


September 2009

## Highlights of this Issue

### A Focus on Adolescent Catechesis

This is the first of two issues addressing the topic of adolescent catechesis within the wider arena of youth ministry. The second issue, in March 2010, will further the discussion on adolescent catechesis. However, in order to do so, your input is needed. Contribute your thoughts, comments, questions, and/or concerns via the [NACYML Discussion Forums](#) or the [NACYML LinkedIn discussion page](#).

Further reading on the relationship between adolescent catechesis and the [National Directory for Catechesis](#) can be found in an article written by Daniel S. Mulhall. [Download the article here.](#) 

#### Catechesis and Youth Ministry—Not So Different

Catechesis is “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” ([Catechesi Tradendae \(CT\), #1](#)).

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

#### Being a Catechist

Dean Diomedes compiles the comments from members of the NACYML Leadership Team, newsletter team, and other Catholic leaders on the topic of what it means to be a catechist. Submissions are less than 140 characters to simulate [Twitter](#) posts.

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

#### An Update on the NSYR

If you think you already know all about the [National Study of Youth and Religion \(NSYR\)](#), take another look. The NSYR is longitudinal study currently in the third wave of research. NSYR released a major report on wave two findings, *Religion and Spirituality on the Path Through Adolescence*, this past January.

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

#### From the Chair

In her article, Mary reflects upon a young woman from her parish who travelled with a summer delegation to visit otheir sister community in El Salvador. Visiting with one of the Carmelite nuns at the site of Archbishop Oscar Romero’s assassination, this young woman asked, “Sister, has the Catholic Church ever apologized for our inaction during the most difficult times in El Salvador?”

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

#### Family Farmers, the Hungry, and Global Warming

As we look at the topic of adolescent catechesis, it is important for us to stay current on topics that provide us with opportunities to live our faith through our actions. Tony offers an update on issues of hunger and global warming, providing us with the knowledge we need to catechize not just those we minister to, but to all those we meet.

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

### Announcements of Important Information and Useful Resources

- A live Internet seminar, *Tools in Addressing Suicide: Pastoral Supports and Prevention Strategies*, will be offered free of charge on Tuesday, October 20. The cost of registration has been waived for members of NFCYM and NACYML. [Download the flyer](#) for more information.
- For the 2009-2010 OnCourse program, all training sessions will be offered as Webinars facilitated by experts in the areas of youth ministry, theology, catechesis, pastoral ministry, etc. Sessions will last for ninety minutes, and will include downloadable resources. Watch upcoming e-mails and the [NACYML website](#) for more information very soon!
- Freshmen Survival Guide 2009 is available for download or purchase. [Busted Halo's Freshman Survival Guide Book](#) offers a holistic look into the lives of college students, and is a great resource for college orientation staffs, counseling services, campus ministers, and youth ministers. [Download the flyer for more information.](#)
- A NACYML members' exclusive—free programming from the Center for Ministry Development. Download your complimentary program on the [NACYML website!](#)
- Join Catholic Relief Services' Food Fast 2009-2010. Visit the [CRS Food Fast website](#) for more information.
- Join the [virtual pilgrimage](#) for the [National Catholic Youth Conference](#) (NCYC) in November. Visit the [NCYC website](#) for more details and information.
- Check out the [NACYML members' website](#) for more important updates, resources, and information.

### *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.

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## *From the Chair*

*Mary Mueller*

*NACYML Chairperson and Pastoral Associate*

*Good Shepherd Catholic Church*

*Shawnee, Kansas*

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A young woman from our parish travelled with the summer delegation to visit our sister community in El Salvador. Visiting with one of the Carmelite nuns at the site of Archbishop Oscar Romero's assassination, this young woman asked, "Sister, has the Catholic Church ever apologized for our inaction during the most difficult times in El Salvador?"

After a silent shake of the nun's head, the young woman stood tall and said, "Sister, on behalf of my church, I apologize."

