

Pastoral Care

“Ministry is not something we “do” to someone else. It is a holy way of living toward God and toward one another.”- Kenda Creasy Dean, The Godbearing Life

The ministry of Pastoral Care is that “holy and compassionate way of living toward” the young people in our care that Kenda Creasy Dean describes above. It is being present for the young people and their families when they are in need. It is keeping them in our prayers, asking them how they are coping with a known problem, programming events that help them through the difficult years of adolescence, and finding them help when they have nowhere else to turn.

However, Pastoral Care is not counseling (unless you are a licensed counselor):

“All youth ministers need to be pastoral caregivers; those who are professionally trained can also be counselors. There is an incredible difference. Pastoral care demands integrating sound theological principles with good interpersonal skills and programming. (It is not appropriate for untrained youth ministers to) make interventions or diagnoses, or to hang out a shingle that says ‘counselor.’ Pastoral Care requires strong self-knowledge, an understanding of the adolescent experience and family systems, and a caring stance toward the feelings of young people. Pastoral care provides support, guidance, confrontation when necessary, information, and tools for empowerment.”

-Sharon Reed and John Roberto, Pastoral Care Resource Manual: Connecting Pastoral Care and Youth Ministry, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1994. P. vii.

In this chapter we cover many different topics which deal with Pastoral Care:

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Ministering to Teens of Divorcing or Divorced Parents

by Irene C. B. Viorritto

In the United States, approximately 50% of marriages end in divorce and of those, 60% involve children. Divorce or separation can be one of the most painful experiences in a child's life, regardless of age. Research shows that even five years later only one-third of affected children are described as doing well: having good self esteem and coping successfully with school, friends, and home. Another third have some adjustment issues, including bouts of unhappiness, low self-esteem, and anger. A final third of these children are still extremely unhappy, angry, dissatisfied with life, often depressed and deeply lonely.¹

As youth ministers, we clearly have our work cut out for us regarding these suffering teens! Before we can help the teen through this agonizing time in their life, we must understand the emotional state and responses of the teens during and after a separation or divorce.

Middle School students (9-12 years old)

Students in this age group are developing a basic ability to see various points of view in a situation and most are able to understand some of the reasons for the divorce; they will seriously and bravely try to make the best of it. As a Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM), it is important to know that students will often cover up their distress in order to “protect” the feelings of their residential parent. (e.g. they will not request to see Dad more often, despite missing him terribly, because of Mom’s expressed anger towards him and not wanting to cause her more anxiety). It is important to listen to what the student is *saying* and what the student is *not saying* – we can advocate for the student as a “disinterested party” from the divorce proceedings.

Approximately 25% of youth in this age group will become an ally of one parent; even though they can better understand both sides of a dispute than their younger siblings, they still tend to see things in black and white terms. This results in a need to label one parent as the “good guy” and the other the “villain”, perhaps because they still fear abandonment and don’t want to alienate the parent they are idolizing.² This age group often has the “Parent Trap” fantasy: trying to undo the separation, perhaps to counteract their own sense of powerlessness.³ Other common experiences in this age group are:

- **Intense anger** - Not only because of the separation, but often because they see a double standard in the parent’s behavior – e.g. a visible inconsistency between the parents as disciplinarians and then (at least in the teen’s eyes) acting inappropriately or selfishly themselves.
- **Shaken Identity**
- **Physical Complaints or Problems** including infections, asthma, headaches, stomachaches, etc. – if the CYM serves in a teaching capacity and notices a student being sick or absent frequently, this could be a red-flag that the situation at home is causing the teen stress.

¹ Donald A. Gordon and Jack Arbutnot. What About the Children, 6th ed. (Athens, OH: The Center for Divorce Education, 2008) 6.

² Ibid. p. 9

³ Ibid. p. 9

- **Peer-relationship problems**- fewer friends, sense of less support among friends, greater fear of peer rejection. These students are more likely, out of loneliness, to choose friends who have been rejected by normal peers and have emotional/behavioral difficulties.
- **Abuse of power** - Students of this age are beginning to understand cause-and-effect relationships on a small-picture scale and may act out using this new “power” to emotionally hurt one or both parents via mean words, accusations, or refusing to spend time with a parent they consider more “blameworthy”. This should not be accepted and as CYMs, we can reinforce the need to be civil and polite to both parents. With the parents we can help the student understand that they do control their own feelings and encourage the parents to give the preteen some measure of control over minor aspects (bring a friend along on a trip, choose an activity, elect when to call the other parent, etc).

