be true about all volunteers, consider the following ideas:

- Provide a yearly retreat for volunteer leaders. It can be a daylong event or a weekend or overnight model.
- Engage leaders in reflection on their service during times of evaluation. Invite adults and youth to reflect on the ways they have experienced God in the young people and in the service they have provided.
- Provide articles and reflection questions that will help leaders grow in faith.
- Pray often with the leaders—before the start of an event, during planning meetings, and certainly in the midst of programs.

Supporting Leaders

All leaders need to know that their service is valued and that they are making a difference. Supporting leaders should be an ongoing effort of the coordinating team, and there are many different ways to do that. We need to affirm leaders' contributions, support them by making it easy for them to be involved, and give them the evaluation and feedback they need to continue to grow in ministry.

Affirmation

Thank you, thank you, thank you! It can never be said enough. Youth ministry volunteers (both youth and adults) should be thanked regularly—including publicly at least once a year. Their contributions to a particular event or to an overall program should be praised and acknowledged.

Consider some of the following ways to affirm your volunteers:

- Send thank-you notes.
- Put notices in the bulletin acknowledging the work of volunteers.

- Tell people how you see them growing in their ministry role, and celebrate their new skills.
- Take people out to dinner or for coffee.
- Host a volunteer appreciation dinner (with the whole parish or as a separate ministry), and praise the volunteers for their work.
- Invite the young people to affirm their volunteer leaders with "valentine" notes, while on a retreat, or in other ways.
- Invite the pastor or other ministry leaders to write a letter of appreciation to the volunteer leaders.
- Write articles about your volunteers for local newspapers, the parish newsletter, or the bulletin. Be sure to include young people who are peer leaders.

Make It Easier

By paying attention to those who volunteer their time in youth ministry, you should be able to determine the things that are making volunteering stressful. Eliminate or lessen those stresses whenever possible, but if you are not able to do that, acknowledging those issues directly will let the volunteer leader know that you are aware of the sacrifice she or he is making. Consider these ideas:

- Provide child care for those leaders who need it during their times of service.
- When one or more leaders handle a difficult situation well, praise all who are involved, and ask them to share with other leaders how they dealt with the matter.
- Pay all fees for leaders to attend workshops, seminars, courses, and so on.
- Plan an annual outing for all the adult and youth leaders.
- Make yourself (or other leaders) available for meetings with leaders.
- Communicate by note or phone with each leader's spouse (or family), indicating what a great job the staff person is doing and how grateful the parish community is that the spouse (or family) stands in support of the person's service.
- Provide a free pizza certificate to volunteers who have spent all day at an event so that they don't have to worry about dinner when they get home.
- Invite the young people to offer their services to youth ministry volunteers who work with them on a regular basis. The young people could help with spring-cleaning-type projects at the volunteers' homes.

Feedback

People need to know how they are doing. They deserve to know what they are doing well (specifically) and what they might need to learn more about in order to grow in their ministry. This requires that the ministry coordinator (or others involved in youth ministry) provide specific feedback and

evaluation to volunteers, which can happen at the end of an event, at youth ministry meetings, or at private meetings scheduled with a volunteer. The more "regular" the feedback and evaluation become, the less threatening they will be to people. To ensure that feedback becomes a regular part of youth ministry, build it into your program structure. Consider the following ways of providing and eliciting feedback:

- After every event, talk about what went well and what needs improvement.
- Ask the volunteers to name what they think they personally did well and what they wish they could do better. (Consider providing training for areas of concern.)
- Share information from participation evaluations with the volunteers. Strategize around anything that was poorly evaluated.
- Be as specific as possible when giving feedback. Instead of saying, "You are great with the young people," consider something like, "You have a real gift for reaching out to young people and making them feel welcome." This is equally important when giving negative feedback (see the next section).
- Don't be afraid to encourage people to continue to grow into their roles. When they are disappointed in a program or their role in it, encourage them to recognize that every new skill takes time to master.

How to Give Negative Feedback

Not every volunteer will immediately be good at working with youth, and some will never be good at it. As ministry leaders we must care about every volunteer, but not to the exclusion of the young people. If a volunteer is not doing a good job, it can have a profoundly negative effect on the young people and on their experience of youth ministry and the Church as a whole. To help volunteer leaders improve, consider the following guidelines:

- Affirm what they are doing well at the same time that you provide negative feedback.
- Provide immediate feedback to new volunteers. Set up a structure in which they get immediate feedback about what they are doing well and what needs improvement. If they are "older" members of the parish and you are new to the parish, do the same. It will be harder, but the feedback will help you know who needs help and whom you can count on to be mentors to others.
- Be specific in your feedback. It can sometimes be helpful to put negative feedback in writing so that the person has a chance to read and digest it before talking about it.

- Provide ways for people to improve. Send them to training, have them work with someone who is a strong leader and can mentor them, or work with them one on one.
- Check in to see how they are doing, and affirm any growth or change you see. Encourage them to keep improving.

Removing People from Leadership

Asking people to step away from a leadership role can be difficult, but sometimes it must be done. If people are mismatched to their current roles, and they have not been able to (or have not chosen to) improve, it will be necessary to remove them from their roles. This should be done as pastorally as possible. Consider the following steps:

- Talk with the pastor or another supervisor to share your concerns about the volunteer; ask them to confirm your decision and support it.
- Review for the volunteer the feedback that you have previously provided. Speak about your concerns for the good of the program and the young people who are involved in it.
- Talk with the person about his or her experience of the role. What has he or she found challenging? What is making it difficult?
- Acknowledge the commitment of time and energy that the person has given. Thank her or him for the sacrifice.
- Work with the person to find a role in the parish community that is better suited to his or her particular gifts, either in youth ministry or in another ministry area.
- Be firm about your decision to remove the person from her or his role. The news may not be accepted well, so be ready to face the consequences of your decision. Do not talk negatively with other volunteer leaders about the person you are removing.

Conclusion

A leadership system for youth ministry is necessary to create a strong youth ministry program in the parish. It should involve many different people working in a variety of roles. The effort it takes to find the right people, to orient and train them for their roles, and then to help them continue to grow and develop can seem a little overwhelming, but the work invested in those tasks can have a profound effect on the quality of your ministry. Young people deserve the best we can offer them, and that can happen only when we have the right people in leadership roles. We believe that the resources of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative can help you create a strong youth ministry program, but ultimately it will be the people standing in front of and next to the young people that will make youth ministry come alive.

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes Cited in Quotations from *Catechesi Tradendae*

1. Cf. Matthew 28:19–20.
2. Cf. John 20:31.

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