



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

Parish Guide for Youth Discipleship

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the
Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe
all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am
with you always, until the end of the age.*

Matthew 28:19-20

The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry
The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
Revised March 2019

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Introduction

The Church is losing young people, and fast.¹ As a diocese, we need to take a fresh look at parish catechesis. Continuing to do what we are doing now is simply not going to work. After students receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, our parishes typically only see a small fraction of those students return to church regularly. With the Confirmation age going from grade 10 to grade 6 by 2020-2021, many parish leaders and parents have expressed fears they will lose the presence - and the hearts - of these children even sooner! Without revitalizing our parish ministries, those fears may be realized.

However, there is at the same time a great deal of hope that this moment in our diocese can be an opportunity to restructure catechesis so that we can vibrantly and enthusiastically pass on the faith to our young people. Whether they fully realize it, these young people's hearts are restless for God. Our parishes need to be communities where they can know God, grow in relationship with God, and wrestle with the truths of our Catholic faith.

In this guide, we hope to give you the tools to reach young people and guide them to know and love Jesus Christ.

The Vision for our Diocese

As the Confirmation age is lowered to grade 6, we're asking our parishes to work together toward a common vision of catechesis. Although it won't be fully achieved until 2020-2021 and beyond, the following sections lay out that vision.

The Need to Reach Out to Youth

We can no longer expect students and their parents to simply show up for religious education.² "In order to attract young people who are only marginally engaged in the life of the Church, or not engaged at all, it is necessary that those who catechize adopt a missionary attitude."³ In other words, if we want young people in our churches, we have to change the way we reach out to them. This means building intentional relationships and getting to know young people in our parishes.

We should also keep in mind that the youth in our parishes extend beyond those we see at Mass or in religious education.⁴ Thus, we have to reach beyond the pews in our efforts to invite and accompany our

¹ One study on this topic is *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics*, (Winona, MN, Saint Mary's Press, 2017), which found (p. 4) that "studies indicate that more people who were raised Catholics—often young people—are leaving the faith than ever before. Of all the major denominations, Catholicism has experienced the greatest net losses as a result of affiliation changes."

² Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, (Huntington, IN, Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 39, writes, "We can no longer depend upon rites of passage or cultural, peer, or familial pressure to bring the majority back." Weddell explains that the sacraments used to bring families back into the life of the Church, but this cultural trend has declined. See Weddell's chapter 1, "God has no Grandchildren" for a brief, readable account of this alarming shift in our Church.

³ *The Joy of Adolescent Catechesis* (National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis, 2017) 12. See also General Directory of Catechesis (GDC) 185.

⁴ See *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 518, 528.1, 776.

young people. Their souls, as well as ours, are genuinely in danger and our efforts in youth engagement and outreach should always have that in mind.

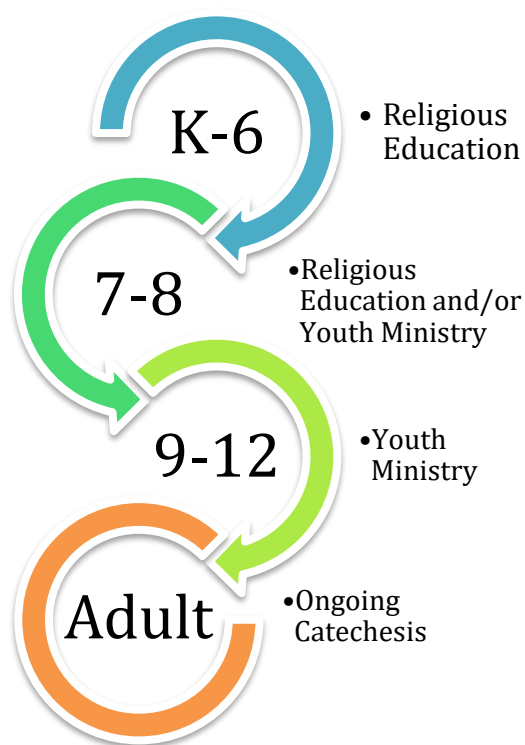
The Families in Your Parish

We have very little chance of reaching young people in an effective way if we are not also reaching their families. This is a crucial point for all catechesis, youth programs, and youth outreach. Focusing on the whole family, as opposed to just the children, may not be what we are used to, but it is essential for the long-term involvement of young people. The faith of teenagers is greatly influenced by the faith, or lack thereof, of their parents.⁵ While there are many ways to involve the whole family in religious education, a family formation model for religious education is also worth considering. More information on this can be found in the “Family Formation” section below.