High School students (13-18 years old)

Adolescents are more socially and intellectually developed, making them more equipped to deal with the family break-up. The primary social orientation for adolescents is their peer group rather than the family, which may in fact mask many of the problems they encounter. As CYMs, we may be more likely to pick up on these masked problems since we have the opportunity to observe the teen in more social and peer-oriented situations. During parental conflict, teens react differently than their younger siblings: boys report more sad feelings, girls report more angry feelings. Both may result in a loss of parental influence, and greater reliance on peers or social isolation.

One of the biggest problems is the loss of the parent-child relationship, a major support during the time of great personal and social turmoil of adolescence. For many teens, the lack of consistency in discipline and controls between parents is unsettling and in the absence of a healthy parental model, they may be hurt by unhealthy models or turn to unrealistic models portrayed in the media or by their peer group. Often, teenagers will act out their anger and frustration by getting involved with delinquency, deviant peers, substance abuse, and sexual risk-taking (especially among girls). Teens often have difficulty paying attention and concentrating, so grades usually suffer, and many, especially boys, may have behavioral problems. All of these can lower a teen’s sense of self-worth and increase distress over the break up, so it is important to praise them often and genuinely for personal achievements.

In a single-parent home, many teens find it necessary to grow up faster – often assuming greater responsibilities than they otherwise would at this age. (e.g. caring for younger siblings, or caring for emotionally overwhelmed parents) About a third of these teens become more involved in family life, whereas another third of these teens become removed from family life.⁴

Teens typically acquire new thinking abilities that allow them to understand how systems work (family, government, etc.), although oversimplified and idealized, and will experience outrage and moral indignation when things don’t work right. They are more likely to feel helpless, powerless, and frustrated by what they perceive as a lack of respect for their feelings by the parent(s), the court, or “the system” than their younger siblings. Along with parents, the CYM can acknowledge the teen’s views and the reality of their anger while, at the same time, challenging their assumptions about the underlying causes of the problems.⁵ Encouraging and

⁴ Ibid. p. 10-11

⁵ Ibid. p. 12

⁶ Ibid. p.33

equipping parents to model good communication (active listening and giving feedback in an effective way), compromise, and perseverance is critical for CYMs.

We as CYMs know, and are often challenged by, the fact that teens have a sixth sense for dishonesty, manipulation and double standards. It is extremely important to help parents understand the need to be open and honest in their communication and consistent in their supervision and discipline skills.



How Can the Church Help?

Emotional Support for Parents

- Create a support group, provide counseling and friendship
- Let teachers and counselors know what is happening (details not required/appropriate)
- Give both parents copies of grades, records, communications, etc
- Provide general parenting skills classes
- Give extra reminders
- Help to arrange carpools
- Provide supervised activities
- Ask for specifics on all emergency forms

Support for Students

- Create a divorce support group for teens.
- Take a greater interest in teen's activities and encourage discussion.
- Recognize that a parent's sexual activity may cause sexual activity (especially in girls), earlier and more often.
- Offer single sex small groups (boys need the masculine activities and cognitive stimulation).
- Offer Catholic Life Communities (CLCs) with same gender adult as a regular contact
- Teach about sex-role identification, approval/interest of older male authority figure → self-confidence/worth.
- Expose both boys and girls to a father's love.
- Support boys and girls that have impairments in social behaviors with a father's absence.⁶
- Encourage a non-resident parent to be a chaperone (if appropriate).
- Encourage consistency between homes
- Have youth ministry couples model healthy relationships
- Use the God-Church relationship as a model for Marriage Man-Wife

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Youth and Gangs

by Fr. Ramón Domínguez, Y.A.

The upswing of news articles and commentaries on the presence of gangs in our area should concern our parish communities and youth leaders, if for no other reason but to ensure the safety of the youth in our care. A more genuine response to this area of concern is to see what can be done to prevent and/or to reach out to those youth who are on the fringes so that they can see the truth of the love of God and recognize the pain and empty promises offered by the gang lifestyle.

Gangs have existed in the United States for as long as we have been a nation. Gangs have come in different flavors, ethnicities and manifestations. Gangs should not be seen as a Hispanic (or African-American, or other minority group) problem. The typical origin of a gang is a group of culturally isolated or marginalized individuals who decide to band together for mutual protection and support. In the case of gangs, what might have begun as an exercise in self-defense, has been co-opted by criminal elements to provide a circle of protection from the law and a context in which its members can seem to enjoy power and authority over others.

