

March 2010

Highlights of this Issue

Continuing the Discussion on Adolescent Catechesis

This second issue focusing on adolescent catechesis continues the discussion begun with the September 2009 issue.

Additionally, this issue debuts a new section of the NACYML Newsletter. The [Perspectives page](#) is dedicated to highlighting editorials from a variety of authors/writers, on a wide variety of topics. This issue features another article from Tony Magliano, a NACYML member and prominent writer for the [Catholic News Service](#).

Additional articles by Tony are posted on the [NACYML members' website](#). Provide the opportunity for others to read Tony's articles by urging your local diocesan publications to subscribe to Tony's articles from the [Catholic News Service](#).

Advocating for Adolescent Catechesis

Advocates provide a voice for the voiceless, making known the unknown. Advocacy moves the conversation beyond those who are already committed, and includes the other stakeholders who are keys to the success of our catechetical and youth ministry programs.

The [National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis](#) (NIAC) also feels the urgency...

[Continue reading Ela's article...](#)

It Takes a Deanery

The youth ministers of our deanery meet once a month to network, share ideas, and plan bimonthly deanery events for the high school students of our county. This tradition has been going for two decades and translates into a formidable youth ministry presence in the diocese. We also gather with other parish ministers for bimonthly deanery meetings, diocesan meetings, and social events...

[Read Anne's article here...](#)

Involving Parents in Catechesis

I have heard so many youth ministers comment about how inactive parents are. They offer frustrating observations such as: they do not show up or volunteer to help, they do not attend Mass, and they do not seem to be catechized themselves! Have you had similar observations?

[Read the rest of Stacy's article...](#)

From the Chair

New beginnings are exciting, yet at the same time can cause anxiety. I write to you for the first time as the Chair of the NACYML Leadership Team with both of those feelings. Excitement in serving in this capacity for the next two years and anxiety in hoping I can meet the expectations and challenges ahead...



[Read more of Glen's article...](#)

Whose Job Is It Anyway?

As youth ministry leaders in the United States, our bishops have charged us with comprehensive ministry to, for, and with young people. One of the components of that ministry is catechesis. According to [Renewing The Vision of Youth Ministry](#), we are to assist adolescents in developing their relationships with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and to know the core teachings of our faith...

[Read Faye's article...](#)


Budgeting to Meet the Priorities

When we talk about youth ministry budgets, we may think about buying resources such as DVDs, iTunes, books, etc. Perhaps our parish finance committee even expects to find requests to purchase basketballs, water balloons, and snacks...

[Continue reading Robbie's article here...](#)

Important Information and Useful Resources

Final Sessions: OnCourse Online Webinars

There is still time to register for the remaining two sessions on April 8 and May 13. [Download the brochure for more information.](#)  (30 KB)

Coming Soon: Another OnCourse Offering

NACYML is pleased to announce the [OnCourse Youth Ministry Specialization Certificate](#) beginning September 2010 and concluding in November 2011. The program, offered in conjunction with [Ministry Training](#)



[Source](#) and [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College](#), will consist of four courses addressing all of the specialized competencies for youth ministry leaders from the [National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers](#). General information is available on the [NACYML website](#); more information will be forthcoming in April.

Advanced Conversations: Youth and Young Adults and Mental Illness

Sponsored by the [NCPD](#) and the [NFCYM](#), a webinar devoted to the topic of youth/young adults and mental illness will be offered on May 4.



More information is available on the [NACYML members' website](#), the [NFCYM website](#), and the [NCPD website](#).

There is no charge for members of NFCYM, NACYML, and NCCL.

Institute for New Youth Ministers - July 27-30, 2010

NACYML will once again partner with [Cultivation Ministries](#) for the [Institute for New Youth Ministers](#).

Youth Ministry Access—Programming from CMD

The latest downloadable session is available from CMD and is located on the [NACYML members' website](#). Check out the other great resources available from [Youth Ministry Access](#).

Impact73.org Seeking Youth Groups to Form Impact Zones

[Impact73.org/Pinckney Pro-Life](#) empowers youth by providing them with effective programs to educate their peers.