Parish Catechesis and Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Burlington

Each parish has different resources, needs, and members, but all parishes should offer a consistent catechetical program from kindergarten through grade 12,⁶ as well as opportunities for adult catechesis.⁷ For grades K-6, this will typically be religious education. For grades 7-8, this could be religious education and/or youth ministry. For grades 9-12, parishes must offer youth ministry opportunities. Finally, although it isn’t a focus of this document, parishes should continue to offer catechetical opportunities for young adults and adults in all stages of life.

It should be noted that religious education does not simply mean “classroom instruction” or learning a multitude of facts. All too often, the classroom and textbook elements of catechesis are overemphasized. St. Pope John Paul II tells us that “an intellectual knowledge of Christ and his Gospel is not enough.”⁸ On the contrary, “the definitive aim of catechesis to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”⁹ Religious education, then, is not just about passing on content or doctrine, but about putting students into relationship with their Savior. Pope Benedict XVI



⁵ See the *Report on American Catholic Religious* (University of Notre Dame, 2017), p. 9.

⁶ St. John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae* (CT), 39: “From infancy until the threshold of maturity, catechesis is thus a permanent school of faith and follows the major stages of life, like a beacon lighting the path of the child, the adolescent and the young person.”

⁷ St. John Paul II, CT, 43: “Thus, for catechesis to be effective, it must be permanent, and it would be quite useless if it stopped short at the threshold of maturity, since catechesis, admittedly under another form, proves no less necessary for adults.”

⁸ St. Pope John Paul II, “Jubilee of Catechists and Religion Teachers,” (Homily, Vatican City, December 10, 2000).

⁹ St. Pope John Paul II, CT 5.

said this another way when he explained that “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the *encounter* with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”¹⁰ As catechists, we need to prepare our students to encounter a *person* and help them grow in relationship with Him.

In the process of evangelization, catechesis ideally takes place *after* an initial conversion to Christ.¹¹ However, it is often the case that our students have not truly experienced an initial conversion and encounter. That means our parish programs must teach for conversion and consistently include the initial proclamation of the Gospel, or *kerygma*.¹²

K-6 Religious Education

In kindergarten through grade 6, parishes will be expected to offer religious education, either at their parish or in collaboration with other parishes. As stated above, this religious education should aim, above all, to put students into a personal relationship with Jesus.

This can be done in the form of classroom catechesis, a family formation model, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, or some combination of those. Students will typically receive the Sacrament of First Reconciliation in grades 1 or 2, First Holy Communion in grade 2, and Confirmation in the grade dictated by the transition schedule.¹³ For more information on the diocesan guidelines and policies for religious education, contact the diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

7-8 Religious Education and/or Youth Ministry

In grades 7 and 8, parishes will be expected to offer catechesis in the form of either religious education, youth programs, or a combination of both.

Preparing students for catechesis in grades 7 and 8 begins in the younger years. Consistent and clear reminders of what is to come will have to be given to the parents during grades K-6, lest they think that parish catechesis ends after Confirmation. Dropoff after Confirmation is one of our greatest challenges and why programs that appeal to these young people must be offered. There are many programs that serve as fun and well-organized alternatives to traditional religious education. A detailed list of options and opportunities in this area can be found below in the “Youth Program Ideas” section. Your plan should be based on the needs and desires of your students and their parents, as well as the abilities of your parish leaders.

For these grades, we strongly encourage deanery or county-wide events so young people can meet other young Catholics.

¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1 (emphasis added).

¹¹ See St. Pope John Paul II, CT 18.

¹² St. Pope John Paul II, CT 19: “This means that ‘catechesis’ must often concern itself not only with nourishing and teaching the faith, but also with arousing it unceasingly with the help of grace, with opening the heart, with converting, and with preparing total adherence to Jesus Christ on the part of those who are still on the threshold of faith. This concern will in part decide the ton, the language and the method of catechesis.”

¹³ See “Confirmation Transition Schedule” in the “Charts, Templates, & Further Information” section at the end of this document.