“No one is sure when or why they emerged in the United States. The earliest record of their appearance in the United States may have been as early as 1783, as the American Revolution ended. They may have emerged spontaneously from adolescent play groups or as a collective response to urban conditions in this country. Some suggest they first emerged following the Mexican migration to the Southwest after the Mexican Revolution in 1813. They may have grown out of difficulties Mexican youth encountered with social and cultural adjustment to the American way of life under the extremely poor conditions of the Southwest. Gangs appear to have spread in New England in the early 1800’s as the Industrial Revolution gained momentum in the first large cities in the United States: New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. ... Early in American history, gangs seem to have been most visible and most violent during periods of rapid population shifts.” (*cited from the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Bulletin, August 1998*)

In our present day, gangs represent for many disadvantaged or disengaged youth an opportunity to belong, to succeed, in short to “be something”. For those in families with parents who are working multiple jobs with little time at home, or in others where the family is dysfunctional and fragmented, gangs can often represent for these suffering youth an opportunity to a part of a family, and to have people that care for them and will be there for them always...or, at least, that is what they are promised.

Unfortunately, while this may be true at first, young gang members will eventually come to understand that this comes at a price and with an unexpected reality. The price is often a loss of ties and relationships with one’s own family of origin (however imperfect it may be). But more seriously it is a loss of appropriate social interaction and bonding which is replaced by self-centered and at times violent or destructive behaviors. While most gang leaders speak positively about how the gang is united and is a family and that they would put themselves on the line (even to die for each other), more often the reality is such that they will only do this when their self-interests are at risk. If it is not in their self-interest, the gang can easily leave one behind and move on. Gangs are a type of pyramid scheme where those on the bottom only serve those on the top with little return coming down, except for what is necessary to keep them interested (i.e., availability of drugs, alcohol, parties, excitement, sexual opportunities, etc.).

“Research indicates that parents play a pivotal role in keeping young people out of gangs. Negative influences within the family — including domestic violence, child abuse, harsh or inconsistent parenting practices, and/or drug/alcohol abuse by family members — can increase the risk that a youth will join a gang.” (cited from *Parents’ Guide to Gangs*, OJJDP, 2009)

In developing an effective outreach to all types of youth, the Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM) must first become attentive to outward signs that can accompany gang involvement. This is an important first step to ensure the safety of other program participants. Secondly, the CYM must engage these youth in conversations and help foster in them an increased awareness of the dangers and risks of the gang life and, more importantly, the tremendous promises and joys that come with living a life rooted in Gospel values.

Many resources exist to assist parents and the CYM in recognizing potential gang related behaviors. No single set of characteristics or behaviors should be taken as “proof” of gang involvement but they should all be taken into consideration. Each action, style, set of clothing, etc. that a young person wears or values is an indicator at least at some level of either something they are or something they aspire to or esteem. When these indicators point away from Christ, it is important to see how we can engage them to encounter Christ in a deep, personal and caring way rather than to be critical and negative of their behaviors. The most effective way to get a young person to change is to love them and to motivate them to see that what you are proposing is indeed what they are longing for.



Some resources to assist in detecting possible behavioral indicators and other gang culture information include:

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| www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org | (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)) |
| www.nationalgangcenter.org | (a site run on behalf of OJJDP) |
| www.preventgangsnova.org | (which includes links to individual northern Virginia local governments and more resources) |

The gang lifestyle is often a very addictive life. Even youth who come to realize that they want to discontinue, often find it very hard and can relapse back into old patterns, much in the same way that drug/alcohol users fall back into abuse when faced with a tough day or immediate temptations without adequate external support. The most important motivator to prevent gang involvement is a positive parental relationship and ultimately one which brings the young person to live in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Toward this end, relationships are modeled and lived rather than taught and instructed. The young person must first be engaged in a personal relationship with the CYM or other youth leader to come to know Christ through them. Then it is through this relationship that they will feel confident to journey forth into the great joys that await them in the life of grace.

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At-Risk Young People

“Now, crises have no inherent power to cement a teenager’s commitment to Christ. But, like surgery, they do have an unmatched power to open a teenager to deeper healing. The key: When the crisis hits, is there a passionate Christian engaged in the student’s life—not to answer unanswerable questions, but to offer determined love?”

– Rick Lawrence, “The Tipping Point,” *Group Magazine* 01/02.2003, p. 15.

Crisis #1: Substance Abuse

Signs: There are multiple symptoms that manifest themselves in the young people, who have a problem with substance abuse. But the biggest and most common sign to watch out for is any extreme change in physical appearance, personality, attitude, or behavior. For example ... increase or decrease in appetite, sweaty or shaky hands, change in friends, chronic dishonesty, difficulty paying attention...

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

- Refer adolescents to an Alateen group in your area.
- Work with school and community leaders to develop broad based chemical dependency educational programs.
- Have programs dealing with the issues of self-identity, anxiety; expressing anger, these many times contribute to drug abuse.
- Working with teens to develop social skills through involvement in support groups (small groups), and teaching appropriate behavior.
- Be a facilitator in reconciling the teen with his or her family, and friends. This may be introducing the teen into a new peer group or finding a new role or place in a Christian community.

