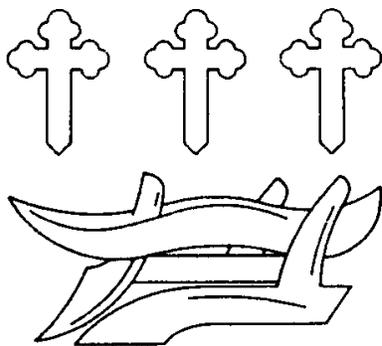


Forming Young Disciples:

**Guidelines and Resources for
Parish-Based
Evangelization & Catechesis
for Adolescents**



**Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Offices of
Evangelization & Catechesis
Youth & Young Adult Ministry
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The illustrations in this document are actual photos of stained glass windows from Catholic churches around the world. Such windows have been used to echo the Christian story from generation to generation. A list of the windows and their locations appears at the end of the document.



I. Introduction: Why This Document?

The challenge of Catholic education and formation in our media-driven, cyberspace age is no less than this: older Catholics must be restored to, and younger Catholics introduced to, a sense of Catholicism as a comprehensive way of life...no previous generation of American Catholics inherited so little of the content and sensibility of the faith from their parents, as have today's Catholic youth. (R. Scott Appleby, Notre Dame University Church Historian)

Here in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati we are faced with the same challenge that religious educators and youth ministers are confronting across the United States: how do we revitalize our catechetical ministry with young people so as to welcome them into Catholicism as a *comprehensive way of life* – and in so doing, provide them with the knowledge and abilities to live out their faith as disciples of Christ as members of the Catholic faith community?

This document is designed to assist those who are responsible for catechetical leadership in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati in confronting this challenge. In many of our parishes there is little offered by way of systematic, intentional catechesis beyond programs of confirmation preparation. Frequently parish youth programs for teens focus on social and service opportunities with little attention to catechesis. There are some parishes that have virtually abandoned any attempt to impact the faith lives of their teens. Recent survey data suggest that somewhere between 40-50% of our young people receive no religious education at all.¹

Happily, there is hope. There are parishes in the Archdiocese that are having a powerful and positive impact on the faith of their young people. The best of these parishes integrate systematic, intentional catechesis within comprehensive youth ministry, and in so doing are effectively providing young people with the understanding, language and capabilities they need to fully and consciously participate in their faith communities.

In this document you will find some of the best and most helpful tools and approaches to adolescent catechesis currently utilized here in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Based on the most current thinking on adolescent catechesis and the foundational catechetical documents of the Catholic Church, this document intends to:

- Update pastors, catechetical leaders and parents on current thinking about adolescent faith formation, in accord with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, 1998), the *National Directory for Catechesis* (USCCB, 2005), *Renewing the Vision—A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (USCCB, 1997), and other recent official Church documents;

¹ According to Archdiocesan statistics from 2004-2005, 36.78% of students in grades 9-12 are enrolled in Catholic high schools, 17.77% are enrolled in parish religious education programs, and 45.45% are receiving no religious education at all.

- Establish adolescent catechesis in the context of the Church’s mission of evangelization and discipleship.
- Assist pastors and catechetical leaders (typically Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education and Directors of Youth Ministry) in integrating catechesis within the comprehensive youth ministry of the parish;
- Provide practical tools for curriculum and session planning;
- Identify recommended themes for adolescent catechesis;
- Provide descriptions and illustrations of various models of adolescent faith formation;
- Put catechetical leaders in touch with the best available resources on adolescent faith formation.



II. Sources and Terms: The Foundations and Language of Faith Formation

One frequently hears the terms “religious education,” “catechesis,” and “religious instruction” used interchangeably; however, there are important distinctions between these terms. Where does one go to understand the distinctions, and more importantly, where does the Church get her mission and direction for adolescent catechesis? This section briefly describes the essential foundational Church documents that guide the work of adolescent faith formation, and attempts to establish some common understandings of the language of adolescent faith formation.

Foundational Sources

The universal Roman Catholic Church and the Catholic Church in the United States have recently published a set of guiding documents that define the content, process and language of catechetical ministry, and establish guidelines and expectations for catechetical ministry with both adults and adolescents. From Rome, and guiding the worldwide Catholic Church, are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) and the *General Directory for*

Catechesis (GDC). Both of these have deep roots in the catechetical traditions of the Church, sacred scriptures, and the rich array of catechetical documents that preceded them. Here in the United States the mission of catechesis is founded on all of these, and specifically applied to our unique cultural and societal situation by the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC).

Moreover, the Catholic Church in the U.S. has developed a rich source of inspiration and guidance for catechesis in *Renewing the Vision – A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (RTV), which details a vision or framework for youth ministry that includes catechesis as one of its core components.

These core documents, together with the documents of Vatican Council II, papal encyclicals and other foundational Church documents, universal and national, set forth the living core of catechetical principles that frame and direct our current efforts, and serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for this resource.

The Language of Catechesis

In order to understand this resource it is vital to have a solid working knowledge of the nuances of the language of catechesis. Perhaps more importantly, the terms suggest different kinds of effort and activity on the part of catechetical leaders, ministers and catechists. To blur these distinctions can lead to losing sight of essential elements of our catechetical mission.

1. **Evangelization:** The process by which the Church brings the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeks to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. (*Go and Make Disciples*, #10)
2. **Conversion:** Through the process of conversion, one turns from sin to God and all aspects of one's life are gradually transformed to be more in harmony with Christ. Conversion has moral (behavioral), intellectual (cognitive), and emotional (affective) dimensions.
3. **Religious education:** A process of formation that intends to convert the learner to a particular religious tradition. Includes:
 - a. **Religious instruction:** The systematic presentation of a particular religious tradition, with the explicit goal of passing on the beliefs, history, rituals, and ethical code of that tradition to the learner(s). The primary aim of religious instruction is *knowledge and understanding*. It is the process of *explaining* the Gospel and Church tradition that has been *proclaimed* through evangelization.
 - b. **Catechesis:** The systematic exploration of the depths of meaning in the religious tradition and the study of its implications for one's personal life, with the aim of deepening and maturing one's initial faith. Pope John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* proposes the following description of the ministry of catechesis:

Very soon the name of catechesis was given to 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. (CT, #1)

Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of doctrine imparted, generally speaking in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of the Christian life. (CT, #18)



III. Evangelization and Discipleship: The Heart of Adolescent Faith Formation

The General Directory for Catechesis says that catechesis is an essential “moment” within the Church’s mission of evangelization (GDC, # 63). Thus, catechesis and evangelization are intimately linked in a common movement toward greater intimacy with Christ and His Church. Yet we are living in a time when many of the faithful have neither been evangelized nor have experienced an initial conversion to Christ. Pope John Paul II called the Church to a *new evangelization*, responding to this situation in the Church where “there exist entire groups of the baptized [who] have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel” (GDC, #58).

Evangelization and discipleship then must become the centerpiece of our faith formation efforts with adolescents. Our catechesis with youth must be *evangelizing catechesis*, since one cannot assume that parents, families or the young people themselves have been evangelized. Evangelizing catechesis emphasizes proclamation and witness, which through the action of the Spirit calls people to a personal (not private) relationship with Jesus Christ, whereby they experience true conversion and choose to follow Christ within the Catholic Church. “The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, making of oneself a disciple of him” (GDC, #53).

Catechesis without evangelization lacks a living heart; evangelization without catechesis lacks depth, rootedness, language and staying power. Both are necessary and inextricably linked. Pope Paul VI said, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* # 41). He goes on to add that it is not enough to witness in a wordless way. He says that witness of life “always remains insufficient because even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified...the Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed” (EN, # 22).

The reality of our day calls for a new evangelization and an ever greater proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through evangelizing catechesis, adolescents may come to know of God’s unconditional love for them and respond to that great love by deepening in faith, prayer and Christian living – in other words, by growing as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Principles for Evangelizing Ministry with Adolescents

The National Study of Youth and Religion, the largest and most detailed study of teenagers and religion ever undertaken, drew this conclusion:

...contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. (*Soul Searching – The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, p. 261)

This landmark study strongly affirms that parents are, *de facto*, the primary evangelizers and formers of adolescent faith. Their role cannot be overstated; it is that important.

Therefore the foremost principle of evangelizing ministry with adolescents is that parents are the primary and most potent evangelizing influence in their lives. Effective youth evangelization efforts will acknowledge, support and resource parents as they evangelize and form the faith of their children. Those who hope to evangelize and form the faith of teenagers will develop alliances with parents in this mission, working together with them to impact the faith of their children. Put simply, evangelizing ministry with adolescents works to empower parents to be and grow as the primary evangelizers of their teens.

The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers (NFCYM, 1993) describes the following operational principles for youth evangelization:

- ***Evangelization has an explicit dimension.*** Effective evangelization includes the explicit verbal proclamation of the Good News of Jesus. The name of Jesus, his “teaching, life, promises, kingdom and mystery” (EN, # 22) should be part of every effort, activity, initiative, program and catechesis with young people. (p.11)
- ***Evangelization has an implicit dimension.*** “You may be the only Gospel some people ever read” is a phrase well known in Christian youth ministry circles. We are

called to be visible signs of God's love in the lives of our youth by the way we "walk our talk." (pp. 11-12)

- **Evangelization involves an initial proclamation.** The entire faith journey begins with an initial proclamation of the Good News of the reign of God. Whether implied through relationships between Christian adults and youth, or explicitly through the verbal announcement of the life, meaning, promises and mystery of Jesus, "the initial proclamation...calls young people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, calls for a change of heart and invites them into the community of believers." (p.12)
- **Evangelization involves an ongoing proclamation.** Pope John Paul II called for a recommitment to the ongoing announcement and witness to the Good News. All Catholic Christians, including young people, need to hear the Good News of God's ever-present, ever-new love for them again and again, both explicitly and implicitly. (p. 12)
- **Evangelization requires that the church be physically present in the real situations of young people's lives.** The ministry of presence in the places where our young folk live, work, play, learn, recreate and gather – their homes, schools, the mall, the playing field, the concert hall, the gym, the street corner – tells young people that they are valued and supported. This is, indeed, Good News to their ears. (p. 12)
- **Evangelization recognizes moments of hurt, need and crisis as significant entry points for proclaiming the Good News of Jesus and for making real the healing power of God.** The healing, compassionate, reconciling presence of God is made real to our young people when we are there when they are hurting, alienated, marginalized or in trouble. (pp. 12-13)
- **Evangelization calls young people to live daily as disciples of Jesus.** "This is what is needed: ...a Church which is not afraid to require much, after having given much; which does not fear asking from young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as that of following the Gospel" (Pope John Paul II, 1995 World Day of Prayer for Vocations). As youth are invited into a deeper discipleship of Jesus, they are also drawn into "responsible participation in the life, work and mission of the Catholic faith community" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 11). The parish characteristics which facilitate the call to discipleship are discussed later in this document.
- **Evangelization must be integrated into the comprehensive youth ministry efforts of the faith community.** "Evangelization is the energizing core of all ministry with adolescents." (*RTV*, p. 36) Everything the Church does to, with, by and for youth must be formed by and infused with the implicit and explicit proclamation of the Good News, its initial and ongoing proclamation, as well as the call to discipleship. By definition, authentic Catholic youth ministry, requires that the person of Jesus—his life, mission, teaching, promises, death and resurrection—must be proclaimed in every program, activity, initiative and outreach. If Jesus isn't part of the equation, explicitly and implicitly, then we can't call it *Catholic* or *ministry*.

Youth Evangelization: Practical Approaches

An evangelizing faith formation program for adolescents may look quite different from conventional religious education programs principally designed for religious instruction. Catechetical leaders and youth ministers will likely need to think creatively and consider unconventional approaches so as to ensure that evangelization is center stage in their long-range and short-range planning. These questions are key to understanding evangelizing adolescent catechesis: Where, in our youth programming...

- ...do young people experience adults and peers *reaching out to them, getting to know them personally, welcoming them* into the faith community, building real and meaningful relationships with them?
- ...do young people experience a *real connection* with the faith community? Where are they welcomed in, given a place at the table, told that they are valued and appreciated, and invited into some kind of *meaningful participation*?
- ...do young people encounter the proclamation of the Good News in *language they understand*, in people they know and who care for them, in personal and meaningful terms? Where do they experience a *genuine and personal invitation to follow Jesus*?
- ...do young people experience *opportunities to deepen* in their faith? Where are they challenged *to live more fully a life in Christ*, in their words, actions, plans and decisions?

Implementing catechesis and faith formation within an overall framework of evangelization and discipleship calls for practical approaches and tasks on the part of youth ministers, catechetical leaders and catechists. For instance, in his book *Walking Together – Outreach and Evangelization Resources for Youth Ministry* (Saint Mary's Press, 1995), Dan Ponsetto describes a popular four-stage approach to youth evangelization:

Contact → Community → Proclamation → Discipleship

- **Contact:** The first element is “contact”—outreach to young people with the intent to make a genuine and interpersonal connection with them. Contact means meeting with young people on their turf and on their terms. Contact ministry involves attending athletic events, school plays, musical performances, award ceremonies, school cafeterias at lunchtime, social events, etc., so as to get to know young people outside of a structured or programmatic environment. Winning their trust and building a relationship with young people are key to contact ministry. This is a necessary “pre-evangelization” step which builds a foundation for those to follow.
- **Community:** The second element in the strategy is “community”—providing opportunities for young people to be welcomed, known, engaged and meaningfully participating in a loving family of faith. Community can happen in the context of explicit youth ministry programs and activities, and it may also take place in the context of service or ministry groupings. It can be peer-based, intergenerational, or ideally both. A young person can enjoy a meaningful experience of community in a youth group, a choir, a service organization like the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, or a catechetical gathering like a bible study. The goal of the community stage is to provide an environment in which the gospel message can be proclaimed, modeled and supported by others who are living it.

- **Proclamation:** The third element is “proclamation”—witnessing the gospel message, certainly in actions but especially in words. The “implicit” proclamation of loving deeds is not enough; the Good News must be framed in “explicit” words that are understandable and meaningful. Proclamation is most effective when shared interpersonally. To be clear: proclamation is not simply mentioning the Good News, rather it offers a compelling message that this news is indeed incredibly good, and includes an invitation to accept the gospel in a personal way. Jesus Christ is always the living center of this proclamation, and the invitation is to put Christ at the center of one’s life, to become a follower of Jesus. This kind of proclamation frequently happens in the context of retreats, special spiritual renewal programs, parish missions, and the like. However, it may also take place spontaneously, even unexpectedly, in the course of an ongoing relationship with a young person.
- **Discipleship:** The fourth element is “discipleship”—inviting young people into a developing faith life, a “deepening” process wherein their faith is challenged to grow, and their lives are challenged more and more to conform to Christ. Explicit religious education and instruction are needed at this stage, as are opportunities to enter more deeply into the liturgical, service and community life of the parish.

The following tasks are vital to effective youth evangelization:

- **Establish an environment of welcome, invitation and hospitality.** If possible, the gathering space should be youth-friendly, with attention to comfortable furniture, décor that is appropriate and inviting to young people, and easy availability of food and beverages. Food, whether before, during or after sessions with young people, can greatly contribute to a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.
- **Use music to set the tone.** Music is extremely important to the great majority of young people, and they can assist adult leaders in finding music that is appropriate for a particular event, setting or activity. Suitable music that is either explicitly or implicitly in accord with our faith is widely available in all the current musical styles, including hip-hop, rap, alternative, rock and country.
- **Use icebreaking and community-building activities.** These have long been mainstays of youth ministry gatherings, and abundant resources are available. The objective is to work with the group dynamic so as to help young people to grow in trust and open up to one another, to the leaders, to God and to their faith.
- **Prepare leaders and catechists to witness.** Finding the words to share one’s faith can be challenging, even intimidating. Leaders and catechists can benefit from training and coaching so as to grow more comfortable and accomplished at speaking from their experience and sharing their faith.
- **Use fun, humor, engaging activities, personal sharing and storytelling.** Young people spend most of their lives in classrooms listening to teachers. Often they arrive tired and stressed-out from school and other commitments. Leaders and catechists should be prepared to respond with fun games, humor, energizers, interactive and engaging activities and creative approaches that can effectively engage participants. Personal sharing and storytelling, on the part of both leaders and youth, can lead to greater openness to learning and growth.

- **Pray frequently for and with youth.** Evangelization and conversion are matters of spirit and ultimately cannot be contrived or controlled. Leaders and catechists should be regularly praying for their youth as an indispensable component of their preparation. Similarly, others in the parish may be drawn into a special ministry of prayer for young people. Moreover, prayer should be a part of every gathering, including opportunities for young people to share their own prayers, petitions and intercessions during the course of gatherings. Such prayer can be a powerful and moving part of sessions with young people.
- **Explicitly invite young people to follow Jesus.** Leaders and catechists need to develop explicit means to both invite and challenge young people to discipleship. This very important step is frequently missed or assumed. Such invitations call a young person to important moments of decision. Whether in the context of retreats, worship events or service opportunities; whether in the form of a commitment card, a “letter to self,” or a special ceremony; young people need to be called to decision.
- **Walk your talk, talk your walk.** If the process of evangelization and discipleship is to have integrity, leaders and catechists must have integrity as implicit and explicit witnesses of the gospel. Their decisions and behaviors must manifest the gospel just as much or more than their words. Perfection is not the goal – integrity is. This suggests that leaders and catechists need to be living as disciples themselves, striving to put Jesus and the gospel first in their daily lives. In this way, their words are substantiated by the commitment and integrity of their lives.
- **Youth Leadership Development.** One of the most effective ways to powerfully impact the faith of young people is to entrust them with evangelizing leadership roles in the faith community. To lead, young people must internalize their faith, own it and live it rather than simply learn about it. Ironically, in the act of being empowered to evangelize others young people themselves are evangelized. Thus, programs of leadership development can be important evangelizing moments in the lives of teenagers. (Contact the [Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry](#) for information about programs that develop and nurture young leaders.)



IV. Keys to Effective Adolescent Faith Formation

The ministry of catechesis...engages adolescents in the learning process by incorporating a variety of learning methods and activities through which adolescents can explore and learn important religious concepts of the Scriptures and Catholic faith. A variety of learning approaches keeps interest alive among adolescents and responds to their different learning styles.... [Catechesis] incorporates a variety of program approaches including parish and school programs; small-group programs; home-based programs; activities, and resources; one-on-one and mentoring programs; and independent or self-directed programs or activities. (*Renewing the Vision - A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. USCCB, 1997, pp. 29 - 30)

Renewing the Vision recognizes that catechesis within the context of a comprehensive youth ministry allows for the development of programs and strategies that adapt to diverse families and youth in our faith communities, while affirming that parents are the principal formers of adolescent faith. Parishes that value an integrated ministry with adolescents and their families foster a variety of programs, experiences and activities that allow for a response of genuine faith that reflects the *total* person – heart (affective), mind (cognitive) and will (behavioral). Parishes that are attuned to the variety of needs, interests and faith development of their youth will respond with as many catechetical programs, models, outreaches and efforts as necessary to meet those needs. A variety of innovative strategies allows for flexibility and adaptation as the needs, interests and faith of youth and their families change and grow.

Single-dimension programs (such as exclusive sports, catechetical, service, or other unique focus) are not as helpful and should not be emphasized as much as comprehensive programs which address a range of needs and interests of young people. (*New Directions in Catholic Youth Ministry: A National Study of Catholic Youth Ministry Program Participants, Executive Summary*. July 1996, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.)

Whole Community Catechesis

The goals set forth in *Renewing the Vision* ask us to begin all our catechetical efforts with this question: “What leads people to become *disciples of Jesus Christ*?” When efforts are attached to the life, mission, work and worship of the faith community, young people learn through their experience of parish who we are as the Body of Christ and as disciples of Jesus. Adaptable, flexible, diverse and comprehensive programming helps young people and adults come to know, love and serve God and others in a holistic way. This systematic approach is sometimes called *whole community catechesis*. It is a catechetical effort by which the faith experiences of parish life inform, form and transform members into disciples of Jesus Christ. Attention to how and when the entire faith community encounters God provides a holistic approach to discipleship.

Whole community catechesis is based on the notion that the Church itself is the primary curriculum for faith formation. Bill Huebsch, noted author on whole community catechesis, describes the framework of whole community catechesis this way:

In whole community catechesis, the total parish is involved in learning and sharing about the faith. Every Christian of every age in the parish is involved, not just children...Households of the parish become the main focus of redesigned parish programs. The household is where faith is lived every day. So, in whole community catechesis there is a strong focus on developing households...Whole community catechesis starts with the premise that faith formation or learning about the faith is part and parcel of being a Christian. It's not optional...As such, working within the framework of whole community catechesis serves to tie together (1) all the formal instruction which the parish provides (homilies, children's instructional programs, sacramental preparation, leadership training, preparation for various pastoral care and liturgical ministries, biblical study, and spiritual growth opportunities) with (2) the informal sharing of faith which whole community catechesis implants into everything else, especially everyday household and parish life. (*Whole Community Catechesis in Plain English*. Bill Huebsch, 2002)

The [*General Directory for Catechesis*](#) reinforces this approach:

Catechetical pedagogy will be effective to the extent that the Christian community becomes a point of concrete reference for the faith journey of individuals. This happens when the community is proposed as a source, locus and means of catechesis. Concretely, the community becomes the visible place of faith-witness. It provides for the formation of its members. It receives them as the family of God. It constitutes itself as the living and permanent environment for growth in the faith. (*GDC*, #158)

This approach utilizes the entire course of the Church's life as the curriculum for faith formation. It is a process of preparing all ages and all generations for meaningful participation in Church events, engaging members in the events, and reflecting on the significance and meaning of the event for their lives as Catholics. Whole community catechesis views the ministry of teaching in relationship to the events of the Church – as preparation for events and reflection on events. The Church Year, sacraments, prayer and liturgy, justice and service, community life, proclamation of the Word, specific parish celebrations or challenges all become the “content” of catechesis. This holistic, comprehensive and communal vision allows for faith to be developed, shared and celebrated both at home and in the parish community.

Whole community catechesis:

- provides opportunities that engage youth and adults in both *learning about* and *learning how to be* people of faith;
- *builds community* through *participation* in shared church events and learning experiences, and through engagement in the practices of the faith community;

- provides programs which engage youth in developing faith by being with members of a faithful community, doing that which is Catholic, reflecting upon what they have experienced, and sharing what they have learned with their peers, families and the parish;
- recognizes the intergenerational nature of the faith community and seeks to maximize intergenerational connections and sharing, especially among youth and a broad range of parish adults who serve as leaders, models and mentors in the faith formation process;
- creates opportunities for the parish community to experience and celebrate the gifts and talents of its youthful members;
- builds connections among various ministries in the parish and structures collaboration into the curriculum, uniting leaders in a common effort to nurture the faith of all parishioners;
- supports families as faith communities of the home.

(For a more detailed description of Whole Community Catechesis, consult *Becoming a Church of Lifelong Learners* by John Roberto, Twenty-Third Publications, 2006.)