It was a powerful moment for the teens and adults present, and it continues to be a focus of my own prayer and reflection. The owning of faith is something to which I aspire. The fact that this young woman was willing to step forward and claim her place in our shared church, to acknowledge a need for reconciliation and restoration speaks volumes regarding her own faith journey.

### **Issues of Adolescent Catechesis**

Two of the next three issues of the NACYML newsletter will address the topic of adolescent catechesis. As we look to models, best practices, current research, and new developments, we are faced with an opportunity to evaluate our own ministry contexts. Do I, as a youth ministry leader, also recognize my role as a religious educator? Do I work to collaborate and build formation opportunities with other catechetical ministry leaders? Do I acknowledge the need to become familiar and comfortable with catechetical documents? Am I intentional about catechizing the young people and families with whom I work?



In these issues we face difficult questions. We step into an arena that for some of us is outside our comfort zone. We are asked to 'come to the table' to meet and collaborate, to learn a new language. We are challenged to take seriously our call to be catechists and evangelists.

We welcome insights into the latest research in the field, we embrace the development of new conversations, and we are grateful for the sharing of the work of our partners in forming and catechizing the young church. Engaging in the conversation surrounding adolescent catechesis, we continue to promote the practice and profession of Catholic youth ministry leaders.

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## *Catechesis and Youth Ministry—Not So Different*

*Ela Milewska*

*Project Coordinator*

*National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis*

*Washington, District of Columbia*

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Catechesis is “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” (*Catechesi Tradendae (CT), #1*).

As youth ministers we are humbled and honored by Christ to bear witness to his name and to journey with young people as they come to know, love, and serve the Lord. We are catechists and proud of it!

### **Mediators and Evangelizers**

As ministers in the Catholic Church, we are blessed with an abundance of documents from the church to guide and inspire us in our ministry. These resources provide for us not only the aim and purpose of catechesis as envisioned by the church and her bishops, but also form us in our identity as catechists.

And who do they say we are? First of all, we are "esteemed members of the Church's apostolate" (*National Directory for Catechesis, #218*). Our work involves more than educating (which is very important); we are also called to be "courageous witnesses to the Catholic faith," (*NDC, #225*) to be role models to young people in our actions, words, and attitudes. We are mediators, serving to facilitate "communication between the people and the mystery of God." (*General Directory for Catechesis, (GDC) #156*). We are evangelizers (*NDC, #218*), inviting young people into a new or deeper relationship with the one who loved them first, Jesus Christ. We are instruments of inculturation, who know that "catechesis takes flesh in the various cultures and milieu" without compromising the central message of the faith (*CT, #53*).



Each of these descriptors—evangelizer, instrument of inculturation, and witness—describe the deep and humbling person of the catechist we are called be. It is a complex role that can not be summed up in one term. As the church continues to grow in understanding of person, one thing will be a constant: there will always be the invitation for "the Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow him, teacher and formator of disciples" (*GDC, #231*).

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## *Being a Catechist*

*Dean Diomedes*

*NACYML Leadership Team and Publications Committee Chair*

*Youth Ministry Coordinator*

*St. Linus Church*

*Norwalk, California*

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The following are reflections and comments from members of the NACYML Leadership Team, newsletter team, and other Catholic leaders on the topic of what it means to be a catechist. Submissions are less than 140 characters to simulate [Twitter](#) posts.



### **Being a catechist means . . .**

. . . everything we do teaches another and shows them what it is like to walk in the light. (Joan Martinez)

. . . cultivating faith in others by helping them learn about faith issues and grow in their relationship with God. \*(ziggykt)

. . . a responsibility to share information for the purpose of transformation. Helping people learn more in order for them to be able to love more. \*(deandiom)

. . . while you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart. (St. Francis of Assisi)

. . . experiencing and sharing God's loving mission, and empowering others to do the same. (Joe Perdreauxville)

. . . living out my baptismal calling to share the good news that was shared with me. \*(chrisweber)