Resources:

- PRIDE (Parents’ Resource Institute for Drug Education) Youth Programs (<http://www.prideyouthprograms.org>)
- National Families in Action (<http://www.emory.edu/NFIA>)
- National Family Partnership (<http://www.nfp.org>)
- American Council for Drug Education (<http://www.acde.org>)
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (<http://www.health.org>)
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (<http://www.madd.org>)
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (<http://www.ncadd.org>)
- Students Against Drunk Driving (<http://www.saddonline.com>)
- National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral and Routing Service (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>)

Crisis #2: Child Abuse and Neglect (Dating and Family Violence)

Signs: There are many kinds of abuse: Physical, Sexual, and Emotional.

Physical Abuse signs for example could be... unexplained injuries (especially marks shaped as an object like a belt or fingers), disagreement in parent and child stories of injury, fearful, or withdrawn behavior, or afraid of home. *Sexual Abuse* signs for example could be... running away, pregnancy, substance abuse, suicide attempts, and trouble with law, withdrawn, sexual references, or excessive bathing. *Emotional Abuse* types are as follows: 1.) rejecting- lack the ability to bond, make child feel unwanted, 2.) ignoring- unable to respond to emotional needs of the child, sometimes physically their, but not emotionally, 3.) terrorizing- parents single out a child to criticize or punish, have expectation beyond normal abilities, 4.) isolating- not allow a child to participate in appropriate activities with peers, restrict eating, or seclusion to their room, or 5.) corrupting- permit children to use drugs or alcohol, watch pornography, and participate in crime.

Dating Violence signs for example could be... one partner has extreme mood swings, one partner embarrasses the other in public, is controlling regarding friends, attire, or decision making, and there is tendency for one partner to talk to people in sexual ways.

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

Ministry to the Victim:

Programming in this case is not as easy...But the victim does needs 6 things:

- 1.) *Protection*, help in disclosing a vulnerable secret.
- 2.) *Support*, this means being by their side and following up with them frequently.
- 3.) *Ventilation*, there is a need to create a safe space for the victim at the church offering your personal time to hang out, maybe grab a cup of coffee to talk.
- 4.) *Reassurance*, the teen needs to hear repeatedly that he or she “is not alone, and that abuse happens to many people.”
- 5.) *Consistency*, abused adolescents need someone who can tolerate their low self-esteem, and you need to be a person who keeps your promises, your word, is responsible, steady and faithful.
- 6.) *Appropriate intervention*, a teen who has been abused absolutely needs professional help by an objective professional who is specifically trained in dealing with abused teens.

Ministry to the Parents

The parents are also going to need ministering to, to help the young person. They also need 4 things from you and a pastoral care agent.

- 1.) *Support*, you need to express faith in the parent’s ability to care for their child and make decisions and about what must be done.
- 2.) *Ventilation*, many times parents are very angry at God and filled with rage. Non-judgmental listening allows for a non- violent outlet for this anger. Being thereto listen and taking time to talk is very important.
- 3.) *Faith*, helping parents examine suffering and violence in this world, maybe connecting them to another family who has survived dealing with abuse.
- 4.) *Stress Reduction*, many times these parents will be dealing with the stress of the legal system you can help with maintaining structure, and stress reduction techniques.

Crisis #3: Stress and Anxiety

Signs: There are many changes and stressors in a teen’s life. Some of these problems can be as simple as school demands, or frustrations, to negative thoughts about themselves, changes in their bodies, divorce of parents, moving, being over committed, or struggling with family financial problems. Stress that is unattended to can turn into anxiety, cause withdrawal, aggression, physical illness, or poor coping skills like drug and alcohol use.

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

- Do some programming on skills such as
 - Time Management
 - Coping with loss
 - Prayer (Letting go)
 - Stress relievers
- Also be aware of overloaded schedules.
- Be a model yourself of stress management skills.
- Creating good community building within your youth ministry- so the have a network of support in each other.

Crisis #4: Grief and Loss (Death, Disasters, and Divorce)

Signs: There are different signs and ways of dealing with a loss. Expect anything in the process of a teen in grief. The five stage model is not the only way to grieve. Grief will be different according to the age of the teen, the relationship to the deceased, unexpectedness of the loss, circumstance surrounding the loss, and the teen's previous experience with loss. They have the right to grieve in whatever way they want, if not harming themselves or others.

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

- This is a delicate *programming piece*, although good to address if there is a local disaster or loss that affects multiple teen's in the youth ministry program. Other programs that can be done throughout the year to help with loss are: reaching out to God, dealing with your feelings, being responsible for themselves- learning how to let others know what they need and want.
- *One-on-one:* Dealing with a teen in the grief process, simple walking with them in however they deal with the loss can be exactly what they need. Never act like you know what they are going through, or that they should move on, do set limits and follow routines.

