

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTRY TO & WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Ministry to and with young people in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is firmly based on the United States Catholic Conference of Bishop's document *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* which was published in 1997. It is the understanding in this Archdiocese that youth ministry includes all ministries to and with young people. The guidelines below entail three areas of ministry: Youth Ministry with Young Adolescents (Jr. High), Youth Ministry with Older Adolescents (High School), and the Confirmation Preparation Process.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY WITH YOUNG ADOLESCENTS (JR. HIGH)

PHILOSOPHY

“Significant physical and emotional changes characterize the period of pre-adolescence and adolescence. While home and family remain the more powerful forces in the development of pre-adolescents and adolescents, their peer groups begin to exercise increasing influence on attitudes, values, and behavior. They learn to live the Christian faith by observing the good example of others whom they admire and trust.” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 48 D)

Adolescence is one of the most fascinating and frustrating transitions in the life span, during which the accelerated rate of change and growth is second only to infancy. It is a time of expanding horizons, self discovery, and emerging independence. In young adolescence the transformation from childhood to adulthood begins with the onset of biological, physical, behavioral, and social transformation. The spiritual development of young adolescents occurs not separate from, but as part of this transformational process.

Young adolescence is a critical point in life's trajectory. This period provides an optimal time for intervention to prevent destructive life patterns, and promote continuing healthy habits. Whether or not a young adolescent emerges into adulthood as a healthy, self-reliant individual will depend on the opportunities they have to develop positive attitudes and life skills during these formative years.

The objective of ministry to and with young adolescents is to promote the full participation of these young people into the Christian community. This ministry will work to provide these young adolescents with the opportunity to grow in knowledge of themselves, to share openly with their peers and to experience God personally and in community.

GOALS

Three interdependent and equally important goals guide the Church's ministry with young people. These goals state what it means 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. They express the Church's focus for ministry with all adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing the programs, activities, and strategies to reach these goals (*Renewing the Vision*, 9). These goals will be the fundamental foundation for all ministries to young people.

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 Catholic faith community.
3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

PROCESS

The specifics of each ministry to young adolescents will, obviously, vary from parish to parish. However, there are four characteristics that seem to be present in most effective programs.

1. **Personal Relationships**

Caring adult leaders, teachers/catechists, coaches, and chaperones work to build personal relationships with the youth they serve. Through them, young adolescents know that they are loved by God and feel at home in the Church.

2. **Parental Support**

Parental support and ownership of the program is obtained through regular communication, parent education sessions, and numerous opportunities for parents to volunteer. Remember, most parents get involved in small ways such as assisting with publicity, transportation, or food preparation.

3. **Input of Young Adolescents**

Young adolescents provide input into the planning of all programs/events and assist the adult leaders with specific tasks during each event or gathering.

4. **Planning Team**

An organized planning team has designed a comprehensive program which responds to the diversity of needs of young adolescents. Ministry to and with young adolescents includes a variety of components, using several different formats. The program is evaluated at regular intervals throughout the year.

5. **Include all Components of Comprehensive Youth Ministry**

Ministry with adolescents utilizes 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 achieve the three goals for ministry. 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. They provide a structure for the Church's ministry with adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing programs, activities, and strategies for each component. The U.S. Catholic Bishops remind us, "We have learned that no one strategy, activity, or program is adequate to the task of promoting the three goals for ministry with adolescents and that families, parishes, and schools cannot work in isolation if the Church is to realize its goals" (*Renewing the Vision*, 19).

This comprehensive approach is a framework for integration rather than a specific model. Each ministry component supports and enhances the others. A comprehensive ministry with adolescents provides balance among all eight components. This balance is achieved throughout a year or a season of programming. Even a single program or strategy can incorporate several of the ministry components, as in the case of a retreat program. It usually takes a parish 2-3 years to incorporate most of the components in a comprehensive ministry.

- Advocacy - interpreting the needs of youth and their families, especially the social problems facing them and acting with or on behalf of youth and their families for change in the systems which create or contribute to the social problems; giving young people a voice and empowering them to address the social problems that they face.
- Catechesis - promoting a young person's growth in Christian faith as a living reality through the kind of teaching and learning that emphasizes understanding, reflection, and

transformation; fostering in youth a communal identity as Catholic Christians within the intergenerational community of faith and helping them to develop their own personal faith identity. This is accomplished through systematic, planned and intentional programming (curriculum).

