

# TOTAL FAITH™ INITIATIVE

The Catholic Youth Bible

**Coordinator's Manual**

Total Youth Ministry

Total Catechesis

The Catholic Faith Handbook  
for Youth

Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

# TOTAL FAITH™ INITIATIVE

## **The Total Faith™ Initiative**

### **Total Catechesis**

*Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*

*Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*

*Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*

*Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*

### **Total Youth Ministry**

*Ministry Resources for Community Life*

*Ministry Resources for Evangelization*

*Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*

*Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*

*Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

*Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*

*Total Faith™ Initiative Coordinator's Manual*

*The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*

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for Youth

**Thomas East** with Ann Marie Eckert,  
Leif Kehrwald, Brian Singer-Towns, Cheryl M. Tholcke

Laurie Delgatto, general editor

Saint Mary's Press™

This book is dedicated to John and Linda Roberto  
on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary  
of the Center for Ministry Development (CMD).

To John, founder of CMD, in gratitude for your vision, leadership, and  
commitment to empowering leaders for today's Church.

To Linda, in gratitude for your commitment, dedication, and constant care  
of the CMD staff and community.

 Genuine recycled paper with 10% post-consumer waste.  
Printed with soy-based ink. 5056801

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This manual was developed in collaboration with the Center for Ministry Development. The publishing team included Thomas East, project coordinator, and Cheryl M. Tholcke, content editor.

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Printed in the United States of America

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2012 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04

ISBN 0-88489-778-8

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# Introduction to the Total Faith™ Initiative

Many youth today are waiting to hear the Good News that is ours as Christ's disciples. Youth in our parishes long to grow spiritually and to belong to their family, Church, and local community in meaningful ways. Parents of youth long to experience Church as supportive of and caring about the same things they care about. They hope the parish will offer ways for youth to be involved and to grow in their faith through the presentation of solid content. Parents want to understand youth ministry so they can support and encourage their child's participation.

Parishes want to know how to include youth and how to pass on faith to a new generation. Parish members want to see youth more involved and are worried about the challenges that face today's youth. They know that young people need support from their faith community—now more than ever. Parish youth ministry leaders are generous, passionate, and busy people; they make sacrifices so that youth will have a community to belong to and a place to grow. They need ideas and plans for youth ministry activities—and strategies that really work. They are working toward a ministry that goes beyond just gathering groups of young people; they are working toward a ministry that makes connections between youth and the community.

In 1997 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published its vision and framework for youth ministry that addresses those concerns. In *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, the bishops describe a rich and challenging vision for Catholic youth ministry. Catechesis is at the heart of that vision; throughout the document the bishops urge the Church to guide young people toward a life of fullness in Jesus Christ, and to give them the tools that will enable them to live out that fullness as Catholic Christians. To put it simply, the bishops call young people to embrace their faith as they study it, pray it, and live it. The bishops also challenge the faith community to surround young people with love, care, and attention, and to include youth throughout the life of the parish.

By addressing each of the eight components for comprehensive youth ministry as articulated in *Renewing the Vision*, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps communities implement that vision. It addresses those elements in a way that pays attention to the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral needs of young people. In this renewed vision, catechesis is one component of youth ministry; it is not distinct from it.

The initiative includes a three-part series that brings to the field of youth ministry the ancient yet timeless truths of the Catholic faith. The Scriptures and Tradition are set within a framework that any parish can apply in its everyday ministry with youth. From the initial proclamation of the Good News, through evangelization and outreach to effective catechesis, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative seeks to root youth in and connect them to the unchanging truths of their Catholic faith—while challenging them to apply the words of the Gospel and the teachings of Tradition to their daily lives. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative includes these components:

- ***The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*** and the first edition of ***The Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)*** serve as the centerpieces of this initiative. The *CFH* is an integrated text for youth who are participating in the learning elements of TOTAL FAITH, and all the sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals are linked to this handbook and to the *CYB*, which is considered an important student resource.
- The **Total Youth Ministry** resource manuals address six of the eight components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. (The advocacy component, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and is addressed specifically in the *Coordinator's Manual*.)
- The four catechetical manuals that comprise the **Total Catechesis** series are grounded in the content of the *CFH* and address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## TOTAL FAITH Resources Are Integrated and Flexible

TOTAL FAITH resources are both integrated and flexible. They integrate all the components of comprehensive youth ministry, because many parish youth ministry leaders desire a single resource that addresses all youth ministry components. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps parishes implement comprehensive youth ministry with all its components, including adolescent catechesis, in a way that is seamless.

Because many youth ministry leaders create their own programs by mixing and matching ideas and activities from several sources, TOTAL FAITH resources are created to be flexible. The sessions and activities in the Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry manuals are designed to stand independently, without having to be in a particular sequence or having other content as a prerequisite. This means that you can use a session or two in regular gatherings with youth or combine them into longer programs. For example, you can take an activity from one session and combine it with a prayer experience and a media connection from another session to create your own learning program. In fact, all the session handouts are available on an accompanying CD-ROM in a format that allows you to customize and modify them.

There is more. You can access all the sessions and activities in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals through a searchable database on the *TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual* CD-ROM, which is included with this manual.