Crisis #5: School Violence and Gangs

Signs: Any kinds of threats are a red flag for violence or gang participation. A threat to killing someone, themselves, of running away, or of destroying property are to be taken very seriously. Gang involvement signs are as follows: abrupt changes in a child's friends, changes in dress- same color combo all the time, gang symbols on books or clothing, secretive about activities, unexplained large sums of money, sudden behavioral changes, and problems with the police.

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

- Get to know their friends, talk to them about how they spend their free time, and make an effort to get to know their parents.
- Implement supervised group activities, after school programs, social weekend activities, athletics, or volunteering.
- Have a program on good communication skills. (Good to have a parent-teen communication night). Also include other family activities.
- Be aware yourself of gangs in your community, as well as the symbols and signs associated with each individual group.

Crisis #6: Depression and Suicide

Signs: Some warning signs of Depression or Suicide can be: Frequent sadness or crying, decreased interest in activities, low energy, social isolation, low-self esteem and guilt, extreme sensitivity, increased irritability, and difficulty with relationships and many others. If suicide is in the picture, there can be talk of killing oneself, poems of writings about death, self-injury, and giving away belongings.

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

- *Programming* about suicide and depression can be tricky. Maybe have a program one how to help your friends with depression or suicide, (a little less direct). Have a program focusing on the future; discuss it in a positive manner. Having a program on God as all-powerful and able to handle anything may be comforting to those who feel alone and helpless.
- *One-on-one:* offer help, and listen, never lecture. Trust your instincts when dealing with a possibly suicidal teen and seek immediate help. Pay attention to talk about suicide even small comments, make sure you investigate.

Resources:

- Suicide Hotline (1-800-SUICIDE) (<http://suicidehotlines.com>)
- American Association of Suicidology (<http://www.suicidology.org>)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (<http://www.afsp.org>)
- National Institute of Mental Health (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>)
- National Mental Health Association (<http://www.nmha.org>)

Crisis #7: Eating Disorders

Signs: Are to be looked for in both boys and girls, although the highest demographic of eating disorders are found in middle-upper class, white and Asian girls, that is not the only group it hits. Eating disorders are most of the time control issues. Signs to look for in someone suffering from an eating disorder are: *anorexia*- intense fear of weight gain or being fat, feeling fat although dramatic weight loss, loss of menstrual cycles. *Bulimia*- repeated episodes of bingeing and purging, feeling out of control when eating, eating beyond comfortable fullness, frequent dieting, extreme concern with body weight and shape.

Ideas for Pastoral Care:

- Programming is something that indirectly can help with the causes of eating disorders. Some programs you might include are: nutrition, taking care of yourself (body), God is in control, God is constant, Self-Esteem or self-image, Created in God's Image.
- One-on-one is where you can be supportive of the individual, especially when the disorder is revealed. Don't ever over-simplify an eating disorder, don't ever be judgmental, don't confront the person as a part of a group, don't diagnose the person, don't argue if the person denies the problem just calmly repeat what you have seen, and last don't be inactive during an emergency if it is severe seek professional help.

The Meaning of Suffering

Talking Points for Discussions with Young People

The Catechism of the Catholic Church guards us against sound bites – there is no quick answer which suffices to respond to the question of suffering. It is only our Christian faith as a whole which provides the answer (cf. CCC309). The following are some talking points for beginning or deepening discussion of suffering.

The Framework: *The following excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers a framework for understanding suffering. Talking points are elaborated below.*

“God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and mysteriously knows how to derive good from it (CCC 311).”

1. **God Does Not Cause Evil:** “God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living...It was through the devil’s envy that death entered the world” (Wis 1:13, 2:24)

Natural Disaster: Suffering as a Consequence of Original Sin

The harmony that man had with creation was broken when sin entered the world. The Catechism tells us that visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Due to man’s sin, creation is subjected to bondage and decay (cf. CCC 402 and Rom 8:21). This makes sense when you consider the profound relationship between God and man. Man (read: humanity) is created intelligent and free. Man can receive and recognize the great gift of creation and as its steward can praise God in thanksgiving. When man sinned, this profound relationship between God and man was broken, and all of creation became subject to the same forces of death that man is.

2. **God Permits Evil because He Respects Creaturely Freedom:** In order to offer to humanity the ability to love, God gave freedom. This freedom is exercised toward its rightful end when we choose to love, but God will not force us to love. The choice we have to freely is one God will not take away. When we sin (that is, when we choose against love) God permits the evil and suffering that come from our sinning because He refuses to overpower, control, or destroy our freedom (and consequently, our ability to love).

