

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry

Summary

A document of the United States Catholic Bishops, published in 1997.

Parishes with dynamic youth ministry are guided by this document which provides a vision for comprehensive youth ministry.

Definition of Catholic Youth Ministry

“Youth ministry is the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community” (Renewing the Vision, p. 1).

Three Goals of Catholic Youth Ministry

Goal 1: Empowerment

To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today (*RTV*, p. 9).

- Present the Good News
- Relationship with Jesus
- Call to discipleship
- Provide for catechesis
- Explore vocations

Goal 2: Participation

To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community (*RTV*, p. 11).

Four Faith Communities

- Family
- Parish
- Catholic Schools
- Youth Serving Organizations

Goal 3: Growth

To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person (*RTV*, p. 15).

- Aim: “healthy, competent, caring and faith filled youth”
- Address spiritual needs in context of life
- Ministry fosters:
 - Healthy adolescent development
 - Discipleship
 - Catholic identity

Becoming a Youth Friendly Parish Community

The Catholic Bishops of the United States call parishes to become “youth friendly communities in which youth have a conspicuous presence” (*RTV*, p. 13). These communities have the following characteristics:

A Youth Friendly Parish

Values youth

- makes youth feel welcome
- listens to youth
- responds to their needs with age appropriate programming
- supports youth with “prayer, time, facilities, and money”

Sees youth as resources

- empowers gifts of youth
- provides meaningful roles for youth in the community
- acknowledge and affirm their efforts and contributions

Provides for intergenerational relationships

- connects youth to role models and mentors
- includes youth in the life of the parish: prayer, learning, serving and celebrating
(Summarized from *RTV*, p. 13)

Flexible and Adaptable Programming

- A diversity of program settings
 - Age-specific programs for young and older adolescents
 - Family-centered programs for the entire family, for parents, for foster parents, for grandparents raising children, and for parents and adolescents
 - Intergenerational parish programs
 - Community-wide programs
- A balanced mix of programs, activities, and strategies that addresses the eight components of comprehensive ministry
- A variety of approaches to reach all adolescents and their families including:
 - Gathered (organized and assembled) parish, school, and community-wide programs
 - Small group programs and small ecclesial community experiences
 - Home-based programs, activities, and resources
 - One-on-one and mentoring programs and activities
 - Independent or self-directed programs
- A variety of scheduling options and program settings to respond to the reality of the busy lives and commitments of adolescents and their families (*RTV*, p. 25).

Components of Comprehensive Youth Ministry

“The components describe specific areas of the mission of the Church that work together to provide ministry with adolescents. These components provide a framework for the Catholic community to respond to the needs of young people and to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community” (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 26).

Advocacy

Interpreting the need of young people, standing up for young people, both as individuals and as a youth community.

Catechesis

Deepening the faith of young people through teaching and reflection – working towards transformation.

Community Life

Building community, not just between young people, but with their families and engaging youth in the broader parish community.

Evangelization

Proclaiming the Good News and inviting youth into relationship with Jesus Christ through ongoing witness.

Justice and Service

Engaging young people in helping and serving other people, and understanding the Gospel call to justice through education and reflection.

Leadership Development

Inviting, training, and supporting adults and young people into leadership for youth ministry and with the broader parish community.

Pastoral Care

Providing prevention programs for youth and families, caring for those in crisis, and providing guidance during times of decisions and moral choices.

Prayer and Worship

Helping youth to develop an individual prayer life, experience a variety of communal prayers, and involving youth in the sacramental life of the Church.

Putting the Framework Together

Together, the definition, the goals, the themes, the components and settings provide a framework for developing our unique response as a parish community. This framework provides a guide for developing comprehensive ministry and is designed to...

- utilize each of the Church's ministries – advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship – in an integrated approach to achieving the three goals for ministry with adolescents;
- provide developmentally-appropriate programs and activities that promote personal and spiritual growth for young and older adolescents;
- enrich family life and promote the faith growth of families of adolescents;
- incorporate young people fully into all aspects of church life and engage them in ministry and leadership in the faith community;
- create partnerships among families, schools, churches, and community organizations in a common effort to promote positive youth development (RTV, p. 20).

Leaders in Youth Ministry

- **Mobilize the community**
“Ministry with adolescents mobilizes all of the resources of the faith community in a comprehensive and integrated approach...” (RTV, p. 24).
- **Promote cooperation among ministries**
“Of special importance to effective ministry with adolescents is cooperation among the leaders, ministries, and programs in a faith community as they work together in a common effort...” (RTV, p. 25).
- **Integrate youth within parish life**
“We strongly encourage all ministry leaders and communities to call forth the gifts of all young people and empower them for ministry to their peers and leadership in our faith communities” (RTV, p. 42).
- **Involve a wide variety of adults and youth in a wide variety of roles**
“This approach involves a wide diversity of adult 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” (RTV, p. 40).

The Leadership System

➤ **The Ministry Coordinator is responsible for**

- ⇒ Facilitating planning
- ⇒ Administering the program
- ⇒ Developing a leadership system
- ⇒ Serving as an advocate and link for young people to the faith community and the wider community (*RTV*, p. 41)

➤ **The Coordinating team**

- ⇒ Organizes the comprehensive youth ministry
- ⇒ Plans the overall ministry strategies and programs
- ⇒ Develops a leadership system
- ⇒ Identifies the resources of the faith community
- ⇒ Connects the ministry with the other ministries and programs of the faith community (*RTV*, p. 41)

➤ **Program Leaders**

- ⇒ Include youth and adults
- ⇒ Work individually or as part of a team
- ⇒ Develop, promote, implement and evaluate programs and strategies (*RTV*, p. 41)

➤ **Support Staff**

- ⇒ Provides assistance to help individual programs
- ⇒ Provides administrative support to make the overall ministry more effective (*RTV*, p. 41)

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry is available through the United States Catholic Conference, Washington DC, (800) 235-8722
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