### Total Youth Ministry Resource Manuals

The Total Youth Ministry resource manuals address six of the components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. Another component, advocacy, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and addressed specifically in the *Coordinator's Manual*. The catechesis component is addressed in the four Total Catechesis manuals. You will find the following information in each Total Youth Ministry manual:

- a chapter explaining the component, connecting it to Church documents, and identifying practical ideas and resources
- sessions that can stand alone or be combined with other sessions in the series
- numerous strategies, ideas, suggestions, and resources that go beyond a specific gathering

Following is a brief description of each of the manuals:

- ***Ministry Resources for Community Life*** offers faith communities program resources and strategies to build community among young people and throughout the parish. The resource includes nine gathered sessions to help young people get to know one another, themselves, and the meaning of Christian community. It also contains an outline for an ecumenical event to help build community across denominational lines, and it offers practical strategies and ideas to help manage community issues, make the most of community life opportunities, and encourage intergenerational and family relationships.

## Features of TOTAL FAITH

TOTAL FAITH provides the following:

- ◆ an integrated approach to youth ministry that includes attention to adolescent catechesis within the *Renewing the Vision* components
- ◆ flexible resources that match a variety of parish models and styles of youth ministry
- ◆ solid content about the Catholic faith and about numerous topics throughout the components of youth ministry
- ◆ easy-to-use session plans for gathered programs that are adaptable and complete
- ◆ dynamic session designs geared to youth's learning needs
- ◆ resources to support youth learning, including handouts and connections to *The Catholic Youth Bible* and *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*
- ◆ strategies, ideas, and resources that go beyond gathered programs to connect youth to all settings of youth ministry and parish life

- **Ministry Resources for Evangelization** offers faith communities tools and program resources to evangelize youth. It offers practical strategies and ideas for outreach to young people, and contains twelve gathered sessions to share the Good News. It also includes a retreat to engage young people in becoming or continuing as Jesus' disciples.
- **Ministry Resources for Justice and Service** offers faith communities programs and strategies to engage youth in justice, direct service, and advocacy in faithful, age-appropriate, and proactive ways. This resource contains eight gathered sessions around specific justice issues, an overnight retreat on service to poor people, and two half-day retreats or evening reflections on simplicity and racism.
- At the heart of **Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care** are twelve sessions designed to equip young people with the tools needed to celebrate their holy goodness and navigate some of life's difficult issues. Session topics include recognizing the goodness in oneself and others, building and maintaining relationships, dealing with tough times, and preparing for the future. The last section of the manual comprises strategies for doing the ongoing work of pastoral care.
- **Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship** is designed for those who work with and walk with youth in this journey of discipleship. The manual contains three sessions to teach youth to pray and to practice praying in different forms. Eleven communal prayer services are included, which can be used on a variety of occasions throughout the seasons of the year. It also contains strategies and resources to help youth communities develop patterns of prayer and to include youth in preparing prayers and liturgies.
- **Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development** offers faith communities program resources and strategies to develop youth as leaders within youth ministry programs and the parish. The manual includes four foundational sessions on Christian leadership, ten leadership skill sessions and minisessions, and two sessions to help prepare youth and adults for working together. The manual offers ideas and strategies for creating leadership roles within the parish, inviting youth to leadership, and working with the parents of youth leaders. The plans for implementing sessions and other gathered events are complete, easy to follow, and adaptable to your community.

### The Total Catechesis Manuals

The four Total Catechesis manuals address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism*, a faith that is to be believed, celebrated, lived, and prayed. Each catechetical manual is grounded in the content of the *CFH*. Using tested strategies, catechists lead the participants through

creative learning experiences and then invite them to reflect on those experiences. Prayer, the Scriptures, and other elements of the Christian faith are carefully integrated into every manual in the series. These four manuals correspond to the four sections of the *CFH*:

- **Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality** is a rich course that gives young people a solid grounding in the foundations of Christian morality, to add to what they have already received in their faith community and in their family. The manual presents young people with the fundamental concerns of the moral life in a Catholic Christian context. Above all, the course is an invitation to young people to build God's Reign by loving themselves and others as God loves them. In other words, it is an invitation to become holy, healthy, and happy. In doing so, young people will bring God and the world together!
- From the Scriptures and Tradition, we come to know prayer as our response to God's invitation of covenant and communion. It is both a gift of grace and a determined effort on our part. Prayer involves our whole being—mind, body, and soul. The material in **Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer** encourages young people to pray as a way to grow in their relationship with God. It gives young people the tools to pray all ways, and always, and enables them to build their relationship with God on a solid foundation.
- **Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments** addresses the sacraments of initiation, the sacraments of healing, and the sacraments at the service of communion. The sessions share the history of the sacraments, their meaning, the significance of symbols, and the nature of the rite itself. Participants are invited to enter actively into the study of the sacraments, to make connections between the sacraments and their own lives, to reflect prayerfully on the meaning of the sacraments, and to take some sacrament-related action steps.
- **Catechetical Sessions on the Creed** focuses on understanding the treasure, the gift, the challenge, and the sacrament that is Church. The young people are supported as they grow in their faith and in their knowledge about the basic truths of the Catholic faith. They are encouraged to make the mission of the Church their own, and challenged to set their heart on all that is good, holy, and true about being a young Catholic in the world today.

The manuals in the Total Catechesis series are STUDY IT! PRAY IT! LIVE IT! resources. The STUDY IT! component comprises a 45- to 60-minute core session that focuses on chapters in the *CFH*. Optional activities, called session extensions, allow you to extend the core session to 90 minutes or longer. The PRAY IT! component offers a 10- to 15-minute prayer service on the session theme, and the LIVE IT! component suggests ways to connect the session topic to parish, community, and family life.