3. **God Derives Good from Suffering:** “God writes straight the crooked lines.”

- a) **Suffering has New Meaning in Christ:** Because our God has become man and suffered, all suffering has taken on a redemptive value: “Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus” (CCC1521). We are not passive in the drama of salvation – God gave us the dignity of being involved in our own salvation and that of others. We can offer up our suffering in reparation for our sins and those of the whole world.

- b) **This Life is Not All:** Many people will suffer greatly in their earthly life, and if there were no afterlife it would scarcely be possible to understand co-existence of God and suffering. But, not only does God draw good out of misery, He also points us to a future life where inequalities are rectified and sorrows come untrue. We are not to set our hopes entirely upon this life, but to live this life *with an eye toward the eternal happiness we are called to in the afterlife.*

Take courage...

“The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it” (CCC164), but take courage for each person is held gently in the palm of the Father’s hand.

Teens and Grief by Kristin Witte

Grief is the intense distress and emotional anguish that arises when loss occurs. It is the normal response to a loss. Adolescents, unlike children, view death as irreversible and inevitable. Adolescents are aware that everything dies at some time but often view both themselves and their friends as invincible. Death often compels adolescents to ask difficult theological questions about the meaning of life, existence of suffering, and God's divine plan.

Adolescents, by their nature, place a great deal of emphasis on their peer relationships. In light of that, there is a profound concern for others and the pain that other people may be experiencing. Often young people will cry and react to a loss because they see others are sad, not necessarily because they personally knew those most affected. Teens that the youth minister might not "expect" to respond to a loss, may respond dramatically because it triggers memories of another loss they have experienced. It is important to remember to support the entire community (parents, young people, children, other parish adults) whether they were intimately connected to the situation or not.

Often teens are unsure as to how to handle the overwhelming emotions that come after a loss. They often have very little context and experience in dealing with loss in order to create perspective on healing and grief. Adolescents who face a loss may feel anger, responsibility for the death, and sometimes survivor's guilt, asking the question "Why not me?" While attempting to struggle through the exhausting grief process, adolescents may call attention to the pain by exhibiting other addictive distracters (ex. drugs, alcohol, sexual acting out). These behaviors must be addressed and cannot be "overlooked" due to the fact that a teenager is grieving. Instead, the presenting behavior must be appropriately addressed so that the grief process can progress healthily.

What can those who serve youth do to comfort and support grieving teens?

According to St. Thérèse of Lisieux, in her writings *Manuscrits autobiographiques*, "For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." There is no greater way a youth minister or parish community can serve young people during a time of grief and loss, than to pray. Prayer is a beautiful gift from God and a vehicle for healing, sharing emotions and providing a ritual for context and storytelling.

Youth ministers often look for the "right thing to say" at times when teens are grieving. In the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote "A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak" (#31). After the death of a loved one, it is viable that teens may feel anger towards God for "allowing" the person to die. As a youth minister, often we are called upon to be a peaceful pastoral presence at that time in knowledge that, at that moment, you are providing Christ's love for that young person's troubled heart. Instead of erring on the side of saying far too much, it is always preferable to err on the side of listening intently to the stories, concerns, and questions of young people. They have come to you for a reason, because you are someone they know of Catholic faith. They seek spiritual, as well as emotional, healing at this time. At a time of great vulnerability and feeling of chaos, choosing to engage in conversation (be it theological or otherwise) is an opportunity for empowerment.

As someone who serves youth, you are called upon to provide: (1) A healthy venue for young people to engage in the grieving process (2) Opportunities grounded in our Catholic faith to mourn the loss and (3) Healthy individuals who can accompany the young person as they begin the process of reorganizing their life after the loss.

Kristin Witte serves as the Coordinator of Pastoral Care for the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. In addition to extensive crisis intervention training, Kristin has completed three Masters Degrees and is a current doctoral candidate at The Catholic University of America.

Coping with Depression

by Nina Kuziel

Depression is undoubtedly a common occurrence among adolescents. It is important to recognize that depression is more than just a few negative feelings that come and go or even a bad day or week. Depression is a mental condition that lasts for more than several weeks at a time and is too strong to overcome with simply a positive attitude by oneself. Art Bennett (Director of the Alpha Omega Clinic) gives a great example of how to identify depression in an adolescent. A teen that says, “I did something stupid” or “I messed up” is communicating the guilt or regret he may feel for something he has done. However, when a teen begins to say, “I am stupid” or “I am a mess-up,” it suggests negative self-talk and a lack of self-worth that could indicate depression. A Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM) should pay close attention to how and what their teens are saying. If a teen consistently use negative self-talk, he or she may need to be referred for professional help.

