

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS
Our Mandate
To assist and support parishes as they engage young people and families in the life, mission and ministry of the Church.
Core Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Oriented:</b> We recognize that the family is the primary formers of faith in young people and effective youth ministry fosters and supports family life and the family’s efforts to form missionary disciples.</li> <li>• <b>Relevant:</b> Programs, communications, liturgy and gatherings need to be culturally relevant and sensitive to the realities young people and their families are engaging.</li> <li>• <b>Relational:</b> “It is in relationships – with Christ, with others, in the community – that faith is handed on. For the sake of mission, too, the Church is called to adopt a relational manner that places emphasis on listening, welcoming, dialogue and common discernment in a process that transforms the lives of those taking part.”<sup>1</sup> It is within these relationships that we draw young people into a relationship with Jesus Christ.</li> <li>• <b>Vocational:</b> The basic Christian vocation is the call to holiness<sup>2</sup> and youth ministry initiatives should effectively reflect that God calls each person into relationship with him, respects one’s freedom and yet has a plan for every person.</li> <li>• <b>Adoptive:</b> As each of us is an adopted child of God, so must our parish communities be committed to fully adopting young people and families. They must be embraced and welcomed in the manner which they present themselves, listened to, mentored and accompanied on the journey to holiness.</li> </ul>

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
Family and Youth Ministry Outreach Office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide workshops and formation opportunities for parish teams in their work with youth and families</li> <li>• To support the Youth Ministry Certification program to better prepare individuals for the work of youth ministry</li> <li>• To equip disciples within parishes we will offer on-site youth/family ministry training</li> <li>• To develop programs and initiatives that parishes can adapt and use in their own communities</li> <li>• To deliver activities, articles and ideas that are relevant to families, parents and young people that can be shared via social media, bulletins, or other publications</li> <li>• To support and enable all members of parish teams to effectively engage, inform and disciple parents, youth and families</li> <li>• Create and share new, relevant methods of youth and family ministry</li> </ul>
Parishes and Families of Parishes
Mission/Financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a preferential option for youth and family ministry in all parish families</li> <li>• Invest in personnel, programs, activities and resources for young people and their families</li> <li>• Support parents in their role as first witnesses of the faith</li> </ul>
Personnel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discern the gifts and charisms among the parish staff to determine those best suited to work with children, youth, parents and families</li> <li>• Ensure initial training and provide ongoing formation and support opportunities to effectively train members of the parish team responsible for the work of youth and family ministry</li> </ul>
Parish Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize all moments of contact with families and young people as opportunities for evangelization and embrace those encounters with joy, grace and a spirit of welcome.</li> <li>• Create a culture of accompaniment within the entire parish, engaging everyone in the work of mentoring young people and welcoming families</li> <li>• Recognize the unique gifts and energy that young people have to offer, drawing them into the life, mission and ministry of the church</li> </ul>

1. Final Document of the Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, paragraph 122 2. <https://www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/28296-synod-document-focuses-on-listening-to-youth-women-welcoming-their-contributions-to-church>

## Methodology and Approach for Parishes

It is essential to recognize that while doctrine and theology remain the consistent, the ways in which we impart that theology and the truth of our faith must be flexible and adaptable. Youth Ministry is fluid and all efforts should be made to work within the current culture in which families are living, if we hope to draw them into a relationship with Jesus and His Church.

It is with this in mind that we offer the following suggestions:

### Children

- Keep children in mind when planning liturgies.
  - Encourage families with small children to sit up front so it is easier for them to see the altar
  - If you supply a weekly bulletin make it easily accessible as families come in so children can interact with them throughout the mass
  - Make sure families know where the restrooms are
  - Get to know children's names so you can acknowledge them before or after mass
- Whenever possible, provide a Children's Liturgy of the Word with well-trained catechists and leaders
- Provide activities and events outside of the mass that help connect the church with fun, food and friends

### Tweens and Teens

- This is the typical age for "youth group" but current trends indicate even this is changing
  - Young people are more likely to participate in events that have a short, defined duration measured in weeks rather than months
  - Small, intimate groups (discipleship groups) are sometimes preferred
  - It is important to have well trained adults available to mentor young people
- Young people have a desire to make an impact on their community and the larger world
  - They want to do meaningful work in service to others
  - They want to be heard and respected
  - Their gifts should be acknowledged and utilized in the life of the parish
- This generation of young people like being with their parents. Provide opportunities for them to share the journey.
- Significant transformations can be experienced in the midst of large gathered events such as World Youth Day, Steubenville, Rise Up conference, weekend retreats and camp experiences.

### Families

- Whenever possible eliminate roadblocks for families that may make it difficult for them to attend gatherings
  - Feed them a meal
  - Provide child care when required
  - Offer multiple time options for mandatory gatherings to accommodate busy schedules
  - Provide age appropriate activities for all members of the family
- Parents love opportunities to create great memories with their children, parishes should be deliberate about designing events that help them do that
  - Provide gatherings and activities for the whole family
  - Offer a space for family photos
  - Post photos on social media (with proper consent)
- Families need to know we care about them even when they are not present regularly
  - Provide workshops and activities that support the challenging yet rewarding work of parenting
  - Communicate relevant articles, prayers, memes or links on social media or in other communiques
  - Create a file on good resources for those crisis moments that you can share with parents
- Provide parents with knowledge and skills to confidently lead their children in the faith
  - They desire to pray for and bless their children. Train them, give them resources, model for them and let them practice.
  - Give them the tools and opportunities and resources to explore their faith, to find ways to express their faith in words and actions their children can understand. Supporting them helps support their children
  - Their children may be having experiences of faith that they have never had (adoration, Steubenville, retreats) whenever possible give them a small taste of these experiences
  - Follow up meetings and events with them with talking points and discussion starters