Also of Interest to Youth Ministers. . .

- [The National Black Catholic Congress March/April Newsletter](#)
- [Spark the Wave Announces Wave Week 2010: July 18-23](#)
- [Busted Halo Offers Free Widgets for YYAM Websites and Blogs](#)
- [Visit the NACYML members' website for more valuable information and resources!](#)

A Picture Is Worth . . .

Articles in this newsletter correspond to the Core Competencies detailed in the [National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers](#).

Look for the symbol in the article that indicates which core competency the article addresses.

To learn more about the standards, see the [resource page](#) which is always accessible from the newsletter navigation bar. It provides a summary of the core competencies and the specialized competencies for youth ministry leaders.



Print the Newsletter!

- Use your browser's print function or click on the "Print this page" link at the bottom of the right-hand navigation column to print an individual page.
- Print the entire issue (PDF) by using the link below. Or, download this PDF to your computer by right-clicking the link and selecting "Save Target As..."



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March 2010

From the Chair

Glen McCall

NACYML Chairperson

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

Hawthorne, New Jersey

New Beginnings

New beginnings are exciting, yet at the same time can cause anxiety. I write to you for the first time as the Chair of the NACYML Leadership Team with both of those feelings. Excitement in serving in this capacity for the next two years and anxiety in hoping I can meet the expectations and challenges ahead. I would like to share with you some thoughts concerning what lies ahead as well as to introduce myself to you since many may have said “Glen who?” when the announcement of a new chairperson was made.

First and foremost, I extend sincere appreciation to Mary Mueller, the immediate past chairperson, who during her tenure led with great vision, professionalism, and strength. Additionally, we have all benefited from the leadership of Mary’s predecessor, Grace Cassetta, the founding chairperson.



Who Is Glen?

Now to answer the question, “Glen who?” I currently serve as the Director of Youth Ministry and Confirmation at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey. I have been working in the field of youth ministry for the past twenty-seven years. For the past seven years, I have also served as an adjunct professor of theology at the College of St. Elizabeth in Convent Station, New Jersey. Prior to being discerned as chairperson, I served on the NACYML Leadership Team as the chair of the Marketing Coordinating Committee. I look forward to serving as chair and continuing to move us forward as a professional organization.

Challenges Ahead

I also mentioned challenges. One that I wish to bring to your attention is in the area of adolescent catechesis—an area that has gained much attention over the past few years and is the focus of this newsletter.

One of the greatest challenges I believe we face as youth ministry professionals is collaboration with those ministry professionals who work specifically in the catechetical field. This collaboration I speak of is not just on the local level but on the diocesan and national levels as well.

I encourage you to read the [National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis resource regarding advocacy initiatives](#), and hope that it challenges you as it did me in working towards the common goal of adolescent catechesis.

Contact Glen

I also would like to hear from you on how you see NACYML, as an organization, working toward this goal of collaboration. I encourage your input and suggestions. You can send them directly to me [via e-mail](#).

Here is hoping the future holds more excitement than anxiety for all of us!

[E-Mail NACYML](#)

March 2010

A Catholic State of the Union Address

Tony Magliano

Catholic News Service

Washington, District of Columbia

My Fellow Americans,

The greatness of a nation is not based on its affluence and military might. Rather, greatness is measured by an enduring commitment to the Gospel's central teaching of love for all, and a determination to fully apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to every aspect of political, economic, and social life.

With this unfailing moral map from the Almighty as our guide, let us always protect life and affirm its dignity! A civilized nation does not permit the murder of 1.2 million babies by abortion every year. I call on this Congress and the states, to pass a constitutional amendment, fully protecting the life of every single human being from conception to natural death.

In some ways we act no different than our Neanderthal predecessors in dealing with conflict. Except that today instead of clubs, we use M-16 rifles, B-1 bombers, unmanned drones, cruise missiles, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction against our enemies—killing countless innocent civilians in the process.

Jesus taught us to love our enemies, not annihilate them! Waging war—with all its death and destruction—is contrary to reason, logic, and the God who gives life. In this world there is no perfect way, but there is a better way. Let us wage peace!