Liturgical Catechesis

Celebration of the Sunday Eucharist and the other sacraments of the Catholic Church is the heart of parish life. Indeed, Vatican II's [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy](#) (#10) states that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows." The centrality of the liturgy makes liturgical catechesis an essential component of all faith formation efforts. The [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (#1075) says that "liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the sacraments to the mysteries."

According to the GDC (#71), "liturgical catechesis prepares for the sacraments by promoting a deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy. This explains the content of the prayers, the meaning of the signs and gestures, educates to active participation, contemplation, and silence." Thus, liturgical catechesis has three main aspects. It teaches people about the significance of the Church's rites, equips them with the skills necessary for active participation, and engages them in reflection upon their liturgical experiences. In this way, parishioners learn how the liturgy expresses our Christian beliefs and recognize its implications for our lives.

Liturgical catechesis may be one element of whole community catechesis. Since all age groups celebrate the sacraments, intergenerational gatherings provide ideal settings for liturgical catechesis. At times, youth may benefit from sessions designed especially with their needs in mind. Confirmation preparation programs should always include liturgical catechesis. Alert catechetical leaders will take advantage of the many opportunities for liturgical catechesis that the Church calendar presents.

Faith communities who are already engaged in intentional and comprehensive youth ministry will find many components already in place for the movement toward whole community catechesis. The integration of a variety of models of adolescent catechesis (see [Section VII](#)) in their catechetical efforts supports whole community catechesis and affirms the vision and goals of comprehensive youth ministry.

The Context of Adolescent Catechesis: The Faith Community and Its Youth Ministry

...the success of such [catechetical] efforts rests very much on the quality and total fabric of parish life...When these various elements of parish life are weak or lacking, formal programs for adults typically do not flourish; when they are vibrant and strong, they create an overall climate of active participation and living faith... (*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us - A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, USCCB, 1999, p. 41)

This statement from the U.S. bishops' document on adult faith formation is no less true for adolescents. The context of adolescent faith formation is at least as important as the program. That is why this section deals with the broader faith community and asks, "What are the necessary characteristics of the faith community that make for successful adolescent faith formation?"

Effective programs of adolescent faith formation typically happen in faith communities with:

- **Youth-Friendly Leaders, Liturgies, Programs, and Ministries:** *Youth-friendly* means that the faith community is intentional about welcoming young people into its life and activities. *Youth-friendly* leaders, including pastor, staff and parish council, strive to understand and be responsive to the unique needs and culture of youth. *Youth-friendly* liturgies have songs, music and homilies that are inclusive of the entire faith community. *Youth-friendly* parish programs intentionally welcome and include young people. *Youth-friendly* ministries utilize the abilities of young people at the service of the faith community and the broader community.
- **Active and Meaningful Youth Participation:** In youth-friendly parishes, young people are visible everywhere. They serve in liturgical ministries at Sunday Mass. They are active and visible participants in parish renewal programs. They sing in the choir and play instruments in music ministry. Not only are they involved in helping to plan and lead youth ministry activities, they are warmly welcomed and mentored into appropriate parish leadership roles and may serve on a parish's pastoral council, worship team, etc. They are included in parish service and social activities. Their presence is felt not only in youth ministry activities, but in every aspect of parish life.
- **Parish Leaders Committed to Comprehensive Youth Ministry:** In developing *youth-friendly* faith communities, leadership is vital: as the leaders go, so goes the faith community. If parish leaders, including pastor, staff and council, understand and are working towards the vision of youth ministry described in [Renewing the Vision - A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry](#) (NCCB, 1997), their commitment and

efforts will bear fruit in terms of enhanced youth participation across the board. This vision “provides a way for integrating ministry with adolescents and their families into the total life and mission of the Church, recognizing that the whole community is responsible for this ministry. The comprehensive approach uses *all* of our resources as a faith community – people, ministries, programs – in a common effort to promote the three goals² of the Church’s ministry with adolescents.” (*Renewing the Vision*, pp. 19, 20).

- **A Variety of Vibrant Youth Ministry Components:** A systematic program of adolescent faith formation makes no sense if it takes place in a vacuum – if there are no, or few, other significant involvements of the young person in living a life of faith. Catechesis is one of the eight components of comprehensive youth ministry described by the U.S. bishops in [Renewing the Vision](#); the other components round out the experience of adolescents in the faith community, and provide the living framework in which catechesis becomes comprehensible and lived instead of dry and theoretical. These components include community life, evangelization, justice and service, advocacy, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship.
- **Trained and Effective Adult Youth Ministry Leaders and Catechists:** Adults responsible for the faith formation of youth must receive the training and preparation that is necessary for them to serve as effective mentors, guides and teachers of the faith. The following minimum competencies are fundamental to any adult leader serving in youth/catechetical ministries:
Some minimum competencies for catechists:
 - basic theological competence in scripture, morality, Church doctrine, sacraments, ecclesiology, Christology – in accord with Vatican Council II;
 - understanding of adolescent development and its implications for ministry and catechesis;
 - ability to reflect on and share one’s personal faith;
 - ability to effectively lead prayer and worship;
 - understanding of effective catechetical process, and the ability to implement it;
 - the ability to relate well with young people: to be a listening, supportive, challenging, helpful and healing presence in their lives;
 - the ability to identify and get help for at-risk youth (e.g., young people suffering from abuse or neglect, who are desperate or suicidal, etc.).

Of course, those who are responsible for designing and directing programs of youth ministry or catechesis need considerably more than these minimums. Archdiocesan programs of training and certification are indispensable resources for those who bear the responsibility for coordinating programs of youth ministry and/or catechesis. (For

² The three goals of comprehensive youth ministry are as follows: (1) to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; (2) to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community; (3) to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person. (*Renewing the Vision*, pp. 9-18)

more information on these opportunities, contact your regional Archdiocesan [Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry](#) or the [Office of Evangelization and Catechesis](#).)

- **Healthy Cooperation & Collaboration between Catechetical and Youth Ministry Leaders:** Since catechesis is one of the eight components of youth ministry as defined by the U.S. bishops in *Renewing the Vision*, youth ministers must serve as catechetical leaders. In this regard they orchestrate the adolescent faith formation efforts of the parish, sometimes alone but often together with the other catechetical leader(s) of the faith community (typically a DRE or CRE). Ideally, this relationship will be marked by healthy cooperation, collaboration and mutual respect, characterized by:
 - a mutual partnership where both parties take ownership and responsibility for adolescent faith formation;
 - clear lines of authority and delegation in regard to various aspects of the adolescent faith formation program;
 - collaborative planning and evaluation, where all catechetical leaders, including youth ministers, bring their respective gifts and insights to the process;
 - mutual and fair negotiation of areas of responsibility and division of labor.

In situations where these characteristics are not present, leaders should avail themselves of the resources of the Archdiocesan Offices of Evangelization and Catechesis and/or Youth & Young Adult Ministry so as to get help in establishing a healthy model of collaboration.

In summary, the context of adolescent faith formation is as or more important than any particular model or program. If specific programs of adolescent faith formation take place within the broader enterprise of comprehensive youth ministry, faith themes come to life as young people come into their own as vital members of the faith community.

Adolescent Faith Formation: Foundational & Operational Principles

The *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) identifies foundational and operational principles for the ministry of adolescent evangelization, catechesis and discipleship, as follows (excerpted with permission of the author from *Adolescent Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis: It's About Discipleship*, by Daniel S. Mulhall, Assistant Secretary for Catechesis and Inculturation, Office for Catechesis, Department of Education, USCCB):

1. Every individual has the responsibility to grow in faith and to contribute to others' growth in faith.
2. Catechesis takes into account the circumstances and cultures of those being catechized; there is but "one saving Word—Jesus Christ—but that word can be spoken in many different ways" (NDC 186).
3. Growth in faith is related to human development and passes through many stages; everyone develops in different ways according to his or her own pace.
4. Growing in faith means growing in communion with the Trinity through active participation in the sacraments, prayer and generous service to others.

5. Catechesis must take into consideration all the human factors in order to present the Gospel message in vital and compelling ways; catechesis is a permanent school of the faith that follows major stages of life.
6. Catechesis for adolescents should:
 - a. Take into account their physical, social and psychological development
 - b. Present the words and example of Jesus and the saints in ways that appeal to young people
 - c. Present Jesus as the Son of God, friend, guide, and model to be admired and imitated
 - d. Present the basic content of Jesus' revelation
 - e. Present the rational bases for faith, the coherent truth of the faith, and the relationship between the two
 - f. Help young people to articulate the beliefs and teachings of the Church and to apply them to their lives
 - g. Present other areas of Catholic belief including Scripture, the Church, worship and sacraments, and the principles of Christian morality
 - h. Help young people experience a deeper relationship with God through prayer and service
 - i. Include active participation in worship and community life with adult believers
 - j. Include ongoing formation and regular reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Penance
 - k. Include catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation
 - l. Assist with vocation discernment
7. Effective approaches for adolescent catechesis include catechesis on special themes, group projects and activities, memberships in youth associations and groups, retreat and spiritual direction.
8. Young people are to be given adequate opportunities to serve the Church through its liturgical ministries. (Note: Participation in liturgical ministries doesn't hinge on reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Young people who have received First Communion and whose gifts and maturity are in keeping with the particular role should be included. Specific norms regarding youth participation in liturgical ministries in a given faith community are the pastor's to establish.)
9. Adolescent catechesis is most effective when integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral ministry for youth that includes formation in community life, evangelization, learning about and active participation in promoting justice and serving others, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship.
10. Adolescent catechesis is to help young people become disciples of Christ in the world, draw young people into responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Church, and to foster personal and spiritual growth.

11. Catechesis for adolescents should include:

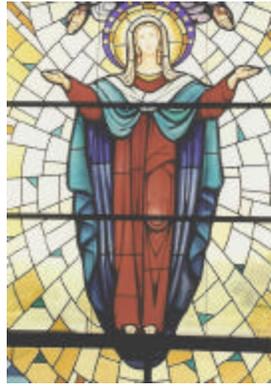
- a. The study of the Catholic faith and how faith develops
- b. Liturgy and prayer experiences
- c. Practical skills for living the Catholic faith today
- d. A shared dialogue between the life of the adolescent and the wisdom of the Catholic Church
- e. Learning methods and activities (including arts and music) that engage and help young people explore religious concepts and ideas
- f. Group participation (warm, trust-building, accepting, caring)
- g. Real-life applications of learning
- h. Programs that promote family values and encourage family participation
- i. Activities that promote a Christian attitude toward human sexuality
- j. The recognition and celebration of the Church's unity and diversity
- k. Personal invitation to young people to consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life
- l. Instruction on ecumenism and the Church's relationship with other religions

12. Catechesis for middle and junior high school children should help them to:

- a. Observe, explore, interpret and evaluate their experiences in the light of faith
- b. Think of themselves as Christians and to act like disciples of Christ according to the norms of faith and love
- c. Interiorize authentic Christian values and make Christian decisions in today's society
- d. Develop a desire to grow in faith through study, prayer, and living as a Catholic

Additionally, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) states that catechesis of children and youth should be oriented toward catechesis for adults. Accordingly, parish leaders should plan and evaluate their current adolescent faith formation efforts acknowledging that adolescent catechesis is just one phase of a lifelong process of continuous faith formation. This realization frees catechetical leaders from the unrealistic expectation that young people must complete all of their religious formation by the time they graduate from high school.

Adolescent faith formation programs that reflect the principles above will have a greater chance of fostering the spiritual growth of young Catholics, empowering them to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, and engaging them in the ongoing life of the Catholic faith community.



V. Developing Your Adolescent Catechesis Curriculum: A Step-by-Step Process

Catechetical leaders (e.g., Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education, Directors of Youth Ministry) who bear the responsibility for organizing and managing a parish's faith formation with adolescents need to be able to develop systematic catechetical curricula, and utilize effective models and approaches to impart it. It is not enough to provide topical meetings or occasional group discussions on scattered faith themes. There must be a master plan and a guiding, intentional consciousness that ensures that young people will be broadly and deeply catechized during their middle school, junior high and high school years.

Moreover, those curricula should be integrated into the schedule of the faith community's pastoral ministry with youth (e.g., youth ministry calendar), so that over a period of years adolescents will be initiated into the breadth of our faith. The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* identifies six catechetical tasks that frame the breadth of the Church's catechetical curriculum; a catechetical curriculum will systematically and adequately include them all so that young people will have a solid foundation for lifelong faith development:

- promoting knowledge of the faith
- liturgical education
- moral formation
- teaching to pray
- education for community life
- missionary initiation

Following is a step-by-step process for developing a systematic adolescent catechesis curriculum in a parish setting:

- Step 1.** **Review** (or develop, if none exists) a comprehensive plan for ministry with youth.
- Step 2.** **Identify** the unique catechetical needs of the adolescents in the faith community.
- Step 3.** **Develop** major aims and goals.
- Step 4.** **Brainstorm** and prioritize the approaches, models and means to best meet your goals.
- Step 5.** **Integrate** the explicit catechetical component into the youth ministry and

parish calendar.

Step 6. Review, finalize and have approved your master plan.

Step 7. Communicate your plan to all stakeholders.

Step 8. Recruit, orient, train and support catechists.

Step 9. Implement your plan.

Step 10. Evaluate and fine-tune.

Each of these steps is explored in detail below. Use the [Curriculum Planning Worksheets](#) included in this section as a reproducible format for the actual work of planning.

Step 1. Review (or develop, if none exists) a comprehensive plan for ministry with youth.

It is beyond the scope of this document to thoroughly explore a comprehensive planning process for youth ministry. The [Archdiocesan Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry](#) can be of great assistance if your parish does not have such a plan: call and inquire about its “11-Step Planning Process.” For our purposes here it will suffice to describe a generic comprehensive youth ministry plan. The typical ingredients of a comprehensive youth ministry plan are:

- a statement of mission/vision
- needs assessment information on the unique needs of this parish’s adolescents
- major aims, goals, objectives
- a calendar of events, activities, opportunities integrated into the parish’s master calendar
- activities across the range of youth ministry components: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, prayer and worship, pastoral care
- a team (or teams) to coordinate and lead the various aspects of the ministry

A well-trained youth ministry leader will ensure that there is a comprehensive plan with these elements guiding the youth ministry efforts of the faith community. [Be sure to keep in mind the difference between youth ministry and “youth group” (see [Appendix A., Youth Group vs. Youth Ministry](#)). A youth group is one particular kind of youth program. It is unrealistic to expect a volunteer adult youth group leader to develop such a plan. Rather, in parishes with no staff-level youth ministry leader, comprehensive youth ministry planning should become the responsibility of the catechetical and/or pastoral leadership of the parish.]

A comprehensive youth ministry plan will lead to a wide variety of youth-related activities in the parish (see [Appendix A., Comprehensive Youth Ministry Planning Grid](#), and [Youth Ministry in Your Parish Might Look Like...](#)). Activities may be “gathered” or “non-gathered.” “Gathered” activities take place in groups (e.g., catechetical programs, youth group meetings, prayer services, etc.). “Non-gathered” activities include ministry activities that

typically happen outside of groups (e.g., newsletters, email, mentoring, individualized learning projects, outside reading, family-based faith formation, etc.).

Comprehensive planning may also include activities across the spectrum of forums in which young people typically find themselves: family, church, school and civic community. (See [Appendix A, Comprehensive Youth Ministry Planning Grid](#).)

Finally, as mentioned above, a comprehensive youth ministry plan will necessarily include sufficient people resources (e.g., leadership teams, commissions, boards, etc.) to provide effective leadership and coordination.

Step 2. Identify the unique catechetical needs of the adolescents in your faith community.

Each parish faith community has its own unique constellation of demographics and programming, resulting in unique catechetical needs. For this reason the planning process must be informed by needs assessment information that will guide the successive steps of the process. Typically needs assessment will attempt to find answers for these questions:

1. How many young people are in the parish? How many younger adolescents? How many older adolescents?
2. Of these young people, how many are currently enrolled in Catholic schools, and are thus receiving regular religious education? How many are enrolled in the parish's junior high or senior high religious education program? How many are not receiving any form of systematic religious education?
3. Of these young people, how many have received religious education as children, either through a Catholic school or PSR program? What was covered, and in what depth? Are there significant gaps in prior education/formation?
4. Confirmation: How many young people are on track to participate in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and at what age(s)?
5. What are the interests/hopes of the potential participants in terms of themes, topics, courses?
6. What are the interests/hopes/requirements of the parents in terms of themes, topics, courses?
7. What are the preferred windows of opportunity for scheduling faith formation activities? Seasons, months, weeks, days? What are the least preferred windows?
8. What are competing activities and priorities that might serve as an impediment to prevent young people from participating?
9. Any other information specific to your parish that would be helpful to the planning process.

Much of the needs assessment information can be gathered through parish census data and sacramental records. Beyond this basic data, however, different approaches are needed. For instance, surveys have the virtue of securing quantitative data, but it is challenging to gather returns, especially from mailed surveys (not to mention that some people detest

surveys!). Focus groups can help clarify needs through face-to-face conversation, but not everyone can participate, so the results can be skewed based on the biases of participants. Interviews on the phone are economical time-wise and can be conducted at the convenience of both parties; however, they lack the complete communication that face-to-face contact offers and may be regarded as intrusive. In general, a combination of approaches is recommended. By combining different approaches, the data can be cross-checked, verified and/or nuanced.

Samples of generic surveys are included in [Appendix B](#), which may be easily adapted for specific parish use.

Step 3. Develop major aims and goals.

Next is a process of sifting and prioritizing, resulting in identification of the desired outcomes of the planning process. This step consists of several important sub-steps:

- **Determine Your Major Aims:** Juxtapose, correlate and compare the needs assessment information with the listing of recommended catechetical themes (see [Section VI](#)) in order to prioritize them. Further, identify the priority themes according to age level and developmental appropriateness. It is helpful to take a three-year or six-year perspective, assuming that one or the other is the normal cycle of involvement through the teen years, depending on whether the planning is for younger adolescents, older adolescents, or both. As a result of this work you will arrive at a set of “major aims” for each age group, in other words, the target areas for catechesis, correlated with the target age groups. (See [Curriculum Planning Worksheets](#), beginning on page 28.)
- **Develop Your Goals:** In each of your major areas, identify the goals or outcomes to accomplish. It is vital here to try your best to describe as specifically as possible the desired endpoint of the catechetical process: Where do we want the participants to be at the conclusion of the experience? What will they learn? What skills will they develop? What attitudes are we working to develop in them? How will they grow? (See [Curriculum Planning Worksheets](#), beginning on page 28.) At the conclusion of this step, you should have a set of major aims and goals that will guide the rest of the planning process. These comprise your targets, what you hope to accomplish as a result of your efforts.

Step 4. Brainstorm and prioritize the approaches, models and means to best meet your goals.

Now comes the really creative part of the planning process, which is best done in a group so as to maximize the dynamic of creative interchange, with ideas building on one another. As necessary preparatory work for this step, paper the walls of your planning site with large, monthly calendar pages filled with all of the “givens” of your parish and community. Be sure to include on this calendar the rest of the youth ministry events and activities that have already been scheduled, the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year, as well as any special parish and community events (e.g., festivals, high school homecoming celebrations, graduation, etc.). This becomes both the backdrop of your planning and an important reality check.

Review your major aims and goals, then brainstorm approaches and models (see [Section](#)

VII for in-depth descriptions of the range of models and approaches that are available to you). Keep in mind that some of the models are more expensive and labor-intensive than others, and that some require special training and preparation.

Try to match specific major aims and goals with the models and approaches best suited to meet them. For instance, retreats are powerful and effective experiences of evangelization and in-depth exploration of faith themes. Since you can only manage a limited number of retreats a year, carefully choose their focus. Similarly, mini-courses are best suited for exploration of topic areas in a series, possibly with guest speakers. For instance, a series of 4-8 sessions on the topic of sexuality may allow you to explore a theme from a variety of different perspectives over a number of weeks.

Finally, look for opportunities on the calendar to integrate your approaches and models with the ongoing faith life of the parish. Minimally, be sure that you don't conflict with any important parish or community events. Ideally, your models and approaches will integrate seamlessly into the liturgical seasons and feasts, and they will mutually reinforce one another, build on one another, and support one another. Maximize the opportunities to draw young people into the celebrations, service, community and continuing education of the whole parish rather than separating them out for special programming – and if necessary, work with the other planning groups of the parish (e.g., worship commission) to facilitate their participation.

Step 5. Integrate your catechetical planning into the youth ministry and parish calendars.

Once you've explored and identified your preferred models and approaches, it is time to integrate them into the master calendar. This will undoubtedly be a messy project as you struggle to integrate your models and approaches into busy annual parish calendars (hint: use a pencil, not a permanent marker!).

The critical issues in curriculum development at this point in the planning process are *scope* and *sequence*. *Scope* has to do with the breadth of the subject matter. *Sequence* has to do with the order in which subject matter is organized. Try your best to organize the components of the catechetical program in a way that makes solid thematic and experiential sense, so that ideally one piece builds upon the other. For instance, a mini-course on Catholic Social Teaching would best be organized to coincide with actual service experiences.

It is important to keep in mind that if the planning is responding to different age groups at different developmental stages, they will need programming designed specifically for them. Sometimes these can overlap and share resources, but different developmental stages call for developmentally appropriate measures. Of course, this may complicate your planning, but it is much better to anticipate this and plan for it in advance than to experience the negative effects in disgruntled youth and adults.

Step 6. Review, finalize and have approved your master plan.

Before finalizing the plan it is vitally important to have others review it with great attention to detail, anticipating both potential conflicts and missed opportunities for collaboration. You may present it to the pastor and the pastoral staff, parish education commission,

elementary school principal, athletics leaders, parents, youth ministry core team – anyone who might notice something on your calendar that you missed. There is no way to avoid scheduling conflicts, but it is imperative that you minimize them and their impact on your planning.

Once this review has taken place, submit the plan to the pastor, education commission and perhaps even the parish pastoral council for their review and final approval. The final plan includes the results from your needs assessment, your major aims and goals, and your master calendar.

Step 7: Communicate your plan to all stakeholders.

Once the plan is approved it is essential to forward information about it to all of the various stakeholders. A partial list follows:

- Pastor
- Parents
- Parish Pastoral Council and Education Commission
- Parish Staff
- Parish support staff
- Youth Ministry/Catechetical Volunteers
- Youth Leaders
- School staff, principal, teachers (if parish has an elementary school)
- Athletic Boosters
- Maintenance, facilities persons

If your parish is proximate to Catholic secondary schools, consider forwarding that information to the religion department chairs and/or campus ministers. This may well engender greater cooperation and collaboration between your parish-based efforts and school-based faith formation.

Step 8. Recruit, Train and Support Catechists

Of course, your curriculum will be no better than the catechists and youth ministers who will implement it, and the resources that are available to them. An architect wouldn't place her precious blueprints into the hands of untrained workers, and neither should we. We need to ensure that those who will be implementing the curriculum are well-prepared catechetically and ministerially. Those who work directly with young people in forming their faith should minimally obtain catechist certification through the Office of [Evangelization and Catechesis](#), as well as Basic and Intermediate Youth Ministry Training through the [Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry](#).