## The Manual CD-ROMs

Each manual is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing the full content of its activities. This feature enables the user to provide handouts and resource materials to catechists, adult leaders, parents, and young people in a variety of delivery methods, such as e-mail, Web site posting, and photocopying. Handouts and resources are provided in both printable color and black-and-white versions, and the latter can be customized for the particular needs of your group. You will also find additional resources, hyperlinks to suggested Web sites, and background material for leader preparation.

## The Coordinator's Manual CD-ROM

On the CD-ROM accompanying this *Coordinator's Manual*, you will find a searchable database to help you locate sessions and activities in the TOTAL FAITH manuals that can be used to create gathered programs, and ideas and strategies for nongathered programming. The CD-ROM allows you to print brief descriptions of all the sessions and activities found in the Total Youth Ministry and Total Catechesis manuals, for use in planning. You will also find PowerPoint presentations to assist you in training your

## TOTAL FAITH Sessions Are Easy to Use

The plans for implementing sessions and other gathered events are complete, easy to follow, and adaptable to your community. With the detailed plans provided for the sessions, activities, and strategies in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative, youth ministry volunteers no longer need to be program designers. By using the TOTAL FAITH resources, you can focus on the important task of finding the leaders that make youth ministry happen. Each session includes an overview, a list of materials, preparation steps, and step-by-step instructions for facilitating a session with confidence. Most sessions also include a variety of ways to extend the theme of the session with prayer, related learning exercises, or follow-through experiences.

## TOTAL FAITH Sessions Encourage Dynamic Learning

Youth are engaged in active learning with the sessions in the Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry series because the design is built around their learning needs and styles. Every session includes dynamic learning activities that bring young people's experience into conversation with the session theme. You will find that in the different manuals, the instructions and categories will be familiar. Yet in the different components of youth ministry, the sessions have been designed to match what we know about how youth learn in that particular component. For instance, in *Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*, the pastoral circle helps youth engage in critical reflection about topics of justice in today's world. In *Ministry Resources for Evangelization*, each session is built around a Scripture passage and a faith witness. Throughout the Total Catechesis sessions, a praxis approach to learning is utilized to help youth connect what they are learning with their everyday life.

## TOTAL FAITH Supports Youth with Resources for Their Faith

Handouts are included in many of the session plans so that youth are provided with the resources needed to support their learning. Participants will also rely on the *CFH* and the first edition of the *CYB*, the foundational texts for the TOTAL FAITH sessions and activities.

### *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*

This book can stand alone as a reference for young people, but it is intended to be an integrated text for youth who are participating in the

learning elements of TOTAL FAITH. Leaders in youth ministry will also find it to be a helpful resource and guide for sharing and living the faith.

### *The Catholic Youth Bible*

The *CYB* is designed for searchers and committed Christian youth to read and to apply the Scriptures to their life. The Bible is linked to sessions throughout the manuals of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative and therefore is considered a primary student resource.

## The TOTAL FAITH Initiative Is Comprehensive

Throughout the strategies offered in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative, parishes are encouraged to go beyond an approach that relies only on gathered meetings. The TOTAL FAITH Initiative also makes connections to families of youth by supporting them with helpful resources and opportunities to gather together. In addition, the initiative suggests a variety of ways to connect youth to the parish community and the wider civic community.

## TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual Contents

### Chapter 1: "Comprehensive Catholic Youth Ministry"

This chapter provides a description of the purpose, goals, and components of Catholic youth ministry as described in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Renewing the Vision*.

### Chapter 2: "With a Solid Catechetical Heart"

This chapter provides direction for catechesis with adolescents today. It also includes a guide to key documents relating to catechesis, practical guidance for parishes in planning for catechesis, and a discussion of models and effective methods.

### Chapter 3: "Visioning and Planning for Dynamic Youth Ministry"

This chapter helps leaders plan for and organize youth ministry. Practical resources and exercises are included to provide a way for parish teams to name their vision and set goals for the parish's youth ministry.

### Chapter 4: "Choosing a Model of Ministry for Your Parish"

This chapter describes the qualities and elements of effective youth ministry and provides several models for parishes to consider in their planning.

leaders and in program planning, and handouts on a variety of topics to help prepare leaders for their role.

## Connections to the Spirit & Song Hymnal

Many of the TOTAL FAITH sessions include suggested songs from the *Spirit & Song* hymnal, published by Oregon Catholic Press. This hymnal is designed to enhance prayer and liturgy for gatherings of youth and young adults. For more information about *Spirit & Song*, contact Oregon Catholic Press, at 5536 N.E. Hassalo, Portland, OR, 97213, 503-281-1191 or 800-548-8749, [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org).

### Chapter 5: "Planning a Season of Ministry"

This chapter provides a process for parish leaders to use to plan a season of youth ministry that includes gatherings with youth, connections with families, nongathered strategies, and connections to parish life. Four sample seasonal plans are included.

### Chapter 6: "Gathering with Youth"

This chapter suggests various ways to use the TOTAL FAITH resources in gathered programs with youth and their families. The gatherings include youth nights, extended events, and retreats.

### Chapter 7: "Connecting with Youth"

This chapter provides ways for parishes to connect with youth beyond gathered programs. It includes ideas and resources for reaching out to youth and a guide to strategies for connecting with youth.