To that end, I have ordered a total withdrawal of military forces from both Iraq and Afghanistan before Christmas. Untiring, comprehensive negotiations with all willing parties, along with the rebuilding of both countries, will be our objectives. Pope John Paul II taught that, “if development is the new name for peace, war and military preparations are the major enemy of the integral development of peoples.”



It is estimated that with an additional \$100 billion in poverty focused aid per year, extreme poverty throughout the world could be eliminated. For the sake of the common good, and in solidarity with the world's suffering masses, I urge Congress to transfer \$100 billion from the astronomical \$708 billion military budget and appropriate it for the purpose of raising the world's one billion hungry human beings out of extreme poverty!

Here at home, forty million Americans—one in every five children—are poor. I ask this Congress to embark on a massive green jobs creation program that will help protect our fragile environment and put millions of Americans to work.



Killing people, who kill people, is both hypocritical and immoral. It is my hope that Congress will pass legislation outlawing the vengeful practice of capital punishment. Our country is benefitting from the hard work of millions of undocumented workers who are forced to live a largely underground existence. Send me legislation that legalizes their status and unites their families, and I will proudly sign it into law.

As the only industrialized nation without universal health insurance, and with over forty-six million Americans uninsured, I urge Congress to pass a quality health care bill that covers every single person in the United States. No one should be excluded from this human right.

Since abortion is not health care, I will veto legislation that includes any form of abortion coverage! And I insist that full conscience protection be provided to all insurers, hospitals, and related personnel.

Let us ask God for the courage to put our Gospel based faith into action. Let us be guided by the wise principles of Catholic social teaching, and thus, consistently do what is morally right for all.

God bless America, and everyone on planet earth!

Provide an opportunity for others to read Tony's articles on social justice and Catholic living by urging your diocesan newspaper/publications to regularly subscribe to Tony's editorials from [Catholic News Service](#).

Read more of Tony's writing in the [members' section of the NACYML website](#).

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March 2010

Advocating for Adolescent Catechesis

Ela Mileszka

Project Coordinator

National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis

Washington, District of Columbia

A Sense of Urgency

Recently I had a conversation with a parish youth minister with whom I worked several years ago. He described the sense of 'urgency' he feels in his ministry. Young people are coming to his, and other parish communities who are hungry to know Christ and what it means to be Catholic. He is grateful that he has the skills, the team, and the resources to enable his community to minister to the youth of his parish, and he now feels an urgency to assist other communities in these challenging times. This youth minister is becoming an advocate.



Getting Others On Board

Advocates provide a voice for the voiceless, making known the unknown. Advocacy moves the conversation beyond those who are already committed, and includes the other stakeholders who are keys to the success of our catechetical and youth ministry programs.



The [National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis](#) (NIAC) also feels the urgency of this youth minister. One key aspect of NIAC is to advocate for quality, comprehensive approaches to adolescent catechesis in Catholic schools and parishes, as well as in the family. Based on the recommendations from the National Symposium on Adolescent Catechesis in November 2008, the Advocacy Initiative Group developed a white paper outlining the issues regarding advocacy and adolescent catechesis and the suggested directions. To read NIAC's advocacy white paper, [click here](#). NIAC also invites you to join the conversation

regarding adolescent catechesis by visiting the [NIAC website](#) by adding your input and using the posted resources available for your parish communities.

[E-Mail NACYML](#)

March 2010

We Are Called. We Are Obligated.

Jenn Ledonne

Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

St. Mary Church

Alexandria, Kentucky

Lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function precisely, and to carry it out conscientiously, zealously, and diligently. (Code of Canon Law, 231)



As ministers—a term which includes catechists—we are obliged to be formed properly and appropriately. It is not only true of the person as a minister, but also true of the person outside of the ministry setting.