Moreover, the health and well-being of young people are at stake, so those adults who work with them should be recruited carefully and screened diligently. Prior to working with youth, adults must undergo a criminal background check, including fingerprinting, and the orientation to the archdiocesan [Decree on Child Protection](#).

Catechetical leaders (including DRE's, CRE's and Directors of Youth Ministry) need to conscientiously and regularly supervise their catechists and adult youth ministry leaders so as to provide for quality control to ensure that curriculum goals are attained. Equally

important, those adults who teach and minister with young people are treasures of the Church, to be prayed with and for, encouraged, supported, resourced, recognized and celebrated.

Step 9: Implement your plan.

Here are a few pointers to keep in mind as you implement your curriculum:

- **Material Resources:** Within the boundaries of our budgets and facilities, we need to do our best to provide adequate spaces and materials for our catechetical programs. Certain kinds of catechetical experiences require special environments (e.g., prayer experiences) or special materials.
- **Session Planning:** Once your curriculum is approved, the important task of developing catechetical sessions remains. Whether in a retreat, a mini-course or in a service-learning context, catechetical sessions with teens require careful planning, the application of tried-and-true methodology and methods, and lots of creativity. This task is so vital that an entire section of this manual is devoted entirely to it. See [Section VIII – Developing Effective Catechetical Sessions](#).
- **Publicity, Invitations, Hospitality:** We need to think carefully about how people will be welcomed to our programs. People are typically inundated with paper, which makes mailings and flyers less effective. Although much more time-consuming, a personal invitation is typically more effective than a generic flyer. Moreover, the welcome and hospitality that people experience in their first few minutes of a program will often make (or break) their decision to stay and participate.
- **God Is in the Details:** There's no substitute for careful planning and attention to detail. This is especially true when session plans are complex, or require advance preparation, or special materials or equipment.
- **Build Community:** Every time young people gather it is an opportunity to further cement their relationships with one another and the faith community. Be sure to build in time for people to connect with one another and develop bonds of companionship.
- **Feed the Hungry:** Many a rough lesson plan has been miraculously smoothed over by the presence of snack foods and beverages. If we intend to feed their minds and spirits, often the way in is to address their physical hungers as well. Whether served before, during or afterwards, food can lubricate the catechetical experience.
- **KISMIF:** The KISMIF rule of youth ministry programming stands for “Keep it simple, make it fun.”

Step 10: Evaluate and fine tune.

Ongoing evaluation is essential to maintaining and growing your catechetical curriculum. Three different kinds of evaluation should take place:

- **Program Evaluation:** Some kind of evaluation should take place at the conclusion of each segment or program session, e.g., after a given class, or retreat, or service project. This evaluation provides immediate feedback to catechists, youth ministers and the coordinators of the catechetical programming, and can be used to help them build on strengths and address weaknesses in the programming.

- **Course Evaluation:** Evaluation should also take place at the conclusion of a series of catechetical experiences, for instance, at the conclusion of a mini-course. The intent of this evaluation is to assess the impact of a course, series, or set of catechetical experiences relative to the established catechetical goals and objectives, especially those listed in the Faith Themes section of this document.
- **Curriculum Evaluation:** This kind of evaluation should take place semi-annually or annually, and it involves a comprehensive review of all of the dimensions of the catechetical effort. The intent of this evaluation is to determine how well the overall goals and objectives of the catechetical effort are being attained, and how the overall effort might be enhanced or improved.

There are many different kinds and approaches to evaluation, including surveys, questionnaires, group discussion, graffiti walls, etc. Catechetical leaders should utilize the full range of evaluative tools as appropriate, so as to avoid burdening the participants or catechists with undue paperwork. One of the most helpful resources for assessing the effectiveness of the entire program is NCEA-ACRE. Contact the [Office of Evangelization and Catechesis](#) and/or the [Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry](#) for samples and assistance.



Curriculum Planning Worksheets

Developing a 6-Year Adolescent Faith Formation Curriculum

Catechetical leaders may use this simplified format to do systematic catechetical curriculum development. The worksheet takes planners through the following steps:

- Step One Needs Assessment & Prioritization
- Step Two Assign Faith Themes to Calendar “Blocks & Select Models/Approaches
- Step Three Calendar Programs to Address Faith Themes

- 1. Step One. Needs Assessment & Prioritization.** Complete the following to the best of your ability, drawing upon your knowledge of your parish. If the information is unknown to you, write down how you would get it:
 - a. Review participants’ prior education and experience:
 - i. Religious education/youth ministry background? Confirmation?

 - ii. Covering which faith themes?

 - iii. With what depth and breadth?

 - b. Consult parents:
 - i. What is their vision of youth ministry? Insights?

 - ii. Preferences?

 - iii. Priorities?

 - c. Consult pastor and catechetical leadership:
 - i. Recommended goals and programs?

 - ii. Available personnel and budget?

 - iii. Priorities?

- d. Conclusions:
 - i. Identify priority target groups for programming: junior high, senior high, public school, Catholic school, in combinations or all of the above?
 - ii. Identify priority faith themes: (consult faith themes in [Section VI](#) of this resource)

2. Step Two. Assign Faith Themes to Calendar “Time Blocks” and Select

Models/Approaches: Use the grid below to map faith themes and models/approaches for junior high and senior high faith formation. (Note: some faith themes may be woven throughout, as in the sample curriculum below). Keep in mind the strengths and weaknesses of particular models. (See [Section VII. Models of Adolescent Faith Formation](#) for detailed descriptions.)

Models:

- [Mini-Courses](#)
- [Small Faith Communities](#)
- [Mentoring](#)
- [Retreats](#)
- [Justice and Service Programming](#)
- [Mission Trips & Work Camps](#)
- [Super Sundays](#)
- [Intensive Summer Programs](#)
- [PSR Classes](#)
- [Confirmation and RCIA](#)

Approaches:

- [Family-Based, Intergenerational Programs](#)
- [Rites of Passage](#)
- [Pilgrimages, Encuentros, Conferences, Rallies & Apostolic Movements](#)
- [Programs of Leadership Development](#)
- [Religious Recognition Programs for Boy and Girl Scouts](#)

Curriculum Planning Grid

Time Block	Junior High Faith Themes	Models & Approaches
Fall/Winter, 20__		
Winter/Spring, 20__		
Summer, 20__		
Fall/Winter, 20__		
Winter/Spring, 20__		
Summer, 20__		
Fall/Winter, 20__		
Winter/Spring, 20__		
Summer, 20__		
Senior High Faith Themes		
Fall/Winter, 20__		
Winter/Spring, 20__		
Summer, 20__		
Fall/Winter, 20__		
Winter/Spring, 20__		
Summer, 20__		
Fall/Winter, 20__		
Winter/Spring, 20__		
Summer, 20__		

Sample 6-Year Curriculum

Please note that this curriculum is provided only as an example, not as a recommended or preferred curriculum. It provides a generic snapshot of a 6-year curriculum, systematically organized so as to utilize a variety of models in addressing the range of faith themes presented in this resource. A particular parish's actual curriculum would normally be developed in response to the unique needs and situation of that parish, and will be adaptable relative to changing circumstances. Moreover, it is assumed that this curriculum is integrated into the liturgical year and parish's comprehensive youth ministry. The first three years of the curriculum's cycle are devoted to younger adolescent faith themes; the latter years focus on older adolescent faith themes.

Time Block	Junior High Faith Themes	Models & Approaches
Fall/Winter, 20__	Personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-course: physical, social and spiritual maturing • Retreat: identity as a child of God, human dignity, healthy sexuality • Participation in Advent and Christmas worship, service, celebration
Winter/Spring, 20__	Relationships with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-course: healthy relationships with God, self and others • Special speaker program on chastity • Participation in Lenten and Easter worship, service, celebration
Summer, 20__	Service & outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to church and community w/service learning component
Fall/Winter, 20__	Knowing & following Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-course on discipleship • Evangelizing retreat • Participation in Advent and Christmas worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Winter/Spring, 20__	New Testament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-course on New Testament • Participation in Lenten and Easter worship, service, celebration
Summer, 20__	Service & outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to church and community w/service learning component
Fall/Winter, 20__	Human dignity & sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-course on human dignity and sexuality • Retreat: Healthy identity, self-esteem, human sexuality • Special speaker program on postponing sexual involvement • Participation in Advent and Christmas worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Winter/Spring, 20__	Morality & moral decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-course on morality & moral decision-making; sin and reconciliation • Participation in Lenten and Easter worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Summer, 20__	Service & outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to church and community w/service learning component
Themes intentionally integrated throughout: prayer & Christian spirituality, Scriptures, membership in the Church		

Time Block	Senior High Faith Themes	Models & Approaches
Fall/Winter, 20__	Intimacy, relationships & sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small faith community gatherings focus on issues and Church teaching on healthy and holy intimacy, relationships and sexuality • Retreat: healthy relationships with God, self and others • Special speaker program on chastity and postponing sexual involvement • Participation in Advent and Christmas worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Winter/Spring, 20__	Christian morality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small faith community gatherings focus on issues and Church teaching on Catholic, Christian morality, Catholic social teaching and moral decision-making • Retreat: Walking your talk, talking your walk – living with integrity as a Catholic Christian • Special speaker program on social justice, simple living and related themes • Participation in Lenten and Easter worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Summer, 20__	Peace & justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission trip, soup kitchen, rehabbing low-income housing, w/service learning component
Fall/Winter, 20__	Faith & belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small faith community gatherings focus on issues and Church teaching on Catholic beliefs • Retreat: living the Sacraments • Participation in Advent and Christmas worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Winter/Spring, 20__	Understanding the Bible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small faith community gatherings focus on how to understand, interpret, appreciate and pray with the Bible. • Participation in Lenten and Easter worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Summer, 20__	Peace & justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission trip, soup kitchen, rehabbing low-income housing, w/service learning component

(Continued on next page)

Fall/Winter, 20__	Religious traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small faith community gatherings focus on understanding other faiths and Christian denominations. • Special speaker program(s) on various faiths, denominations • Retreat: Living ecumenically while firmly Catholic • Participation in Advent and Christmas worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Winter/Spring, 20__	Vocations & life choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small faith community gatherings focus on discerning one's call, lifestyle choices, vocations, etc. • Retreat: Listening and discerning God's call • Participation in Lenten and Easter worship, service, celebration, with mystagogical reflection
Summer, 20__	Peace & justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission trip, soup kitchen, rehabbing low-income housing, w/service learning component
Themes intentionally integrated throughout: prayer & Christian spirituality, Scriptures, membership in the Church		

3. Step Three. Calendar Programs to Address Faith Themes

- a. Calendar: Rough out a calendar of faith formation models/programs, using the calendar format on the next page, or a calendar of your own making. Reviewing various "off the shelf" faith formation packages can be helpful (see [Section IX. Resources](#)).
- b. Fine tune: Correlate your calendar with the various other calendars and schedules of the faith community, so as eliminate as many scheduling conflicts as possible, and to cooperate with other programs as much as possible.

Reproducible Handout

Adolescent Faith Formation Calendar Worksheet

Year: _____

Directions: Rough out your calendar, inserting your models and faith themes/topics into time periods below.

Note: programs may be one time only or extend over several or many months, depending on the chosen models and approaches.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Junior High												
Senior High												



VI. Faith Themes: The Content of Adolescent Catechesis

Planning a faith formation curriculum inevitably leads to the central question: what content should be imparted to participants? This section contains faith themes, goals and objectives organized around specific themes, based on *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis* (1986), *Renewing the Vision* (1997), and *Education in Human Sexuality for Christians* (1981). The goals and objectives are for younger adolescents (typically ages 12-15) and older adolescents (typically ages 16-19). The goals for younger adolescents overlap with grades seven and eight in *Growing Together: Ministry to Children*, the archdiocesan Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs. Parishes following a school-based model of junior high religious education should refer to *Growing Together: Ministry to Children*. Parishes that have established comprehensive junior high youth ministry programs should use this document.

The themes that follow are congruent with and flow from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, although they are organized in a different format and conveyed at times with different language. The *Catechism* is organized around doctrinal concepts; this resource is organized around the developmental needs of adolescents. It should be noted that the *Catechism* was never intended as a textbook for catechesis, but as a resource and reference. Use of the *Catechism* as a primary text for adolescent catechesis is discouraged.

Evangelizing youth and forming young disciples are the main goals of all catechetical efforts with young people. Thus, each theme presents goals and objectives that state outcomes holistically – that is, in affective, behavioral and cognitive domains. The objectives for each theme are not intended to serve as lesson plans. Catechists must translate these general goals and objectives into specific outcomes for their students. These objectives do not express all of the theological concepts or Christian attitudes and practices possible within a particular theme; rather, they represent some examples of the competencies that characterize the growing faith of adolescent Catholic Christians. Moreover, assessing the attainment of objectives in the affective and skill areas can be challenging, requiring observation of behavior in a variety of settings, some of which are clearly beyond the scope of ministerial/educational environments. Nevertheless, affective and behavioral outcomes are as important as cognitive objectives, particularly if faith formation and ongoing conversion are significant goals of our programs.

The order in which the themes appear on the following pages does not indicate a recommended sequence. While they do attempt to present the main elements of the Christian message, it is certainly possible to add other themes or to reorganize the ones suggested in this document. It is also possible that a program of adolescent faith formation might not include all of the themes listed here. Because the structure of adolescent religious education varies so widely from parish to parish, the themes may be adapted for local situations.

Some themes occur in both the “Younger” and “Older” sections. *Renewing the Vision* states, “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” (p. 30). Topics like Relationships, Scripture, and Morality require different teaching strategies depending on the developmental stage of the learners. For instance, while both younger and older adolescents need to know how to make moral decisions, older adolescents have a greater ability to analyze moral issues. It is also true that one should not make these age distinctions absolutely rigid. Two teenagers in the same group may be at quite different stages of faith development. The faith themes, therefore, represent content that is generally appropriate for youth within a range of years.

A theme does not necessarily represent a course unto itself. Some themes may require more than one course to accomplish. Other themes may be combined or spread out over several courses or program units. They might also provide the content for retreats, youth rallies, and “Super Sundays,” or be incorporated into service learning experiences and the reflection/discussion portion of meetings of small faith communities.

Finally, it should be noted that the U.S. bishops are developing doctrinal guidelines for Catholic secondary school religious education. If and when these guidelines become available, they may well impact or perhaps even replace the following themes.

Faith Themes for Younger Adolescents (ages 12-15 / grades 7-9)

- [Knowing and Following Jesus Christ](#)
- [Personal Growth](#)
- [Human Dignity and Human Sexuality](#)
- [Relationships with Others](#)
- [Prayer and Worship](#)
- [Service and Outreach](#)
- [Membership in the Church](#)
- [The New Testament in My Life](#)
- [Morality and Moral Decision-Making](#)

Faith Themes for Older Adolescents (ages 16-19 / grades 10-12)

- [Vocations and Life Choices](#)
- [Intimacy, Relationships, and Sexuality](#)
- [Christian Morality](#)
- [Understanding the Bible](#)
- [Prayer and Christian Spirituality](#)
- [Religious Traditions](#)
- [Peace and Justice](#)
- [Faith and Belief](#)

The following pages are devoted to each of these faith themes, one per page, including goals and objectives.

Younger Adolescents

KNOWING AND FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Part One, Section Two, Chapter Two: I Believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Develop a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Acquire an understanding of the Church's teachings about Jesus Christ.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Identify Jesus as a historical person.
- Explain the central teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and their implications for a life of discipleship.
- Explain the meaning of the paschal mystery and its implications for their lives.
- Identify several persons who are living examples of following Jesus' teachings.
- Tell the story of a saint who exemplifies a life of discipleship.
- Cite some personal examples of people through whom they have experienced Christ's presence.
- Cite ways that their parish community lives out the teachings of Jesus.
- Discuss how they see Jesus in their lives and how they can witness to their faith in Him.
- Pray to and with Jesus in various ways (e.g., shared spontaneous prayer, scripture meditation, Christian centering, etc.)

Younger Adolescents

PERSONAL GROWTH

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #355-#373)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Develop a sense of self that is informed by the Gospel.
- Understand the influence of family, peers/friends, the media, and culture on self-esteem.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- List the stages of human growth and development.
- Explain how Jesus is the best model of a fully human person.
- Recognize themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ through their baptism.
- Explain how friends and family influence their behavior.
- Describe ways the media attempts to influence their perception of happiness and fulfillment.
- Distinguish between their own personal values and those of their peers and culture.
- Name and explain differences in personality traits.
- Identify their own personality traits.
- Acknowledge their sinfulness while also realizing the immensity of God's mercy.
- Appreciate their intrinsic worth as a young man/woman created in the image of God.
- Define self-respect and personal integrity.
- Identify behaviors that demonstrate self-respect and personal integrity.
- Name personal strengths, weaknesses, and gifts.
- Develop skills for affirming others and sharing their faith.

Younger Adolescents

HUMAN DIGNITY AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #2258, #2331-#2363, #2520-#2527)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Recognize the different human experiences of love and how they reflect God's unconditional love.
- Understand that relationships have a sacred dimension.
- Develop a healthy and Christian attitude toward sexual morality.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Articulate the Church's teaching about the sacredness of all human life.
- Explain how God's love is reflected in their daily relationships.
- Identify people who exemplify God's love through their relationships with others.
- Identify sexuality as a gift from God.
- Distinguish between respectful and disrespectful expressions of sexual behaviors in various relationships, especially dating relationships.
- Describe the Catholic understanding of the meaning and purpose of sexual intercourse and explain why it only belongs in a committed marital relationship.
- Define chastity and explain its benefits.
- Define modesty and identify ways to act modestly in speech, dress, behavior, etc.
- Be able to critically evaluate the portrayal of sexuality in the media.
- Identify some forms of sexual stereotyping.

Younger Adolescents

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #2201-#2220)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Understand the nature and importance of healthy friendships and family relationships.
- Understand how families function.
- Develop respect for all people, especially those of other cultures and people with disabilities.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Identify qualities of healthy relationships (love, respect, honesty, trust, etc.) as exemplified in Scripture and Tradition.
- Evaluate a personal relationship by using the qualities of a healthy relationship.
- Relate Scripture stories and teachings to their own relationships.
- Explain methods for developing better communication with their parents.
- Identify positive ways of relating to their siblings and other members of their extended family.
- Practice skills for coping with conflicts with friends, parents, and other authority figures.
- Practice skills for achieving reconciliation with others.
- Explain how prejudice and stereotypes create barriers to relationships and identify ways to overcome them.
- Demonstrate accepting behaviors towards people of other cultures and people with disabilities.

Younger Adolescents

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery and Part Four: Christian Prayer)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Understand the essence of prayer as a personal encounter with God.
- Actively participate in experiences of communal and individual prayer.
- Appreciate the importance of liturgy and sacraments in living as a Catholic.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Distinguish between saying prayers and praying.
- Explain the forms of prayer: blessing, adoration, praise, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.
- Give personal examples of how symbols mediate the presence of God.
- Name and explain the symbolic actions in each of the seven sacraments.
- Explain the principles for celebrating liturgy well.
- Assist in preparing a liturgical celebration according to appropriate liturgical principles.
- Participate in a liturgical ministry related to their gifts.
- Compose a prayer in their own words.
- Design and lead a brief prayer service.
- Experience a variety of prayer styles from the Catholic tradition.

Younger Adolescents

SERVICE AND OUTREACH

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #2419-#2449)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Discuss Jesus' life as a model of justice.
- Discuss the Catholic stance on the biblical imperative to serve the poor and the powerless.
- Examine the Catholic tradition of service.
- Become familiar with the key themes of Catholic social teaching.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Describe teachings and activities from Jesus' life that exemplify a concern for social justice, e.g., the Sermon on the Mount.
- Identify teachings about justice found in the writings of the prophets.
- Explain Catholic teaching about service to the poor and powerless.
- Identify examples of social needs present in their community and activities for promoting justice which are taking place there.
- Experience doing service in the parish and the local community.
- Relate their service projects to Catholic social teaching.

Younger Adolescents

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Part One, Section Two, Article 9: “I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church”)

Program Goals

Younger Adolescents will:

- Understand their call to participate in the mission of the Church.
- Develop an appreciation of the role that the Church plays in their relationship with God.
- Acquire some of the skills that enable them to live as active members of the Catholic faith community.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Discuss the nature and purposes of community and the kinds of support that communities provide.
- Name and explain the mission, marks, and models of the Church.
- Explain the concept of the universal Church and how it relates to the diocese and the parish.
- Name several important things that Catholics do to express their faith.
- Describe their experiences of parish life and how it nourishes their relationship with God.
- Explain the major ministries of the parish.
- Participate in at least one ministry of the parish.
- Share their meaningful personal experiences/faith stories in a small-group setting.

Younger Adolescents

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY LIFE

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #101-#114 and #120-#133)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Understand the structure of the New Testament.
- Understand the New Testament as the inspired word of God and as the basis for the Catholic faith.
- Integrate the teachings of Jesus found in the New Testament into their own lives.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Locate specific passages in the New Testament.
- Outline the historical development of the books of the New Testament.
- Identify various literary forms in the New Testament.
- Name Jesus' central teachings in the New Testament.
- Identify the relationship between the teachings of Jesus and the beliefs of the Catholic Church.
- Recognize themselves in the lives of the people of the New Testament.
- Connect their life experiences with gospel values.
- Be able to use the New Testament for their prayer.

Younger Adolescents

MORALITY AND MORAL DECISION-MAKING

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Part Three: Life in Christ)

Program Goals

Younger adolescents will:

- Recognize the moral values in Jesus' teachings.
- Understand the tension between human freedom and responsibility.
- Understand the role a well-formed conscience plays in moral life.
- Understand how to make moral decisions based on the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Critique contemporary culture within a Catholic moral framework.

Objectives

Younger adolescents will be able to:

- Identify Scripture stories that exemplify Christian moral values.
- Identify experiences of conflict between personal freedom and responsibility.
- Identify various sources of influence on their moral values: family, peers, culture, the media, and the Catholic Christian tradition.
- Reflect on the meaning of conscience and how it relates to moral choices.
- Describe the nature of sin and the need for continuing conversion.
- Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to live holy lives.
- Utilize an appropriate process for making moral decisions.
- Apply Christian moral principles and values to the moral issues they confront in their daily lives (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, cheating, stealing, gossip, premarital sex, etc.).
- Demonstrate moral decision-making in relation to a personal experience.
- Critique contemporary media from a Catholic perspective.

Older Adolescents

VOCATIONS AND LIFE CHOICES

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #897-#933, #1533-#1589, #1601-#1658)

Program Goals

Older Adolescents will:

- Reflect on the direction of their lives, their values, and their goals in light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Understand the universal call to holiness which springs from baptism.
- Develop a clear understanding of the four vocations in which they can practice the Christian life of discipleship: single life, married life, religious life, and ordained ministry.
- Understand the Catholic vision of marriage.