### Chapter 8: "Connecting with Families of Youth"

This chapter provides leaders with research on families with teens and ways that youth ministry leaders can partner with parents. Included are suggestions and ideas for using the resources and sessions in the series.

### Chapter 9: "Connecting Youth to Parish Life"

This chapter shares ideas for connecting youth to parish life and building the relationship between youth and the parish community. Opportunities for connections between the generations are identified.

### Chapter 10: "Inviting, Welcoming, and Encouraging Youth Participation"

This chapter explores methods and resources for encouraging youth and their families to become involved in youth ministry. It also includes recommendations for welcoming youth and providing hospitality.

### Chapter 11: "Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders"

This chapter presents a vision and strategies to empower a variety of leaders to implement youth ministry.

## Where Do I Start?

You can use the TOTAL FAITH Initiative resources in your parish in different ways, depending on the needs of the young people and the community.

Here are some suggestions on how to start:

- **If you are looking for content to include in an existing youth ministry and religious education program,** you will want to review chapters 5 and 6 of this *Coordinator's Manual* for help in planning and implementing gathered programs for youth.
- **If you are looking for a specific program element, such as a learning activity or a prayer service, for an event or a gathering that you are**

**planning,** you will want to use the "Searchable Index of Sessions, Activities, and Strategies" feature on the CD-ROM that accompanies this *Coordinator's Manual*. That feature will allow you to locate elements from the sessions that connect with the topic you are looking for.

- **If you and your parish wish to start or enhance the parish's ministry with young people,** you will want to utilize the resources in this *Coordinator's Manual* in a systematic way. Here is a plan to follow:
  1. With your team, learn about youth ministry and adolescent catechesis. Read chapters 1 and 2, and involve others in the helpful exercises provided at the end of the chapters.
  2. Read chapters 3 and 4, and involve other leaders in planning, goal setting, and choosing a model for your parish youth ministry. Use the exercises at the end of chapter 3 to lead others in a planning day. In chapter 4, the section "TOTAL FAITH Connections" tells you how the TOTAL FAITH resources connect with the elements and models for effective youth ministry.
  3. Use the TOTAL FAITH sessions and strategies to plan a season of ministry. Use the process in chapter 5 and the helpful index cards located on this manual's CD-ROM to plan for three months of ministry using the TOTAL FAITH resources and other resources.
  4. Use chapter 6, "Gathering with Youth," to plan for youth nights, extended events, and retreats.
  5. Plan for strategies to help the youth ministry team connect with youth. Use chapter 7, "Connecting with Youth," to locate and plan strategies that go beyond gathered programs and help you connect with youth. The section "Using TOTAL FAITH Resources to Reach Out to Youth" tells you where to find nongathered strategies.
  6. Use chapter 8, "Connecting with Families of Youth," to find ways to connect with families of youth. The section "Using TOTAL FAITH Resources to Connect with Families" tells you where to find specific sessions and strategies to help you connect with families.
  7. Find ways to connect youth with the parish. Use chapter 9, "Connecting Youth to the Parish Community," to find suggestions, ideas, and resources that build the relationship between youth and their parish. The section "TOTAL FAITH Connections" tells you where to find sessions, strategies, and resources for this topic.
  8. Use chapter 10, "Inviting, Welcoming, and Encouraging Youth Participation," to find helpful suggestions for publicizing youth ministry and extending hospitality to youth.
  9. Use chapter 11, "Finding, Preparing, and Supporting Leaders," to access and support leaders in your community. The guides for youth ministry leaders on the CD-ROM will help you prepare leaders for specific roles.

## Conclusion

Parishes with dynamic youth ministry surround their youth with loving care. They include their young members in leadership and planning, and respond to the needs identified by their youth. It takes total faith to dream and build ministry with youth that truly empowers young disciples. Our hope is that you will find in the TOTAL FAITH Initiative the help, encouragement, and example that your parish community needs to create or strengthen the youth ministry efforts in your community.

# 1 Comprehensive Catholic Youth Ministry

Youth, parents, parish communities, and youth ministry leaders long for vibrant youth ministry that engages, inspires, and empowers youth for discipleship and active membership in the community. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Renewing the Vision* provides a vision for this kind of dynamic ministry with youth. In that vision, youth are seen as gifted, growing, and capable of being active disciples. The parish is seen as a place where youth and their families feel welcome and participate actively. Youth ministry is described in that vision primarily as the parish's relationship with its youth, rather than as a program or a collection of activities. Through that relationship the parish community shares faith with young members.

This vision of youth ministry is broad and has numerous possibilities. In considering all the possibilities, some people can become overwhelmed. The possibilities in the vision are not intended as a checklist of things that every parish is required to provide. Rather, the possibilities provide the big picture of what Catholic youth ministry can be. Parishes find themselves in that picture, and develop their ministry with youth by connecting youth to the resources, activities, and people that comprise parish and community life.

Many people describe the vision presented in *Renewing the Vision* as "comprehensive youth ministry." To be comprehensive, parishes develop a mix of strategies and gathered events. They have a regular pattern of gathering with youth, a variety of ways to connect with youth outside of events, a means to connect with and support families of adolescents, and an intentional plan for including youth throughout parish life. The mix and emphasis of those pieces are different for each community. One parish described their youth ministry as a two-step dance, with one step being their ministry directly for teens and the other step being their efforts to connect teens to the rest of the parish's life and ministry.