Formation Guidelines

In [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#), the bishops of the United States write that the four areas of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—that provide a framework for the formation of deacons and priests also provide a framework for lay ecclesial ministers. The bishops reiterate that lay ecclesial ministers need:

- *human qualities critical to form wholesome relationships and necessary to be apt instruments of God's love and compassion;*
- *a spirituality and practice of prayer that root them in God's Trinitarian life, grounding and animating all they do in ministry;*
- *adequate knowledge in theological and pastoral studies, along with the intellectual skill to use it among the people and cultures of our country;*
- *and the practical pastoral abilities called for in their particular ministry.*

So What Does This Mean?

It means that we are called, indeed obliged, to lead balanced lives. Not only must we form wholesome relationships in ministerial settings, but we must form them with our family and friends outside of our ministry. We need to take time for ourselves to rest, relax, and rejuvenate. As ministers, we tend to give a lot. But we can not give what we do not have.



This is also true for the spirituality of the minister. If the only time we pray and worship is within ministry settings, our prayers are not as strong. We must continue to grow and develop our spirituality so that our passion for our triune God and our faith shine through all we do, both within and outside of our ministry settings.

Not only are we obliged to grow and deepen our personal spirituality, but we are obliged to grow and deepen our knowledge of theology and pastoral studies. There are many ways this can be done, from local speakers and classes, to online courses through universities, and the NACYML webinars done in conjunction with [Ministry Training Source](#).

National Certification Standards

The [National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers](#) are currently being revised, but we can still use the current document as a guide to the knowledge, skills and dispositions that we should strive to develop.

“Some people have a suspicious or fearful attitude toward the National Certification Standards, seeing them as an impossible checklist of criteria that they do not meet,” said Kathy Goller, chair of NFCYM's Accreditation and Certification Commission. “However,” Goller continued, “if a lay ecclesial minister really takes the time to do an honest self-assessment, I believe they will find it to be an affirming process. The standards and competencies might point out areas in which a minister can grow, but they will also point out the knowledge, skills and dispositions he or she already has.”

Formation Resources

As lay ecclesial ministers, it is important that we continue to grow and develop so that we can best serve those who God has called us to serve. If we only form one area of our lives, we are not only missing out on a rich experience, but we are showing those we serve an unbalanced example of how to live as a disciple following God's call. Take some time in the near future to discover all the resources and suggestions that are available on the [NACYML website](#), the [NFCYM website](#), as well as checking out the discussion boards on the [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) sites. Use these resources to find ways to grow your personal and professional life.

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March 2010

Budgeting to Meet the Priorities

Robbie Anderson

Pastoral Associate, Youth Minister

St. George Catholic Church

Tinley Park, Illinois

When we talk about youth ministry budgets, we may think about buying resources such as DVDs, iTunes, books, etc. Perhaps our parish finance committee even expects to find requests to purchase basketballs, water balloons, and snacks.

Budgets should be driven by our priorities. What is it that we hope to accomplish?

Youth Ministry Priorities

Ideally, we hope to prepare our young people to be disciples who know and love Jesus Christ. What we are advocating for is not merely money. We are advocating for young people to be formed as disciples and for kingdom building. Who would turn that down?

It has been my experience that most of the people on finance committees are limited in their knowledge of what we are trying to accomplish in youth ministry. They likely have not heard of the [National Study on Youth and Religion](#). We need to excite the pastor, finance committee, and the parish council on the possibilities of a church filled with adults who are excited to be living witnesses—disciples who active and articulate in their faith.



The Business Plan

We can then present our business plan to the banker—our parish finance council or diocesan financial officer. The budget is the means to get to our goals. It is an investment.

Our youth ministry budget needs to reflect all that this implies. A document from the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Co-Workers in the Vineyard](#), calls for a trained laity. Training budgets for catechetical leaders of adolescents need to be consistent with budgets of leaders in the grammar school programs. National standards are being written and budgets need to be planned to accommodate the cost of training.

Just Wages

Beyond the cost of training, the individual who has become certified and has spent time and money in education and formation will need to pay their own cost of living. A just wage is called for. It is very encouraging that so many young, well educated and formed young people in their twenties are coming into youth ministry from some very good institutions. How can we sustain them into the future? Will they be able to stay in ministry when they marry and have children? We can make a case for the fact that it would be less costly for us to pay these young youth leaders a just wage than it would be for the Church to lose them and re-train new youth ministers to take their places.