. . . to have a heart burning with love for Christ and the desire to share this love with others. It means to be committed to growing in faith. (Christina Lujan)

. . . walking with others to gain a deeper understanding of our Catholic identity by sharing our faith and faith stories. \*(kimmacmillan)

. . . Jesus Christ in His infinite wisdom, used the words and idioms that were in use among those whom he addressed. You should do likewise. (St. Joseph Cafasso)

. . . leading young people closer to Christ through relationship so that they can be empowered disciples. \*(Johnnyrinrin)

. . . if anyone comes to me, I want to lead them to him. (Edith Stein)



. . . means to teach and model the Catholic faith for others—formally and informally—in the classroom, at events, and in every day life. (Matthew Robaszkieicz)

. . . one who knows more loves more, love follows knowledge. (Catherine of Sienna)

. . . it is always trying to figure out the best way to proclaim the good news to youth in this particular time and place in a way that conveys the profound truth that Jesus is risen—and that makes all the difference in their lives. (Cathy Becker)

... never having to say I am sorry. Or is that the answer to another question? \*(genedavid)

... to be a person that loves their faith and is willing to share it with all in what they say and do. They are also willing to share their journey of faith. (Jim Flannagan)

... being the good news lived out for young people. (Faye Abbondanza)

... to bridge between experiences of life and language of God and faith. (Mary Mueller)

... to be someone willing to share their love of God and neighbor with others. (Katie Hayes)

... to bring the good news to our young people through the lens of their paradigm. (Robbie Anderson)

... being a witness and friend of Jesus who introduces and helps others to meet him, understand him, and befriend him. (mikepatin)\*

... helping others recognize God's presence in our every day lives through his creation, words, and deeds, and a sharing of our beliefs. (Jenn Ledonne)



... being someone who is willing to empty oneself so that others can see the light of Christ evident in not only what one teaches, but in how one lives. (Kyle Holtgrave)

**\* Contributions from actual Twitter user names. You are welcome to follow, or request to follow, any of these NACYML members on [Twitter](#).**

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## An Update on the NSYR


Faye E Abbondanza

Associate Director, Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Diocese of Youngstown

Youngstown, Ohio

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If you think you already know all about the [National Study of Youth and Religion \(NSYR\)](#), take another look. The NSYR is an ongoing study currently in the third wave of research. NSYR released a major report on wave two findings, [Religion and Spirituality on the Path Through Adolescence](#) , this past January.

### NSYR Background

The first wave was a telephone survey conducted in 2002-2003 with adolescents thirteen to seventeen years old. The second wave was conducted in 2005 with a re-survey of the same group, then sixteen to twenty-one years old. Wave three is following them from adolescence into young adulthood.

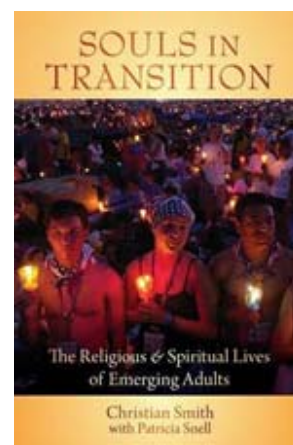
You may be interested to know there were no ‘dramatic drops in religiosity that some might expect as teens mature’ (RSPTA, 31). It is also encouraging that the adolescents reported their own religiosity stayed the same or increased between waves one and two, with a small portion of the sample reporting a decrease (RSPTA, 31).

With the information from the first wave, we recognized that our youth are inarticulate about their faith, yet they follow the example of their parents in religious practice. Also, youth are positively influenced by participation in religious education and large group events.



### Applications for Future Ministry

Looking at the first two waves together shows there is cause for hope! We as youth ministry professionals work to provide fertile ground for our young people to grow in faith as disciples of Jesus Christ. We need to cultivate our resources, parents, mentors, peers, anyone in the parish who can pray for youth, and evaluate and renew our efforts in providing comprehensive youth ministry. If we work to keep our young people feeling welcomed, valued, motivated, and involved, perhaps wave three will show a mature ownership and growth of belief and practice in the faith—mapped out in [Renewing the Vision of Youth Ministry](#) as the three goals for ministry with adolescents.