Objectives

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Identify three of Jesus' primary values and explain their relationship to Christian lifestyles.
- List three primary personal values and explain how these values will influence their life plan and vocational choices.
- Choose one personal goal for the next five years and design a plan for reaching that goal.
- Practice the skills of decision-making and discernment, including the use of prayer, for making important vocational choices.
- Distinguish between a vocation and a career choice.
- Cite the opportunities and challenges of each of the four vocations: single life, married life, religious life, and ordained ministry.
- Explain the role of commitment in each of the four vocations.
- Identify how lay people carry out the mission of the Church in the world.
- List the various forms of lay ecclesial ministry.
- Explain the covenantal nature of Christian marriage.
- Explain the marriage preparation requirements of the Catholic Church.
- Identify how the Rite of Marriage reflects the Catholic Church's beliefs about this sacrament.

Older Adolescents

INTIMACY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND SEXUALITY

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #2197-#2233 and #2331-#2391)

Program Goals

Older adolescents will:

- Explore their relationships with God, self, and others.
- Develop communication skills for use in family, work place, and community.
- Develop responsible and meaningful relationships emphasizing, honesty, love, and respect.
- Understand the Catholic Church's teachings on human sexuality.
- Appreciate the significance of their families in their lives.

Objectives

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Practice active listening skills.
- Practice techniques for collaborating with others and coping with difficult situations.
- Practice peaceful conflict resolution techniques.
- Practice skills for achieving reconciliation with others.
- Share with another individual a personal experience of faith, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- Relate the Scriptures and sacraments to their own efforts to form healthy relationships.
- Identify the different kinds of love and describe their characteristics.
- Identify appropriate expressions of various degrees of intimacy in relationships, especially dating relationships.
- Examine the most important relationships in their lives and how these have impacted them.
- Identify and carry out a strategy for improving one personal relationship.
- Identify the traits of a healthy family.
- Explain how they can contribute to healthy family life.

Older Adolescents

CHRISTIAN MORALITY

(Catechism of the Catholic Church - Part Three: Life in Christ)

Program Goals

Older adolescents will:

- Recognize the moral values in Jesus' teachings.
- Understand the tension between human freedom and responsibility.
- Understand the role a well-formed conscience plays in moral life.
- Develop an interiorized, principled moral value system and recognize the call to holiness.
- Understand how to make moral decisions based on the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Critique contemporary culture within a Catholic moral framework.

Objectives

Older adolescents will:

- Identify Scripture stories that exemplify Christian moral values.
- Identify experiences of conflict between personal freedom and responsibility.
- Reflect on the meaning of conscience and how it relates to moral choices.
- Describe the nature of sin and the need for continuing conversion.
- Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to live holy lives.
- Explain the meaning of Christian virtue and its relationship to character.
- Utilize an appropriate process for making moral decisions.
- Apply Christian moral principles and values to the moral choices they confront in their daily lives (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, cheating, stealing, gossip, premarital sex, etc.).
- Apply a moral decision-making process to contemporary moral issues.
- Demonstrate moral decision-making in relation to a personal experience.
- Critique contemporary media from a Catholic perspective.

Older Adolescents

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #50-#133)

Program Goals

Older adolescents will:

- Develop a working knowledge of the historical development of the books of the Bible.
- Understand and appreciate the Bible as the inspired word of God.
- Understand the relationship of the Scriptures to the development of Christianity.
- Understand how to use the Bible to assist their own faith development.

Objectives

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Give examples of religious, moral, symbolic, and historical truth in the Bible.
- Identify various literary forms found in the Bible.
- Retell the major stories of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- Recognize the role that the Hebrew Scriptures played in the development of the Christian Scriptures.
- Outline the formation of the Christian Scriptures.
- Explain the stories of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures in their historical, social, and cultural contexts.
- Identify the scriptural basis for several major Catholic beliefs.
- Relate the life experience of the people of the Bible to their own experience.
- Experience the use of Scripture for personal prayer.
- Use the Bible to explain insights about their faith.

Older Adolescents

PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery and Part Four: Christian Prayer)

Program Goals

Older Adolescents will:

- Recognize God's loving presence in their lives.
- Develop their own preferred style of prayer that grows out of their experience of God.
- Become familiar with some of the major spiritual exercises within the Catholic tradition.

Objectives

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Tell stories about times in their lives when they were aware of God's presence.
- Describe and participate in four different methods of prayer and/or devotions common to the Catholic tradition.
- Explain the forms of prayer: blessing, adoration, praise, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.
- Name a story from the Scriptures where they identify with one of the characters.
- Experience the use of Scripture for personal prayer.
- Explain the significance of symbols and rituals in mediating the presence of God.
- Describe how symbols and rituals function in each of the sacraments of the Church.

Older Adolescents

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #74-#79, #813-#822, #836-#856, #1200-#1206)

Program Goals

Older Adolescents will:

- Better understand and appreciate the development of the Christian Tradition.
- Understand how the Christian Tradition relates to the religious traditions of other faiths.
- Appreciate the distinctive characteristics of Catholicism.

Objectives

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Identify major themes in the religious traditions of Christian and non-Christian faiths.
- Identify common symbols and practices among Christian and non-Christian faiths.
- Attend and reflect on a liturgical ceremony of a tradition other than their own.
- Participate in the liturgy of a Catholic rite other than the Roman rite.
- Explain the historical development of the Catholic Christian tradition.
- Discuss the relationship between the Catholic Christian tradition and the other major Western traditions.
- Compare and contrast their Catholic beliefs with those of other religious traditions.
- Participate in a sacramental preparation process for others in their parish community.
- Distinguish between and give examples of Tradition and traditions within the Catholic Church.

Older Adolescents

PEACE AND JUSTICE

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Paragraphs #337, #541-#550, #2258-#2267, #2302-#2317, #2401-#2449)

Program Goals

Older Adolescents will:

- Recognize the kinds of injustice in the world and understand their causes.
- Appreciate the power of the Gospel message to transform society.
- Become familiar with the heritage of Catholic social teaching.
- Participate in activities that promote justice and peace in their parish, community, nation, and the world.

Objectives:

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Discuss the interdependence among all peoples and between humankind and the earth's environment.
- Name some of the effects of violence and injustice on humanity.
- Articulate an understanding of the Kingdom of God.
- Relate Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God to contemporary social issues.
- Name some of the significant documents which present the Catholic Church's social teaching.
- Articulate the basic principles of Catholic social teaching.
- Use Catholic social teaching to analyze contemporary social issues.
- Explain the difference between justice and charity.

Older Adolescents

FAITH AND BELIEF

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* - Part One: The Profession of Faith)

Program Goals

Older adolescents will:

- Understand the distinction between faith and religion.
- Understand how doctrines develop from reflection on the experience and stories of the Christian community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Recognize how the central Christian beliefs respond to fundamental human questions.
- Understand how the Catholic faith influences their personal beliefs and actions.

Objectives

Older adolescents will be able to:

- Define the terms faith, Christian belief, doctrine, and dogma.
- Explain why it is important to build a personal relationship with Jesus and with the Christian community.
- Summarize and explain their personal religious beliefs and relate them to the main beliefs of the Catholic faith.
- Explain the Christian belief in the importance of baptized individuals belonging to a faith community.
- Give reasons why adolescents choose to participate in their parish community or decide to distance themselves from it.
- Explain the Christian tradition's teachings about the importance of lifelong, continual growth in faith.
- Give reasons for trusting in God, especially in times of doubt, temptation, suffering, or hardship.



VII. Models of Adolescent Faith Formation within Comprehensive Youth Ministry

Developers of curricula for adolescent faith formation have at their disposal a variety of different models and approaches, each of which has its strengths and weaknesses. They are explored in detail in this section:

1. **Mini-Courses**
2. **Small Faith Communities**
3. **Mentoring**
4. **Retreats**
5. **Justice and Service Programming**
6. **Mission Trips & Work Camps**
7. **Super Sundays**
8. **Intensive Summer Programs**
9. **PSR Classes**
10. **Confirmation and RCIA**
11. **Supplemental Approaches:**
 - Family-Based, Intergenerational
 - Rites of Passage
 - Pilgrimages, Encuentros, Conferences, Rallies & Apostolic Movements
 - Programs of Leadership Development and Ministry Formation
 - Religious Recognition Programs for Boy and Girl Scouts

Important Considerations

When considering these models and approaches, catechetical leaders should pay attention to these important considerations:

- **Whole Community Catechesis:** The life, worship, community and service of a parish provide the rich subject matter for catechesis throughout the year – if leaders have a vision of “whole community catechesis,” in which the faith community itself becomes the primary curriculum and living context of catechesis. The models described below, if they are to be effective, should be integrated into the fabric of the life of the faith community, and responsive to the liturgical seasons, feasts, celebrations and major events that punctuate a year in the life of a Catholic parish. See [Section IV. Keys to Effective Faith Formation](#) for a description of “whole community catechesis.”

- **Matching Models to Catechetical Objectives:** It is important to note that no one model is necessarily better than the others. Ideally, several models will be used in combination, determined by goals, needs, interests, available resources and time considerations. Moreover, certain models are better at accomplishing particular cognitive, affective or behavioral objectives than are others. See [How to Select the Right Models on page 74](#) for assistance in selecting the best model(s) for your situation.
- **Cultural and Ethnic Diversity:** Our catechetical efforts should include attention to the reality of the culturally diverse society in which we live. Catechesis and all ministry efforts are “multi-cultural when [they focus] on a specialized ministry to youth of particular racial and ethnic cultures *and* [promote] multi-cultural awareness among all youth.” (*Renewing The Vision*, p. 22) By affirming and utilizing the values and traditions of ethnic cultures, young people come to a greater appreciation of their heritage and identity, and feel empowered, valued and welcomed by a universal Church which celebrates unity within diversity. It is incumbent upon *all* catechetical leaders “to incorporate ethnic traditions, values, and rituals into ministerial programming; teach about the variety of ethnic cultures in the Catholic Church; provide opportunities for cross-cultural experiences; and foster acceptance and respect for cultural diversity.” (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 23)
- **Archdiocesan [Decree on Child Protection](#):** Catechetical leaders must carefully attend to the provisions of the archdiocesan [Decree on Child Protection](#) as they contemplate models or approaches that employ individualized or small group settings.

1. Mini-Courses

This approach involves short catechetical courses (e.g., 4-8 weeks, one evening per week, 1½ - 2½ hour sessions) dealing with targeted themes. For instance, a parish may choose to offer a 6-week mini-course on Wednesday evenings focusing on morality, take a month break, then offer a 4-week mini-course on sexuality and dating.

Periodic assessments and surveys help to discern which faith themes are most likely to capture the attention of youth while addressing their developmental, spiritual and catechetical needs. Attention to the archdiocesan recommendations regarding faith themes appropriate for younger and older adolescents can assist catechetical leaders in this discernment.

The mini-course model is usually part of a larger overall program of comprehensive youth ministry. Typically, community-building activities, parish activities and functions, service projects and spiritual programs are planned for the periods between one mini-course and the next.

Mini-courses can offer young people an opportunity to gather in small groups on a regular basis to share fellowship, support one another and grow in faith. However, if participation depends upon who signs up, young people could well find themselves in a whole new group with a new adult facilitator every 4-8 weeks.

Advantages of the Mini-Course Model:

- It allows for a greater integration of youth ministry and catechesis, since other youth ministry activities can be scheduled in the weeks between courses.
- It can create greater investment and ownership on the part of both youth and their parents, since their needs and values are given serious attention through the whole process of surveying and discussion which precedes the construction of the curriculum.
- Mini-courses typically include a thought-out scope and sequence.
- Since courses are time-limited, participants are less likely to become uninterested and bored. It is also easier to commit to a mini-course than to an ongoing one.
- Young people enjoy the exercise of free choice as they select the mini-courses of most interest to them.
- This model is ideally suited to the parish context where attendance is voluntary and access to young people is not a foregone conclusion.
- Adult facilitators/catechists typically vary from mini-course to mini-course; in this way they can teach courses for which they already have the necessary education, training, skill or interest.
- Shorter courses allow for more time to do planning for creative programming.
- Mini-courses reinforce the notion that catechesis and religious education are life-long processes. Since mini-courses mirror the most frequent model of adult faith formation programming, young people will be formed by the process itself along with the content.
- High quality resources and texts are available (e.g., Saint Mary's Press' *Horizons Program*) that are based on and support this approach.
- Expert guest presenters can be enlisted from outside the parish to conduct particular mini-courses.

Some Concerns about the Mini-Course Model:

- It requires skillful marketing on an ongoing basis. Registration can be an ongoing challenge if participants are constantly signing up for new classes.
- The format limits the amount of time available to cover any topic in depth.
- It calls for a variety of trained adult facilitators who have expertise in a broad range of theme areas.
- Participants may end up with major gaps in their religious knowledge if the mini-courses fail to cover a broad range of faith themes or if attendance is sporadic.

- Lacking informed supervision and planning, mini-courses may target “fad” topics, thereby leaving very significant gaps in participants’ faith formation.
- With significant turnover in catechists and participants, young people may not experience the benefits of long-term, in-depth association with peers and adult facilitators;
- Other parish-wide activities and programs which complement the mini-course model must be offered and promoted, lest youth come to expect that their only involvement in parish life consists of class attendance.

2. Small Faith Communities

Small faith communities foster faith in the context of a more intimate, caring community. In this model, the young people of a parish or school are typically invited to join smaller groups numbering eight to ten members. Depending upon the program and its participants, small faith communities tend to meet bi-weekly for 1½ or 2 hours. Less frequent meetings make it difficult for the group to gel into a community. Periodically, small groups may be brought together to share in a large group setting, or to engage in some kind of social or worship activity. This furthers the experience of faith through the larger Church. In a further variation, in at least one model currently in effect in one of our parishes, participants regularly gather in a large group for a brief, special presentation that establishes the theme for the evening, after which participants then break off into their small groups.

Groups are typically led by a trained adult facilitator, or perhaps a pair of adults, or even a married couple. Sometimes an adult and a youth will team up to provide leadership. Less frequently, small groups are conducted by trained peer leaders (note: see caution regarding youth leaders in the list of concerns below).

Groups may be arranged at random, or by grade, interest, location, or some other unifying feature. Adult facilitators are often expected to remain with their group throughout the entire four years of high school for the sake of continuity. Small faith communities frequently meet in a home, usually that of the adult facilitator, which fosters a sense of comfort and safety. Genuine shared experiences of faith can take place because trust has been carefully and intentionally nurtured. Participants enjoy a depth of interpersonal interaction and affection, and are willing to share their experiences of faith in God honestly and straightforwardly with each other.

A typical small faith community meeting might include: a general sharing of each teen’s thoughts and feelings since the last time they met; shared prayer; discussion of a particular faith theme; a presentation or discussion that connects life experience with the Church’s story; a resolution or some kind of response by individuals or the entire group to grow in discipleship. Catechetical programs or textbook series are frequently used as a starting point. However, when youth are invited to offer suggestions for topics in addition to those already planned for the year, they come to know that their opinions and life experiences are valued. Through connections made with the Church’s story, they discover and find friendship with God in and through their experiences of love and faith fostered in the group.

Advantages of the Small Faith Community Model

- This model offers a scheduling alternative to the “once-a-week-for-an-hour” structure of traditional classes. Because the small faith groups typically meet longer, increased flexibility of structuring generates momentum and longer activities can be attempted. For instance, prayer and socializing can more readily be built into the lesson.
- Small faith groups build great depth of trusting relationships between teens and their leaders over an extended period of time.
- Thematic content is balanced by relational ministry.
- This format provides credible adult and teen role models of faith for youth.
- Each young person can be known personally. Faith is more readily passed on when the Good News can be addressed to the unique individual situation of the hearer.
- Teens in leadership learn some vital discipleship skills: articulation of their faith experience, group facilitation, listening, peer ministry and collaboration.
- Facilitators of small groups don’t need the skills to lead large groups – thus leader/catechist formation is easier.

Some Concerns about the Small Faith Community Model

- Parishes may have difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of adults willing to make the commitment of time and energy necessary to make this model work.
- Small group leaders need training and ongoing support in order to be effective. Because of the strong emphasis on establishing long-term relationships, there is an increased need for professional supervision and accountability on the part of the catechetical leader or coordinating youth minister. Special care must be taken to ensure that group leaders are acting appropriately within the scope of their role as catechists and mentors.
- Special care should also be taken with teen facilitators, both in terms of preparation and ongoing support and accountability. If the content of group sharing and discussion has the potential to become deeply personal or emotional, an adult facilitator should, without exception, be present in the group.
- Facilitators may overemphasize devotions or interpersonal sharing to the exclusion of catechetical content.
- There will always be teens whose jobs or activities will prevent them from being regular, committed participants in the small group – resulting either in teens being excluded, or in intermittent, unpredictable participation on the part of some.

- Care must be taken to ensure that the small faith groups remain connected with the larger Church. Other parish-wide activities, outreaches and programs must be made available and attractive to teens in small groups lest they (and the faith community) mistakenly expect the small group to be able to respond to all their faith needs.
- Although youth ministry programming hosted in private homes can benefit from the comfortable and welcoming environment there, this practice can pose special problems. Regarding the Archdiocesan [*Decree on Child Protection*](#), for instance, unless the catechetical leader or youth minister are always present at such meetings, how will parish leaders know that there are two adults actually present for all sessions? Similarly, since some homes are safer than others, how does one go about assessing homes for safety and suitability? In addition, if catechetical sessions take place away from the parish and are not subject to the immediate supervision of parish leaders, there is no way of knowing the content or quality of such sessions. For these reasons, parishes have generally opted away from regular home-based programming except on a special, occasional basis that can be supervised by staff-level personnel. Parishes that take seriously their mission of evangelizing youth will invest in comfortable, homey and hospitable meeting spaces for young people for their regular youth ministry and catechetical sessions at the parish.

3. Mentoring

Mentoring adolescents in faith can be both rewarding and challenging. It requires a unique commitment – a covenant, if you will – of adults and youth to walk together on the journey of faith. Unlike most of the other models presented in this document, mentoring has as its starting point a specific real or felt need of an individual young person. Discernment of an individual youth’s needs is a crucial first step in pairing up youth and adults. In the traditional mentoring situation one youth is paired up with one adult. However, it is not uncommon for two or three youth who share similar needs and interests to be paired with the same adult. The duration of the mentoring relationship depends upon its goal(s).

The following are typical steps of a mentoring process:

1. Individual needs, issues, concerns and interests of youth are discerned.
2. Gifts, talents, interests and expertise of adults are discerned and training of adults is provided.
3. Youth and adults with correlating needs, interests and gifts are paired up with each other.
4. Orientation is provided for youth and adults regarding the process, requirements and responsibilities of the participants. Goal setting takes place.

5. An agreement or covenant is made between mentor and youth(s) and with the supervisor of the program with regard to duration of the mentoring relationship, frequency and location of meetings and specific individual responsibilities, etc.
6. Mentors and youth(s) begin to meet regularly to achieve their goal(s).
7. Regular check-ins with a supervisor ensures that the adult mentor and youth mentee remain on track.

Adult mentors are specifically trained to hear and respond to the questions and concerns youth have about their developing faith. Adult mentors must have ready access to appropriate resources. The “curriculum” is focused on youth needs which are placed before caring adults. It is the job of the adult mentors to help their youth(s) to discover the ways in which God has spoken and continues to speak to them. In a very real way, adult mentors act as interpreters and guides of the presence of God in the lives of young people. They offer suggestions, insights, challenges and training in discipleship. The method and strategy may include scripture study, liturgical training, dealing with life issues, service projects, exploration of Catholic social teaching, pastoral care for hurting teens and families – and much more.

Adult mentors serve as guarantors that faithful living is a worthwhile goal and discipleship in Jesus changes the world. The young person receives a caring ear, unconditional love, challenging questions, stretching experiences – with an adult who is a role model of faithful living, with the wisdom that comes from age and experience.

Advantages of Mentoring

- A more comprehensive approach to youth ministry is engendered because the adult mentor acts as the agent and sponsor of youthful participation in the faith community.
- A holistic approach to discipleship in Christ Jesus is balanced between theological discussion and practical experience. Young people not only learn the faith, but also how to live out that faith in conversation with their adult mentors.
- Because the “curriculum” is goal-specific, the mentoring situation often has an established beginning and end. Many adults who have a limited amount of time to give will be drawn to participate.
- The program requires the participation of a broad range of adults who bring all sorts of expertise, interests, gifts and talents. Many caring adults will appreciate the flexibility of the program and recognition of their unique gifts and skills. Often, it has been a struggle to help adults connect their “secular” lives to their “faith” lives. This program gives them the opportunity to match their avocation or job-related skills with their vocation as disciples of Christ.

Some Concerns about Mentoring

- Careful attention must be paid to the Archdiocesan *Decree on Child Protection*, which mandates that at least two adults must be present for any activity for children. Mentor meetings must take place with more than one adult present, which is possible if meetings occur in the context of a broader gathering in a public setting. Mentors must not meet with participants in their own homes, or set up private meetings away from the church.
- Since the curriculum is taken from the life situations of youth, adult mentors must be trained sufficiently in order to integrate the principles outlined in official Church documents on adolescent catechesis and the core content of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in their dealings with youth.
- Not everyone is suited to mentoring. Special care must be taken to ensure that the match between adults and youth is beneficial and healthy. The policies outlined in the Archdiocesan *Decree on Child Protection* must be rigorously adhered to.
- Because not every adolescent needs or wants to be in a mentoring situation, other catechetical strategies must be made available to them.
- Careful planning and discerning of the needs and gifts of the participants is crucial. Done poorly, the mentoring situation could cause more harm than good.
- Mentors must be trained to recognize the deeper needs or warning signs of at-risk youth so that appropriate referrals may be made. Mentors who are not professional counselors must acknowledge their limitations and consistently seek appropriate action whenever situations warrant it.
- Ongoing training and periodic check-ins are absolutely necessary for the success of the program and the participants. If the program is large with many participants, constant attention to supervision remains a challenge for DREs and Directors of Youth Ministry who have many other tasks to handle.

4. Retreats

Retreats are perhaps the most effective programs a parish can offer its youth. Retreats create short-term small faith communities where faith questions can be explored in an in-depth way over an extended period of time, usually a weekend. Because retreats are often evangelizing events, they intentionally draw together adolescents' lived experiences and relationships and place them in the context of the divine mystery.

Just as there are many different catechetical approaches, there are many different kinds of retreats. Some retreats have been known to draw several dozens of teens into one shared experience. Others are intentional about keeping numbers small. Much depends upon the theme, the psychological and spiritual development of the participants and the goals of the retreat. Whatever the circumstances, retreats often provide intense and profound experiences of God's loving presence in the lives of young people.