Can we afford not to pick up the tab for adolescent catechesis? Our counterparts in the other non-Catholic churches are competing with big budgets and lots of perks in their well appointed youth spaces. How long can we say that we are concerned about the faith formation of our Catholic youth without putting our resources into that concern? How long can we tell our young people that they are important to the church without backing that with resources?

In today's economic climate, we do not see a lot of parishes with extra money to add to their budget. We are not asking for leftovers. We are asking for a structural change in the way parishes and diocesan offices budget for catechesis. It may mean sharing resources or new considerations in stewardship campaigns.

Resources to Help

It will be a tough sell to advocate for this type of structural change. The youth ministry leader will need to sit and talk with people from the parish council and/or finance committee. The [National Initiation for Adolescent Catechesis \(NIAC\)](#) is a good start. It is an alliance of multiple ministries concerned with catechesis. We need to duplicate that alliance in our parishes. This is a whole parish/diocese issue.

A great resource, [Youth Ministry and Parish Finances: How to Budget and Budge It](#) can be found at the [NFCYM online store under HelpNotes](#). It also includes a sample budget that can be easily adapted to any number of situations.

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March 2010

Whose Job Is It Anyway?

Faye E. Abbondanza

Associate Director

Diocesan Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Youngstown, Ohio

As youth ministry leaders in the United States, our bishops have charged us with comprehensive ministry to, for, and with young people. One of the components of that ministry is catechesis. According to [Renewing The Vision of Youth Ministry](#), we are to assist adolescents in developing their relationships with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and to know the core teachings of our faith. Luckily, this is not a role that you need to tackle alone. Look to your diocesan office for assistance.



Regardless of how your diocesan office is structured, there are a couple of things you should be able to count on:

- In promoting the profession of youth ministry, diocesan offices should know the standards for competency, and assist youth ministry leaders to know the diocesan requirements for certification and what methods of training are available for certification.
- Opportunities for networking, and the catechetical and spiritual development of youth ministry leaders should be encouraged and/or provided by the diocesan office.
- Knowledge of available resources and diocesan policies to assist youth ministry leaders in developing comprehensive programs.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list of what a diocesan youth ministry office does, know that the staff of the diocesan office are advocates for our youth and adult leaders. Adolescent catechesis is everyone's job, and as a diocesan office the goal is to promote the skills and knowledge that assist youth ministry leaders in doing that job well.



For additional information, visit the [resource and development sections on the NFCYM website](#).

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March 2010

It Takes a Deanery

Anne Weeks

Director of Religious Education and Youth Ministry

Holy Spirit Church

Uniontown, Ohio

“Eggs over easy, bacon very crispy-almost burnt, pancakes, and a half order of wheat toast,” I say, but this could have been said by almost anyone sitting around the table at Perkins that morning.

Around the table are gathered ministers from the Stark County Deanery in the Diocese of Youngstown. We meet so regularly that we practically know what each of us would order!



Two Decades of Meetings

The youth ministers of our deanery meet once a month to network, share ideas, and plan bimonthly deanery events for the high school students of our county. This tradition has been going for two decades and translates into a formidable youth ministry presence in the diocese. We also gather with other parish ministers for bimonthly deanery meetings, diocesan meetings, and social events.



The value of meeting regularly sets in place a structure to learn from others—both new ministers and those already seasoned in the ministry—practices that work in various ministry situations. It creates a forum to understand youth ministry trends as we discuss changing times and demographics. As available, our diocesan director joins us to listen, and when needed, to compile our questions to present at the diocesan level.

Making Time To Gather

Some may say that they do not have time to get away from the office. I work a little over part time and intentionally set these times aside. I may not be getting a program planned, or phone calls returned, but I am forming myself into a stronger youth minister with an understanding beyond my little world. I am challenged to think in new, creative, out of my comfort zone ways.

But it is the relationships that matter most. In times of strife there is an army of dedicated professionals to call upon to help handle situations. We are linked in a fellowship of adults who care about teens and are open to growth.

