

## **Eight Components of Comprehensive Youth Ministry**

### **Advocacy**

This 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 act (Putting Children and Families First).

**Advocacy:** *interpreting* the needs of youth and their families, especially the social problems facing them and *acting* with or on behalf of youth and their families for a change in the systems (policies, procedures, programs) which create or contribute to the social problems; *inviting* them to address the social problems that they face.

### **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). The goal should be to have all Catholic youth involved in some program of catechesis.

**Catechesis:** *sponsoring* youth toward maturity in Catholic Christian faith as a living reality through the kind of teaching and learning that emphasizes understanding, reflection, and transformation; *fostering* in youth a communal identity as Catholic Christians within the intergenerational community of faith and helping them to develop their own personal faith identity (*the Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*).

### **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 require us to live these values in our interactions with young people and in our community life. God’s reign was proclaimed through the relationships Jesus initiated, and it continues to be heralded every time we witness our belief in him through the relationships in our community.

The community life of the first Christians was a sign to everyone that Christ was in their midst (see Acts 2:42-47). The ministry of community life is not one what we do (activity), but who are (identity) and how we interact (relationships).

**Community Life:** *creating* an environment which nurtures meaningful relationships among youth and between youth and adults characterized by gospel values (e.g. acceptance of all people, trust, respect, cooperation, honesty, taking responsibility, willingness to serve); *helping* young people feel like a valued part of the church community; *providing* opportunities for social interaction and meaningful participation in the life of the church and civic community.

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

**Evangelization:** *proclaiming* through word and witness the good News of the Gospel to youth who have not yet heard or seen it and *inviting* them into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the community of believers; *ongoing witness* of the faith community as it attempts to live out the Gospel with such authenticity that the faith of all the members is sustained and nourished. Evangelization is the energizing core of all the components of youth ministry (*the Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization*).

## **Justice and Service**

The ministry of justice and service nurtures in young people a 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.

**Justice and Service:** *guiding* young people in the development of a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service grounded in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the scriptures and in Catholic social teaching; *empowering* young people (and their families) to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering, to serve those in need, to pursue peace, and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all people; *infusing* the concepts of justice and peace into all youth ministry efforts.

## 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 adults 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.

**Leadership Development/Enablement:** *recruiting, training, and supporting* youth and adult leaders in youth ministry; *empowering* youth for leadership and ministry with their peers, in their schools, and in their church and civic community; *developing* a leadership team of youth and adults to organize and coordinate a ministry with youth; *partnering* with parents and families in promoting positive youth development and faith growth.

## 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 more fundamentally a relationship- a ministry of compassionate presence. This was Jesus' caring stance toward all people, especially those who were hurting or in need. Pastoral care enables healing and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships. It nurtures growth toward wholeness, and it provides guidance in decision making and challenges obstacles to positive development.

**Pastoral Care:** *promoting* positive youth and family development through a variety of preventive strategies (e.g., developing life skills and parenting skills); *caring* for youth and families in crisis through support, counselling, and referral to appropriate community agencies; and *providing* guidance as youth face life decisions and make moral choices.

## 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.

**Prayer and Worship:** *assisting* young people in deepening their relationship with Jesus through spiritual development and a personal prayer life; *providing* a variety of communal prayer and worship experiences with youth to deepen and celebrate their relationship with Jesus in a caring Christian community; *involving* young people in the sacramental life of the Church.