9-12 Youth Programs

In grades 9 through 12, parishes will be expected to offer engaging youth programs to their young people. Parish catechetical leaders, high school leaders, and other ministry leaders need to move beyond what has been done in the past and consider what sort of program makes the most sense for their community in the present. What will it take for young people to come to your parish? Is partnering with another parish the best way to make that happen? St. Pope John Paul II warns that when youth aren't welcomed into the church community “catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren.”¹⁴ This serves as a good reminder that parish leaders should personally invite youth to take part in these programs, as well as solicit their feedback for what programs they would be interested in participating in. A detailed list of options and opportunities in this area are outlined below in the “Youth Program Ideas” section.

Just as with youth programs in grades 7-8, we strongly encourage deanery or county-wide events so young people can meet other young Catholics.

Discipleship Plan

To facilitate a clear transition from parish catechesis leading up to Confirmation and parish catechesis following Confirmation, it is important that Confirmation candidates create a *discipleship plan*. The plan will be their goals for spiritual development, involvement in the church, and concrete plans for discipleship in everyday life. Creating a discipleship plan is part of the Confirmation requirements, but parishes are invited to introduce this activity to younger grades as well. In 2019-2020, students in grades 8-10 will be creating discipleship plans. In years moving forward, this will transition (along with Confirmation) to become an activity that will be completed in grade 6. We recommend that students create their discipleship plan near the beginning of their Confirmation year, so that it can be a helpful resource for their sponsor and for those conducting individual candidate meetings.

Discipleship plans will allow parish catechetical leaders, pastors, sponsors, and parents to hold students accountable to their own goals after they've received Confirmation. Thus, parishes should keep hard-copy records of these discipleship plans so they are able to follow up with these students in future months and years. As we seek to increase personal relationship and mentorship in youth ministry, we hope this will be a valuable activity and resource to parishes. You can find a Discipleship Plan Leader's Guide and Student Sheet in the appendix, A-2 and A-3, respectively. The student sheet can be edited to meet your parish's needs.

Suggested Steps Forward for your Parish

Now that we've laid out where we'd like to go as a diocese, the next step is figuring out how to help get us there together. We are suggesting that parishes take the following steps, in line with the monthly timeline given for each:

¹⁴ St. Pope John Paul II, CT 24

I. Reflect on your current situation - May

First, figure out how many young people you have in the parish (keeping in mind this includes those in *and out* of the pews). Then, examine your youth programs (if any), identify who has historically overseen those programs, and recall whether the parish has collaborated with local parishes in the past.

One excellent way for parishes to begin this process is to participate in the St. John Bosco Project, which is an initiative to help parishes and parish clusters grow youth and young adult ministry in their local communities. The diocese will help you implement this initiative at your parish. More information on this project can be found below under “Diocesan Support to Parishes.”

II. The question of parish collaboration - May

Next, decide if it makes sense for your parish to collaborate with one or more parishes to provide middle and high school youth programs. One of the most powerful aspects of a youth program is the opportunity for young people to meet other young Catholics and build new relationships.

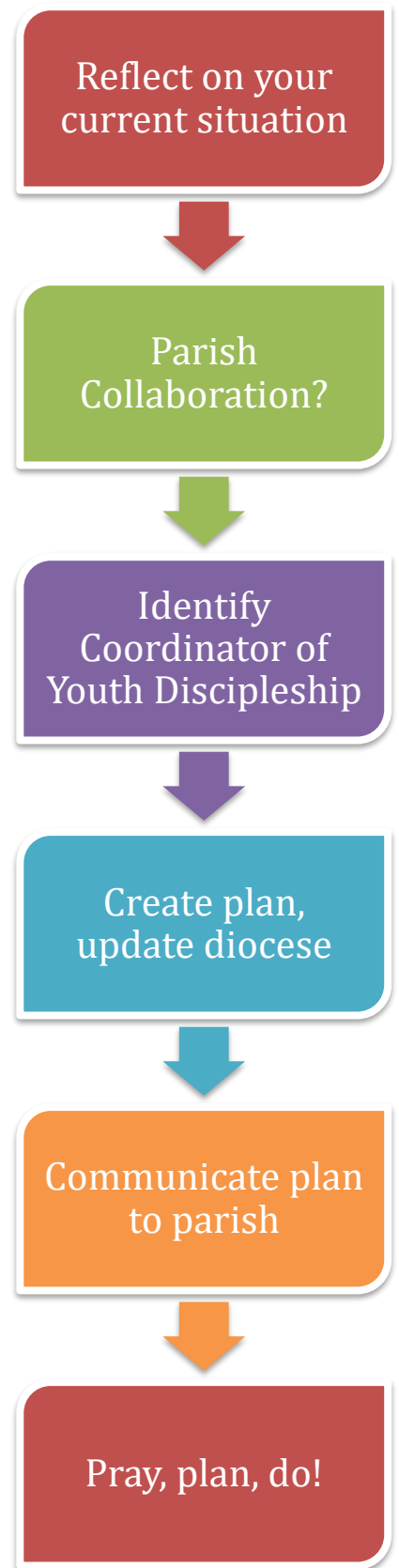
It is understandable that some parishes, for various reasons, will not be able to support programs by themselves. Some deaneries may even decide to have all their parishes collaborate as one. However, even if you are a parish that can support robust programs for all grades, collaboration may still be the best option because other parishes may benefit from a partnership with you!