For those wishing to try this, I challenge you to find a convenient location, a few willing participants, and get started. It takes a deanery, with its collective wisdom, to show young people that Catholicism is relevant in their lives today.

AFFILIATED REGIONAL/DIOCESAN ASSOCIATIONS

Does your diocese or region have a youth ministry association or organization? If so, inquire about your local association or organization becoming affiliated with NACYML

Affiliated associations or organizations benefit by:

- reduced membership dues
- access to nationally known speakers/presenters in various formats for ongoing formation
- NACYML publications and resources
- association with a professional, national organization

Contact the NACYML Office for more information - 202-636-3825.

[E-Mail NACYML](mailto:info@nacyml.org)

March 2010

Involving Parents in Catechesis

Stacy DeLong
Youth and Young Adult Minister
Corpus Christi Catholic Church
Tucson, Arizona

Frustrations with Parents

I have heard so many youth ministers comment about how inactive parents are. They offer frustrating observations such as: they do not show up or volunteer to help, they do not attend Mass, and they do not seem to be catechized themselves! If you have had similar observations, continue reading further for a few tips.



Step One: Have a Party

The first step begins with basic communication. Have you met the parents of all the young people? This can be an easy first step in getting to know the parents and them getting to know you and your staff.

- Throw a party and invite all parents and their teens. Let it be casual and informal, creating a relaxed atmosphere. Make a point to follow up with anyone who was not able to make it.
- Introduce yourself to the parents. Create a sign up sheet asking parents for their contact information.
- Provide your contact information and relay your openness to communication.
- Acknowledge your common goals: helping their teenager learn about Catholicism, building their faith, and empowering them with the skills, knowledge, and resources they will need in life.
- Do not forget to thank them for coming and taking an active role in their teen's life. Praise and gratitude go a long way toward building a partnership!

Step Two: Have a Conversation

The second step involves a little understanding, empathy, and follow through. Consider that most parents and grandparents today were trained and catechized in their faith very differently than the youth of today and maybe even differently than you were trained. It is understandable that many parents today feel a little inadequate about articulating Church teachings or sharing their faith with their teens.

- Your conversation with the parents can help you gain a sense of where the parents are in their own faith journey and how comfortable they are sharing faith with their teens.
- You can adjust your approach to the parents based upon individual needs. No matter where they are on their faith journey, you should approach all parents with the same respect for their role in the faith development of their teens. You are a co-worker with the parents.
- Provide parents with information that will enable them to communicate better with their teen outside of youth ministry. Yes, this may mean more work for you, but by doing this you can be helping to create an open dialogue between teens and their parents; a win-win situation for all!
- Do not assume anything you send home with a teen is seen by their parents. This is why you want to send separate emails or mailings directly to the parents. They will likely be more involved if they know what is going on.



Step Three: Invite, Invite, Invite

The third step I recommend is invitation. Personally ask parents to help out. Help them recognize their own gifts and talents and incorporate them into the youth ministry program. The more involved your parents are, the more they will take ownership in this program.

- Do not expect parents to already know what to do or how to do it. Teach them just as you do their teens.
- Invite them to ask questions. Provide books or resources you may be using if they want to learn more on their own.
- Offer to mentor or provide catechesis to the parents if they feel the need for additional help. Your parish may already have an adult education program in place for this.

In conclusion, my advice is to be pro-active. Empathize with the parents, put yourself in their shoes and think about what you would want. Then offer it. Keep the communication lines open and personally invite them to be involved and to stay involved. You may soon have more involved parents than you will know what to do with. What a great situation that will be!

[E-Mail NACYML](#)

March 2010

Adding Catechesis to Social Activities

Pia Kayo

Coordinator of Youth Ministry

Church of Saint Timothy

Escondido, California

Catechesis in Social Activities? Really? Why Not Just have Fun and Call It Good?

That is the reaction I used to get from the teens on my leadership team every time we sat down to plan a social event. Yes, some of my adults jump on that bandwagon, too, and if I want to be really honest I have to say there are times when the same thought runs through my mind. Why must every activity and event in youth ministry need a catechetical component? What is the harm in just having a good time once in a while?

