

# Groundbreaking

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

(Part 1) What is Youth Ministry?

*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*

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## Introduction

Welcome to youth ministry! This is truly one of the most exciting and important areas of ministry in our church today. Like all ministries, youth ministry requires intentional planning in order to be effective.

### How to Use This Manual

This manual provides a clear process for getting started in developing a parish youth ministry program. *Groundbreaking* is the initial step in building a comprehensive approach to ministry with young people. *Groundbreaking* enables the planning team to:

- a) create a shared vision of youth ministry
- b) develop a program of ministry to, with, by, and for young people
- c) handle the important issues in the field

This manual should serve as a guide in developing your parish program of youth ministry.

### Definition

According to the U.S. Bishops' 1997 document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, the goals of youth ministry "state what it means 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" (RTV, 9). The three primary goals in our ministry to young people are:

1) *To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.*

We know that young people are seeking. They look for ways to contribute something important to the world. They look for a cause to which they can belong. As a faith community, offering young people the challenge of life as a disciple means providing a spiritually challenging world. It means evangelizing youth and drawing them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Empowering young people means helping them join in service, ministry, and leadership while providing them with meaningful catechesis.

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

Young people are striving to be part of a community. They want to feel connected to other young people with whom they will feel safe. As a church, we offer young people community. We help them to become more connected in their own families, in our parishes, and in the wider community including school, and other youth-serving organizations. We help to support families by providing them with resources, programs, and other information. We help youth connect to a network of support by integrating them into the liturgical and pastoral life of the parish community. Building participation in other youth-serving organizations within the community further strengthens this network of support for young people.

3) *To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.*

This time in the life of an adolescent brings dramatic physical, social, intellectual,

and spiritual changes. As the body of Christ, we offer youth a place to grow. We offer experiences and opportunities for youth to grow in positive ways, to learn their faith, and use their gifts in service to others. As a community, we use our creativity and resources to respond to youth that are seeking, striving, and growing. We foster this growth through active engagement of youth in the life of our communities. We seek to support the development of healthy, competent, caring, and faith filled youth by addressing their unique developmental, social, and religious needs. By addressing the obstacles and challenges to healthy adolescent development, we hope to foster positive growth and promote Catholic identity.

## **Components**

The response to young peoples' personal and spiritual needs and the call to involve them in the faith community are most effectively done by establishing holistic and comprehensive programs. There are eight fundamental components described in the Renewing the Vision (RTV) document, which provide a framework for youth ministry.

### *1) Advocacy*

“The 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” (RTV, 27).

### *2) Catechesis*

“The ministry of catechesis most effectively promotes the faith development of young and older adolescents when the curriculum is focused on important faith themes drawn from the teachings of the Church and on the developmental needs and life experiences of adolescents” (RTV, 30).

### *3) 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” (RTV, 34).

### *4) 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” (RTV, 36).

### *5) Justice and Service*

“The ministry of justice and peace nurtures in young people a social 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” (RTV, 38).

### *6) 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” (RTV, 40).

*7) 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” (RTV, 42).

*8) 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” (RTV, 44).

**Underlying Assumptions for a Comprehensive Vision**

*Renewing the Vision* encourages integrating parish ministry with young people and their families into the total life of the church, recognizing that the whole community is responsible for this ministry. The following themes of comprehensive ministry ensure that youth ministry utilizes all available resources and is all inclusive:

*a) Developmentally Appropriate*

“Effective ministry with adolescents provides developmentally appropriate experiences, programs, activities, strategies, resources, content, and processes to address the unique developmental and social needs of young and older adolescents both as individuals and members of families” (RTV, 20).

*b) Family Friendly*

“Ministry with adolescents recognizes that the family has the primary responsibility for the faith formation of young people and that the parish and Catholic school share in it” (RTV, 21).

*c) Intergenerational*

“Ministry with adolescents recognizes the importance of the intergenerational faith community in sharing faith and promoting healthy growth in adolescents” (RTV, 22).

*d) Multicultural*

“Ministry with adolescents is multicultural when it focuses on a specialized ministry to youth of particular racial and ethnic cultures and promotes multicultural awareness among all youths” (RTV, 22).

*e) Community-wide Collaboration*

“Community collaboration means building partnerships among families, schools, churches, and organizations that mobilize the community in a common effort to build a healthier community life and to promote positive adolescent development” (RTV, 24).

*f) Leadership*

“Ministry with adolescents mobilizes all of the resources of the faith community in a comprehensive and integrated approach. ...This approach involves a wide diversity of adult and youth leaders in a variety of roles necessary for comprehensive ministry” (RTV, 24).

*g) Flexible/Adaptable Programming*

“Ministry with adolescents creates flexible and adaptable program structures that address the changing needs and life situations of today’s young people and their families within a particular community”(RTV, 25).

Developing youth ministry takes time. It takes time to develop relationships with young people. And it takes time for youth to get the message that the church is really interested and committed to them. It takes a team of dedicated, loving adults who are willing to be models for youth. Youth ministry takes a variety of program activities, formats, and time frames to meet the differing needs and interests of young people.

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