

# **Catholic Youth Ministry**

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*Catholic Youth Ministry: The Essential Documents* is a must-have resource for youth ministers. It provides a compelling reason to develop youth ministry and keep it growing within the framework of our Catholic Tradition. This resource provides a why for what we do and moves us well beyond youth ministry that is driven by the personal wants and preferences of individual leaders. *Catholic Youth Ministry: The Essential Documents* stands as the reference resource that should be available to all youth ministry leaders.

—Greg Dobie Moser, executive director of youth and young adult ministry,  
Diocese of Cleveland, and former NFCYM board member and chairperson

# **Catholic Youth Ministry**

**The Essential Documents**

Laurie Delgatto, general editor

With a foreword by Robert J. McCarty

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# Contents

Foreword 7

## Chapter 1

An In-Depth Summary of *Renewing the Vision:  
A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* 10

## Chapter 2

*From Age to Age:  
The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents* 24

## Chapter 3

*The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis:  
Maturing in Faith* 58

## Chapter 4

*The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization:  
Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers* 96

Recommended Resources: An Annotated Bibliography 134

Acknowledgments 139



## Foreword

The underlying strength of Catholic youth ministry is our common, articulated vision, promulgated by the bishops. Many other countries with organized Catholic youth ministry at the national level and denominations with a commitment to youth ministry suffer from the lack of a formally stated and shared vision of ministry with young people. The importance of an agreed-upon vision should not be underestimated or underappreciated. It has allowed the field of Catholic youth ministry to develop comprehensive approaches, models, and programs, reflecting that shared vision. That is why *Catholic Youth Ministry: The Essential Documents* is such a valuable resource.

The strategy for developing a common vision was significant in itself. The consultation process begun by the United States Catholic Conference for the original *A Vision of Youth Ministry* in 1976 and by the revamped United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* in 1997 included extensive dialogue with veterans in the field of youth ministry and built upon the experiences of practitioners. This process was also used by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) for its series of foundational documents on particular aspects of youth ministry, which are included in this sourcebook. The NFCYM is a network of the diocesan offices of youth ministry and collaborating organizations that provides leadership, conferences, resources, and programs for enhancing Catholic youth ministry at every level of the Church. The NFCYM's commitment to significantly involving the field of youth ministry in developing foundational documents has resulted in an enduring vision with wide ownership.

A common vision provides a shared language for talking about, planning for, and implementing youth ministry. And this vision is applicable to diverse geographic settings, such as urban, suburban, and rural areas of our country, in our various cultural and ethnic communities, and in our various ministry settings, such as parishes, schools, youth movements, and community programs. Furthermore, this common vision is the starting point for the development

of other resources, curriculums, and training programs designed to support our ministry. This is a significant advantage for Catholic youth ministry.

The 1997 *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* is the core document. *Renewing the Vision* built upon the 1976 document *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, the initial articulation of comprehensive youth ministry. *Renewing the Vision* further expanded the 1976 document, based on our experience of youth ministry, young people, and the Church. Once released, *Renewing the Vision* was first introduced to the field through a series of training workshops hosted by various dioceses and ministry formation providers.

The other supporting documents include *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith* (1986), *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers* (1993), and *From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents* (1997). Developed and written by the NFCYM, they are anchored in the original 1976 document, and each spotlights a particular component or dimension of youth ministry. These documents also were the result of an extensive consultation with experts in the field of youth ministry.

*Renewing the Vision* reflects and embodies the key insights and principles from these specific documents, so much so that *Renewing the Vision*, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, and these additional foundational documents inform, support, and enhance one another. The documents, though, are not meant to be a compendium of practical resources for implementing programs. However, they do provide clarity of vision, which aligns our energies, motivates our action, and focuses our ministry on defined goals.

To read these documents is to know the breadth of the vision of Catholic youth ministry as developed over a period of time and based on the experience of practitioners. To take seriously this ministry to, with, by, and for the young Church, we must begin with the shared wisdom of the faith community. Knowing these documents enables the informed youth ministry leader to transform vision into reality. This sourcebook is a treasure of collected wisdom.

Robert J. McCarty, DMin  
Executive Director  
of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry





## Chapter I

# **An In-Depth Summary of *Renewing the Vision:* *A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry***

**Note.** Permission to reprint the complete text of *Renewing the Vision* was not granted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). What follows is an in-depth summary and discussion on the key concepts and themes found in *Renewing the Vision*, adapted from the *Total Faith™ Initiative Coordinator's Manual*, by Thomas East, Ann Marie Eckert, Leif Kehrwald, Brian Singer-Towns, and Cheryl M. Tholcke (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004), pages 17–27. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved. Should you wish to have access to *Renewing the Vision* in its entirety, you may view it at [www.usccb.org/laity/youth/rtvcontents](http://www.usccb.org/laity/youth/rtvcontents), or you may purchase a copy from the USCCB by calling 800-235-8722.

## Introduction

Youth, parents, parish communities, and youth ministry leaders long for vibrant youth ministry that will engage, inspire, and empower youth for discipleship and active membership in the community. The USCCB's document *Renewing the Vision* provides a vision for this kind of dynamic ministry with youth. In the 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 constitute 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 will be different for each community.

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

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

## 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” (USCCB, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, p. 6).

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 what 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.

### 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.

### 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 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.

### 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.

# Acknowledgments

The scriptural quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1993 and 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

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The second excerpt on page 23 is from Pope John Paul II's World Day of Prayer for Vocations, number 2, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/vocations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_18101994\\_world-day-for-vocations\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_18101994_world-day-for-vocations_en.html), accessed October 13, 2004.

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The excerpt on page 29 and the quotation on page 35 are from *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifideles Laici)*, numbers 46 and 47, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html), accessed August 12, 2004.

The second quotation on page 30 is from *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*, by the NFCYM, number 24. Copyright © 1986 by the NFCYM, Inc. All rights reserved.

The first quotation on page 32 and the quotation on page 39 are from *Directory for Masses with Children*, by the Congregation for Divine Worship, numbers 1 and 9, at [www.adoremus.org/DMC-73.html](http://www.adoremus.org/DMC-73.html), accessed October 13, 2004.

The quotations marked *General Catechetical Directory* on pages 32, 40, 43–44, 63, and 78 are quoted and or adapted from *General Catechetical Directory*, by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, numbers 82, 25, 5, 17, and 84, respectively, at [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_cclergy\\_doc\\_11041971\\_gcat\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_11041971_gcat_en.html), accessed October 13, 2004.

The quotation marked *Dilecti Amici* on page 35 is from *Dilecti Amici*, Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year, number 15, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_31031985\\_dilecti-amici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici_en.html), accessed October 13, 2004.

The words of Pope John Paul II on page 37 are from his "World Youth Day Prayer Vigil," in *Origins*, August 26, 1993, page 185.

The quotations and excerpts marked *Catechesis in Our Time* on pages 40, 62, 62, 63, 63, 63, 63–64, 64, 66, 95, and 95 are from *Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae)*, numbers 23, 5, 19, 23, 24, 16, 20, 38, 40, and 72, respectively, at [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html), accessed October 13, 2004.

The quotation on page 46 is from an English/Spanish compendium of *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment, National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*, and *Prophetic Voices: The Document on the Process of the III Encuentro Nacional Hispano de Pastoral*, by the USCCB (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1993), page 41. Copyright © 1995 by the USCCB, Inc.

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