How Are We Different?



The answer lies in asking ourselves another question. What separates youth ministry from other youth clubs and social groups? In other words, why do we gather our young people? The answer is that we gather to share with them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, invite them into full communion with Christ and his church, and to give them the tools they need for authentic Catholic living. If that is our purpose, then yes, every activity and event in youth ministry should include a catechetical component.

The good news of the Gospel has relevance in every facet of our lives. It is not just something we pay attention to once a week at Mass or in confirmation classes and Bible studies. The Gospel and our adherence to the mission to which we have been called by virtue of our baptism shapes and affects everything we do; or it should, anyway. That is what our young people need to learn. By including a catechetical component in every single activity and event that we sponsor, we teach our young people how to recognize and embrace the working of the Holy Spirit in events that seem to have nothing to do with church. They can then apply that to other areas of their lives. The next time they go to a dance, attend a game, or see a movie, maybe they will remember what they experienced and look at the activity through a Gospel filter—or what we like to call, faith-colored glasses.

So How Do We Do It?

Obviously, not every young person wants to sit through a talk when he or she is at a dance or a game night. The easiest way is to input catechesis through the opening and closing segments by utilizing a relevant Scripture passage and having the young people respond in some way. The opening prayer can typically last ten to fifteen minutes, and set the theme and tone for the event. Closing prayer is usually shorter, five to ten minutes, and ties everything together while sending them off with food for thought for the week.



Another way to include catechesis is to have an intermission in the middle of the event with a multi-media presentation that everyone can watch while grabbing a bite to eat or something to drink. Be sure to decorate the activity space with items that tie the activity in with Christian values, as this is an effective form of subliminal messaging. The teens do not have to be hit over the head with the message, but they will get it anyway. Whatever we choose to do, however we decide to include a teaching, the important thing is that we do it.

Follow this link to the [NACYML website](http://www.nacyml.org) for some sample activities, along with ideas for catechesis for each. Have fun!

[E-Mail NACYML](mailto:info@nacyml.org)

March 2010

Communicating the Depth of Youth Ministry

Katie Hayes

*Director of Youth Ministry
St. John of the Cross Church
Western Springs, Illinois*

How can you educate parishioners who think youth ministry is just playing games and eating pizza with teenagers? Here are three key ways to share the complexity and strengths of youth ministry.



The Relationships in Ministry

We all know that Jesus' life was built on relationships. His interactions with Mary and Martha provide guidance for us. Jesus respected and honored the time Mary gave in building a relationship. This mattered more than the work Martha was doing. When our ministry builds relationships, those relationships will encourage lives focused on sharing gifts, serving others, and following Christ. These examples will be seen by others and provide evidence of the depth of youth ministry.



CAUTION: Relationship building is not limited to teenagers! The relationships you build with volunteers, parents, and staff members will also spread what is happening within your ministry. When we show respect for parents, listen to their needs, and help encourage their vital role in the faith formation of their teenagers, our ministry is given a huge positive boost. When we incorporate volunteers of all ages we open youth ministry up to many different populations in the parish family. These volunteers may then become advocates for youth ministry in the parish.

The Photos of Ministry

We have all heard it before, "This photo is worth a thousand words!" Sharing photos through the bulletin, website, youth room, and/or bulletin board at church or school will allow others to see all that you are doing with teenagers. Showing them in service to others or during prayer can demonstrate the depths of your ministry.

The Words of Young People

Sharing what teenagers thought about a retreat, service project, conference, home group, or just life as a teen can make people more aware of youth ministry. I struggle to coordinate this happening, but whenever I do I get the most positive feedback from the most random of parishioners.

Ask a small group to write down three sentences at the end of a meeting. On the ride home from a retreat write down what the teenagers are talking about to each other (and get their permission to print it). Have a teenager write about something cool they did over the summer. Their words open your youth ministry world to the rest of the parish and help show the variety of activities, prayer, service, and relationships that exist through your youth ministry.

Good luck sharing the wonderful depths of youth ministry!

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