*Renewing the Vision* does not provide a rigid program model or a prescriptive method for developing ministry. Rather, it offers a framework, a structure that has room for parishes to develop youth ministry in various

ways. Like the blueprints for building a home, the framework provides five important elements that guide us:

- definition
- goals
- themes
- ministry components
- ministry settings

Let's explore these elements in depth, and look at how the TOTAL FAITH Initiative addresses them.

## Definition of Catholic Youth Ministry

The definition of youth ministry offered by the bishops in *Renewing the Vision* is formed by our love for and our commitment to youth: "Youth ministry is the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community" (p. 1).

The bishops remind us to see within youth the incredible potential and capacities they have, and to respond to their present and real needs. Youth ministry does not exist because youth are particularly troubled or needy; youth are growing in ways intended by our loving God. They are encountering the joys that are a natural part of adolescence. In the midst of their growing pains, youth have wonderful gifts to offer. We minister to youth because we are Church and we follow Jesus' pattern: we respond to needs and empower youth to use and share their gifts.

## Three Goals of Catholic Youth Ministry

In *Renewing the Vision*, three goals serve as directions for ministry with youth.

**Goal 1: "To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today" (p. 9).** We know that young people are seeking. They seek to find the adventure of their lifetime. They look for a way to contribute something important to the world. They look for a cause to belong to, a cause in which to place their energy and life. As a faith community, we offer young people the challenge of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This effort includes the following:

- providing a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision for life
- evangelizing youth, drawing young people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- calling youth to discipleship

- providing opportunities for youth to join in service, ministry, and leadership
- providing catechesis for youth
- helping youth explore their vocation

**Goal 2: "To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community" (p. 11).** We know that young people strive to be part of a community. They long to belong with others. They want to feel connected to people with whom they feel safe. As a Church, we offer young people community. We help them become more connected in their own families, in our parishes, and in the wider community.

*Renewing the Vision* identifies four important faith communities for young people: the family, the parish, the Catholic school, and the youth-serving organization. We help youth connect to those communities through these methods:

- supporting families of youth with resources, programs, and information
- integrating youth into the life of the parish community
- supporting community life in the Catholic school
- building participation in youth-serving organizations

**Goal 3: "To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person" (p. 15).** We know that young people are growing. This time in their life brings dramatic physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual changes. As the Body of Christ, we offer experiences and opportunities for youth to grow in positive ways, through learning their faith and by using their gifts in service to others. As a community we use our creativity and resources to respond to youth who are seeking, striving, and growing. We foster this growth through our active engagement of youth in the life of our communities in these ways:

- supporting the development of healthy, competent, caring, and faith-filled youth
- addressing their unique developmental, social, and religious needs
- promoting Catholic identity
- using the asset-building approach to address the obstacles and challenges to healthy development

## Seven Themes of Comprehensive Youth Ministry

The themes of the comprehensive vision presented in *Renewing the Vision* provide a guide for ministry development that helps us use all our resources and be inclusive and responsive in our ministry efforts.

## Adolescent Development

An important part of our picture of youth includes their tremendous growth during the years of adolescence. In *Renewing the Vision*, we are called to minister to youth whose age span encompasses both younger and older adolescents. Younger adolescents are ten years old to fourteen or fifteen years old. In school, most of those youth are in grades five through nine. With the exception of infancy, no time in life compresses more physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and faith development into so brief a span. Key among those changes would be rapid physical growth, the onset of puberty, the move from concrete to abstract thinking, and the growing importance of peer groups and friendships.

Older adolescents are fifteen years old to eighteen or nineteen years old. Older adolescence is an ongoing process, beginning at age fourteen or fifteen and continuing until the early twenties. This means that some of the issues and changes for older adolescents that are addressed by youth ministry continue to be addressed by young adult ministry, which covers the age span of eighteen to thirty-five. Some key changes

### Developmentally Appropriate

Effective ministry responds to the developmental growth of young and older adolescents by using programs and strategies that are age appropriate and strategically focused to contribute to the positive development of youth.

### Family Friendly

Effective ministry recognizes the family as an important setting for ministry and provides links between the programs of youth ministry and the family home through information sharing, inclusive programs, and resources for families of adolescents.

### Intergenerational

Effective ministry utilizes the intergenerational parish community by developing shared programs that include children, youth, and adults of all ages. The intergenerational theme is also addressed by connecting youth to adults in the community, which includes adults mentoring youth, as well as linking youth as mentors with younger members of the parish.

### Multicultural

Effective ministry provides for ministry to youth in the context of their culture and their ethnic heritage. Effective ministry also promotes crosscultural understanding and appreciation.

### Communitywide Collaboration

Effective ministry promotes collaboration with leaders, agencies, and congregations in the wider community. This collaboration includes sharing information, sponsoring programs, and developing advocacy efforts.

### Leadership

Effective ministry mobilizes the people of the faith community to become involved in youth ministry efforts by providing diverse roles and leadership commitments for adults and youth.

### Flexible and Adaptable Programming

Effective ministry provides flexible and adaptable program structures and ministry responses to address the variety of youth and families in our communities.

## Eight Components of Comprehensive Youth Ministry

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

The components support and enhance one another. Ministry becomes more effective when the ministry response is balanced across the eight ministry areas. This balance is not necessarily achieved by developing separate ministry activities and strategies for each component; sometimes a single event, such as a retreat, incorporates several ministry components. A balanced approach to the following components, taken from *Renewing the Vision*, takes place over a season or year of ministry.