These decisions should be brought to each parish’s deanery meeting so that each dean has a clear picture of how parishes are organizing this effort.

III. Identify your Coordinator of Youth Discipleship - June

It would be a good practice for each parish to identify a coordinator of youth discipleship (or youth minister), who will be tasked with ensuring the parish has consistent offerings for young people in grades 7-12. For a sample role description of the coordinator of youth discipleship, see A-1 in the appendix.

This coordinator can be part of your parish or from another



parish. For example, if you are collaborating with St. Andrew’s parish for grades 7-12 youth programs, their coordinator of youth discipleship would be yours as well.

If parishes have a difficult time finding the right person for this role, it would be wise to collaborate with another parish. We recommend that the individual chosen to fill this role not be an unsuspecting volunteer who is called on to “fill a spot.” As our diocese seeks to boldly push forward in making disciples of our youth, having the wrong person in this role can cause more harm than good.

The parish catechetical leader can fulfill this role but does not have to.

The coordinator of youth discipleship should work collaboratively with the parish catechetical leader. The two should not be working independently of one another. It is the role of the catechetical leader to guide the coordinator of youth discipleship and understand how their ministry fits in the larger scope of parish catechesis.

IV. Identify your parish plan & update the diocese - June

At this stage, your parish will have reviewed its current situation, identified collaborating parishes, and selected a coordinator of youth discipleship. Next, it's time to figure out which program(s) your parish will be actively offering. Once that is decided, we ask that you share this plan with the diocese. There will be a short online survey, which will be sent to parish catechetical leaders, where you can do this. For a visual of what a parish plan might look like, refer to the sample parish models in the “Charts, Templates, & Further Information” section, at the end of the document.

*Note: It will be ideal to have a parish plan *before* July, especially in parishes that will be affected by new priest assignments.

V. Communicate your plan to your parish (especially your families!) - July, August

Perhaps the most important step, and the easiest to forget, is to clearly and repeatedly communicate your plan to your parish community – especially to the families of your students. Creating and offering youth programs will likely be new for your parish (some more than others), so there may be pushback, questions, complaints, and confusion. One of the best ways to respond is with a clear vision and reasons for that vision.

You can communicate your plan in several ways. We encourage parishes to make announcements before or after Mass, hold parish meetings, hold parent meetings, send emails to parish families, create flyers, encourage parish leaders to bring it up in conversation with parishioners, call registered families with the update, put an announcement in the bulletin, etc. For a sample bulletin announcement and suggestions for parish communication, see the parish plan communication templates in the “Charts,

Templates, & Further Information” section, at the end of the document. Remember, there is no substitute for word of mouth!

VI. Pray, plan, do! - July, August, September...

So, you’ve come up with a plan. Now you must “pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you.”¹⁵ This is a big effort. Souls are at stake. With the time that remains before the year begins, do your best to give detail to your plan (parish calendar, catechist meetings, lesson plans, parent meetings, etc.) so that you can begin your program as smoothly as possible in the fall.

Family Formation

Many of our parishes have transitioned to a religious education model of family formation. Instead of having weekly religious education, which usually only involves the children, family formation is built around monthly or bimonthly sessions where the whole family attends together. We encourage this as a catechetical model, especially because it focuses on parents, encouraging them to live the faith at home and equips them to assume their roles as primary catechists of their children.¹⁶ Some of our most vibrant parishes in the diocese are using this model for religious education. When family formation is done well, it can be beneficial for the parish and for the faith of those families involved. While many publishers offer family formation, we recommend the two following options:

1. *Family Formation*¹⁷, published by the Church of Saint Paul in Ham Lake, Minnesota.
2. *Family of Faith*¹⁸, published by Sophia Institute.

