

Catholic Diocese of Wichita
VISION FOR PARISH CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY
Approved 16 March 2010

As the Catholic Diocese of Wichita marks its 50th anniversary of youth ministry, there is much to celebrate regarding ministry with youth. Numerous programs and services are provided for our youth on both the parish and diocesan levels. Visitors to our diocese often comment on the number of quality opportunities available for our young people. As wonderful as these programs, services, and opportunities are, however, there is still more that can be done.

Therefore, as we look forward to the next fifty years, the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries would like to share the diocesan vision for Catholic Youth Ministry. The following statement presents the major elements of this vision, which seeks to build upon the foundation and further the growth of youth ministry in our diocese by effectively engaging today's youth and their current needs and by strengthening the diocesan unity of all those serving our youth. This vision reflects the recommendations of our Third Diocesan Synod and follows the recommendations of the *National Directory for Catechesis* and *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, both of which are published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

1. Parish programs for junior high and high school youth are known as Catholic Youth Ministry and follow a Catholic Youth Ministry model.

While the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) model served our diocese well in the past, the needs of today's youth, especially in the areas of faith formation and spiritual growth, call for the natural transition to Catholic Youth Ministry (CYM). Although the CYO model had a four-fold program [Catholic Action, Athletics, Culture and Social], it tended to focus on social activities. The CYM model also incorporates four programming components [Catechetical, Spiritual, Service and Social], but it focuses on the call of young people to discipleship. Additionally, although CYO was supported by the parish, it was often viewed as something separate from the parish; CYM involves the entire parish and integrates young people more fully into parish life.

It is our diocesan goal that every parish offer Catholic Youth Ministry. Ideally, as it grows, the parish program will build upon a foundation that supports its youth, develops youth as leaders, and cares for and evangelizes young people, thus achieving a more comprehensive model of Catholic Youth Ministry as described in *Renewing the Vision*. The term CYM describes this spiritual and comprehensive approach to youth ministry, and is consistent with the language used by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) with which we are affiliated. The use of the term CYM replaces the term CYO. All parishes incorporating the CYM name and model will send a message of diocesan unity, parish support, and commitment to the ongoing formation of our youth.

2. Parish Catholic Youth Ministry programs include activities within these four components: Catechetical, Spiritual, Service & Social.

After consultation with numerous pastors, as well as the diocesan Faith Formation Team and the Advisory Council for the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, the following components are included in each parish program:

- **Catechetical (Faith Formation and Education)**
This includes learning more about the Catholic faith and how it impacts daily life.
- **Spiritual (Personal and Communal Prayer and Worship)**
This includes developing the prayer life of each young person, celebrating the Sacraments, and providing opportunities for communal worship.
- **Service (Education and Action)**
This includes meaningful service opportunities that educate for justice and provide “hands-on” experiences.
- **Social (Community Life & Fun)**
This includes fun activities that build caring, Christian relationships.

Catechetical

Pastoral Priority # 2 of Synod Question Six is to “teach the young that stewardship is the way of life in Christ.” Stewardship is “the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.” Discipleship is learned through catechetical formation. The catechetical component is provided through the Catholic high schools and the parish religious formation programs. Parents are encouraged to avail themselves of our four Catholic high schools whenever and wherever possible. For many of our young people, however, a Catholic high school education is not accessible, and so parishes must provide catechesis for high school youth that goes beyond preparation for Confirmation. Whatever catechetical programs are offered for teens, we believe they will be most effective if they are a part of, and not separate from, Catholic Youth Ministry. In other words, a more experiential and relevant format will bring the faith alive for the youth. A formula that expresses this effective model is: CYM = CYO + PSR. Through the spiritual guidance of the pastor, the faith witness of its parishioners, and the advantage of non-classroom settings, the parish provides an ideal forum to deepen the knowledge of and practice of the Catholic faith for young people that instills a life-long hunger for faith development.

Spiritual

Pastoral priority #1 of Synod Question Six is to “help our youth to love Jesus more through participation in sacraments and youth-oriented liturgies.” This is most effectively realized at the parish level. Every parish CYM has the privilege of providing young people the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God, particularly in the Eucharist. The diocesan offices offer many retreats, camps, and other spiritual experiences for youth that are meant to *complement* the spiritual foundation established within the parish. It is in the parish that young Catholics will find a faith community that responds to their deepest spiritual yearnings. In return, the profound spiritual witness of its youth will inspire and enrich the spiritual growth of the entire parish.