Research indicates that the rates of depression greatly increase from childhood to adolescence. Why is that? Adolescent depression is associated with a number of factors including:

- Anxiety/worry/fear
- Poor academic performance
- Peer pressure
- Substance abuse
- High-risk sexual behavior
- Divorced/separated parents
- Bad home environment
- Negative self-concept
- Negative body image
- Hormonal and physical changes
- Insensitive peers
- Abusive parents/family members
- Alcoholic family members
- Sexual abuse from the past (which leads to lack of self-worth and difficulty trusting others)
- Absent parents
- Unlimited cell phone and internet use
- Hectic schedules
- Eating disorders

According to *Renewing the Vision*, the Church’s ministry with adolescents seeks to “promote positive self-image in young people, including an appreciation of one’s ethnic culture, a sense of self-esteem, a sense of purpose in life, a positive view of one’s personal future, and a humble acceptance of one’s self as lovable and loved by God and others” (17). It can be difficult and challenging to achieve this when there are so many obstacles and battles to overcome. In an excerpt from Ron Taffel’s book [Breaking Through to Teens: A New Psychotherapy for the New Adolescence](#), he explains how teens “everywhere are overwhelmed by a tidal wave of culturally induced anxiety” and “often the real problem is handling the stress of normal, everyday teen life” (11). Not to mention, parents are becoming less involved in their teenager’s life for a variety of reasons. In fact, “parents now spend 40% less time with their children than they did 30 years ago, and two million children younger than 13 have no adult supervision either before or after school” (21). In reaction to this lack of personal attention from the people they love the most, feelings of anger, anxiety, and depression arise in teenagers. Young people need community, appreciation, nurture/care, and a sense of belonging. In a way, young people can benefit from a second family that will provide all of these things that they are not getting at home.

Youth ministry may provide this sense of belonging and increased self-worth for those

who are lacking it in their lives. According to Taffel, “adolescence is still a time of intense emotions and fluctuating identity, of absolutes and debilitating insecurities. [Teens] not only need the anchor of reliable relationships with adults in their lives, they secretly yearn for the kind of knowledge that mature people have acquired through years of observation and experience” (25). Youth ministers can empower and encourage young people to realize that they are loved by others and more importantly, by a God who gave His only Son to die for them. During adolescence, teenagers experience something called the “personal fable” in which they develop the tendency to think that their thoughts and feelings are unique and no one else knows what they are experiencing. It is no wonder that depression is a major issue during adolescence when these thought processes are occurring. Adolescents are extremely self-conscious and so when something goes wrong like a relationship breakup, it is almost unbearable to experience because they think that no one else knows how they are feeling and what they are experiencing.

Small groups are a great tool that CYMs can incorporate into their program in order to deal with these issues. Groups help an individual to realize that he/she is not alone and provide a sense of belonging and appreciation that might be lacking in one’s life. Small groups provide a support system in which students become examples to each other and hold one another accountable. However, depression is a serious suffering that requires professional help. As a youth minister, monitor what the teens are saying to you about how they are feeling while at the same time keeping a healthy distance. You are not a professional therapist. You are not on-call 24/7. If a teenager comes to you with the same issue more than twice, then it is time for you to refer them elsewhere. If a teenager has expressed thoughts of suicide to you or anyone else, then immediate action must be taken. Parents must be notified. The student needs professional help if he/she is not already seeing someone.

Last but not least, PRAY FOR THEM and WITH THEM. Pray for their healing and the strength to overcome their negative thoughts and feelings. Pray for an increase in faith, hope, and love. Of course, the Mass is the most perfect prayer to offer up for anyone who is suffering. The Rosary is another beautiful prayer. Ask the Blessed Mother to watch over and heal those teens in your parish youth program who are depressed. Finally, consider the Thomas Merton prayer:

Dear God,

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think I am following your will does not necessarily mean that I am doing so. But I believe this. I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you. I hope I have that desire in everything I do. I hope I never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it at the time. Therefore I will trust you always, for though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I know you will never leave me to face my troubles all alone. Amen.

Nina Kuziel is the Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Ann Catholic Church in Arlington, VA. She is in her second year of graduate school at George Washington University getting her Master’s in School Counseling. She is the proud aunt of two nieces... soon to be three!

Responding to the Crisis when a Young Person Dies

by Kristin Witte

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross once said, "People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in; their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within." Catholic churches are known for their stained glass. When crisis strikes a Catholic parish or school it is the light of Christ that emanates from within revealing true love and beauty.

Crisis is the sudden change that disrupts normal functioning. Crisis can affect an individual, group or organization. An emergency becomes a crisis when it disrupts cognitive, physical, or emotional functions. Tragic death, natural disasters, terrorism, and violent assaults may have a devastating effect on people. An event, however, doesn't make a crisis. It is the overwhelming of resources that make it a crisis. The goal of crisis response is **not** therapy, but rather to help get people back to their level of coping. If therapy is necessary for certain individuals, that should be referred for a later time.