Family formation can lend itself well to middle school and high school ministry because there is already a sense of community that comes with the family meetings. Typically, family formation programs are designed to work best with children through grades 6 or 8. This provides a natural transition period to go from religious education to youth ministry at that time.

To see an example of a parish plan that uses family formation, see sample parish A in the “Charts, Templates, & Further Information” section, at the end of the document.

¹⁵ Attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola, quoted in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 2834.

¹⁶ GDC, 225: “Parents are the **primary** educators in the faith”. See also St. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 36; CCC 1653, 222; *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 11.

¹⁷ Family Formation, found at www.familyformation.net, is a Catholic family-based catechetical program developed by the Church of Saint Paul in Ham Lake, Minnesota. Because it is not a self-published program, it does not fit the criteria to be reviewed by the USCCB. This program has, however, received a Nihil Obstat, imprimatur, and been operating successfully in our diocese. To speak with other parishes using this model, contact the diocese and we will gladly connect you.

¹⁸ Sophia’s Family of Faith program is also being used successfully in our diocese. More information can be found at <https://sophiainstituteforteachers.org/shop/family-of-faith>. To speak with other parishes using this model, contact the diocese and we will gladly connect you.

Youth Program Ideas

It is daunting to begin a youth program, especially when a parish or individual has no experience in this area. Do not be afraid! The following are a list of suggestions for youth programs that parishes can implement. If you have further questions about these programs or how to implement them well, please contact the diocese.

Youth Group/Youth Nights

[The Diocesan Youth Ministry Resource page¹⁹](#) has a number of pointers for starting a youth group. Starting a youth group doesn't have to be complicated. For more information or for training, please contact the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Bible Study

There are numerous teen Bible studies available. Weekly or every other week Bible studies are a great way of fostering discipleship. It is important to have a good and well-formed guide for the study of Scripture. Here are some recommended Catholic teen Bible studies:

- [T3: The Teen Timeline](#) (Mark Hart) from Ascension Press
- [Encounter: A Middle School Bible Study](#) (Mark Hart) from Ascension Pres
- Life Teen has a simple Bible study program based upon the lectionary readings for that Sunday. Unleashed (for boys and for girls) series.
- [Echo the Story -- St. Mary's Press](#)
- [The Little Rock Bible study](#) series comes highly recommended as well.
- [Catholic Faith Handbook](#)

Service Groups

Consider starting a teen service corps or group in your parish. Offer regular service opportunities through a group like this -- serving the poor, elderly and homeless in particular. Junior Vincentians is just one example of this type of group.

Example: www.svdpwny.org/juniorvincentians.html

Parish Ministries

You don't need a special program to get youth involved in your program. Sometimes the best way to get youth involved is to plug them into the already-existing parish ministries, based on young people's interests and talents. To do this successfully, a parish will need to have 1) a PCL and Coordinator of Youth Discipleship who knows their young people and 2) parish ministry leaders who are ready to welcome those young people into ministry. Some examples would be ushers, lectors, music ministry, greeters, liturgical planning, parish council, etc. Actively inviting and welcoming young people into ministry is a great way of challenging them and helping them feel at home in the church.

¹⁹ www.vermontcatholic.org/ymresources

Evangelization Teams

Consider starting youth evangelization teams who can regularly evangelize in the community. Here are some parish-based examples outside of the Diocese of Burlington:

- www.saintthomascatholicchurch.org/youth-evangelization-team.html
- www.popyem.org
- Possibly consider something based upon the Alpha model -- <https://alphausa.org/catholic>

LifeTeen

LifeTeen is the largest and most robust Catholic youth program in the country. LifeTeen has a large database of youth group night programs, video support, retreats, etc. There is a subscription for LifeTeen, though the Diocese of Burlington is considering obtaining one for the Diocese if there is enough interest.

A strength of LifeTeen is it saves a great deal of time in preparing dynamic lessons. With this said, doing a LT program requires a tremendous commitment and an excellent team of both adults and teens. For more information, contact the Youth Office, or go to www.lifeteen.com

The evenings are based around a solid and dynamic liturgical experience (usually the program happens in the evening after Mass). Some parishes do these once a month, others every other week, and others every week of the year (in other parts of the country).

Though a solid and meaningful experience of the Mass is essential, it can become problematic if teens begin to qualify the Mass they are attending as a 'Youth Mass' (and then only want to attend if it is a Youth Mass). We encourage strong and solid catechesis so that any teens participating in a LT program understand that the Mass celebrated anywhere (music or not, great preaching or not) still contains the full Christ present in the Eucharist.