### Advocacy

“The ministry of advocacy engages the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community. It places adolescents and families first by analyzing every policy and program—domestic, parish-based, diocesan, and international—for its impact on adolescents and families. Poor, vulnerable, and at-risk adolescents have first claim on our common efforts. The ministry of advocacy struggles against economic and social forces that threaten adolescents and family life, such as poverty, unemployment, lack of access to affordable health care, lack of decent housing, and discrimination. The ministry of advocacy supports policies and programs that support and empower adolescents and their families and works to overcome poverty, provide decent jobs, and promote equal opportunity. In all advocacy efforts we must remember to focus on adolescents and families with the greatest need. This is the ‘option for the poor’ in action (*Putting Children and Families First*)” (p. 27).

### Catechesis

“The ministry of catechesis helps adolescents *develop* a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and *increase* their knowledge of the core content of the Catholic faith. The ministry of Catechesis also helps young people *enrich* and *expand* their understanding of the Scriptures and the sacred tradition and their application to life today, and *live* more faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives, especially through a life of prayer, justice, and loving service. Genuine faith is a total response of the whole person—mind, heart, and will. The ministry of catechesis fosters growth in Catholic faith in all three dimensions—trusting (heart), knowing and believing (mind), and doing (will)” (p. 29).

### Community Life

“The ministry of community life *builds* an environment of love, support, appreciation for diversity, and judicious acceptance that models Catholic principles; *develops* meaningful relationships; and *nurtures* Catholic faith. The content of our message will be heard only when it is lived in our relationships and community life. To teach compassion, generosity, tolerance, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, and love as gospel values and to

for older adolescents include reaching adult growth and maturity, establishing a personal identity, experiencing shifting patterns of authority, and moving toward the capacity for intimacy in relationships.

## Leadership for Youth Ministry: It Takes a Parish

An exciting part of the vision for youth ministry is that everyone in the community can play a role. The whole community can pray for young people, make youth feel welcome, and support ministry efforts. Many organizations, adults, and youth can find a place to make youth ministry happen. It is all about focusing the gifts of the community in a common direction.

## The Coordinator of Youth Ministry

Supporting youth ministry takes leadership. In many parishes, choosing a single leader or a small group of leaders was the first and only thing the community did to support youth ministry. This left too much for too few people to do. Imagine an orchestra conductor who takes the podium and uses the baton to begin the symphony. As he starts the piece, he also runs down to play each instrument, running from seat to seat, trying to be the whole orchestra. It just would not work. The conductor needs the musicians. A coordinator of youth ministry is like the conductor, because he or she tries to keep the many gifted players in sync, bringing each group of instruments into the piece at the right time. “Ministry coordinators have a central role in facilitating the people, programming, and resources of the faith community on behalf of a comprehensive ministry effort with adolescents” (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 24).

## The Coordinating Team: Keeping an Eye on the Big Picture

The coordinator of youth ministry works hand in hand with a coordinating team to keep an eye on the big

identify ourselves as Christians requires us to live these values in our interactions with young people and in our community life. . . .

“The ministry of community life is not only *what* we do (activity), but *who* we are (identity) and *how* we interact (relationships)” (p. 34).

### Evangelization

“The ministry of evangelization shares the good news of the reign of God and invites young people to hear about the Word Made Flesh. Drawing from Jesus’ example, evangelization involves the community’s pronouncement and living witness that the reign of God has become realized in and through Jesus. The starting point for the ministry of evangelization ‘is our recognition of the presence of God already in young people, their experiences, their families, and their culture. . . . Evangelization, therefore, enables young people to uncover and name the experience of a God already active and present in their lives. This provides an openness to the gift of the Good News of Jesus Christ’ (*Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization*, p. 15).

“The ministry of evangelization incorporates several essential elements: *witness, outreach, proclamation, invitation, conversion, and discipleship*” (*Renewing the Vision*, pp. 36–37).

### Justice and Service

“The ministry of justice and service *nurtures* in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching; *empowers* young people to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering; and *infuses* the concepts of justice, peace, and human dignity into all ministry efforts” (p. 38).

### Leadership Development

“The ministry of Leadership Development calls forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents. Leadership roles in adolescent ministry are key. Leaders must be trained and encouraged. This approach involves a wide diversity of adult *and* youth leaders in a variety of roles. Many will be involved in direct ministry with adolescents, others will provide support services, and yet others will link the ministry effort to the resources of the broader community” (p. 40).

### Pastoral Care

“The ministry of pastoral care is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus’ care of people, especially those who were hurting and in need. The ministry of Pastoral Care involves *promoting* positive adolescent and family development through a variety of positive (preventive) strategies; *caring* for adolescents and families in crisis through support, counseling, and referral

to appropriate community agencies; *providing guidance* as young people face life decisions and make moral choices; and *challenging* systems that are obstacles to positive development (*advocacy*). Pastoral care is most fundamentally a relationship—a ministry of compassionate presence. This was Jesus’ caring stance toward all people, especially those who were hurting or in need. Pastoral care enables healing and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships. It nurtures growth toward wholeness” (p. 42).