Service

Pastoral Priority #4 of Synod Question Six is to “provide opportunities for youth to share their faith and experience faith in action.” By their nature, youth have a heightened sense of justice and concern for the less fortunate. Despite their busy lives, many youth are open to the opportunity to be servants. In addition to the opportunities for service provided on the diocesan level, a justice and service component that inspires meaningful service opportunities is a core element of every parish CYM and shapes young people to be servants to their families, their parishes, their communities, and the world. The parish has the ability to put into concrete action for our youth the words “Go forth to love and serve the Lord.”

Social

Pastoral Priority #3 of Synod Question Six is to “encourage youth and parents to prioritize and balance their lives with respect to worship, family, school, extracurricular activities, work, play and rest.” The parish serves as a “family” setting where this balance is modeled and learned. Parishes have an opportunity to positively impact the lives of youth by providing a hospitable and safe alternative for those who may otherwise choose gangs, cults or other groups.

The social component provides opportunities for young people to feel more at ease and welcome within the parish community. Diocesan social events, including those at the Catholic high schools and through home-schools, are designed to encourage the young person to actively participate on the parish level. A parish CYM that welcomes and embraces youth will build on the momentum established by these other opportunities. By seeking out youth and their families and encouraging full parish participation, the parish collaborates with diocesan efforts in providing an effective ministry for youth. Ultimately, it is in the parish where young people find their home and live out their faith.

3. Parish Catholic Youth Ministry programs take into consideration the differing developmental needs of younger and older adolescents and the importance of the family.

The developmental needs of 14 and 15 year-olds are quite different than those of 18 year-olds, and the programming initiatives offered through the parish take this into consideration. Careful thought is given to a scope and sequence or progression of formation over a four-year period, so that the older adolescents—who have a greater tendency to fall away from parish programs—remain engaged, challenged and well-formed. Separate programs are offered for those in the middle school years.

Additionally, parish CYM takes into consideration the importance of the family in the faith formation of youth. Catholic Youth Ministry should not take young people away from the family, but rather support the family, by recognizing the home as the primary place for sharing, celebrating, and living the Catholic faith, and the influence of parents on the faith formation of their children. Keeping in mind the foundation of the family as well as the particular needs of each age group, the parish will succeed in creating a solid program that is purposeful, relevant and reinforces life-long faith formation.

4. Parishes identify and appoint a coordinator for Catholic Youth Ministry and are assisted by the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries in their training and support.

As each parish identifies and appoints a coordinator, the following requirements are kept in mind. CYM coordinators are at least 21 years of age, are recognized as good stewards in their parishes, are in compliance with Diocesan Safe Environment policies, and have completed an orientation conducted by the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries. The Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries is available to assist parishes in finding potential coordinators.

It is our diocesan goal that parish Catholic Youth Ministry programs be supervised by a trained coordinator. The diocese will provide additional training and formation that is in compliance with nationally recognized standards.

The Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries recommends that parishes of 500 to 1,000 families have at least a half-time coordinator and parishes of 1,000 families or more have a full-time coordinator with compensation considerations, as appropriate.

While many coordinators volunteer their time and talents, parishes may elect to hire coordinators as appropriate to their needs. Parishes that have hired part or full-time coordinators have experienced a dramatic increase in participation among their youth, increased collaboration within the parish, more focused and goal-directed programs, consistency of programming, and a better use of the talents of the volunteers. Creative strategies for funding coordinators, if desired, are provided through the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries. It is important to remember that paid coordinators do not replace the parishioners who offer their time, talent and treasure to this ministry, but rather coordinate their many gifts. Paid coordinators work *with* volunteers, not instead of them. The presence of a committed, trained, and supported coordinator in each parish will enhance the efforts of the parish in responding to the needs of its youth and help ensure the vitality and longevity of the Catholic Youth Ministry.

In conclusion, we are blessed to minister in a diocese that has such a love for our Catholic youth. We are further blessed with a generation of young people hungry to grow spiritually and to make a significant difference in this world. As we move forward into the next fifty years of Catholic Youth Ministry, let us work together as a diocesan family to equip our young people for their mission in the world.