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## *Sharing the Practices on Adolescent Catechesis*

*Katie Hayes  
Director of Youth Ministry  
St. John of the Cross Parish  
Western Springs, Illinois*

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As we explore adolescent catechesis it is important to touch base on how youth are doing in the parish, and how involved they are in relation to catechesis. The [National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis](#) (NIAC) named various vision points as “foundational and interdependently connected elements” in the process of adolescent catechesis. I have used these to share some insight as to the progress of my parish’s young people, as well as a tool for others to evaluate their own parish’s youth ministry efforts.

### **Empowered Parents and Faithful Families**

We hear the same idea presented in various terms—home as domestic church; parents as primary catechists; whoever prays together, stays together. However, the reality of making these come alive is our responsibility. Helping parents better understand their faith so that they can share it with their teenagers is vital. Those young people who are most actively engaged in our parish have parents who know, understand, and live these axioms!



### **Vibrant, Youth Friendly Parishes**

Being youth friendly has a variety of levels. Does the parish simply tolerate young people carrying the gifts up to the altar once a month? Or, are teens invited and engaged in all areas of liturgical ministry, serving on a regular basis? Our parish trains and schedules teenagers as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, lectors, cantors, and ushers to serve at all weekly Masses. The young people are treated with respect, and encouraged to participate as much as they are able. This inviting environment encourages more actively engaged teenagers.

### **Fruitful Partnerships**



Collaboration between various groups constantly needs renewal. It is very easy for me to sit in my office and plan events and activities for our youth, but then I am operating in isolation. When I connect with the volunteers in our parish or the youth minister at the parish in the next town, our ministry to young people is infinitely better. Sharing ideas and using each other’s resources is vital to building a sense of community amongst the youth.

Who are people in your community who can be partners in your goals? What local organizations can support your efforts?

### **Intentional and Systematic Faith Formation**

Our program is based on small groups which contributes to a sense of community and encourages teens to connect with both peers and mentors. There is deliberate formation and catechesis through planned sessions and presentations. The volunteers and catechists know it is a journey, and that sharing their own faith is a vital component of the journey. Each parish needs to find the format that works best for their youth, whether it is speakers and guest presenters, bible study groups, theme nights, large or small group gatherings. The goal is that we help our teenagers learn about their faith while also living their faith through service.

### **Inclusion, Trust, and Acceptance**

I love working with teenagers and witnessing their growth in the Catholic faith. However, I know there

are times when I am not open to trusting and accepting new ways of doing things because I think my experience is stronger, or my methods are better. But, I know that I need to continually look at our programming and evaluate if what we are doing is best serving the young people.

I know that I must always be cognizant of opportunities that allow the teens and their families to feel included and welcomed in our ministry. How has your parish allowed young people to give input to your activities? Are we reaching out to all aspects of our youth community, not just those who come when invited? Does our youth environment welcome all races, cultures, and ethnicities? This is a challenging aspect of ministry, but important to consider if we want to be the evangelizers Christ calls us to be.

I hope these reflections on the vision points are useful, and will assist others to find additional ways to improve adolescent catechesis in the parish. More information is available through the [NIAC website](#).

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## Challenges of Adolescent Catechesis

*Beth Simmonds  
St. Christopher Parish  
Coordinator of Youth Ministry  
Columbus, Ohio*

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Our young people are growing up in a world unlike that of any previous generation. Our challenge to speak the Gospel in a language they can understand requires us to be attuned to the ever changing youth culture as well as to the never changing Word of God.

Culturally, we recognize that our young people:

- are no longer growing up in a pervasive Catholic culture where their faith formation is supported by multiple institutions;
- are impacted by the individualism in our society which suggests individuals can have a personal relationship with God and do not need a church or a faith community; and
- see religious participation as one choice among many for their calendars, and Catholicism as one option among many belief systems.