Life Teen has a special program called the JPPII Initiative to help new parishes get started. Contact the Office of Youth Ministry for more information.

Discipleship Programs

- The Holy Father and the Bishops are calling for a renewal of focusing on creating 'missionary disciples' for the 21st century. The other key concept here is 'accompaniment' -- namely, walking with young people as they begin the true encounter experience with Christ and begin their 'walk' with Him. There are a number of programs out there to consider. Here are a few of the more popular ones:
- YDisciple -- From the Formed initiative, YDisciple is geared around a small group model -- creating communities of faith sharing and learning how to walk with Christ, like the story of Emmaus. Discipleship is a lifelong process and the YDisciple program gives structure to this process.
- 33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat In Preparation for Marian Consecration -- though normally done by adults, this book is an excellent formation

- Some other possibilities: [4 Signs of a Dynamic Catholic \(Matthew Kelly\)](#), [DOCAT](#), [True North: A Roadmap for Discernment](#), LifeTeen has a number of [different books](#) that would be excellent for study as a group and for ongoing formation/discussion.
- Theology of the Body -- a discipleship program can easily be built around a Theology of the Body program. The most well-known book is [Theology of the Body for Teens](#).
- A good basic resource for discipleship ministry is [Discipleship Focused Youth Ministry](#)
- For more tips about starting a disciple group, see the article [7 Best Practices for Building Discipleship Groups](#)

Single gender discipleship groups

There is something to be said for single gender discipleship groups. Groups that are single gender often encourage a level of openness and honesty that is difficult to achieve when the group is co-ed (you could consider a hybrid version where there are opportunities within your evening to break them into single gender groups). Some programs to consider as a model are:

- Conquest and Challenge groups (please contact the Youth Office for more information)
- Blaze middle school girls ministry -- www.walkingwithpurpose.com
- Catholic Life Communities (CLC) model -- inspired by Youth Apostles -- <https://www.youthapostles.org/category/catholic-life-community-clc>

Youth Leadership Development

Developing youth leaders is indispensable for any good youth ministry program. This can take a variety of forms: equipping teens to lead younger youth/teens, training them to be leaders in various church ministries, etc. Consider a youth leadership weekend, partnering with other local parishes to develop youth leaders, attend the Steubenville ‘Lead’ weekend, or the Diocese of Burlington YOUTHLEAD weekend. Please consider starting your own local program.

Fraternus/Fideles

In 2008, a group of lay Catholics founded Fraternus, an apostolate which provides boys with adult male mentorship to help them grow into mature, virtuous Catholic men; four years later, [Fidelis](#) — a counterpart group for girls — was launched in a pilot program at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Bremerton, Washington. Fidelis is a parish-based ministry run by lay Catholic women volunteers, and is a “sisterhood of women, young and old, leading each other to Christ ... rooted in virtue and the richness of the Catholic faith.”

Activities include weekly meetings which include the discussion of a particular virtue, weekend excursions or retreats, and a weeklong outdoor adventure known as “Inspire.” Fidelis currently has chapters in nine parishes in five states and serves several hundred Catholic girls.

Vermont would offer a perfect setting for an endeavor such as this.

www.fraternus.net/

Catholic scouting

Catholic scouting can be a great way of forming youth. The Catholic Diocese of Burlington has an active scouting program, which can be found at vermontcatholicscouting.weebly.com . The Knights of Columbus have been asked not to charter any new Boy Scouts troops by Supreme Knight Carl Anderson.

Other newer scouting programs that are not BSA include [American Heritage Girls](#), [Trail Life](#), etc. There are tens of thousands of youth who participate in both American Heritage Girls and Trail Life all over the country (including Vermont).

Knights of Columbus

Local Knights of Columbus chapters should work in collaboration with parish youth initiatives. Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the National Knights of Columbus wrote in 2016:

During the November midyear State Deputies meeting, I announced our new Orderwide initiative, Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish.

At the heart of this new program is a commitment to strengthen the Catholic identity of our families by integrating our activities more fully into the sacramental and social life of our parishes. In this way, we will not only help families, but also further the mission of the new evangelization and revitalize parish life.

The Knights of Columbus has always been an organization dedicated to the family and to helping our brother Knights be better husbands and fathers. Our new initiative is refocusing on this core mission.