Advantages of Retreats

- Retreats can be designed specifically to meet the age/development/spirituality of the participants.
- The thematic approach in an intensive time frame allows for a thorough examination of the subject.
- Since most retreats occur off-site, getting away for a few days enhances the experience of “doing something unique and different.”
- Like intensive summer programs, retreats often mix different types of activities together in order that different learning styles are engaged.
- When youth are voluntarily present, they usually are committed to active participation and invest themselves in the success of the program.

Some Concerns about Retreats

- Retreats can be costly. The rental of the facility, transportation and feeding a group of growing teens over an entire weekend can strain personal and parish budgets.
- Retreats held at a site other than the teens’ own parish raise a number of legal and liability issues related to transportation and supervision. Please refer to the [Youth Retreat Resource Manual](#) from the [Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry](#) for detailed information.
- Some adults are more comfortable with teaching than they are with witnessing or openly sharing their own faith story. Presenting one’s own witness talk can be much more threatening than transmitting doctrine. Other retreat dynamics like prayer experiences, small group discussions, community building activities and the like may call upon adult and youth leaders to take on tasks for which they are unprepared. Therefore, special training for both adult and youth leaders is necessary.
- Young people may be distracted by the novel environment, and the overnight stay can lead to special discipline challenges.
- It is unrealistic to expect young people (and adult leaders, too) to attend several retreats during the year so that they might be exposed to several faith themes. Therefore, the retreat model works best when it supports other catechetical models. It is generally not recommended that retreats become the primary mode of catechesis.
- When young people attend a retreat offered outside of their parish and led by persons unconnected to their parish, care must be taken to help retreatants connect their retreat experiences, learning and development back to their ongoing lives in their faith community. Unfortunately, such retreats can have the opposite effect, drawing young people away from their parishes or even competing with parishes for their time and commitment.

5. Justice and Service Programming

“Faith in action” is the guiding premise for justice and service programming. Involving young people in service to others engages them in discipleship. Learning to serve and serving to learn are mutually inclusive opportunities for young people to discover biblical principles regarding the call to justice and the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching while acting as God’s agent of justice, peace and forgiveness in service to others.

The “Pastoral Circle” (*based on the work of Peter Henriot and Joseph Holland and adapted by Thomas Bright and John Roberto*) describes a process for justice and service programming. This four-step catechetical model provides opportunities for involvement, exploration, reflection and action which lead to growth in awareness of social injustice and the ability/skills to positively impact areas of social injustice:

- *Involvement* asks participants to get in touch with their own experiences of social justice. Involvement asks the question, “What is going on here?”
- *Exploration* widens the reflections on their own experiences to examine the relationships between the values, structures, ideologies, etc., that cause injustice. Exploration asks the question, “Why does this happen?”
- *Reflection* examines experiences through the lenses of Scripture and Catholic social teaching, and allows participants to discern how our faith and lifestyle motivates us to respond. Reflection asks the question, “As a Catholic Christian, what did I learn? How did I grow?”
- *Action* is the crucial fourth step and the culminating purpose of reflection and exploration. While complex social issues rarely result in simple solutions, it is possible to make some kind of positive and effective response. This step helps people to identify the particular role they can play in weakening or eliminating injustice. Action asks the question, “What are we, as a Catholic Christian faith community, going to do about it?”

The response of action inevitably leads to more *involvements* which call for more *exploration, reflection* and *action*, each time building upon previous insights and experiences, hence the “Pastoral Circle.”

Justice and service programming formats vary. A popular format is a variation of the intensive summer program model. For a week or two during the summer, young people are gathered daily (or every other weekday) to participate in the Pastoral Circle process. Usually, service projects and sites have been prearranged. Part of the day is spent exploring issues, then participants go to the prearranged site to serve. They gather back at the end of the day for debriefing and reflection on what they experienced and observed at the service site.

More typically, justice and service programming takes place as one-time events sprinkled throughout the calendar year. Opportunities to serve at a soup kitchen, food pantry, nursing home, etc., accompanied by reflection before and debriefing afterward, mark most efforts.

There are many opportunities outside the parish for groups to go on service excursions to near-and-far-away places. [*T.A.C.K.L.E. \(Teens Advocating Change through Knowledge, Leadership and Experience\)*](#), an Archdiocesan program, and [*Young Neighbors in Action*](#), a program of the Center for Ministry Development, are just two of many week-long inner-city service opportunities. Mission trips and work camps are explored in more detail in the next section.

Advantages of Justice and Service Programming

- Young people learn to “walk the walk while talking the talk.”
- Youth have personal experiences of empowerment and the ability to participate in the transformation of society into the Reign of God.
- The Pastoral Circle allows for intentional catechesis about biblical principles and our rich church tradition of Catholic social teaching.
- Young people and adults are generally already predisposed to “doing something” to make the world a better place. They want to be asked to serve but they want assurances that their service is meaningful. Justice and service programming supplies the means for purposeful service.
- Teens and adults learn vital skills of discipleship: looking at the world with God’s eyes and being moved to compassionate action for the benefit of God’s children.

Some Concerns about Justice and Service Programming

- Not all youth will be available to participate in a week-long program. Other service opportunities must be made available to them.
- Like the retreat model, larger service opportunities such as mission trips, can be cost restrictive.
- Participating in a service project outside of the teens’ local community or in a foreign country raises a number of legal and liability issues related to transportation and supervision. Please refer to [*Learning through Service: A Guide to Immersion Trips and Extended Service Projects for Youth*](#) for more information. It is available from the archdiocesan Mission Office or the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.
- Justice and Service programming is one of many catechetical efforts. It cannot stand alone as the sole means of catechesis for adolescents in a faith community.

6. Mission Trips & Work Camps

Service learning can take place in powerfully effective ways through mission trips and work camps. These have become normal fixtures in many parish summer youth ministry calendars across the archdiocese, and can be life-changing moments in the lives of young people.

Mission trips can be either domestic or international. They are frequently arranged in conjunction with a sponsoring organization, often a religious community like the Comboni Missionaries, the Franciscans, Glenmary or Maryknoll. They can last as little as a weekend, or as long as a month, although the typical length is one or two weeks. There are as many different kinds of experiences as there are different kinds of missionary activity. Participants may find themselves restoring housing in Appalachia, teaching in a Vacation Bible School on an Indian reservation, or serving food in the inner city.

Work camps are relatively new experiences for young people. Typically scheduled during the summer months when young people are more available, work camps are week-long, structured programs of service, prayer, fellowship, religious education and reflection. In short, a work camp provides a complete and well-organized program of service and formation for youth. Rather than having to plan all of the complex logistics of a mission trip, adult leaders can opt into a work camp package that makes all of the arrangements for you. In preparation for a work camp, adult leaders typically need to attend to fund-raising to meet the substantial per person fee, transportation, and collecting tools and supplies. Service sites and the entire program during the week away are planned and coordinated by the work camp staff. An example is *Young Neighbors in Action*, a work camp conducted by the Center for Ministry Development. Information about opportunities such as these is available from the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry.

Those wishing to do mission trips or work camps with young people should contact the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry or the Mission Office for their resource entitled *Learning through Service: A Guide to Immersion Trips and Extended Service Projects for Youth*, containing vital information on legal and liability issues, insurance, transportation, chaperons, etc., as well as essential planning fundamentals related to Catholic Social Teaching.

Advantages of Mission Trips & Work Camps

- Since both mission trips and work camps typically involve an extended immersion in a very different socio-economic, cultural or ethnic world, participants find many of their fundamental assumptions about life challenged. Such experiences are ripe moments for conversion into a deeper appreciation of the prophetic dimensions of the Gospel.
- Groups that share such experiences tend to bond deeply. Fast friends in faith for life often emerge from these kinds of experiences.
- It is not unusual for young people to come to a clearer sense of a personal call

or vocation to ministry or service by virtue of such experiences.

- Both mission trips and work camps typically involve service to the poor – thus, not only are the poor served, but participants deepen the kind of solidarity with the poor that is at the heart of much of Catholic social teaching.
- Interdenominational Christian work camps can provide a wonderful context for ecumenical interchange and a chance for Catholic youth to encounter and learn more about the faith of other Christian denominations.

Some Concerns about Mission Trips & Work Camps

- A great deal of preparation, advance planning and fund-raising usually precedes these events. Typically adult leaders need to arrange for transportation, lodging, food, and secure building supplies, lumber, tools, etc., as well.
- Since such programs are so time- and resource-intensive, they can have a detrimental effect on other dimensions of the comprehensive youth ministry effort in a parish or school.
- Safety is always a very important consideration in traveling with young people. This concern is amplified exponentially if the destination is a third-world country, or a location with little or no access to health care, or a place subject to political unrest or exotic health threats. Adult leaders must exercise great care in selecting destinations, in working with reputable sponsoring organizations, and broadly, in ensuring that all participants will return safe and sound.
- Both Protestant and Catholic organizations sponsor mission trips and work camps. If a parish is contemplating a Protestant-sponsored trip, leaders need to thoroughly check out the theological assumptions and doctrinal content that their young people may encounter as part of the experience. As a general rule, Catholic-sponsored programs will adhere to the principles of Catholic social teaching – one less thing for adult leaders to be concerned about.
- The cost of mission trips and work camps can be prohibitive for groups or individuals.

7. Super Sundays

This model evolved in the late 1970's as a way to make religious education more appealing to youth, and to reverse the decline in attendance many parishes were experiencing. The model is not currently much used, yet there remain several parishes in our area that continue to utilize it due to its effectiveness in evangelization and its capacity to draw large numbers of young people.

In a typical Super Sunday, an aspect of the gospel message is proclaimed to young people through interactive, exciting, high-energy programming. The format usually

consists of a block of time on a Sunday afternoon and/or evening on a monthly basis through the school year (e.g., 3-7 p.m.). A late morning through early afternoon schedule is also sometimes used (e.g., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Activities may include: icebreakers and community building activities, fun skits, witness talks, slide shows, small group sharing and discussions, a major presentation (speaker or video), Eucharist (or prayer service) and dinner/refreshments. Monthly sessions typically revolve around one topic or theme, e.g. drugs/alcohol, sex and dating, parent/family communication, decision-making, or an article of the faith. These once-a-month sessions are supplemented with other activities and programs offered throughout the week for those youth who wish to explore their faith in more depth.

Advantages of the Super Sunday Model

- Large gatherings of young people are attractive to adolescents. Often, youth will come to an event solely because their friends are going.
- Highly interactive community-building activities, a key element in this model, respond well to the adolescent need for peer interaction.
- The evangelizing nature of this model assists in leading young people to conversion experiences which, in turn, challenge them to move toward more in-depth catechesis.
- Teenagers see the Super Sunday as something different, novel and exciting. The program lends itself to being publicized as an “event,” rather than just another religious education class.

Some Concerns about the Super Sunday Model

- Since Super Sundays typically take place once a month, a youth who misses one or two sessions may go without some form of religious education for months at a time.
- Super Sundays typically have no scope or sequence, that is, no coherent progression from one topic to the next. A program on “dating” could well be followed by a lesson on the Stations of the Cross. There is a tendency to choose a lot of topics which will grab attention rather than focus on a very few topics which are explored in depth.
- Weekly or bi-weekly in-depth catechetical sessions must supplement this program for young people to grow in faith and discipleship.
- At the end of four years, youth have received a smattering of teaching on many unrelated subjects. It is questionable whether a young person would have a solid grasp of basic catechetical themes if only exposed to Super Sundays.

8. Intensive Summer Programs

Young people are so busy during the school year that they may have little opportunity or incentive to attend regularly scheduled classes or meetings. Their

availability increases during the summer months – particularly for youth in grades seven through ten. Many parents look for enrichment opportunities for their children to fill their long summer days, and will actively encourage them to participate. In this way, a catechetical intensive summer program can effectively meet the needs of parents and youth.

Intensive summer programs are usually one- or two-week, parish-based, intensive catechetical experiences, normally scheduled on weekdays (Monday thru Friday; or Monday, Wednesday and Friday). Daytime schedules vary: some camps meet only in the mornings, some all day, some in the evenings.

It is not unusual for an intensive summer program to schedule to utilize a variety of approaches and formats: community-building activities, music, arts & crafts, service projects, bible study, prayer experiences, etc. Young adolescents in junior high are particularly attracted to this approach since it meets their adolescent needs for positive social interaction with adults and peers and offers them a unique experience of meaningful participation in their faith community. Older adolescents may find it difficult to attend because of summer jobs. The hallmarks of effective intensive summer program catechesis are high-energy, high-involvement, fast-paced, yet meaningful experiences which allow young adolescents to explore their faith in a variety of different activities which speak to a particular faith theme or themes.

Advantages of the Intensive Summer Program Model

- Young people who normally cannot attend classes or meetings during the school year because of other commitments have another option.
- Adults and older adolescents who cannot commit to facilitating or teaching during the school year may be available as well.
- The length of the day allows for extended exploration, discussion and sharing of faith issues (as opposed to the “let’s get all that we can into them in one hour” approach).
- The mixture of activities ensures that all learning styles (multiple intelligences) are engaged.
- Parishes can partner with each other in a way that traditional catechesis may not facilitate.
- Because the content is presented thematically over the course of the program, young people receive a thorough rendering of the subject.

Some Concerns about the Intensive Summer Program Model

- Generally speaking, this approach has greater appeal to junior high youth, lesser for senior high youth.
- Not all young adolescents will be available for or attracted to this format – other catechetical experiences should be made available to them.

- Participants in intensive summer programs will need to be engaged in meaningful parish activities during the school year as well. Pairing this approach with others mentioned in this document, such as mentoring or retreats, allows youth to remain connected to the life of the faith community and gives them further opportunities to be formed in their faith.

9. PSR Classes

PSR (Parish School of Religion) classes are offered by some of the parishes of the Archdiocese for grades 9-12. The typical format of this approach is a one-hour class held weekly throughout the school year. Students gather at the parish in groups according to grade level with an adult catechist. Textbooks typically provide structure and content to classes.

Advantages of PSR Classes

- The schooling approach is familiar to both adults and youth.
- In areas of the Archdiocese where there is a long tradition and strong parental support for this approach, attendance may be quite high (typically in rural areas with little local access to Catholic secondary schools).
- Textbooks and teachers' manuals provide approved content and clear structure. Most catechists can use the teachers' manuals with a minimum of formal training.
- Management is simple because classes occur on a regular basis on a specified day of the week.
- Other events (e.g. service, prayer, etc.) may be added to provide variety and breadth to the program.

Some Concerns about PSR Classes

- Except in areas of the Archdiocese where there is a strong tradition of this approach – reinforced by potent parental support – attendance can be extremely low. Numbers of participants typically drop off dramatically each year as young people move from junior high through senior high school. Many parishes have completely discontinued this approach during the high school years due to poor attendance. Similarly, Confirmation programs that utilize this approach may enjoy strong participation leading up to the sacrament, but little or no participation afterwards.
- This format tends to focus narrowly on the cognitive dimensions of education. While some individual catechists can supplement the material to take into account the faith needs of their students, untrained and/or unseasoned catechists will likely not have the skills or resources to do so.
- Textbooks may not engage the real faith needs of adolescents. Without skilled and seasoned catechists who can translate lesson plans into effective learning/growth experiences, textbooks may be more of a hindrance than a help.

- The one-hour time slot is typically inadequate to the development and presentation of the material, and leaves little or no time for community-building, prayer, experiential learning activities, and the like. Catechists often find themselves frustrated by too little class time, and too much material that they feel obliged to cover.
- This approach can be insensitive to the fact that during the school year young people spend the better part of their waking hours in classrooms, and may have little or no inclination to spend more time in a classroom. Although they may be very interested in growing in their faith, the prospect of one more weekly class can be abhorrent to many youth.
- Even in areas where this approach generates high attendance, it is worth raising the question as to whether this approach supports or detracts from comprehensive youth ministry. If a parish's youth ministry efforts are limited to religion classes, it will likely be marginally effective in passing on the faith.

10. Confirmation and RCIA

In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati youth who were baptized as Catholics during infancy may be confirmed between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Please refer to [*Sacraments for Young People*](#) (Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, 2005) for the current archdiocesan guidelines regarding preparation for and celebration of this sacrament. Ideally, Confirmation preparation occurs within the context of a comprehensive youth ministry program which reflects the principles of adolescent faith formation discussed in parts III and IV of this present document. It should never be the sole catechetical program available for the youth of the parish. A well-designed process will inspire teenagers to continue to grow in their faith and scrupulously avoid the impression that reception of the sacrament marks the end of their religious education.

When teenagers seek to become members the Catholic Church, they must participate in the stages and rituals of the RCIA process of the parish. However, catechetical leaders and directors of youth ministry should collaborate to make appropriate adaptations that respond to the developmental needs of youth. Adolescent catechumens and candidates should be introduced to other young people in the parish and be invited to join the parish's youth ministry program so that they enjoy peer support during the process. Careful selection of sponsors who relate well to teenagers will also help to ensure that they have a positive experience during the catechumenate.

11. Supplemental Approaches

The following are not broad enough to be considered models of adolescent catechesis; however, they may be effectively utilized in tandem with the models described above to reinforce and further develop catechetical themes.

- **Family-Based, Intergenerational Resources, Programs & Activities**

It is a common complaint among catechists and youth ministers that their efforts seem too often to go unsupported by parents and families. Moreover, catechetical leaders readily acknowledge the powerful influence that parents and families have on the faith development of their youth, for good or ill. Yet they often feel helpless in this regard.

Resources are available to assist catechetical leaders in having an impact on the faith of parents and families – and thus on young people in those families. Perhaps the most significant resource in this regard is *Family Works*, published by the Center for Ministry Development. This 3-inch binder is packed with everything from intergenerational learning sessions to family prayer and service activities.

Catechists and youth ministers can use resources such as these to augment their lessons with young people. With sufficient forethought and planning, parents and families can be invited into exploring the same faith themes as their teenagers. Topics pass from catechetical sessions to the dinner table, and learning at church is shared and reinforced at home. In this way, the faith formation of a teenager becomes a shared project of parents, families, catechists and youth ministers – as it should be.

- **Rites of Passage**

Through special *Rites of Passage* programming, African-American young people come to know, value, celebrate and utilize the rich texture of their culture and make the connection with their ancestral heritage, their faith in God and identity as members of a faith community. *Rites of Passage* give rise to and celebrate transformation. They present an orderly process of maturation through which youth are prepared for adulthood. Through ritual, ceremony, testing and teachings, *Rites of Passage* assist young people, individually or as a group, to grow in knowledge and faith in order to navigate skillfully through life's challenges.

Elements of *Rites of Passage* include weekly or bi-weekly meetings, usually over the course of a year; catechesis based on the *Nguzo Saba* values with appropriate biblical references; articulation of Africentric perspectives, especially those which recall and celebrate ancestral kinship; challenges or “tests” which enable youth to acquire skills which are needed in adulthood; and ceremonies or rituals within the faith community that celebrate the young person's emergence into full adulthood in the community.

Catechesis which includes *Rites of Passage* can uniquely address the needs and culture of African-American youth and may assist them in successfully moving from childhood towards whole, healthy, responsible Catholic Christian adulthood.

- **Pilgrimages, Encuentros, Conferences, Rallies & Apostolic Movements**

Even with solid catechetical programming in place, parishes recognize the value of augmenting their efforts by participating in diocesan, regional and national faith-enriching activities and programs:

- Parishes looking to expose their youth to the universal Church will send them on *World Youth Day* pilgrimages or sponsor trips to the [National Catholic Youth Conference \(NCYC\)](#).
- A model that is new to the English-speaking world is that of the *Encuentro*, a special gathering that is like yet unlike a conference: with greater emphasis on community involvement and celebration, *Encuentro* will likely be a familiar model for Hispanic youth.
- Parishes, parish clusters and pastoral regions occasionally plan special rallies or speaker programs for young people, frequently in conjunction with national World Youth Day, the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time.
- Retreat or retreat-like experiences can help youth articulate and develop their own spiritualities and empower them to leadership in prayer and worship.

Parishes that take advantage of these opportunities and incorporate the learnings in follow-up sessions, find these supplemental resources and programs very helpful in supporting their catechetical efforts. Parishes who use these programs as their sole means of catechesis or faith development will discover that their youth will *not* (a) develop a connection to the local parish, (b) be exposed to (and, therefore, treasure) the richness and diversity of the Catholic tradition, (c) be challenged to grow from searching to owned faith.

- **Programs of Leadership Development and Ministry Formation**

Young people who are moving into positions of service and leadership in their faith communities are often provided specialized training. Whether liturgical, peer ministry or general leadership skills, this sort of training provides an invaluable opportunity to deepen the faith and spirituality of young people. If those conducting the training understand their role as catechetical, they will include components in their training that go well beyond simply conveying the “how to’s” of ministry and service – they will include prayer, reflection, faith sharing, and sharing our faith tradition.

Youth leadership programs conducted by the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry offer extended, in-depth opportunities to develop not only ministry skills, but a deepened understanding of our faith in the context of our baptismal call to ministry, including: [Laudate – Forming Youth for Music Ministry](#); [TACKLE \(Teens Advocating Change through Knowledge, Leadership & Experience\)](#), an inner-city immersion experience developing young leaders for peace and justice; and [TCL \(Training Christian Leaders\)](#), the archdiocesan youth leadership institute preparing young people for service in comprehensive youth ministry.

- **Religious Recognition Programs**

Many of our young people are involved in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or American Heritage Girls. These programs offer wonderful faith-building opportunities in their religious recognition programs. Each year, hundreds of young women and men in the Archdiocese receive the Marian and Spirit Alive medals (for girls), and the Ad Altare Dei and Pius X emblems (for boys), and others. These programs taken alone do not comprise a comprehensive catechetical model; however, they can serve as effective supplements. Further information and complete program instructions and manuals are available through the [Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry](#).

How to Select the Right Models

This is perhaps the most vexing question that catechetical leaders face: of the many models and resources that are available, which to choose? Or better: which models, singly or in combination, have the best chance of effectively evangelizing and catechizing our young people? As noted, some important considerations precede this assessment: How “youth friendly” is my parish? Does my parish understand and strive for comprehensive youth ministry? Does my parish understand and strive for Whole Community Catechesis? The effectiveness and appropriateness of any of the models and approaches largely depends on how a given parish responds to these questions. That said, one can proceed to the critical question: How do I select the most appropriate model(s) of adolescent faith formation for my faith community?

This is a complex question, since it requires answering several other interlocking questions: (a) What needs do we hope to address? (b) What do we want to accomplish? (c) What resources (personnel, time, money) are available? Each parish community needs to assess its needs, establish its goals, and determine the resources it plans to devote to the effort. Once these steps are accomplished, the chart on the next page may assist in matching needs, goals and resources to the appropriate model.

The chart below illustrates that some of the models are better at what the [General Directory for Catechesis](#) calls “primary proclamation,” directed at nonbelievers and those living in “religious indifference.” (GDC, #61) Some are better at “continuing education in faith” (GDC, # 69) and some are better suited to “journeying towards perfection” (GDC, #56), that is, into deeper conversion and discipleship.