- Community Life - creating an environment which nurtures meaningful relationships characterized by Gospel values among youth and between youth and adults; helping young people feel like a valued part of the church; providing opportunities for social interaction and meaningful participation in the church and civic community.
- Evangelization - proclaiming through word and witness the Good News of the Gospel to youth who have not yet heard or seen it and inviting them into relationship with Jesus Christ and the community of believers; reaching out to young people who are uninvolved in the life of the community as the faith community attempts to live out the Gospel with such authenticity that the faith of all the members is sustained and nourished. Evangelization is the energizing core of all the components of youth ministry.
- Justice, Peace and Service - guiding young people in the development of a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service grounded in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures and in the Catholic social teaching; empowering young people (and their families) to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering, to serve those in need, to pursue peace, and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all people; infusing the concepts of justice and peace into all youth ministry efforts.
- Leadership Development/Enablement - recruiting, training, and supporting youth and adult leaders in youth ministry; empowering youth for leadership and ministry with their peers in their schools, in the church, and in the civic community; developing a leadership team of youth and adults to organize and coordinate a ministry with youth; partnering with parents and families in promoting positive youth development and faith growth.
- Pastoral Care/Guidance - promoting positive youth and family development through a variety of preventative strategies; caring for youth and families in crisis through support, counseling and referral to appropriate community agencies; providing guidance as youth face life decisions and make moral choices.
- Prayer & Worship - assisting young people in deepening their relationship with Jesus through the development of a personal prayer life; and providing a variety of prayer and worship experiences with youth to deepen and celebrate their relationship with Jesus in a caring Christian community; involving young people in the sacramental life of the Church.

Contact the Office of Religious Education for information about resources for Youth Ministry, Confirmation and Young Adolescent Ministry.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY WITH OLDER ADOLESCENTS (HIGH SCHOOL)

PHILOSOPHY

“What is needed today is a Church which knows how to respond to the expectations of young people. Jesus wants to enter into dialogue with them and, through his body which is the Church, to propose the possibility of a choice which will require a commitment of their lives. As Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus, so the Church must become today the traveling companion of young people...”

Pope John Paul II, *Youth: Sent to Proclaim True Liberation*, World Youth Day 1995, Philippines

Youth Ministry is most importantly an affirmation of the faith, gifts, energy, and fresh ideas of young people. It is a Christ-centered ministry. It is a call to empower young people for the mission they have been given by the Lord Jesus. A mission to always be “missionary disciples” (Evangelii Gaudium #120). It is a ministry where the whole Church can meet the challenge of providing “coming generations with reasons for living and hoping” (Gaudium et Spes #31). In turn, “young people [can become] street preachers (callejeros de la fe), joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of the earth” (Evangelii Gaudium #106).

Because these youth ministry guidelines are rooted in the USCCB document *Renewing the Vision* the philosophy of this framework is explained by the following foundational themes:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
 - Human development and growth in faith is a life long journey. Effective ministry with adolescents provides developmentally appropriate experiences, programs, activities, strategies, resources, content, and processes to address the unique developmental and social needs of young and older adolescents both as individuals and as members of families.
2. Family Friendly (Households of Faith)
 - The home is a primary context for sharing, celebrating, and living the Catholic faith. We are partners with parents and guardians, who form households of faith in developing the faith life of their adolescent children.
3. Intergenerational (Whole Community)
 - Meaningful involvement in parish life and the development of intergenerational relationships provide young people with rich resources to learn the story of the Catholic faith experientially and to develop a sense of belonging to the Church.
4. Multicultural
 - Ministry with adolescents is multicultural because of the very nature of our Archdiocese. Multicultural awareness among all youth and the community and the experience of being part of a diverse community must be integrated into all aspects of this ministry. An appreciation of all cultures is vital to any solid ministry to young people.
5. Communitywide Collaboration
 - Ministry with adolescents involves creating healthier civic communities for all young people. This involves networking with leaders in congregations of diverse faith traditions, all schools, youth-serving agencies, and community organizations to nurture a shared commitment to promoting healthy adolescent development and a healthy community; to develop mutual respect and understanding; to share resources; and to plan community-wide efforts and programs.

6. Leadership

- Ministry with adolescents mobilizes all the resources of the faith community in a comprehensive and integrated approach – involving a wide diversity of adult and youth leaders in a variety of roles necessary for comprehensive ministry.

7. Flexible and Adaptable Programming

- Ministry with adolescents creates flexible and adaptable program structures that address the changing needs and life situations of today's young people and their families within a particular community. These potential program structures might include (but are not limited to): a diversity of program settings, age-specific programs, intergenerational programs, communitywide programs, small group programs, home-based programs, mentor programs, use of current technology, etc.