A major aspect of the family as “domestic church” is our responsibility to transmit the practice of the faith to our children and grandchildren.

In November, I said that our youth need a stronger relationship with their parish and that parishes need more effective youth ministry programs. The Knights of Columbus is providentially positioned today to further both of these goals.

*As part of the Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative, grand knights should meet with pastors to discuss how their councils can support parish-based youth ministry activities. This can incorporate Knights of Columbus youth programs such as the Free Throw Championship and the Soccer Challenge. **Youth Activity chairmen should act as liaisons with the parish youth ministry teams to determine how councils can appropriately support parish youth activities.***

Our new approach to youth evangelization is one important part of our Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative. Over time, this initiative will develop a multifaceted approach in support of parish life that will make the Knights of Columbus the strong right arm of our parish church. This will also set a firm foundation for the future growth of strong parish-based councils.

Young Life

Young Life is a national evangelical/non-denominational organization that has established a [presence in Vermont](#). It is important that you are aware of Young Life in the Addison and Chittenden County areas. Please consider contacting their local representatives/ministers to ensure that our Catholic teens are being served and shepherded to our respective churches. Please contact the Office of Youth Ministry for more information and details.

Diocesan Support to Parishes

Parishes are not doing this alone! The diocese exists as a support to your ministry. The Offices of Evangelization and Catechesis and Youth and Young Adult Ministry greatly desire to see youth discipleship succeed in Vermont. Whether you have more questions about how this is all supposed to work, want to bounce ideas off someone, or want us to visit your parish, don't hesitate to let us know! The following is a list of supportive services that we enthusiastically seek to provide for you. This list is not exhaustive, so please reach out with other ideas or ways that we can support you.

St. John Bosco Project

The Saint John Bosco Project is an initiative to help parishes and parish clusters grow youth ministry in their local communities. Bill Gavin, diocesan director of youth and young adult ministry, will work with your parish to help you successfully implement the St. John Bosco project. The basic process of the Saint John Bosco Project is as follows:

1. Initial meeting with pastor and/or pastoral staff explaining process and plan.
2. Explain basic process to everyone in the parish and have every adult and young adult in the parish fill out the parish and personal survey/questionnaire (this can be catered to your specific situation).
3. Parish staff and other key members within parish (in particular, the PCL) complete 'Internal Parish Assessment' to gauge where the parish stands regarding youth ministry and youth discipleship. Through this the parish will examine what is currently happening in the parish regarding youth/young adults, how they are being served and being asked to serve.
4. Examine and summarize the findings and desires delineated in the survey/questionnaire and prayerfully consider what can be done to augment and better youth outreach in the parish.
5. Each ministry will be given a ministry template for measurable goal setting over an 18-24 month period. The primary goal here is to grow youth involvement and, ultimately, disciples, through this particular ministry. After the 18-24 month period, the parish should see how the goals are met and, if not met, what alterations and additional energies can be brought to bring the goals to fruition.
6. The last part of the process – done simultaneously with the aforementioned — is for the parish (or parishes) to come up with several specific ways in which each member of the parish community can welcome, invite and spread the Gospel to the youth and young adults in their respective areas – namely, those not attending church but within the boundaries of the parish. These evangelization initiatives are meant to be local and organically organized and

implemented, addressing local needs, realities and opportunities. They should be organized in such a way that everyone in the parish can participate.

The ultimate goal of the St. John Bosco project is to include the entire parish. We believe only with total parish participation will any new youth initiative be successful. The Bosco Project attempts to avoid the ‘Youth Ministry Committee’ approach; but instead an approach that weaves this focus throughout the consciousness of the entire parish.

Online Youth Resource Library

The diocese has an online resource library with videos, lesson plans, retreat templates, and more. This library will be curated periodically so that the resources remain up-to-date and new resources can be added. You can find this resource library here: (www.vermontcatholic.org/youthresources). If you have suggestions that can be added to this resource library, whether it is something you’ve created or another source you’d like to link to, please let us know.

Talks at Your Parish or Deanery

Do you want a diocesan official to come to deanery meeting or your parish to speak more about this vision for our diocese? We’d be happy to help! Contact our offices.