It stands to reason that models that are better at “primary proclamation” are likely to be most helpful early on in the progression of a systematic program of faith formation. Those that provide “continuing education in the faith” should follow, and those that lead young people into deeper conversion and discipleship should follow thereafter. Of course, this sequence is not set in stone – the genius of effective catechetical leadership is to meld models and approaches together within the context of the broader faith community in a way that makes formation seamless and ongoing.

Keep in mind that in the context of comprehensive youth ministry no single catechetical model will likely meet the needs of all of a faith community’s young people, and therefore a mix of various models is preferred. For a sample curriculum that illustrates such a blend of models, see the charts on [pp. 31-33](#).

	<i>Effective at Primary Proclamation</i>	<i>Effective at Continuing Education in the Faith</i>	<i>Effective at Deeper Conversion & Discipleship</i>
Mini-Courses		ö	
Small Faith Communities	ö	ö	ö
Mentoring	ö	ö	ö
Retreats	ö		ö
Justice and Service Programming			ö
Mission Trips & Work Camps	ö	ö	ö
Super Sundays	ö		
Intensive Summer Programs	ö	ö	
PSR Classes		ö	

Note: the checks above should be understood as general guides, not indicators of particular programs.



VIII. Developing Effective Catechetical Sessions

The various models and approaches described above provide frameworks within which catechetical sessions may take place. This section provides principles for designing effective sessions and includes sample lesson plans.

Catechetical Process: A Preferred Model

For over 25 years, catechists who are attentive to the pastoral context of young people have used successfully a catechetical tool known as *Shared Christian Praxis*. Thomas Groome in *Christian Religious Education* (2nd Edition, Jossey-Bass, 1991) describes Shared Christian Praxis as a learning process that embodies a contemporary approach to catechesis. This learning process begins with the life experience of the young person, engaging him/her in critical reflection on that experience, and then relating that experience to the Scriptures and Church Tradition. The process concludes by engaging young people in reflecting on the meaning of Scriptures and/or the Tradition for their lives and what the implications of these meanings are for their beliefs and lifestyles. The entire learning process can span one session, several sessions, or an entire course.

Countless spiritually hungry adolescents have been nourished and nurtured through this process and others like it. The following template illustrates one such modification and is a preferred model for catechesis with adolescents. Other methods are possible, but the essential elements of shared praxis should be included in planning a session. Also, there is precedent for changing the order of or combining these elements according to the needs and objectives of the session. Use the [Catechetical Process Worksheet on page 82](#) to practice.

The First Steps: Identify the Goal and Objectives for the Catechetical Session

- 1. Identify the goal of the session:** In broad terms, identify what you want the session to accomplish.
- 2. Identify the objectives of the session:** Learning objectives are specific, observable descriptions of the intended *outcomes* of the lesson. They answer the question: “*What do I want participants to know, feel and be able to do by the end of the session?*” Objectives

may fall into three areas: faith as trusting or valuing (affective), faith as knowing or understanding (cognitive) and faith as action or skill (behavioral). It is helpful to begin each objective with the statement, *"By the end of this session, the participants will be able to..."* Next, add an active phrase that describes the intended learning for each of the outcomes: cognitive, affective and/or behavioral.

Why use objectives? They help catechists focus on learning which is, after all, the goal of teaching. Secondly, they can assist catechists in choosing learning activities. Thirdly, they help catechists evaluate their efforts. If you use a teacher's manual, the author will provide learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter. All well-written learning objectives have observable and measurable outcomes.

Objectives related to evangelization, conversion and faith formation may be challenging to write. However, attitudes can be observed and reported, and faith can be manifested in behaviors.

The Second Step: Sequencing Learning Activities

If you have written good, measurable objectives, sequencing the learning activities should not be difficult. In fact, the activities should flow from your objectives. Plan the movements of the catechetical process by selecting activities that will help communicate the goal and achieve learning objectives. A good place to start is by brainstorming possible activities, then, select and prioritize those that best fit your goal and objectives. Set aside any ideas for another time or topic that don't adequately address the goal and objectives you've identified. As you develop activities, ask yourself, "Does this activity accurately reflect the main idea? Does this activity have achievable outcomes that match my learning objectives? Does this activity match the requirements of the particular movement of the catechetical process I've placed it in?" Also, this is a good place to list all the resources and/or materials you will need to conduct the activities. What follows is a breakout of the four primary movements of the catechetical process.

- **Movement One—Naming the Human Experience:** Help young people get in touch with the ways the topic or main idea of the session touches their lives. Develop methods or activities that will engage the participants in *expressing* their own life activity (knowing, acting, feeling) in regard to the main idea. Include activities that help adolescents reflect together on how they have been (or not) impacted by the topic. Don't forget to examine with them how the topic impacts their families, community, and society. Then engage them in identifying the consequences of their actions and, finally, help them visualize implications for future living. Some methods include: discussion, guided reflection, role playing, analysis, simulation games and selected audio-visuals. This movement centers on leading the participants from the particular of their own understanding and situation to the general.

Movement Two—Sharing the Message or Doctrine: After laying the foundation of involving the participants in discovering their own understanding of the topic, this movement presents how the Church understands and experiences the topic—its beliefs, traditions and practices. What is called for here is a creative and imaginative presentation of the Faith Story—scripture, tradition, moral concepts, lives of the

saints, etc.—whatever faith story best sheds light on the topic. This movement centers on being informative.

Because the Gospel is dynamic, that is, living and relevant, catechists are called upon to develop innovative ways of engaging young people in it. The method(s) or activity(ies) selected should both accurately and creatively present the Faith Story through the use of Scripture, Tradition, and contemporary Church experience. There are many resources available that both faithfully present Church teaching and creatively engage the hearts and minds of youth. Some methods include: storytelling, role playing, media, drama, quizzing, questioning, lecture and readings from Scripture or lives of the saints.

And, as you might imagine, this presentation should reflect the most informed understanding of the Church on the topic. Often, the most effective catechists are those who are committed to lifelong learning and growing in the faith.

- **Movement Three—Discovering or Owning the Message or Doctrine (Dialogue):** This movement engages participants in a dialogue between their experiences and the Faith Story. Dialogue invites young people to appropriate and “wrestle” with the meaning of the Story for their lives—helping them to express their questions, challenges, learnings and discover implications for faithful living—how the message/doctrine could change their lives if they believed it and lived it. This movement centers on being reflective and insightful. Some methods include: parables or modern stories, literature, question and answer, personal sharing, imagining, guided reflection and values clarification techniques.
- **Movement Four—Responding in Faith (Applying):** The stage is now set for inviting the participants to make an honest, free response to the message they have heard and experienced in the previous movements. This is where the rubber meets the road, as it were. It engages young people in formulating an authentic response to the challenge of the Gospel by addressing questions such as: “How does the message/doctrine change our lives?” “What effect does our own experience have on how we understand the Faith Story?” “What are we going to do now?” “What would be our next steps?” or “What will we do in the coming days, weeks or months to live the Gospel in our lives?” Also included here is a community celebration of the interior discovery. This movement centers on a reverent and prayerful response.

Develop method(s) and activity(ies) that engage the participants in deciding on what *action* to take as individuals or a group, in their communities and/or in the world. Some methods include: creative writing or art work, prayer services or liturgical celebrations, service project, singing, creating symbols, creating a covenant (with corresponding accountability strategies) and committing to do extra learning/homework on the topic.

The Third Step: Planning the Session.

It is possible that, for some lessons, it may take two gatherings or more to complete the activities. There is no rule in faith formation that says all lessons must be completed in a one-hour time slot. In fact, one hour a week is generally insufficient for effective catechesis,

especially if the session is to include some meaningful prayer, reflection, community-building, food and sufficient time to help integrate learning and explore lived applications. If your program at present allows only one hour, consider extending the sessions to 1½ hours, or more. (Important: the decision to extend catechetical sessions should be done in conversation with the adult youth ministry leaders and catechists responsible for conducting the sessions. Such a decision will typically need to be accompanied by additional training, resourcing and support so as to assist them in developing sessions that respond to young people more holistically.)

The Fourth Step: Review Your Lesson Plan

Review your lesson plan making sure that the activities you've planned for each movement satisfy one or more of the learning objectives. If not, design a more suitable activity. Also, check for a logical sequence of activities. Gather all the necessary materials. Preview all videos and music. Check to make sure all equipment is in good working order. Design and copy all handouts. Make sure that you have obtained permission to copy for any copyrighted material.

The Fifth Step: Evaluate Your Session Plan

No session is ever completed without a follow-up evaluation. After the session, assess whether the activities fulfilled the learning objectives for which they were selected. Make any notes about the participants' observations or engagement in the session, especially what worked and what didn't. Try to determine the reasons why an activity worked or didn't. Write down any changes or improvements you would make if teaching it again.

Energizing Your Catechetical Sessions

Developing sessions that engage the minds and hearts of young people is a constant challenge to catechists. There are some principles, models, strategies and techniques that consistently enhance the effectiveness of catechetical sessions:

- **Know your audience.** Catechists who know and understand the developmental characteristics and needs of their youth will develop approaches that respect and respond to those characteristics and needs, thereby creating sessions that speak to the lived experience of young people. (See [Appendix C. Developmental Needs of Adolescents](#).)
- **Time is of the Essence.** Catechists are often bound by tight schedules – frequently periods of 45 minutes to an hour – that are too short to accommodate the movements of *shared praxis*, or any significant experience or reflection. Longer sessions of 1½-2½ hrs. or more allow sufficient time for the movements of the process, as well as social time, prayer, and food. (See [Section VII](#) for various models that provide for more extended time periods.)
- **Plan in E.P.I.C. Proportions.** Leonard Sweet, expert on ministry with postmoderns, suggests that we should be planning our sessions so that they are experiential, participative, image-driven and connection-driven (hence the “E.P.I.C.” acronym).
Experiential: do our sessions engage young people in active, hands-on, experiential

learning? **Participative:** are young people involved in deciding topics, leading, teaching, etc.? **Image-driven:** do our sessions capitalize on the image-driven technology that's ubiquitous in the lives of young people (e.g., video, dvd's, movie clips, etc.)? **Connection-driven:** do our sessions engage young people in making meaningful, interpersonal connections with other teens, with adults, with their parents, etc.?

- **Use Communication Technologies Often and Well:** Young people are immersed in a technological world. They use communication technologies at school and at play; for entertainment and for homework; to stay in constant touch with friends and to plan for their future. To effectively be a part of their world, we need both to be comfortable with that world and reasonably competent there. Technology comes in many forms: PowerPoint presentations, digital photography and videography, internet resources, communication via email, instant messaging, blogs, websites, etc. Effective catechists and youth ministers will learn to use these often and well both to enhance sessions with youth and to communicate with them between sessions.
- **Keep It Simple, Make It Fun (KISMIF).** If the session is becoming overly complex or heavy, remember "KISMIF!"
- **Feed the Hungry.** Tasty (and hopefully healthy) snacks and beverages, if available at every session, will go a long way to conveying an environment of hospitality and welcome.
- **Debriefing:** To draw real Christian understanding from the activities and experiences we engage our youth in, debriefing is necessary. Through debriefing, a lived experience is evaluated through discussion in pairs or a small group which helps focus that experience and then is processed for integration in one's life. Debriefing has three stages: 1) *Reflection*—"What was I feeling and thinking during this activity?" 2) *Interpretation*—"What does this mean to me?" "Where is God present in all this?" "What is God saying to me in all this?" 3) *Application*—"What will I do about it?" "How can I make what I've just learned part of my life and use it?" "How can I apply what I've learned as a disciple of Christ?" (This third step is expressed in Movement Four of the catechetical process.)
- **Building Community with the "BOAST" Model:** In his book, *Building Community in Youth Groups* (Group Books, 1985), Denny Rydberg discusses five steps for building community in groups. Many catechists innately recognize that building a trusting community among their students is a necessary precursor to effective small group discussions or genuine caring among the members. A specific process must take place in the life of any group to bring about this type of fellowship and openness. This process is characterized by five steps: **B**ond building, **O**pening up, **A**ffirming, **S**tretching and **T**eaming. Rydberg also includes many examples and activities that correspond to the five steps—games, initiatives, tasks and exercises that catechists can use right away.

The Catechetical Process Worksheet & Sample Lesson Plans

The following worksheet and sample lesson plans are provided to assist catechetical leaders and catechists in developing effective catechetical sessions for younger and older adolescents (two samples are provided for each).

Date of lesson: _____
Grade/Age of participants: _____

Catechetical Process Worksheet

The following worksheet is a template for designing your lesson plan.

1. Main Ideas for Session: Select the main idea you want to focus on in this session. What is the particular focus of your learning experience? What is the particular question or issue or topic, for this learning experience? Keep it simple. One main idea per session is enough.

2. Learning Objectives for Session: What specifically do you want the participants to experience/do in this session? Learning objectives answer the question: *What outcomes do I expect to occur with regard to Faith as Trusting, Faith as Knowing and Faith as Action?* Select the learning objectives that are appropriate for the main ideas you have already selected.

Complete the following sentence:

Based on the main idea I've identified above, by the end of the session, my students should be able to:

1. **Trust, Feel** (Affective Objectives): "Faith as Trusting, Valuing" — e.g., "*Based on the main idea identified above, by the end of this session, the participants should be able to feel or value...*"

2. **Know, Understand** (Cognitive Objectives): "Faith as Knowing or Understanding" e.g., "*Based on the main idea identified above, by the end of this session, the participants should be able to know or understand (name, recognize, explain, compare and contrast..., etc.)*":

3. **Do, Act** (Behavioral Objectives): "Faith as Action" e.g., "*Based on the main idea identified above, by the end of this session, the participants should be able to act or behave (commit, respond, etc.) ...*":

3. Planning the Session: *Select activities that will help communicate the main ideas and achieve the learning objectives. Select at least one appropriate activity for each step in the catechetical process design. Don't forget to identify the resources or materials that are necessary to conduct the activities that are planned.*

Reproducible Handout

a) Movement One—Naming the Human Experience: *What method(s) will you select to engage the participants in telling their story(ies) which explains their life experience (knowing, acting, feeling)? What method(s) will you select to engage them in reflecting critically on the impact that their families, community, society, media, etc. have on their life activity? How will you engage them in identifying the consequences of their actions and the implications for future living? What resources will you need?*

b) Movement Two—Sharing the Message or Doctrine: *How will you creatively and imaginatively present the Faith Story? What method(s) will you select to present the Faith Story? How will you use Scripture, Tradition, and contemporary Church experience? What other resources will you use? Does your presentation reflect the most informed understanding of the Faith Community on this topic? What resources will you need?*

c) Movement Three—Discovering and Owning the Message or Doctrine (Dialogue): *What method(s) will you select to engage the participants in a dialogue between their life experience/story and the Faith Story of the Christian community? How will you help them express their questions, challenges and learnings? What resources will you need?*

Reproducible Handout

d) Movement Four—Responding in Faith (Applying): *In light of the entire learning experience, what methods will you use to engage the participants in deciding on what action to take as individuals, in their communities and in the world? What resources will you need?*

4. Evaluation

a) Were your goals and objectives met? If not, why?

b) What worked really well? Why?

c) What could be improved?

d) What other changes would you make if doing this session again?

Sample Catechetical Session Plan: Younger Adolescents

Topic: Images and Titles of Jesus

Objectives: By the end of this session, the participants will...

1. Feel a connection to one image or title of Jesus. (affective)
2. Know various images and titles of Jesus from Scripture. (cognitive)
3. Make a commitment to be Christ Living for others. (behavioral)

Pre-Steps: Introducing the Topic

1. The week before this session, ask participants to bring their favorite image (painting, drawing, poster, prayer card, etc.) of Jesus to this session.
2. Cover a table with a cloth the color of the current liturgical season. Place a Bible, candle and small mirror on the cloth. Arrange a variety of traditional and modern images of Jesus on the table.

Movement One - Naming the Human Experience

1. Gather around the table and have participants place their images of Jesus on the table. At this time, participants would take turns explaining why their images of Jesus are their favorites and what they mean in their lives. Discuss any other images on the table. Ask participants which ones they like or don't like. Discuss the physical characteristics of a Mediterranean man in 30 A.D.
2. Discussion: How do people use images of Jesus in their lives, homes or work? Show examples of ads, greeting cards, news articles, medals, prayer cards, crucifixes, artistic masterpieces, etc. to start the conversation. Be sure to include representations of Jesus from many cultures. Participants will tell how their parents, grandparents and they themselves use images of Jesus and what they mean to them.

Movement Two – Sharing the Message or Doctrine

1. Ask participants, "Where do we get our images of Jesus?"
2. Ideally, our images of Jesus should be rooted in the Bible.
3. Scripture Search in small groups. Using Bibles and the worksheet attached, small groups will each read a passage and determine the title given to Jesus, the characteristics of Jesus in the passage and what they learn about Jesus in the passage.
4. Each group will bring their findings to the large group for sharing and discussion.

Movement Three – Discovering and Owning the Message or Doctrine (Dialogue)

1. Ask, "Do we really know what Jesus looks like?" No. "Why don't we know?" Because there were no portraits painted at the time of Jesus' life. "What if an artist decided to paint a new portrait and use an unlikely model?"

2. View the video “When Did We See You?” by Beacon Street (available through the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis Media Center, # VC 2163). Stop the video at designated times for discussion.
3. Discuss the saying, “In you I saw Christ Living.” Ask, “Who was the image of Christ Living for you this week?” “How were you the image of “Christ Living” this week?”

Movement Four - Responding in Faith (Applying)

1. Instruct the participants to fold the “In You I Saw Christ Living” sheet into a greeting card. Play some soft music for this activity.
2. Instruct participants to reflect on the saying, “In You I saw Christ Living” on page 1 of the card and draw their own faces over or near the saying on the card. Pass the mirror around so participants can study their own faces in preparation for the drawing.
3. Participants open the card to page two and decide and write how they will each be “Christ Living” this next week.
4. Participants compose and write a prayer on page three asking for guidance and strength to be “Christ Living” this week.
5. Gather all around the candle, Bible, mirror and images of Jesus for the closing prayer. After a short prayer by the catechist, participants are invited to read their prayers silently or aloud around the gathered circle.
6. Participants are encouraged to place their cards in a prominent place in their bedrooms and pray their prayers everyday this week.

Materials needed:

Bibles, candle, small mirror, colored cloth appropriate to the liturgical season, an assortment of depictions of Jesus, Images of Jesus Scripture Search, pencils, “In You I Saw Christ Living” sheet (use word processing or publishing software to set up an 8 ½ by 11” piece of paper in a quarter-folded greeting card format. On the outside cover panel of the card, use an attractive, decorative font to write the words: “In You I Saw Christ Living.” On one of the inside panels of the card, write the words: “This week I will be Christ Living by:”; on the other inside panel write “My prayer...”)

IMAGES OF JESUS SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Mark 1: 21 - 28
 Luke 5: 12 - 16
 Luke 2: 8 - 14
 Luke 6: 17 - 19

Luke 7: 11 - 17
 John 1: 35 - 51
 Matthew 8: 14 - 17
 Matthew 8: 5 - 13

Mark 5: 1 - 20
 Matthew 16: 13 - 20
 Mark 6: 53 - 56

DIRECTIONS:

Read the passage indicated for your group. Answer the following questions.

1. What title is given to Jesus in your passage?
2. What characteristics of Jesus did you find in your passage?
3. What did you learn about Jesus in this passage?

Sample Catechetical Session Plan: Younger Adolescents

Topic: Insiders and Outsiders--Becoming More Welcoming

Objectives: By the end of this session, the participants will...

1. Value the Christian virtue of inclusion. (affective)
2. Understand how it feels to be excluded from the group and identify attitudes and actions that include and welcome “outsiders.” (cognitive)
3. Write a “covenant” of welcoming behaviors for the group. (behavioral)

Pre-Steps: Introducing the Topic

1. Bring the participants outside to an uncomfortable spot that you’ve scouted out prior to the meeting. Make sure that it is truly uncomfortable (cold, hard, damp, or dark, etc) –enough so that the participants will complain.
2. Introduce the subject of the session as usual, without any fanfare or special instructions. Pretend to ignore or explain away any complaints from the participants about how uncomfortable the accommodations are. Eventually give in to the discomfort and distractions and return to the room you started in.
3. Debrief the experience: Why was everyone uncomfortable? Why was it hard to stick it out and overcome the discomfort? Why do we like so much better inside? Conclude by rephrasing their comments: no one likes to be uncomfortable; you can’t concentrate when you’re distracted; we want to be inside where it’s warm and plush.

Movement One—Naming the Human Experience

1. In a large room (preferably carpeted), mark out a 15-foot circle using masking tape (Make it larger or smaller depending on the size of your group. Fifteen feet is a good size for 20 participants.).
2. Instruct the group that you’ll be playing a game called *Inside/Outside*. The game starts with the entire group outside the circle. For each round you’ll call a different group into the circle. The goal for each person is to try to get everyone else out of

the circle. This game can get really physical, so set some rules: no pulling clothes or hair, no ganging up, no running, no tackling, use forearms not hands to push, watch out for pointy fingernails, etc. Call groups to the circle: only the boys, only the girls, by ages, by birthdays, everybody at once, on your knees, etc. When you've selected a group, send them into the circle and start the play. The game is over when only one person remains in the circle.

3. When the last round is played, invite the group to sit inside the circle and debrief the game: How did it feel to win? How did it feel to get pushed out early? Did you care about the game after you had been pushed out? Why/why not? What about how people were behaving in the circle?
4. Pass out the handout entitled "Outsiders" and pencils to each participant. Have them work individually on answering the questions.
5. When all have finished writing, have them break into groups of three or four and invite them to share their answers with their small group. Assure them that they can share only what they want to. Take a sampling of answers from the groups.
6. Conclude this part by saying something like: All of us belong to some groups and not others. And sometimes we work really hard to keep people out of the groups we're in.

Movement Two—Discovering the Message or Doctrine

1. Break into three smaller groups. Give each group a newsprint sheet and magic markers, and each participant a bible. Have the groups do a scripture search for places where outsiders were welcomed in. You can point out some stories to get them started: Luke 19:1-9 (Zacchaeus), Acts 9:10-19 (Paul and Ananias), Matthew 25:37-40, Luke 10:25-37.
2. Have the groups write down on the newsprint the scripture stories they've found (citations and titles) and advise them to be prepared to share the gist of each story with the large group.
3. Have each group come forward to tape their newsprint to a wall and describe (briefly!) to the larger group what they found.
4. Prepare your own brief lecture about God's plan for everyone to be included. We even have sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) to help us understand how much God loves us and wants us to be part of God's kingdom. Make connections between what the participants have found in their scripture search and how the Church actively seeks to draw all people into God's loving embrace through its commitment to evangelization, its concern for the poor, broken and marginalized, and through its sacraments of healing and forgiveness.

Movement Three—Discovering and Owning the Message or Doctrine (Dialogue)

1. Have the participants gather in their groups of four again. Instruct them to take one of the scripture passages and create a little play about it. (The play doesn't have to be a strict interpretation of the scripture story—I witnessed one group create a play called “Anti-Cinderella.” It was about what would have happened to Cinderella if her stepmother and stepsisters were welcoming instead of mean to her.)
2. Have the groups perform their plays for the larger group. Applaud at the conclusion of each play.