GOALS

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YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAM AND PROCESS

COMPONENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE MINISTRY

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GUIDELINES FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION PROCESS

PHILOSOPHY

“To be young is to be attracted to truth, freedom, peace, beauty and goodness. To be young means to be eager to live; to live joyfully, meaningfully.” (Pope John Paul II)

Maturing in Christian faith is a lifelong journey. Confirmation preparation is a process in Christian growth based on the belief that adolescents are at a significant point in their faith journey where they are beginning to establish a personal faith identity. Through sharing their own journey and interaction with others, the candidates are assisted in identifying and understanding how God is working in their lives, and come to a new realization of faith within the context of the whole parish community. The Confirmation preparation process must be part of a comprehensive ministry with young people.

The gifted and generous leaders called to share faith with youth in preparing them for the Sacrament of Confirmation seek to impart the above sense of hopefulness and enthusiasm among young people. The Confirmation Preparation Process consists of various elements which provide a framework for supporting youth and the parish as they grow as a faith community. The Youth Ministry Division of the Office of Religious Education affirms and supports each parish as they implement this process in a manner that will address the unique needs of their youth and the entire community. A justice perspective and sensitivity to the multicultural diversity of the Archdiocese should be integrated into this program. This process is grounded in a comprehensive vision of youth ministry in which the parish community responds to the needs of the youth and encourages them in return to share their unique gifts with the whole parish community (*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, USCCB, 1997). Please refer to the Guidelines for Youth Ministry.

Since the Confirmation Preparation Process is a source of renewal for the whole parish community it supports the involvement of the parish including: priests, parents/guardians, families, sponsors, other ministries, youth peer leaders, catechetical teams, and all youth of the community. Each parish is encouraged to implement the above philosophy of this process by developing a model which responds to the specific needs of their youth.

GOALS

The fundamental foundation for the Confirmation Preparation Process is rooted in the three goals of Youth Ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* which was published in 1997 by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. These three interdependent and equally important goals guide the Church’s ministry with young people. These goals state what it means 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. They express the Church’s focus for ministry with all adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing the programs, activities, and strategies to reach these goals (*Renewing the Vision*, 9). These goals are the fundamental foundation for all ministries to young people.

These goals are:

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 Catholic faith community.
3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Specifically, “Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit . . . in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation for confirmands” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1309, USCCB. 1994).

PROCESS

The Archdiocese offers three specific guidelines for developing the Confirmation Preparation Process at a parish:

- The Confirmation Preparation Process should always be parish-based and involve the entire parish community.

Catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awake a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1309). The process is not implemented at High Schools because students will graduate from schools, but young people will always be connected to a parish. A solid Confirmation Process will connect young people to the larger parish community and help them to see that lifelong catechesis includes a lifelong connection to a parish.

- The conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation should always be based on the readiness of the candidate.
- Confirmation Preparation should be a two-year process and take place during high school (grades 9-12).

The process should always be situated within a solid parish-based ministry to young people. It should not be an isolated program that has no contact with the larger parish community. Catechesis (including sacramental preparation) is just one component of a solid ministry to young people and the confirmation process should include all components of youth ministry. Candidates in these parish-based processes should feel supported and encouraged by the community when making the decision to receive the sacrament. This enables a parish to create a process that leads young people to a deeper awareness of what it means to complete their baptismal grace. The United State Catholic Conference of Bishops has decreed that the age for conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation will be “between the age of discretion and about sixteen years of age.” The Conference affirms that the local Bishop may choose the specific age (within the above boundaries) for conferring the sacrament within his diocese. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles believes that the process is best situated in the high school age (beginning no earlier than 9th grade).

In order to fully build community within the process and connect it to the wider parish community the Confirmation Preparation Process should be two years (meaning that the sacrament is conferred on high school age students in the sophomore year or older). A confirmation process can be longer than two years and should be based on the readiness of the candidate. The Catechism of the Catholic Church also states

that the one to receive the sacrament of Confirmation must have the intention of receiving the sacrament” (CCC 1319).

In addition to the above guidelines, the Office of Religious Education lays out other aspects that are part of a vibrant Confirmation Preparation process. The following components are offered as a framework for creating and implementing an effective Confirmation Preparation process, but are not offered as an “all inclusive” program. The Coordinator of Confirmation in collaboration with the pastor must strive to develop a process that meets the needs and fits the environment of the specific parish. A final process will include as many of these components as possible, but might also incorporate many other pieces that will enhance the sacramental preparation of candidates.

