

# Groundbreaking

## **A How-To Guide for Building a Comprehensive Youth Ministry Program**

### (Part 3): Considerations for Youth Ministry Teams

*This resource is provided through the courtesy of the  
Archdiocese of Baltimore's Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry*

*This resource has been revised for use as a general  
youth ministry resource in parish settings*

*Revisions were made by the NFCYM and the Diocese of San Jose*

## **Youth Ministry Teams: Important Agenda Items**

In addition to the tasks of planning, implementing, and evaluating the youth ministry program, the team must also consider several other important issues that affect both the planning process and the life of the team.

### **Nurture Community among the Team**

Youth ministry requires that the team model the type of community it seeks to establish among young people. Take care to plan time for the team to work at getting to know and understand each other. Perhaps a retreat day just for the team is feasible. Do not be so anxious to get to the actual building of the program that you might overlook this essential step. Times for prayer, community building exercises, and opportunities to enjoy each other's company should be included on the agenda. Even after the team has been established, community building opportunities, especially prayer, should be continued. Remember too, that whenever new members join the team, time must be taken to re-build/re-enforce the team's community.

### **Volunteers**

Check with the pastor or parish staff about the diocesan requirements for applying for volunteer service. If a volunteer will have substantial contact with minors, the following may need to be completed before he/she begins to serve:

- a) Application for volunteer service
- b) Names of references provided
- c) Volunteer criminal history screening consent form (fingerprinting)
- d) Training regarding child abuse and protection of children

### **Consider the Total Youth Ministry Effect**

In planning your parish youth ministry program, you should be thinking larger than youth group. Total parish youth ministry includes many opportunities for youth. Parish sponsored Boy Scout and Girl Scout units are a common alternative for youth activities. Many parishes have athletic associations that sponsor youth teams in diocesan or recreation council leagues. A total parish youth ministry program should have some intentional outreach to parents of adolescents. An evangelization and outreach program that encourages youth participation might be an important part of parish youth ministry. All parishes must offer adolescents opportunities for continued catechesis beyond confirmation preparation.

Adolescent catechetical efforts can include free standing weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly programs, retreats, lock-ins, Scripture study, and a variety of other models. The youth ministry team should address the faith themes in *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis* (NFCYM, 1986). Principles for designing such efforts can also be found in this document.

Beyond these different program possibilities, a comprehensive parish youth ministry should work with other parish organizations to encourage and enable them to include youth in their ministry. Youth can and should have a role in many different parish programs: liturgy committee, peace and justice committee, outreach and service program,

planning teams for the parish activities, lectors, music ministry, vacation Bible school, etc.

Please realize that no parish can start with all of this. But it is important that the vision with which you start includes the big picture. Remember to not limit yourself to thinking that parish youth ministry is the youth group.

### **Plan for Ongoing Training**

Once a team has been assembled, it seems that every parish is anxious to get youth ministry rolling. Certainly, it is important to get some positive things accomplished while the group's energy is high. But do not forget to plan for training. Successful youth ministry never happens by chance. Skilled leaders and committed volunteers require initial and ongoing training. Check with your diocesan office of youth ministry for possible training opportunities. Diocesan, regional, and national conferences also provide opportunities for training.

### **Plan for Advocacy within the Parish**

Remember that not all parishioners agree on the importance of youth ministry. For that reason it is important to keep the parish and the pastor aware of what is happening. Use the parish bulletin to advertise upcoming events and also to thank key leaders for their work on past successes. Make regular reports to the pastor and/or the parish council. If the parish has a newsletter, make sure you include news about the good things that young people in the parish have accomplished. Because there are some adults who have a negative image of adolescents, it is important to help the parish learn about the positive impact that youth have in the community.

### **Prayer**

This is not "just one more item" that is important to your youth ministry team meetings. Prayer should be the first item on all meeting agendas. Moreover, prayer brings the team together and establishes a common ground on which to build youth ministry. Take the time to be creative with the prayer experiences. Do not be afraid to spend 15-20 minutes of the meeting in prayer. Utilize different forms of prayer, especially prayer that allows the team to share their faith or their vision of ministry. Prayer works best in bringing the team together when all members of the team take turns in planning the prayer. Utilize your resources. Where possible, the team might come together for Mass prior to the meeting. Be sensitive to the many different styles of prayer that members of the team prefer and make it known that all styles are welcome. Young people will learn to pray better when the adult team models good prayer habits.