Movement Four—Responding in Faith (Applying)

1. Pass out another piece of newsprint and markers to each group of four. Have them discuss “What kinds of people are we having a hard time letting into our little groups? What kinds of people need to be brought in? How do we need to change to make it easier for people to feel welcome?”
2. Then have each group come up with 3 “rules” that the larger group can follow to be more welcoming.
3. Have groups post their newsprint on the wall and discuss any that need further clarification. Have the group vote on 4 or 5 rules that the group will commit to carrying out from now on. Rewrite these rules on a new sheet of newsprint and invite everyone to sign the bottom of it. Post the rules in a prominent place.
4. Conclude this session with a prayer service that thanks God for welcoming us into God's family and asks God's help in making us more welcoming to others.

(This session was adapted from *Creative Junior High Programs from A to Z* by Steve Dickie and Darrell Pearson; Youth Specialties, Inc.: El Cajon, CA © 1998.)

Outsiders handout questions:

1. What groups do you consider yourself to be part of? (sports team, neighborhood, clubs, cliques, etc.)
2. How did you get into these groups? How do others get in?
3. Are there others who want to be in your group but aren't? What keeps them out?
4. How does it feel when you can't get into a group you want to be in?
5. What might be really at the heart of why we don't include some people into our groups?

Sample Catechetical Session Plan: Older Adolescents

Topic: Being Catholic

Goal: To begin a conversation about some basic elements of Catholicism; a basic overview of some standard elements of what it means to be Catholic.

Objectives: By the end of this session, the participants will...

1. Connect more with their faith as they identify some of the distinguishing elements of Catholicism. (affective)
2. Be able to name some of the basic elements of Catholicism: beliefs, practices and attitudes. (cognitive)
3. Choose a Catholic belief, practice or attitude and commit to working on incorporating it into their lives over the next week. (behavioral)

Pre-Step: Several weeks in advance of this session, invite a “panel of experts” to field some typical questions older adolescents may have about the Catholic faith or being Catholic. The panel could include the parish priest, deacon, DRE/CRE, youth minister, parish council president, social justice minister, etc

Movement One—Naming the Human Experience

1. Individually, ask participants to write down some of the special Christmas traditions that their families have. Some typical answers might include: gift giving on Christmas Eve, attending Midnight Mass, stocking stuffers, special foods, etc. Take a sampling of some of the traditions.
2. Show a brief video clip of “Persons, Places and Practices in the Catholic Church” (Redemptorist Pastoral Communications, Ligouri Publications; available through the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Office of Evangelization & Catechesis Media Center, VC # 0315), or some other video that highlights Catholic beliefs and practices.
3. Instruct participants to watch for anything that illustrates what it means to be Catholic.
4. Pair up the participants and, in groups of two, have them come up with a list of items they’ve observed from the video or experienced in their own lives that they think of as “Catholic.” Some examples might include: the Mass, sacraments, saints, rosary beads, devotion to Mary, concern for the poor, spiritual works of mercy, the pope, etc. Offer suggestions if necessary (“What do Catholics think about sin; forgiveness; social issues; the resurrection; life after death, etc.? What do Catholics do for Lent; Christmas; Holy Days? What are some special things [vessels, vestments and sacramentals] Catholics use for prayer or liturgy? What do Catholics believe about Jesus; Mary; Saints; mission of the Church; respecting diversity, etc.?) Have them write down each item on a 5x8 index card.

5. With newsprint taped to a wall (or write on a blackboard), have three columns: Beliefs, Practices, Attitudes. Have the teams tape their index cards in the column they think that item corresponds to.
6. Gather the dyads back together in a large group.
7. Discuss each item relative to where the dyads placed them in the columns. Does each item fit the category? If not, where should it belong? (Sometimes an item will fit in several places—make allowances for a both/and situation rather than an either/or one.)

Movement Two—Sharing the Message or Doctrine

1. Break the group into or triads or quads.
2. Give each small group three blank index cards and ask them write down three questions – one for each of the categories—Beliefs, Practices, Attitudes—on each card. For example, “Why does the Church believe that scripture is the word of God?” or “Why is concern for the poor necessary to be a good Catholic?” or “Why do we have to go to Mass on holy days?” etc. Collect the cards and gather the participants into a large group.
3. Invite a “panel of experts” to field the questions. The panel could consist of a parish priest, DRE, youth minister, parish council president, social justice minister, etc.
4. Allow time for additional questions from the group, especially if an answer from one of the experts has piqued their interest.
5. Conclude this section with thanks and applause.

Movement Three—Discovering and Owning the Message or Doctrine (Dialogue)

1. Have the participants gather in their groups of three or four again to share what they discovered or learned about what Catholics believe or do paying special attention to what was surprising or challenging to them. Have them share one or two things with the larger group.
2. Ask the small groups to discuss: What Catholic traditions (beliefs, practices and attitudes) are most important to me right now?
3. Invite groups to briefly share their answers with the larger group.

Movement Four—Responding in Faith (Applying)

1. Gather the group into a circle for prayer. (If possible, have a prayer center already set up with a bible, crucifix, candle, religious images, plant, cloths, etc.)
2. Begin with a call to prayer, inviting the participants to quiet their hearts, minds and bodies. Then start with the sign of the cross.

3. Ask a participant to read 2 Thess.:13-17. (Have the participant look over the reading before the prayer service.)
4. Distribute paper and pencils. Have quiet background music playing. Give the participants five minutes to write their response to “What does it mean to me to be a Catholic?”
5. Afterwards, give the participants another five minutes to write their response to “What Catholic belief, practice or attitude will I commit to work on this week? What concrete things will I do daily to make this belief, practice or attitude more my own?” Invite them to sign their names at the bottom as a sign of commitment to carry out their plans.
6. Conclude the prayer with a Renewal of Baptismal Vows found on pp. 372-374 of *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, USCCB, 1988.

(This session plan was adapted from *Total Catechesis, Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* by Maura Thompson Hagerty, et. al., Saint Mary’s Press, Winona, MN, 2004.)

Sample Catechetical Session Plan: Older Adolescents

Topic: Catholic/Christian Responses to Violence

Objectives: Participants will...

- Assess the images of violence in media and culture (cognitive)
- Reflect on violence in their own lives (cognitive, affective, behavioral)
- Explore what Jesus and the Church say about violence (cognitive, affective)
- Make practical plans/commitments to reduce the violence in their lives (behavioral)

Pre-Step--Introducing the Topic:

1. Use a quick succession of current video/dvd clips from television or movies illustrating violence.
2. Afterwards, ask participants for a quick “free-association” of words related to what they saw.

Movement One—Naming the Human Experience:

1. On a large sheet of paper, participants work together in groups of three to write down responses to the following:
 - During any given week, I typically observe violence: (Where? When? Who?)
 - Violence is...(come up with your own definition of violence)
2. Participants hang up their papers and report their responses back to the group.

3. Task A. On a separate large piece of paper, participants move back to their groups and are invited to use crayons, markers or pastels to create images of beauty, recollections of peaceful places they've been, what the world is like when it's at peace.
4. Task B. Once their images of beauty/peace have been created, they trade papers with other groups. The task is now to express on the other group's page what violence does to beauty and peace. [This can be an upsetting exercise as participants find their beauty destroyed. Be prepared for strong emotions.]
5. Task C. The papers are returned to their original groups with the task to try to return their drawings to their original condition of beauty and peace.
6. Debriefing: Catechist asks:
 - What was that experience like for you? How did that feel? Why?
 - What lessons can you draw from the experience?

Movement Two—Sharing the Message or Doctrine:

1. Briefly describe who Archbishop Oscar Romero was, and his attempt to end the violence in El Salvador. Provide enough information so that participants will understand the video clip.
2. Show the final 10-15 minutes of the movie *Romero* in which Archbishop Romero stands up to the oppression and violence – motivated by his Catholic faith. [Note: the images of the effects of violence are extremely graphic. Be prepared for strong feelings to be elicited.]
3. Debriefing: Catechist asks:
 - What was it like for you to view the video? Thoughts? Feelings?
 - What did Archbishop Romero believe so strongly that he would put his life on the line for it? About people? Faith? Jesus? What Christians are called to? (Catechist lists these on board or newsprint)
 - Catechist should, at this point, elaborate on what Jesus and the Church teach about violence (e.g., Matt. 5:38-48)

Movement Three—Discovering and Owning the Faith (Dialogue)

1. Catechist plays some quiet, reflective music while participants work on a reflection sheet containing the following questions:
 - As a Catholic Christian, how should I be responding to violence? At home? With friends? At school? In the media? In the community? Between countries?
 - In what aspects of my life am I succeeding at countering violence? In what aspects of my life am I falling short?
2. Catechist invites participants to share their responses after the reflection period.

Movement Four—Responding in Faith (Applying)

1. Catechist invites participants to gather around a candle, representing Christ’s living presence among us, and calls them to prayer, reminding them that Christ said, “Blessed are the peacemakers...” and “Turn the other cheek...” and that when threatened with violence he did not resort to violence but to compassion and understanding.
2. Catechist invites participants to take the candle one at a time and while holding it to formulate a personal prayer or statement of commitment. Prayers could ask the Holy Spirit for help in becoming a more peaceful person, reacting less, listening more, etc. Statements of commitment could express a person’s desire to treat people at home more peaceably, with greater understanding, etc.

Catechist and participants pray together the Peace Prayer of St. Francis.



IX. Resources

The following resources are available in the Archdiocesan Media Center and/or Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry resource libraries.

Foundational Church Documents

Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in Our Time, John Paul II. 1979.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc. – Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 1997.

The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith. Washington, DC: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1986.

The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers. Washington, DC: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1993.

Ecclesia in America: The Church in America. John Paul II. 1999.

Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World. Paul VI. 1976.

General Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1998.

Go and Make Disciples—A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1992.

National Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

Renewing the Vision – A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1997.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us – A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1999.

Approaches to Evangelization (Primary Proclamation, Outreach and Witness)

Access Guide to Youth Ministry: Evangelization. Reynolds R. Eckstrom & John Roberto, Eds. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1989.

The Catholic Youth Bible. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

Changing Lives: Transformational Ministry and Today's Teens. Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart. Dayton, OH: Pflaum Publishing, 2003.

Full-Cycle Youth Evangelization. Patrick J. Brennan. Allen, TX: Tabor Publishing, 1993.

Go and Make Disciples—A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1992.

The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry. Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998.

Growing Teen Disciples: Strategies for Really Effective Youth Ministry. Frank Mercadante. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1998.

Make It Real: A Practical Resource for Teen-Friendly Evangelization. Frank Mercadante. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004.

Meeting the Challenge: Resources for Catholic Youth Evangelization. Robert J. McCarty. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1993.

Reaching Kids Most Youth Ministries Miss. Bo Boshers, et. al. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2000.

Walking Together: Outreach and Evangelization Resources for Youth Ministry. Dan Ponsetto. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1995.

Youth Evangelization. Reynolds R. Eckstrom & Mary Merkle-Scotland. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1994.

Youth in the Community of Disciples. David Ng. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984.

Adolescent Development, Spirituality and Youth Culture

Adolescent Spirituality. Charles M. Shelton. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1983.

Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development. Peter Scales, Nancy Leffer & Richard M. Lerner. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2004.

Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture. George Barna. Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 2001.

Sometimes We Wrestle, Sometimes We Dance: Embracing the Spiritual Growth of Adolescents. Michael Carrotta. Dubuque, IA: Harcourt Religion Publishers, 2002.

Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers. Christian Smith with Melinda L. Denton. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Why Do They Act That Way?: A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen. David Walsh, Ph.d. New York, NY: Free Press, 2004.

Catechetical Approaches and Curriculum Development

Becoming a Church of Lifelong Learners. John Roberto. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2006.

Bringing Catechesis and Liturgy Together: Let the Mystery Lead You. Joe Paprocki and D. Todd Williamson. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2002.

Christian Religious Education (Second Edition). Thomas Groome. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Fashion Me A People. Maria Harris. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

Generations of Faith (Volumes 1 & 2) Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 2000 & 2003.

The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry. Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster. Nashville, TN.: Upper Room Books, 1998.

Growing Teen Disciples: Strategies for Really Effective Youth Ministry. Frank Mercadante. Winona, MN.: Saint Mary's Press, 1998.

Handbook for Success in Whole Community Catechesis. Bill Huebsch. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004.

Introducing Liturgical Catechesis: Formation Sessions for the Parish. Nick Wagner. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 2002.

Key Dimensions of Religious Education. Brennan R. Hill. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1988.

Models and Trends in Religious Education. Gail Thomas McKenna. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998.

The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium. Francis D. Kelly. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999.

Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry. Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel. Winona, MN.: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

Practical Catechesis. Judith Dunlap. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2001.

The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis: How We Share the Fire in Our Hearts. Anne Marie Mongoven, O.P. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000.

Reshaping Religious Education. Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Whole Community Catechesis in Plain English. Bill Huebsch. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2002.

Teaching, Learning, and Catechesis

The Art of Catechesis. Maureen Gallagher. Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1998.

Creative Teaching Methods. Marlene D. LeFever. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1985.

Do It! Active Learning in Youth Ministry. Thom & Joanie Schultz. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1989.

Gifts of the Spirit: Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education. Rev. Ronald Nuzzi. NCEA, 1999.

Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach. Marlene D. LeFever. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1995.

Religious Education and the Brain: A Practical Resource for Understanding How We Learn about God. Jerry Larsen. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000.

Seven Pathways of Learning. David Lazear. Tuscan, AZ: Zephyr Press, 1994.

Program Resources

The majority of the following resources are packaged as complete programs and are available for preview (or loan, in some cases) from the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry library and/or the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis Media Centers.

Community

Celebrate Youth: Becoming a Youth-friendly Church. Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1998.

FamilyWorks. Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1995.

Generations of Faith (Volumes 1 & 2). Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 2000 & 2003.

YouthWorks. Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1994.

Confirmation

Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit. Dayton, OH: Pflaum Publishing, 2005.

Confirmation: Anointed and Sealed with the Spirit. Thomas H. Morris and Kathy Coffey. Denver, CO: Living the Good News, 1999.

Confirmed in a Faithful Community (third edition) – A Senior High Confirmation Process. Thomas Zanzig. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2006.

Confirming Disciples. Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1996.

Confirming Faith (revised edition). Kieran Sawyer, S.S.N.D. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1995.

Moving in the Spirit. Joan Mitchell, C.S.J. St. Paul, MN: Good Ground Press, 2003.

The Spirit Sets Us Free: Confirmation Preparation for Youth. New York, NY: Sadlier, 2000.

(For the most current list of junior high and senior high Confirmation preparation texts, please refer to the annual "Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List" available from the [Office of Evangelization and Catechesis](#).)

Junior High

Discovering (A 4-year comprehensive parish religion program for grades 6-8 in minicourse format). Tom Zanzig, Ed. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1999.

FaithWays. Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1996.

FaithWorks for Junior High: Scripture- and Tradition-based Sessions for Faith Formation. Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1993.

Journey of Faith: Creating a Sense of Belonging between Young People and the Church, a series of 4 student workbooks with accompanying leaders' guides containing learning sessions based on the scripture readings for the Sundays of the liturgical year. Mary Shrader. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2005.

Real Life: Living My Faith Every Day (9 full-color magazines for junior high parish religion programs in minicourse format). DeSoto, TX: Benziger, 1996, 1997.

(For the most current list of junior high catechetical texts, please refer to the annual "Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List" available from the [Office of Evangelization and Catechesis](#).)

Justice & Service

Access Guide to Youth Ministry: Justice. John Roberto & Thomas Bright, Eds. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1990.

Called to be Peacemakers and Apostles of Hope: A Resource for the National Catholic Youth Initiative "To Stand Against Violence." Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1995.

Changing Lives: Transformational Ministry and Today's Teens. Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart. Dayton, OH: Pflaum Publishing, 2003.

Environmental Justice Resource Manual: Protecting God's Creation. Washington, DC: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1999.

The Kid's Guide to Social Action. Barbara A. Lewis. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 1991.

[*Learning through Service: A Guide to Immersion Trips and Extended Service Projects for Youth*](#). Mission Office, Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Office of Evangelization and Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2005.

Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn: A Christian Service Program for Students. Joseph Moore. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1994.

Service Projects for Teens: 20 Plans That Work. Tony Pilcher & Chris Broslavick. Dayton, OH: Pflaum Publishing, 2001.

Prayer & Worship

Catechizing with Liturgical Symbols: 25 Hands-on Sessions for Teens and Adults. Pamela Edwards. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 1997.

The Catholic Youth Prayer Book. Laure Krupp, Matt Miller, and Mary Shrader. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2006.

From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents. Washington, DC: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1993.

Pathways to Praying with Teens. Mary Ann Hakowski. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1993.

Prayers With Pizzazz For Junior High Teens. Judi Lanciotti. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1996.

PrayerWorks for Teens (4 volumes). Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1997.

Vine & Branches: Resources for Youth Retreats (Volumes 1, 2 & 3). MaryAnn Hakowski. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1992 & 1994.

Youth and Sunday Mass: Preparing Youth for Liturgy and Preparing the Liturgy Well. Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry and the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2002. Available online at www.catholiccincinnati.org/youthmin.

Retreats

One-Day Retreats for Junior High Youth. Geri Braden-Whartenby & Joan Finn Connelly. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1997.

One-Day Retreats for Senior High Youth. Geri Braden-Whartenby & Joan Finn Connelly. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1997.

Resources for Outdoor Retreats. Bob Grgic. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1994.

Time Out! Resources for Teen Retreats. Kieran Sawyer, SSND. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1998.

Vine and Branches: Resources for Youth Retreats (Volumes 1-3). MaryAnn Hakowski. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1992 & 1994.

Youth Retreat Resource Manual. Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry, Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Available online at www.catholiccincinnati.org/youthmin.

Senior High

The Catholic Youth Bible (revised edition). Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2006. An accompanying Teaching Activities Manual (copyright 2005) is also available.

Developing Faith (12 faith themes for parish senior high religion programs in minicourse format). Kieran Sawyer, SSND, General Ed. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1996, 1997.

DiscipleWays. Naugatuck, CT: Center for Ministry Development, 1997.

Discipleship in the Catholic Tradition (Minicourses on 11 different faith themes. Each minicourse contains 8 lessons). Villa Maria, PA: The Center for Learning, 1996-2005.

FaithWorks for Senior High: Scripture- and Tradition-based Sessions for Faith Formation. Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1993.

Horizons (A 4-year comprehensive parish religion program for grades 9-12 in minicourse format). Tom Zanzig, Ed. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1997.

Life's Big Issues: Teens and Adults Tackle 12 Challenges. Susan Bellotti, Diane Kozlowski, O.P., and Thomas Sauline. Villa Maria, PA: The Center for Learning, 2000.

Six Weeks with the Bible for Catholic Teens (3 sets of four booklets each are currently available). Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2004-ongoing.

Spirit (A weekly faith-sharing program, each issue takes its theme from the Sunday gospel and explores Catholic doctrine and practice as they flow from the gospels). St. Paul, MN: Good Ground Press.

Teens and Parents: Sessions for Growing in Faith Together. Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004.

Total Youth Ministry (a ten-manual series based on the components of comprehensive youth ministry as outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. Titles include: *Community Life, Youth Leadership Development, Pastoral Care, Prayer & Worship, Evangelization, Justice & Service*. The 4 volumes on *Catechesis* include *Christian Morality, Christian Prayer, The Creed, and Liturgy and the Sacraments*. A Coordinator's manual is also available. Each manual includes a CD-ROM.) The catechetical volumes are intended to be used in conjunction with *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*. Various authors and editors. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004.

Understanding the Catechism (4 sets of student texts, videos, and teacher guides on the topics of Creed, Morality, Prayer, and Liturgy and Sacraments). Allen, TX: RCL, 1998.

X. Publishers, Companies, Contacts, Websites, Etc.

1. Archdiocese of Cincinnati

a. Office of Evangelization and Catechesis

www.catholiccincinnati.org/ore

Cincinnati Region

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Phone: (513) 421-3131
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b. Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

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daytonoym@catholiccincinnati.org

2. Ave Maria Press

Phone: (800) 282-1865, ext. 1
www.avemariapress.com

3. Benziger

(A division of McGraw-Hill)
Phone: (800) 551-8766
www.mhbenziger.com

4. Cultivation Ministries *(Training, consulting and resourcing for Catholic youth evangelization)*

Phone: (630) 513-8222
www.cultivationministries.com

5. Center for Ministry Development (CMD)

Phone: (203) 723-1622; www.cmdnet.org

6. Disciples Now Ministries, Inc. *(A web-based ministry for youth in grades 6 to 12)*

Phone: (410) 729-1501
www.DisciplesNow.com

7. Group Publishing, Inc.

Phone: (800) 447-1070
www.grouppublishing.com

8. Harcourt Religion Publishers

Phone: (800) 922-7696
www.harcourtreligion.com

9. The Liturgical Press

Phone: (800) 858-5450
www.litpress.org

10. National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Inc. (NFCYM)

415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Suite 40
Washington, DC 20017-4503
Phone: (202) 636-3825
www.nfcym.org

11. Paulist Press

Phone: (800) 218-1903
www.paulistpress.com

12. Pflaum Publishing Group

Phone: (800) 543-4383, ext. 184
www.pflaum.com

13. St. Anthony Messenger Press

Phone: (513) 241-5615
www.americancatholic.org

14. Saint Mary's Press

Phone: (800) 533-8095
www.smp.org

15 Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women & Youth

United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
3211 4th Street, N.E
Washington, DC 20017-1194
Phone: (202) 541-3000
www.usccb.org/laity/

16 Twenty-Third Publications

Phone: (800) 572-0788
www.twentythirdpublications.com

17 The Upper Room/ Discipleship Resources

Phone (800) 972-0433
www.upperroom.org

18 Youth Specialties

Phone: (619) 440-2333
www.youthspecialties.com

Appendix A. Comprehensive Youth Ministry Resources

Comprehensive Youth Ministry Planning Grid

(Source: Center for Ministry Development, Naugatuck, CT. Used with permission.)

	Youth		Family		Parish		Community	
	<i>Gathered</i>	<i>Non-Gathered</i>	<i>Gathered</i>	<i>Non-Gathered</i>	<i>Gathered</i>	<i>Non-Gathered</i>	<i>Gathered</i>	<i>Non-Gathered</i>
<i>Advocacy</i>								
<i>Catechesis</i>								
<i>Community Life</i>								
<i>Evangelization</i>								
<i>Justice & Service</i>								
<i>Leadership Development</i>								
<i>Pastoral Care</i>								
<i>Prayer & Worship</i>								

Youth Ministry Might Look Like...

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry • Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Advocacy

youth representation on parish pastoral council, teams and commissions; involvement in civic community on behalf of youth; youth newsletter; bulletin board with photos of youth people and activities; fund raising; letter writing campaigns...