While culture constantly changes and challenges the work of faith formation, it is helpful to remember growth in faith progresses along with human development. The social sciences can offer insights into this process which can empower us as catechetical leaders.

### Stages of Faith Development




The research and published [work of James Fowler](#) tells us most high school students are in the synthetic-conventional stage of faith development. This stage is characterized by the expansion of the world with competing demands for attention from family, school, work, peers, media, and religion. Young people in this stage are very aware of the expectations and judgments of others. They also have very strong feelings but have not stepped outside of themselves to examine their beliefs in a systematic way. They are working to form their own identity in faith and in the world. As they explore their identity, they seek to belong and desire to be recognized as special.

### Reflection Questions

1. How do we invite young people to discipleship in ways that meet their developmental needs?
2. How can we help them discover their identity as unique and special individuals as well as appreciate the need for a community of believers?
3. How can we help reach out to parents/families so they are empowered in their role as the first and best teachers and role models of the faith?
4. How can we help young people embrace their Catholic identity while encouraging respect for other faith traditions?
5. How can we help them to know their faith and know about God, but also to experience God personally in their lives and experiences and develop the language to talk about it?

### Continuing the Discussion and Working Together

The recently published [Vision for Adolescent Catechesis](#)  says: This vision of adolescent catechesis calls for nothing less than re-imagining current faith formation and pastoral ministry efforts with young people and their families. It requires leaders at all levels to engage in honest



assessments of current efforts and systems in order to create new relationships and patterns of ministry which work together to form disciples of Jesus Christ.

As we work together toward this new vision, we can benefit by reading the papers generated for the [National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis \(NIAC\)](#) and use those to begin conversations in our parishes, schools, and dioceses regarding where we have been, where we are, and where we need to go.

We invite you to share with us your insights for our next issue on adolescent catechesis. Comments, thoughts, concerns, and/or suggestions may be e-mailed to [Beth Simmonds](#), or may be posted to the discussion group found on the [NACYML Members' Website](#) or on the [NACYML LinkedIn discussion board](#).

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## "Generation We" and Adolescent Catechesis

Robbie Anderson  
 Pastoral Associate for Youth Ministry  
 St. George Catholic Church  
 Tinley Park, Illinois

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When Frank Mercadante, director and founder of [Cultivation Ministries](#), came to speak to a group of youth ministers last fall, I thought I knew teens pretty well. My own son falls into that generation, and I have been working with young people for the past fifteen years. Frank gave us a little test, and although I scored the second highest in the group, my score was only seventy percent. Three years ago, at the [National Conference for Catholic Youth Ministry \(NCCYM\)](#), Maggie McCarty gave a workshop and asked if we felt something different was happening with young people today. I did feel that there was definitely a difference over the past few years, but Frank really helped identify the special characteristics of this group, as well as the implications to our ministry with them. They are referred to as the Millennial Generation, or Generation Y, and includes those young people born between 1982 and 2002.



### Who is the Millennial Generation?


A few facts about this generation:

- They are the youngest, largest, and most ethnically diverse generation in the United States.
- Suicide, abortion, and violence are down from the previous generation.
- Their parents hover over them and are very involved in their lives.
- Youth are told they are special and believe they have unique gifts to offer.
- The truth is confirmed in their experiences.
- They like doing things together and are happy to compromise their individual needs for the common good.
- They care about getting good grades and are very stressed about all the commitments they make; they do not need something more to keep them busy.



Catechesis for this generation is challenging and refreshing. It can be intergenerational, and does not need to be sugar-coated. Our young people want to discover the Gospel message and see it lived in their communities. They want to be challenged to take their place in the church community through personal invitation. They want to bring their friends into a faith community that will help them to learn about Jesus Christ and provide them with living witnesses to the truth.