### Prayer and Worship

“The ministry of prayer and worship *celebrates* and *deepens* young people’s relationship with Jesus Christ through the bestowal of grace, communal prayer, and liturgical experiences; it *awakens* their awareness of the spirit at work in their lives; it *incorporates* young people more fully into the sacramental life of the Church, especially Eucharist; it *nurtures* the personal prayer life of young people; and it *fosters* family rituals and prayer” (p. 44).

## Settings for Comprehensive Youth Ministry

Often, as youth ministry leaders, we limit our thinking about the settings in which ministry to young people can occur. Consider the following four settings, and the possibilities open up.

### Youth

Direct ministry to and with youth, using activities and strategies, is the first setting to consider. This is the setting we most commonly associate with youth ministry. It includes the variety of ways we gather young people: youth group meetings, religious education programs, sacramental preparation, socials, sporting events, youth retreats, youth service events, and special youth prayer services. Ministry in the youth setting also includes individualized efforts and ways we connect directly with youth without gathering them, such as e-mail prayer messages or a parish ministry presence at youth football games and concerts.

### Family

Ministry in the family setting includes the variety of ways we connect with families of adolescents. This includes providing resources and programs that support parents, as well as strategic opportunities that bring the family together. In this setting we also support the ways that family members minister to and with each other in the home. For example, we can provide suggestions for family prayer or fun time for families of adolescents as they share faith together in the home. With strategies as simple as developing family information packets for youth programs, parents will

picture. This team of youth and adults organizes the various ministry efforts and helps connect the variety of strategies and programs. In this schema are many different roles for the people who are willing to help. There are many roles for people who like to speak or teach. There are many more roles for people who work behind the scenes in planning, hospitality, transportation, administration, and organization of the various ministries. The key is to match people’s energy and gifts with a youth ministry strategy.

## Creating Many Doors for Youth to Enter

*Renewing the Vision* directs parishes to create “flexible and adaptable program structures [to] address the changing needs and life situations of today’s young people and their families” (p. 25).

Parishes that effectively minister to youth provide a variety of ways for youth with different interests to be involved. Some youth are looking for a community they can join to be part of social, faith-formation, and service programs. Other youth seek out specific interests. For instance, some youth in our parishes are already attached to a peer group. They might be

involved in band, choir, sports, or a service club. They would like to connect with the parish but do not necessarily want to join a group. Those young people might be attracted to faith-formation programs, service programs, or retreats, but they may not want to join the youth group.

Many youth in our parishes attend Catholic high schools that have strong religious education and service components. For those youth the door to youth ministry might be involvement in ministry, leadership, or service. They might be paired with an adult to learn how to become a lector or a catechist for younger children. They might help take leadership in developing ministry programs for younger adolescents. Some youth are going to begin their involvement in the parish by being part of the social and community-building components. Different starting points create doors for young people to enter into the home of our parish.

### A Youth-Friendly Parish

In *Renewing the Vision*, parishes are called to become “youth-friendly” communities in which youth have a conspicuous presence” (p. 13). Those communities have the following characteristics:

know what their children are experiencing, and they will be better prepared to support their children's efforts.

#### Parish

The parish setting includes the many ways that youth experience ministry through the life of the parish itself. For example, how do we include the gifts of youth and respond to their needs through our parish liturgies? Some communities prepare liturgies that include youth in the liturgical ministries and are intentional about mentioning, in prayers and homilies, people and issues that matter to youth.

The parish's community life also becomes a place to minister to youth when we pay attention to their needs and gifts. When planning events such as a parish mission or a parishwide service event, consider how those events can touch the lives of young people.

#### The Wider Community

Ministry to youth in the wider community connects youth and families to programs and resources beyond the parish. Examples are participation in interparish, interchurch, and diocesan events, and ways that we can connect youth and families to programs, resources, and events in the civic community. Connecting youth to service in hospitals, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters is a wonderful way for youth to develop their gifts. We take advantage of our shared strength when we come together with other people and agencies in the wider community as advocates for youth.

## Conclusion: Putting the Framework Together

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

- utilize each of the Church's ministries—advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship—in an integrated approach to achieving the three goals for ministry with adolescents
- provide developmentally appropriate programs and activities that promote personal and spiritual growth for young and older adolescents
- enrich family life and promote the faith growth of families of adolescents
- incorporate young people fully into all aspects of Church life and engage them in ministry and leadership in the faith community

- create partnerships among families, schools, churches, and community organizations in a common effort to promote positive youth development

(*Renewing the Vision*, p. 20)

A Church that responds to youth by creating comprehensive youth ministry is a place where youth and their families will find what they need to belong deeply, grow in faith, and find a way to share their gifts. Pope John Paul II describes this vision for Church:

This is what is needed: a Church for young people, which will know how to speak to their heart and enkindle, comfort and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the Gospel and the strength of the Eucharist; a Church which will know how to invite and to welcome the person who seeks a purpose for which to commit his whole existence; 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 the following of the Gospel. (1995 World Day of Prayer for Vocations)

## Exercises for Sharing the Vision

Sharing the vision for comprehensive youth ministry can help bring your parish on board with your ministry efforts. Consider sharing the information in this chapter with the following groups:

- youth and adult leaders in youth ministry
- parish leaders and parish leadership groups, such as the pastoral council and faith-formation commissions
- parish staff
- parents of youth
- collaborators in the wider community

To share the vision, use the PowerPoint slides that accompany this chapter to enhance your presentation. Consider using the following exercises when you make your presentation. If you are presenting the material all at once, you may wish to focus on one or two exercises. If you are working with a leadership group that will consider this material over several meetings, choose one exercise for each meeting to accompany the particular focus of the chapter.