Contact Information

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Charts, Templates, & Further Information

Confirmation Transition Schedule

Academic Year	Grades Confirmed
2019-2020	8, 9, 10
2020-2021	7, 8
2021-2022	6, 7
2022-2023...	6

Parish Plan communication templates

Sample Bulletin Announcement (to be adjusted for each parish's situation)

Worried about how few young people are in our church? We have a new parish plan and are working to fill our church with young people! Our parish will be revitalizing our K-6 religious education program, offering youth programs in 7th and 8th grade, and starting a rich bible study for our high school students. We will also be offering quarterly family sessions where we hope parents will join their children at the parish for some food and a discussion! If you have any questions about these programs, please contact our DRE, Suzy Wilson at swilson@ourparish.org

Sample Vision Form

If you want to give your parishioners a “visual” of how things are being organized, you can use something similar to the “Examples of Catechetical Models” section below. These graphics were made using the “Smart Art” feature in Microsoft Word.

Examples of Parish Models

There is no one way to achieve our vision of youth discipleship in our diocese. It can be helpful, though, to see a few ‘examples’ of how a parish might move forward. The three following models are examples of how parishes could structure their religious education and youth ministry. For the sake of simplicity, each model gives a snapshot of a parish *after* the Confirmation age transition is complete.

Sample Parish A

- **Parish Catechetical Leader: Rachel Baker**
- **Coordinator of Youth Discipleship: Max Brady (also the CYD for two neighboring parishes)**
- In the past, our parish had Family Faith Formation for grades K-6, with grades 7/8 and 9/10 meeting at the same time.
- To better reach young people and lead them to Jesus, our parish has reorganized our religious education and youth ministry opportunities in coordination with the diocesan vision. Below is our parish plan.

K-6 Grade

- Using Catechesis of the Good Shepherd level 1 program for our Pre-K students during *Family Formation* time
- Using the *Family Formation* curriculum to host monthly formation meetings of students *and* their parents where everyone is learning the same topic at the same time.

7-8 Grade

- These young people will attend *Family Formation*, but stay with their parents for the main presentation when classes for the younger grades split off.
- These students will also meet on the 2nd Sunday of the month following the children's Mass for you group including breakfast, games, prayer experiences, and service projects based on the corporal works of mercy.

9-12 Grade

- Our high school students will serve at *Family Formation* as classroom assistants and lead skits and other activities during the Catholic Academy time
- Additionally, these students will meet twice a month for our youth group, which includes adoration, dinner, service projects, games, diocesan trips, apologetics, etc. Additionally, each young person will adopt a ministry to serve the parish.

Sample Parish B

Parish Document, seeking feedback (revised April 2, 2019)

- **Parish Catechetical Leader: Joanne Marshalls**
- **Coordinator of Youth Discipleship: Lisa Rivers**
- In the past, our parish had had traditional weekly religious education for grades K-8 and a separate Confirmation program in grades 9-10.
- To better reach young people and lead them to Jesus, our parish has reorganized our religious education and youth ministry opportunities in coordination with the diocesan vision. Below is our parish plan.

K-6 Grade

- Catechists lead students through Ignatius's *Faith and Life* series at weekly religious education lessons, preparing students for Confirmation in 6th grade.

7-8 Grade

- Meets twice a month for youth group
 - The first monthly meeting uses Ascension's *Encounter* Bible Study
 - The second monthly meeting is a service project, in coordination with the 9-12 grade.

9-12 Grade

- Meets twice a month for youth group
 - The first monthly meeting uses Ascension's *Chosen*, materials from Dynamic Catholic, and occasional guest speakers.
 - The second monthly meeting is a service project, in coordination with the 7-8 grade.

Sample Parish C

- **Parish Catechetical Leader: Hope Junebug**
- **Coordinator of Youth Discipleship: Maurice Flaxwell (the CYD for the whole deanery)**
- In the past, our parish had traditional religious education in grades K-8 and a robust Confirmation program in grades 9-10.
- To better reach young people and lead them to Jesus, our parish has reorganized our religious education and youth ministry opportunities in coordination with the diocesan vision. Below is our parish plan.

K-6 Grade

- Catechists lead weekly religious education using Sophia's *Spirit of Truth* materials, preparing students for Confirmation in 6th grade.

7-8 Grade

- A youth leader or catechist leads children through Ascension's *T3: The Teen Timeline* as a weekly bible study. These classes are much more conversational and relational than the K-6 lessons, though they meet on the same schedule.

9-12 Grade

- Students attend a monthly youth group based around a similar curriculum to the robust Confirmation program we used in the past. For content, we will be using Ascension's *Chosen* and/or offer a prayer session (the Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, etc.). While this youth group meets at our parish, it is for the whole deanery.