### Further Reading on the Millennial Generation

I have been giving a lot of thought to what Frank said during the presentation, as well as in his article, [The Millennial Generation, Postmodernism & the Changing Face of Catholic Youth Ministry](#) . Additionally, I have read [Generation We: How Millennial Youth are Taking Over America And Changing Our World](#), by Eric Greenberg and Carl Weber, in order to better understand the young people with whom I minister. As I watch the young people in my ministry, I admit that they are unique and special, and that they are a testimony to the accuracy of the studies. They challenge me to adjust and to step away from my old patterns. It is requiring quite a bit of letting go and a lot of trust; however, I know that I am not alone!

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## *Points to Ponder about Adolescent Psychology*

*Pam Heil*

*Youth and Young Adult Minister/National Speaker*

*St. Brigid of Kildare Church*

*Dublin, Ohio*



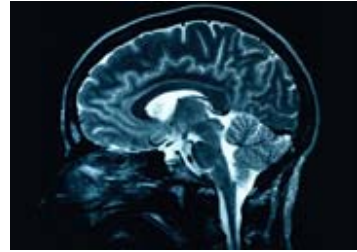
Adolescence is the journey from childhood to adulthood. It is a journey that can be quite a ride for us as youth ministers who desire to be companions on our teenagers' journeys. As a youth minister, teacher, and coach for over thirty years, I have some observations I would like to share with you. Below are some practical insights into adolescent psychology which hopefully will help you to guide and support the young people we love so much.


- The first suggestion is, of course, to love them. Unconditional love is what we all desire, and the need to be loved is our dominant human need. God calls us to relationship, and with teens, the need to belong to a group is a dominant need.
- One challenge as a youth minister is to help adolescents develop the personal insights which will empower them as they determine how to meet their basic needs, how to deal with their changing relationships, how to deal with stress, and how to determine their purpose for existence.
- Adolescents need sleep—more sleep than at any time in their lives except infancy. Let them sleep in on retreats. Be sensitive to their school schedules when you schedule parish activities. Help them with balance. Mood swings, volatile behavior, and depression can be the results of sleep deprivation.
- Adolescents need to question. Parents sometimes panic when their child doubts the existence of God or the tenets of our faith, but it is in searching and questioning that teens will take adult ownership of their spiritual beliefs. Please be sure to encourage 'searchers' or 'doubters' to continue to catechize themselves as Catholics while they investigate other beliefs.
- Adolescents need friends to support them when they experience anxiety and uncertainty about new events and opportunities. The absence of friends can be a deterrent to their involvement in new activities.
- They value your input as a mature adult. They need another generation's advice.
- As much as they need friends, they need time with their parents and families.
- Adolescents need standards to help them break bad habits and to help them form new ones. Challenge them without judgment.
- Adolescents need adults to listen. At times, their non-verbal communication comes out before they can express the words which can convey what is going on within them. Help them develop the language of emotions and the skills of assertiveness.
- They need ownership and they need to have a voice. Have a team of youth leaders. Let them tell you about their culture and allow them to take charge of as much as possible without overwhelming them. If you match responsibilities with their gifts, their responsibilities will not be burdensome.
- They like traditions even though they may sometimes be bored by the constancy of our liturgical traditions.
- Adolescents need experiences to make things real. Catechizing is necessary for confirmation, but then experiences of our universal church, our Catholic social teaching, and faith in action are essential for spiritual growth.
- Adolescents are stressed and they admire and strive for humor in their lives and in others. Teaching appropriate humor is difficult. Have them guide their peers in discussions about humor and hurt feelings.
- They need love just like the rest of us, but have no idea about its relationship to sex. They think they know



everything about sex, but they do not.