### Exercise 1: Exploring the Definition of Youth Ministry

For this exercise prepare two sheets of newsprint by drawing a line down the middle, dividing each sheet into two columns. On the first newsprint sheet, write “Youth Needs” at the top of the left-hand column and “Parish Resources” at the top of the right-hand column. On the second sheet of

- ◆ They make youth feel welcome.
- ◆ They listen to youth.
- ◆ They respond to the needs of youth.
- ◆ They support youth with prayer, time, facilities, and money.
- ◆ They see youth as resources.
- ◆ They empower the gifts of youth.
- ◆ They provide meaningful roles for youth in the community.
- ◆ They provide for intergenerational relationships.
- ◆ They connect youth to role models and mentors.
- ◆ They include youth in the life of the parish: prayer, learning, serving, and celebrating.

### TOTAL FAITH Connections

The TOTAL FAITH Initiative was designed to help parishes implement a vision for comprehensive youth ministry as described in *Renewing the Vision*:

- ◆ The Total Catechesis and Total Youth Ministry resource manuals provide sessions, activities, and strategies for implementing the components of youth ministry.
- ◆ The planning resources in this *Coordinator's Manual* and on its CD-ROM will help in planning a comprehensive youth ministry program based on the goals, themes,

settings, and components of youth ministry.

- ◆ The flexibility of these resources matches the variety and adaptability recommended in *Renewing the Vision*.
- ◆ The Total Catechesis manuals address the faith themes suggested for older adolescents in *Renewing the Vision*.

newsprint, write “Youth Gifts” at the top of the left-hand column and “Parish Needs” at the top of the right-hand column.

Present the information from the chapter about the definition for youth ministry; then invite the group to brainstorm answers for each column. On the first sheet, ask the group to identify the needs of youth. Ask them to consider what young people need in order to grow during this time of adolescence. Then ask the group to identify the resources and opportunities of the parish that could be used to connect with youth. After the two columns are complete, ask the group to connect words or phrases between the columns. For instance, the left-hand side may say that youth need “a way to share their gifts.” This would connect with the parish resource of “leadership and ministry opportunities.”

Repeat this exercise with the second sheet of newsprint by having the group identify the gifts of youth and the qualities or gifts needed by the parish to become a vibrant, faithful, Gospel-filled community. Ask the group to connect youth gifts with parish needs. For example, the youth gift of “creativity” would connect with the parish need for “new ideas.” Ask the group what they discovered from the exercise. Restate the definition of youth ministry, and make connections to the exercise. Allow about 20 minutes to complete the exercise.

### Exercise 2: Exploring the Goals for Youth Ministry

Before doing this exercise, prepare a sheet of newsprint with the following information:

- adventure (goal of discipleship)
- connection (goal of belonging)
- a safe place to learn and grow (goal of total personal and spiritual growth)

Begin by asking the group to brainstorm answers to the following question: “What do you think youth are seeking?” Record the answers on a separate sheet of newsprint. Present the newsprint that you prepared earlier. Explain that youth seek adventure, which focuses on the goal of discipleship; connection, which focuses on the goal of belonging; and a safe place to learn and grow, which focuses on the goal of total personal and spiritual growth. Compare those descriptions to the brainstormed answers, and make connections between the two lists.

Present the material from this chapter about the goals of youth ministry, and ask the group to identify examples of how the parish helps provide for each goal. Allow about 10 minutes to complete the exercise and additional time for your presentation.

### Exercise 3: Exploring the Components of Youth Ministry

If you have enough participants, form eight small groups; otherwise, form pairs to focus on as many of the eight components of youth ministry as possible. Assign a component to each group. Ask the groups to review their component description as found in this chapter and then prepare a brief presentation for the larger group. The presentation could include a key phrase that describes the component, an example of how a parish can minister to or with youth in the component area, and a catchy phrase, slogan, or cheer that goes along with the component.

Allow about 10 minutes for the group to do its work, and then ask each group to give its report. After each group's report, provide additional comments and examples for that component. You can also describe and give examples for the components that did not have a group assigned to them. Allow 30 minutes to complete this exercise.

### Exercise 4: Exploring the Youth-Friendly Parish

*Renewing the Vision* challenges parishes to become “‘youth-friendly’ communities” (p. 13). Prepare a sheet of newsprint listing these four key words:

- know
- value
- welcome
- include

Begin this exercise by presenting the information from this chapter about youth-friendly parishes. Present the four key words, and ask questions about each word:

- How well does our community know youth?
- How highly do we value youth in our community?
- How do we make youth feel welcome—not just in our programs but in how we welcome youth's ideas and sharing in leadership?
- How do we include youth in our life as a parish? in our programs? in our budget and facilities committees? in our leadership groups?

Ask the participants to assess the parish by giving a rating from 1 to 5 (with 5 being high) for each question. The participants should add the four scores and divide by 4 to get their “youth-friendly” rating. As a group, discuss your ratings for each word. Then ask the group to discuss these questions:

- What are the strengths in our community for being youth friendly?
- What are our weaknesses, and in what areas do we need to grow to become more youth friendly?
- What do we need to change about our community to become more youth friendly?

Allow 30 minutes to complete this exercise.