Catechesis

mentoring; retreats; talks and special programs on faith themes; weekly discipleship group; breakfast club for prayer and sharing; mini-courses; religious education classes; conferences; Super Sundays; Bible study groups...

Building Community

connecting youth with the broader parish community; social gatherings; trips; small faith communities; retreats; parties; gathering with other parishes' youth; diocesan and national conferences; seasonal celebrations (like Christmas; Halloween; etc.); ski trips; athletics; fun and fellowship...

Evangelization

outreach into the wider neighborhood and civic community; sharing the Good News; inviting more young people to come be a part of the fun & faith; special programs that tell people about Jesus; hospitality events so people feel welcome...

Justice & Service

parish peace and justice ministry; soup kitchens; rehabbing in the inner city; jail visitation; neighborhood or parish service projects; St. Vincent de Paul; parish festival; mission trips; "plunges" into poor areas (like TACKLE, the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry's urban immersion program for teens)...

Leadership Development

parish ministry & leadership development programs; team building activities (like ropes courses); planning teams; training programs (like TCL, the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry's summer leadership institute for teens); recruiting more adult and youth leaders; team building retreats; skill-building sessions...

Pastoral Care

family support programs; parent-teen communication workshops; support groups; peer ministry training and programs; special speaker programs on divorce, stress; etc.; retreats; visiting the sick; developing listening skills...

Prayer & Worship

choir; music ministry; worship commission; liturgical ministries; prayer experiences like guided imagery; special worship services; roles in Sunday worship like lector and Eucharistic minister; developing personal relationship with Christ; mentoring programs; seasonal prayer services; retreats...

Youth Group vs. Youth Ministry

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry / Archdiocese of Cincinnati

There are big differences between “youth group” and youth ministry. Check out the chart below to explore the differences.

Youth Group	Youth Ministry
One structure to meet many needs.	A menu of structures and programs from which to choose (social, educational, spiritual, service)
In-group & out-group dynamics.	Youth choose to pursue their social group, friends and interests. Minimal pressure to conform to the group.
“Satellite” of the broader faith community.	Integration into the broader faith community.
Pulls kids out of their families and creates a pseudo youth community.	Reinforces family relationships with specific programming that brings families together: e.g. family retreats; father/son, mother/daughter programs; parent-teen communication workshops, etc.
A couple of adults sponsor regular meetings and some special events. The youth group falls apart when they burn out.	The youth ministry is “owned” by the broader faith community. A team (or teams) of adults and youth take responsibility for the youth ministry. Because the youth ministry is owned by the faith community and leadership is spread out, it doesn’t fall apart as easily.
Emphasis on “the group” doing things together.	Emphasis on individuals making life-giving choices from a variety of options while enjoying some group-oriented activities.
Single structure stifles creativity, individuality.	Variety encourages life and vitality.
Example: youth group has regular meetings and occasional special events.	Some examples: mentoring, liturgical ministries, peer ministry, leadership development, service opportunities, youth involvement in community leadership structures, etc.
The payoff: a religious social group for young people to participate in.	The payoffs: broad-based youth involvement in the faith community; personal growth and faith development; family and community ties reinforced; leadership development; discipleship; regular & meaningful service within and outside the community, etc.

Appendix B. Sample Needs Assessment & Interest Finder Surveys

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL #1: YOUTH

This Interest Finder gives you a chance to make yourself heard about a variety of programs and activities that might be available through your church. Read each statement and decide whether or not it is something you would like. Circle the answer which best reflects your interest.

AGE _____ GRADE _____

	No interest				Very much interest
1. Find out what is special about me	1	2	3	4	5
2. Better understanding of my parents, teachers and other adults	1	2	3	4	5
3. Learn how to make friends and be a friend	1	2	3	4	5
4. Talking with other youth about things that are really important	1	2	3	4	5
5. Figuring out what it means to be a Catholic	1	2	3	4	5
6. Learning how to deal with drugs and alcohol	1	2	3	4	5
7. Recreation and social activities where you can get acquainted	1	2	3	4	5
8. Understand sex better	1	2	3	4	5
9. Learn about Christian views of sex, dating, and marriage	1	2	3	4	5
10. Learn to speak naturally and intelligently about my faith	1	2	3	4	5
11. Find meaning and purpose in my life	1	2	3	4	5
12. Learn to understand the New Testament better and what it means to us today	1	2	3	4	5
13. Learn to understand the Old Testament better and what it means to us today	1	2	3	4	5

Reproducible Handout

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL #1 - continued

	No interest			Very much interest	
14. Experience a closer relationship with God	1	2	3	4	5
15. Improve communication with my parents	1	2	3	4	5
16. Be of service to other people in my community and the world who need help	1	2	3	4	5
17. Learn about what is right and wrong and how to make moral decisions as a Christian	1	2	3	4	5
18. Develop a deeper appreciation of the meaning of Jesus for my life	1	2	3	4	5
19. Learn about the Christian's response to social problems like hunger, war	1	2	3	4	5
20. Learn how I can be a peacemaker in my relationships and in the world	1	2	3	4	5
21. Learn how to pray in a personal way	1	2	3	4	5
22. Plan and participate in a variety of worship and prayer services	1	2	3	4	5
23. Learn how to deal with the pressures people place on me (friends, school, parents)	1	2	3	4	5

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL #2: PARENTS OF YOUTH

How interested are you in the following programs and activities that might be available for you and for your teenager(s) through the parish in the coming months?

AGE OF TEENAGER(S) AND GRADES: _____

A. PLEASE INDICATE HOW IMPORTANT YOU THINK IT IS FOR THE PARISH TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES BELOW IN OUR EDUCATION PROGRAM: (Circle the number)

	Not important			Very important	
1. To assist young people in developing a healthy self-concept	1	2	3	4	5
2. To enable young people to plan and participate in the liturgy and the sacraments	1	2	3	4	5
3. To teach young people to pray	1	2	3	4	5
4. To assist young people in forming a responsible Catholic Christian attitude toward sex	1	2	3	4	5
5. To teach young people to make sound moral decisions	1	2	3	4	5
6. To help young people develop a better understanding of the Bible and what it means to us today	1	2	3	4	5
7. To help young people develop a deeper appreciation of the meaning of Jesus for their lives	1	2	3	4	5
8. To lead youth to an awareness of people in need in the community and to be willing to serve others	1	2	3	4	5
9. To assist young people in making decisions about their life-style and vocation	1	2	3	4	5
10. To lead youth to an appreciation of the history of the Church	1	2	3	4	5

Reproducible Handout

NEEDS ASSESMENT TOOL #2 - continued

	Not important			Very important	
11. To help youth have a solid understanding of the basic teachings of the Catholic Church	1	2	3	4	5
12. To help youth develop the skills & maturity for healthy relationships	1	2	3	4	5

B. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS:
(Circle the number)

	No interest			Very much interest	
1. More about drugs and alcohol and how to help my teenager deal with them	1	2	3	4	5
2. How to communicate with my teenager	1	2	3	4	5
3. How to help my child develop healthy concepts of right and wrong	1	2	3	4	5
4. How to help my child grow in the Catholic faith	1	2	3	4	5
5. More about education in human sexuality	1	2	3	4	5
6. How to effectively discipline my teenager	1	2	3	4	5
7. More about growth of my child during the teenage years	1	2	3	4	5

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL #3: PARISH LEADERSHIP SURVEY

This survey is intended to determine which areas of the Church's teachings you believe to be the most important for the youth of this parish.

A. IN THIS SECTION YOU ARE ASKED TO RATE KEY AREAS OF CHURCH DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO THEIR *THEOLOGICAL OR DOCTRINAL IMPORTANCE*.

Place the following in rank order, from 1 to 14: #1 is the topic you believe is the most essential for young people to have some knowledge about; #2 is the second most essential; and so forth.

	RANK
1. Scripture	_____
2. Self-knowledge and Self-esteem	_____
3. Sacraments, Liturgy, Worship	_____
4. Prayer and Spirituality	_____
5. Morality/Moral decision making	_____
6. Sexuality	_____
7. Jesus/Christology	_____
8. Basic Catholic doctrine	_____
9. Justice and Peace	_____
10. Vocations/Decision making	_____
11. Relationships	_____
12. Church/Church history	_____
13. Other: _____	_____
14. Other: _____	_____

NEEDS ASSESSMENT #3 - Continued

B. IN THIS SECTION YOU ARE ASKED TO RANK KEY AREAS OF CHURCH DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO *HOW IMPORTANT YOU THINK THE YOUTH OF THE PARISH CONSIDER THEM.*

Place the following in rank order, from 1 to 14: #1 is the topic you believe that teenagers would call the most important topic; #2 is the second most important topic for teens; and so forth.

	RANK
1. Scripture	_____
2. Self-knowledge and Self-esteem	_____
3. Sacraments, Liturgy, Worship	_____
4. Prayer and Spirituality	_____
5. Morality/Moral decision making	_____
6. Sexuality	_____
7. Jesus/Christology	_____
8. Basic Catholic doctrine	_____
9. Justice and Peace	_____
10. Vocations/Decision making	_____
11. Relationships	_____
12. Church/Church history	_____
13. Other: _____	_____
14. Other: _____	_____

Reproducible Handout

NEEDS ASSESSMENT #3 - Continued

C. IN THIS SECTION YOU ARE ASKED TO INDICATE IN WHICH AREAS QUALIFIED AND (POTENTIALLY) INTERESTED TEACHERS ARE AVAILABLE.

Please write the names of any likely candidates on the line provided.

	NAME
1. Scripture	_____
2. Self-knowledge and Self-esteem	_____
3. Sacraments, Liturgy, Worship	_____
4. Prayer and Spirituality	_____
5. Morality/Moral decision making	_____
6. Sexuality	_____
7. Jesus/Christology	_____
8. Basic Catholic doctrine	_____
9. Justice and Peace	_____
10. Vocations/Decision making	_____
11. Relationships	_____
12. Church/Church history	_____
13. Other: _____	_____
14. Other: _____	_____

Appendix C. Developmental Needs of Adolescents

(The following is excerpted and adapted from *YouthWorks*. Copyright © Center for Ministry Development, Naugatuck, CT, 1996. All rights reserved.)

During the high school years, young people grow through the developmental tasks of young adolescence into the world of older adolescence. An effective ministry with high school youth means understanding both stages of development and the important developmental needs that must be addressed in youth ministry. In general young people in the early years of high school reflect a mix of young and older developmental tasks and needs. Young people in the later years of high school are working through the older adolescent tasks.

This mix of developmental needs and tasks leads to several important implications for youth ministry. *First, we must make clear the differences in developmental needs and tasks of young and older adolescents by adopting different ministry styles, and program content and process that include different formats and schedules for each stage of adolescence.*

Second, effective ministry with youth tailors program content and processes to the unique needs and interests of its target audience. This is done by developing each program in such a way that we respect their developmental and social needs. For example, in organizing a program for young adolescents we make sure that we build in time for physical activity, activities which provide creative expression, positive social interaction, and structure and clear limits. The developmental needs can be used as a checklist to assess how developmentally appropriate our programs are.

Third, we use the developmental needs of each stage of adolescence to direct us to the kinds of issues that need to be addressed in our youth programming. For example, we would organize a program for older adolescents on preparing for the future (career, lifestyles) or on developing a personal value system and decision-making skills. The developmental research provides clues into the interests of young people which can be used in creating programs.

To assist you in understanding high school youth and plan your ministry accordingly, we have described the developmental tasks and needs of young and older adolescents.

Young Adolescent Growth

With the exception of infancy, no time in life compresses more physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral and faith development into so brief a span. Briefly summarized, the key changes of young adolescence (10 - 14/15 year-olds) involve:

- experiencing rapid physical growth including the development of secondary sex characteristics and the capacity to reproduce
- moving from concrete thinking (what is) to abstract thinking (what might be true if...)
- constructing a consistent self-image and discovering who they are as unique persons
- engaging in more complex decision-making

- redefining their relationship with family and moving toward limited autonomy while still looking to family for affection and guidance in setting values
- identifying more strongly with the peer group for belonging and deepening friendships
- establishing a set of religious beliefs, attitudes and values grounded in family *and* in a caring faith community

The developmental needs of young adolescents arise out of these changes. They provide a very useful framework for understanding the positive possibilities of early adolescence, thereby providing a solid basis upon which to build ministry strategies and programming. The following chart describes the eight key developmental needs of young adolescents.

Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents

Opportunities for Self-Definition

- opportunities to better understand, define, and accept who they are as individuals
- opportunities to explore their widening social world and to reflect upon the meaning of new experiences, so that they can consider themselves participants in society
- opportunities for young adolescents of ethnic cultures to achieve a positive orientation toward their own culture and white American culture; to affirm their ethnicity through observation of ceremonies, retention of native language, and reinforcement of specific attitudes, beliefs, and practices

Competence and Achievement

- opportunities to find out what they are good at doing and to know what they do is valued by others whom they respect
- opportunities that encourage the practice of new skills, public performance and recognition, and reflection on personal and group accomplishments

Positive Social Interaction with Adults and Peers

- opportunities to develop interpersonal skills
- opportunities to learn how to develop a relationship with their parents that is reflective of their growing autonomy and utilizes new patterns of communicating
- opportunities to form positive peer relationships and support, especially through structured programs
- opportunities for caring relationships with adults who like and respect them, who share their own experiences, views, values, and feelings, and who serve as role models and advisors

Physical Activity

- opportunities to utilize their energy and growing bodies through activities that require physical movement or expression

Meaningful Participation in Families, Schools, Churches and Community Organizations

- opportunities to participate in making decisions about activities that shape their lives and as active leaders or participants who can make a viable contribution to the success of those activities
- opportunities to participate as valued members of the faith community and as leaders in church ministries and programs
- opportunities for exposure to situations in which they can use their skills to solve real life problems and affect the world around them, such as community service programs

Creative Expression

- opportunities to express to the external world who they are on the inside (feelings, interests, abilities, thoughts) through a variety of activities, e.g. music, writing, sports, art, drama, cooking
- activities that enable them to experience and test out new and different forms of self-expression

Personal Religious Experience

- opportunities to explore "the big questions" in life, questions whose answers can only be comprehended within the context of faith and religion
- opportunities for a deeper and more personal relationship with God

Structure and Clear Limits

- provision of structure and guidance for young adolescents in making decisions about their behavior that involve them in the process of decision-making
- provision of structure that helps them stay focused on a task, persevere in their various efforts and succeed, which leads to an increase in self-esteem
- provision of structure and clear limits that helps them feel safe in their activities, which can empower them to live with joy and confidence

Older Adolescent Growth

Older adolescent growth must be seen as an ongoing process beginning around the first years of high school and culminating in the years after graduation. Briefly summarized, the key changes of older adolescents, ages 15-18/19, involve:

- reaching adult physical and sexual maturity
- developing the ability to engage in reflective thinking about what they know, value, and believe ("what do I think?" and "why do I think that?")
- beginning the process of establishing a personal identity, a meaningful self-concept, which includes an acceptance of one's sexuality, vocational goals, and philosophy of life
- shifting from inherited authority (especially the family) to self-chosen authority (eventually oneself), often by establishing an identity that is powerfully shaped by significant others (peers and adults)
- reevaluating the moral values received from family, church, and significant others (adults, peers) and searching for a moral code which preserves their personal integrity and provides the basis for developing an internalized moral value system that can guide their behavior
- moving toward greater personal intimacy and adult sexuality; developing the capability for more mutual, trusting, deep, and enduring personal friendships with members of the same sex and opposite sex
- expanding their perspective to encompass the motives, feelings, and thought patterns of individuals and groups of people outside their personal experience
- exploring and questioning the faith handed down by family and church as they search for a style of faith and belief which is more personal to them

Developmental Needs of Older Adolescents

Exploration and Experimentation

- opportunities to experiment with a wide array of behaviors, roles, attitudes, relationships, ideas, and activities as they develop their own identity and faith identity
- opportunities to explore who they are and who they can become by reflecting on self in relation to others
- opportunities for youth of ethnic cultures to achieve a positive orientation toward their own culture and white American culture; to affirm their ethnicity through observation of ceremonies, retention of native language, and reinforcement of specific attitudes, beliefs,

Adult Sexuality

- opportunities to understand their sexual growth and integrate their sexuality into their own personality in a holistic way
- opportunities to develop healthy values and attitudes regarding their own sexuality

Interpersonal Relationships

- opportunities to form positive relationships and experiences with peers in a comfortable and secure environment and to develop friendship-making and friendship-maintaining skills
- opportunities to learn how to develop a relationship with parents that is reflective of their growing autonomy and utilizes new patterns of communicating

Adult Mentors

- opportunities to develop relationships with adult Christians who affirm their journey and struggles, explore sensitive issues with them, listen to their stories and questions, share their own faith journey, and ask questions that encourage critical thinking and reflection

Meaningful Roles in the Community and Society

- opportunities to participate with other older adolescents as full members and leaders in the community, society and church
- opportunities to explore, discuss, and act on local and global justice issues; to develop an active responsibility for what happens in their community and world, and to be involved in meaningful community service
- opportunities to be involved in the decision-making, planning, and implementation of programs that serve them

Preparing for the Future

- opportunities to acquire the competencies necessary for adult roles, such as goal setting, problem solving, time management, and decision-making
- opportunities to explore life options and plan their futures (education, career) and to help them acquire the skills, knowledge and experience for their chosen fields; to link more closely the worlds of school and work

Personal Value System and Decision-Making Skills

- opportunities to discuss conflicting values and formulate their own value system
- opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in making decisions and to apply Christian moral values in making moral judgments

Personal Faith

- opportunities to explore and question the faith they have been given by their family and the faith community and develop their own faith identity
- opportunities to explore what it means to be and live as a person of faith today
- opportunities to develop a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ

Appendix D. Archdiocesan Religious Education Policies

Archdiocesan Policies Relevant to Assessment of Parish Adolescent Faith Formation

Religious Education Policies Promulgated through January, 2004

(Please check with the [Office of Evangelization and Catechesis](#) for the most current edition of the policies.)

- 2000.4 **Catechetical Leader Certification:** All who administer parish or private elementary school catechetical programs, whether full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer, should follow the archdiocesan “Qualifications for Certification.”
- 2001.03 **Catechist Certification:** Teachers of religion, whether full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer, in parish religious education programs, Catholic elementary schools or the RCIA are to comply with the “Process of Becoming Certified as a Catechist.”
- 2005.01 **Recognizing and Reporting Abuse:** All persons who have regular, significant relationships with children must comply with the policies, procedures and recommendations of the Archdiocese as found in the Archdiocesan Decree on Child Protection.
- 2100.01 **Vision/Mission:** The religious education program should have a written mission statement consistent with the parish vision.
- 2100.02 **Education Commission:** Each parish must have an Education Commission that is responsible for the lifelong faith formation of the parish.
- 2100.05 **Adolescent Catechesis:** Adolescent catechesis must be a component of a total youth ministry approach.
- 2100.06 **Parish Religious Education Handbooks:** All parishes must develop religious education handbooks for staff, and for parents and students.
- 2101.01 **Curriculum Guidelines:** All catechetical efforts in the archdiocese must comply with the archdiocesan curriculum guidelines (see *Growing Together: Adolescent Religious Education*)
- 2101.02 **Religion Textbook/Program Series:** All textbook and audio visual programs used in children’s religious education programs should be chosen from the Preferred Religion Textbook/Program list. (**N.B.** The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis does not evaluate senior high textbooks/programs.)
- 2101.03 **Respect Life Programs:** All catechetical efforts should incorporate a respect life component that includes the Catholic perspective on sexuality.
- 2101.04 **Christian Service:** All catechetical efforts should encourage and provide various opportunities for children and youth to serve others.
- 2101.05 **Social Issues:** All catechetical efforts should include opportunities to discuss and act upon the many social issues confronting the world today.
- 2102.02 **Parishes:** Every child/youth should participate in some form of religious education recognized/approved by the parish.
- 2102.03 **Persons with Disabilities:** Persons with disabilities should be provided opportunities to participate in school and/or parish religious education programs to the fullest extent appropriate.

- 2103.01 **Time Allotments:** Parish Religious Education Programs: Classes in parish religious education programs (early childhood, elementary, high school) are to meet a minimum of 30 clock hours per year.
- 2104.01 **Proper Authorization for Resource Persons:** Persons coming into the school or parish religious education program as a promoter, participant, leader or director of student activities must be authorized by the appropriate administrator.
- 2104.02 **Facilities and Resources:** Adequate materials and facilities should be available to all those who staff and participate in religious education programs.
- 2104.03 **Budgeting:** Each parish must allocate an adequate portion of the parish financial resources to provide quality faith formation programs.
- 2105.01 **Student Participation:** Children and youth should have opportunities to prepare and participate in liturgies and prayer services as integral parts of their religious formation.
- 2105.02 **Holy Days:** Children and youth should be adequately prepared to participate in the celebration of Holy Days.
- 2106.01 **Family Involvement / Parent/Guardian:** All parish and school religious education programs should provide opportunities for parents/guardians to become acquainted with and involved in the religion program.
- 2106.02 **Home-Based Religious Education:** Families who choose home-based religious education should follow the archdiocesan guidelines for catechesis and sacrament preparation.
- 2106.03 **Responding to Family Situations:** When developing religious education programs, the varied situations of families should be taken into account.
- 2106.04 **Family Role in Faith Formation:** Parishes and Catholic schools should provide opportunities for parents to understand and assume their role in the faith formation of children.
- 2107.01 **Sacraments: Preparation:** Every parish should evangelize and provide catechetical instruction for those preparing for reception of the sacraments.
- 2107.02 **Guidelines for Preparation:** All preparation for the reception of sacraments should follow the archdiocesan guidelines.
- 2107.03 **Parent Involvement in Preparing for Sacraments:** Every sacrament preparation program should provide assistance to parents/guardians in assuming their responsibility to prepare their children for celebrating sacraments.
- 2108.01 **Evaluation:** Formal Program Evaluation: All parishes and schools should formally evaluate their total religious education program at least once every five years.
- 2108.02 **NCEA ACRE Inventories:** The NCEA ACRE Assessment must be administered in every parish and school annually.

Photos of Stained Glass Windows

- Page 2 [Pentecost](#) – Cathedral of Christ the King, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Page 4 [The Annunciation](#) – Our Lady of Victory Roman Catholic Community, Baltimore, MD
- Page 6 [The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple](#) – St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Greenville, South Carolina
- Page 11 [The Glorified Christ](#) – All Saints Catholic Church, Dallas Texas
- Page 20 [Our Lady of the Assumption](#) – Archdiocese of Toronto Catholic Cemeteries Association
- Page 27 [The Nativity](#) – Cathedral of Christ the King, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Page 35 [Eucharist](#) – Central Catholic High School., Portland, Oregon
- Page 54 [Jesus and the Children](#) – Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Ionia, MI
- Page 76 [The Good Shepherd](#) – Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Diocese of Lafayette, Indiana
- Page 94 [The Resurrection](#) – St. Peter’s Catholic Church, Mansfield, OH