POSSIBLE COMPONENTS OF A CONFIRMATION PREPARATION PROCESS

[For detailed descriptions of the following components please refer to the Confirmation Preparation Process Resources. These can be obtained by contacting the Office of Religious Education.]

Components should include (but are not limited to) the following stages:

- Welcoming
- Community Building / Catechetical
- Continuing Catechesis/ Community Building
- Sacramental Preparation
- Discipleship

WELCOMING STAGE (3-4 months)

The welcoming stage is a period during which the youth of the parish are invited to participate in the Confirmation Preparation Process. At this stage, it is important that the coordinator works closely with the local high schools. Three to four months prior to the beginning of the Community Building/Catechetical Stage, the parish Confirmation coordinator invites all parish eighth graders and non-confirmed high school youth to participate in the Confirmation Preparation Process. The coordinator contacts the local Catholic high schools to invite their cooperation in encouraging their students to enter the process.

- **Parent/Candidate Meeting Orientation Meeting**

The parish Confirmation coordinator meets with interested parents and youth to inform them of the process.

Ritual - Beginning the Journey

This ritual can be part of a prayer service at the end of the Parent/Candidate Orientation Meeting as both begin the Confirmation Process.

COMMUNITY BUILDING / CATECHETICAL STAGE (3-4 months)

The goal of this stage is to gradually awaken in the life of the candidate the reality of God and encourage the candidate to participate in the life of the parish community.

- **Interview**

After the candidate accepts the invitation to participate in the Confirmation Preparation Process, an interview is held. The purpose of the interview is for the team to meet and begin to establish a relationship with the candidate. The parents could be brought into this first interview.

- **Sponsor Chosen**

The sponsor is chosen at the beginning of the Community Building stage. The sponsor journeys with the candidate throughout the Confirmation Preparation Process. This relationship is one of faith-sharer, witness, guide and friend to the candidate.

- **Parent/Sponsor/Candidate Meeting**
A meeting for parents, sponsors, and candidates is held to introduce the Confirmation Preparation Process to all three groups and to help each group to understand their respective role
- **Spiritual Development**
Growth in the life of the Spirit within each candidate is essential to the Confirmation Preparation Process. Consequently, programs include components that encourage and promote spiritual growth and understanding. These components include the presentation of faith themes and the offering of retreats and day of recollection for the candidates, parents, sponsors, and team.
- **Faith Themes/ Catechesis**
The emphasis during this stage is on sharing the faith journey and growing as a faith community. This involves sharing in the following areas:
 - Journey/Faith Story
 - Personal Giftedness
 - The Person of Jesus
 - The Call to Follow Jesus
 - Jesus's Model of Servant Leadership
- **Retreat/Spiritual Growth Activities**
The retreat or day of recollection is a concentrated time away from normal activities and environment dedicated to reflection on the experience of God in our lives. Retreats are an important aspect of spiritual growth and instrumental in building community. At the same time, it is important to recognize that such reflection and inclusion into community must be entered into by choice. Retreats and days of recollection for Confirmation preparation are included along with other options for spiritual renewal so that the reflection is genuine and is a response in freedom to the invitation of our loving God.
- **Ritual of Promise by Confirmation Candidates and Sponsors**
(Suggested time: Advent Season)
The Church through the parish community formally welcomes the candidates into the Confirmation Preparation Process.
- **Ritual Covenant Call to Conversion**
This ritual can also be done at a Catechetical session allowing the candidates to reflect on their own conversion.
- **Ritual Renewal of Baptismal Promises**
This ritual can be done at a Catechetical session or at a Eucharistic celebration. It possibly could follow a session where the subject may be the Creed, Commitment, or Baptism.

CONTINUING CATECHESIS/ COMMUNITY BUILDING STAGE (Approx. 1 year)

The Continuing Catechesis / Community Building Stage is a period of more intense preparation for understanding and living the Catholic Christian faith. The candidates are led to a greater reverence for their Catholic faith, Scripture, and tradition.

- **Ritual - Blessing of Sponsors and Candidates**
This ritual at the beginning of year two can be done at a sponsor meeting or catechetical session to bless the relationship between sponsor and candidate for the second year.
- **Ritual - Commitment to Journey** (Suggested time: Beginning of Year II) During the ritual, the Church through the parish community celebrates the candidate's desire to continue the preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

- **Spiritual Development**
The presentation of faith themes during the Catechesis Stage increases the candidate's knowledge of the Christian lifestyle.
- **Faith Themes/Catechesis**
The emphasis throughout the Continuing Catechesis Stage remains on preparation for living as disciples and the catechesis involves enriching the candidate's knowledge in the following areas:

Scripture	Service
Jesus	Catholic Belief and Practices
Church	Liturgy & Liturgical Seasons
Human Sexuality	Justice
Jesus	Morality/Decision-Making
Theology of the Sacraments with a Special Emphasis on Confirmation	
- **Service**
Service is an integral component of the Confirmation Preparation Process. During the Catechesis Stage, the candidates are:
 1. Guided in understanding service as a way to live out the Gospel values;
 2. Offered a variety of opportunities to participate in service projects;
 3. Guided in reflecting upon their service experiences. Service experiences include one long term project or three short term projects during the Confirmation Preparation Process.
- **Ritual - Affirming Confirmation Candidates**
This ritual celebrates the Church community's acceptance of the candidates as they enter into the final preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION STAGE (3-4 months)

The Sacramental Preparation Stage is a time for spiritual preparation and formation in which the candidates are lead to an appreciation and understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

- **Spiritual Development** During the Sacramental Preparation Stage, the emphasis is on understanding and preparing for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Studying the Rite of Confirmation, retreats or days of recollection, liturgical celebrations, and family celebrations provide opportunities for the candidates' faith to be deepened as they make final preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- **Retreat/Spiritual Growth Activities**
During the Sacramental Preparation Stage, a second opportunity for retreat/spiritual preparation provides the candidates with time to reflect upon the growth that has occurred during their faith journey and to prepare in a special way to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This gathering may include sponsors and parents.
- **Faith Themes**
The emphasis during the Sacramental Preparation Stage is on understanding and preparing for the Rite of Confirmation. During this stage, the candidates study the Rite of Confirmation.

- **Liturgical Celebrations**
The liturgical celebrations help the candidates to celebrate and deepen their experience and understanding of their faith.
- **Reconciliation Service**
The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available to the candidates at this time.
- **Family Celebration**
During the Sacramental Preparation Stage, the candidates and their parents are brought together for reflection, sharing and prayer.
- **Interview**
During the Sacramental Preparation Stage, the team interviews the candidates. This interview helps the team and candidate to discern the growth of the candidate as well as begin a closure process to the two year preparation.
- **Rite of Confirmation (Time Frame: Easter Season)**
At the end of the Sacramental Preparation Stage, the Church through the parish community celebrates with the candidates the Sacrament of Confirmation.

DISCIPLESHIP STAGE (Ongoing)

The Discipleship Stage is a time of entering more deeply into the Christian Community. The living out of the sacramental life calls for involvement in the parish community and especially in the parish youth ministry program.

- **Retreats/Spiritual Growth Activities**
During the Discipleship Stage, participation in parish and diocesan retreats, days of recollection, and spiritual growth activities assists the Catholic Christian to grow in the faith community and to deepen a personal relationship with God.
- **Spiritual Development**
During the Discipleship Stage, Spiritual growth and understanding continue to be part of year II with the presentation of faith themes.
- **Faith Sharing**
The newly confirmed are encouraged to continue to share their faith with their sponsor as well as with others in the faith community.
- **Liturgical Celebrations**
Participation in the liturgical life of the Church is necessary for the Catholic Christians to continue to deepen their experience and understanding of their faith.
- **Service**
As the newly confirmed grows in the Catholic Christian lifestyle, the faith commitment is evidenced in an attitude of generosity in service to others.

CONFIRMATION PROCESS

Welcoming Stage	Catechetical Stage Community Building	Sacramental Stage Preparation Stage	Discipleship Stage
Community Building Parent/Candidate Orientation •Journey/Faith Story •Personal giftedness •The person of Jesus •Call to follow Jesus	Year I Church Liturgy Workshop Morality Scripture (Retreat) Year II •Justice/Service •Catholic beliefs and practices •Human Sexuality	Faith Themes Baptism Confirmation/Eucharist Reconciliation Pentecost (Retreat)	Discipleship Stage •Reflection on the Confirmation Experience •Involvement in Parish •Ongoing Catechesis
Calendar Time: September-November Year I	Calendar Time: December Year I- March Year II	Calendar Time: March-May Year II	Ongoing
Rites •Beginning the Journey (At Parent/Teacher orientation) Ritual of Promise	Rites Covenant- Call to conversion (Year I) Renewal of Baptismal Promises •Blessings of sponsor & candidates (Year II) •Commitment to the Journey (Year II)	Ritual of Affirming candidates (Feb-March Year II) Confirmation Rite	

CONFIRMATION PROCESS RESOURCES

Many publishers have developed resources for use in Confirmation Preparation. Contact the Office of Religious Education for information about resources approved for use in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.