- Adolescents need boundaries and need to be held accountable, but they also need flexibility. Respect their schedules and their conflicts. Do all that you can do to include them in events, even if they must come late or leave early.
- They want you to come to their events. Your attendance validates them; they have so many insecurities and emotional needs.
- They need to trust who you are in order to be influenced by you while they try to discover who they are and who they want to become. Be consistent and compassionate.
- Early adolescents are more concerned about what others think of them than older adolescents who begin to develop a sense of purpose. Cognitively, the brain evolves and is more capable of grasping abstract thoughts and principles like integrity, loyalty, mercy, authentic friendship, and love.
- Adolescents can grow to love and trust you even though they think you are weird or that you have stepped off another planet. They need role models on their quest to self discovery. We as youth ministers must answer the call to be examples of Christ in their lives.



Editor's Note: [Pam shares some of her experiences in relation to these tips in her full article](#) . More information on Pam's ministry and writings can be found on [her website](#).

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## Family Farmers, the Hungry, and Global Warming

Tony Magliano  
Catholic News Service  
Washington, District of Columbia

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*Editor's Note: As we look at the topic of adolescent catechesis, it is important for us to stay current on topics that provide us with opportunities to live our faith through our actions. Tony offers an update on issues of hunger and global warming, providing us with the knowledge we need to catechize not just those we minister to, but to all those we meet.*

I love gardening! It strengthens the body, clears the mind, and lifts the soul. And even though my tomatoes will never win a ribbon at the county fair, I hope to plant a garden every year that God sends me.

Gardening reminds me of family farmers who make their living by planting the seeds, tending the soil, and harvesting the crops that become the food we all need, but seldom give much thought to.

The increasingly high costs of growing crops, compared with the low prices farmers receive for them, makes it very difficult for small and medium size farms to stay afloat.

The system, unfortunately, is overwhelmingly geared to assist those who do not need the help—transnational agricultural corporations. Large government subsidies go to these agribusiness giants, while family farmers get little to no help from the federal government.

It is tough enough that small and medium size family farmers have to cope with droughts, floods and pests; they should not have to also wrestle with their own government to give them a fair deal.

### National Catholic Rural Life Conference

An excellent Catholic organization dedicated to helping family farmers and their neighboring communities is the [National Catholic Rural Life Conference \(NCRLC\)](#). Visit the [NCRLC website](#) to view a very relevant document by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops titled, [A Catholic Agenda for Action: Pursuing a More Just Agricultural System](#).

In the document the bishops teach that, “Resources should be targeted towards research that helps smaller farms remain viable and promotes environmentally sound agriculture. Programs that provide affordable insurance protection are essential so that farm families can start again if crops fail. In the wholesale and retail sectors of the food supply system, we favor policies that promote greater competition so that farmers can receive a fair price for their goods.”

### American Clean Energy and Security Act

The NCRLC's executive director, Jim Ennis, reports that the NCRLC supports the [American Clean Energy and Security Act](#) recently passed by the United States House of Representatives. As the bill's name suggests, this act would begin to put America on the road to pollution free energy production, thus significantly reducing our nation's harmful carbon emissions, and in the process greatly lowering the dangers associated with global warming.



But Ennis expressed concern that struggling family farmers everywhere, and hungry people throughout the world—who are the least responsible for global warming and the most at risk for the dangerous effects like flooding, drought, crop failure, and starvation—may not receive the amount of help they need and deserve in this legislation.

The bill passed by the House does provide a certain amount of assistance to poor communities at risk, but

it could, and should, include much more help. However, as this legislation is considered in the Senate, there is a very strong chance that help to the poor may actually be reduced instead of increased.

### **Take Action**

Therefore, please take the time to e-mail and/or call your [United States senators](#) urging them to include in the American Clean Energy and Security Act adequate assistance to family farmers, and a very significant increase in vital assistance to poor communities throughout the world threatened by the dangerous effects of global warming.

Also, please consider an added way to help feed some of the poorest people on earth by sending a life-saving donation to [Catholic Relief Services](#) (PO Box 17090, Baltimore, MD 21203).

By helping family farmers and the hungry poor, you will be providing supernatural food for your soul!

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