The primary role of a youth minister in times of crisis begins and ends with prayer. Do not forget that the rituals and liturgy present in our Catholic tradition are gifts to be utilized during crisis. We, as a Catholic community, should embrace our tradition in an intentional way during times of storm rather than becoming secular in our response to crisis.



Pragmatically, the following is an outline that a youth minister should consider when serving the community after the death of a young person:

- I. The youth minister is a keeper of **Information and Invitation-**
 - Verify the event and promulgate nothing that is unconfirmed.
 - Make sure the Pastor and other staff are aware and engaged.
 - Inform and mobilize adult volunteers and resources from the community.
 - Invite all adults assisting with support to attend the adult meeting before the parish gathering.
 - Designate someone to speak personally with those adults specifically involved with the crisis and provide support for their feelings.
 - Acquire information regarding the family's wishes and how to help the family, making this information available to the parish families. Ask family if it is alright to gather community as soon as possible for prayer and support.
 - Identify siblings, family members, close friends, and others who may be profoundly affected and provide them with the offer of a safe location to gather to pray. (ex. the church, a meeting room)
 - Notify young people of the details that the family has approved for dissemination and any plans for gathering. Use whichever mode of communication that is most efficient (ex. telephone tree, staff meeting, written communication, e-mail, etc.).
 - Media – (if necessary) Have a contact selected for questions should the media become involved.

II. The youth minister **Delegates and Orchestrates** to the community-

- Plan an adult meeting previous to the “Gathering” of young people. Adult meeting should include:
 - Prayer
 - Schedule and expectation of Gathering Event
 - Guidance about ministering to affected young people
 - Importance of self-care
- Plan structured gathering for families and young people which has a clear start and end time. Gathering should include:
 - Prayer
 - Opportunity for storytelling and sharing of feelings and expressing emotions within the safety of the church.
 - Opportunity for community support and emotional expression.
 - Artistic expression options (prayer wall for writing, markers and paper for letter and prayer writing, scrapbooking page for design).
 - Closing prayer and commitment to further ministry (as well as funeral information if available).

III. The youth minister needs to **Follow up** as grieving is a process, not an event. Follow up for the entire parish community might include:

- Having additional adults available for support at both the wake and funeral.
- Meeting with the pastor, staff, adults and outside resources to process the response by the parish and make recommendations.
- Scheduling a prayer service a month after the death of the young person (ex. rosary or holy hour).
- Providing a scholarship to an event/ program in the name of the young person, hosting a parent meeting to talk about supporting young people after a death.
- Contacting the family of the young person with offers of resources, prayer and support.

During a crisis, it is critically important to remember self-care, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. While busy serving others and accompanying them during a difficult time, often it is the youth minister that becomes exhausted, forgets to eat and exercise, and fails to take time for personal prayer. In Luke 10, Christ tells Martha that “Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her” (NAB). In this same way, in order to minister, we must be grounded and intentionally positioned at the feet of Christ so as to give from the abundance He provides for us.

Kristin Witte serves as the Coordinator of Pastoral Care for the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. In addition to extensive crisis intervention training, Kristin has completed three Masters Degrees and is a current doctoral candidate at The Catholic University of America.

Emergency Counseling Contact List

This list is intended to help you to find a counselor for a child or family in need of services. The goal was to provide counselors who are Catholic and will encourage Catholic values. If you hear of others to add to this list (or ones that we should remove) please contact the Office of Youth Ministry.

Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities provide counseling services for a whole variety of issues. If you cannot find what you are looking for below, or are unsure of how to proceed, call Dave Cavanaugh at 703-841-2531 or ask to speak with the Intake Worker.

Children's Services

A young woman experiencing a crisis pregnancy usually feels alone, confused, and overwhelmed by the decisions facing her. At Children's Services, each pregnant mother is seen by a professional social worker experienced in helping in problem pregnancy situations. The social worker listens to and helps the young mother through these difficult and life-changing situations. Confidential services are available during the pregnancy and after delivery for as long as the mother chooses. Counseling is important, too, for the baby's father and the respective families. Sessions can be arranged in whatever manner is best to foster communications and understanding between the young couple and their parents. Are you pregnant, and do not know where to turn?

Call Catholic Charities at 1-800-CARE-002 or 703 425 0100. FAX 703-425-2886 Ask for the Intake Worker.

*5294 Lyngate Court
Burke, VA 22015*

Family Services

Arlington area:

Comprised of Licensed Clinical Social Workers and a consulting psychiatrist, as well as licensed professional counselors, the Family Services Department brings together expertise in child behavioral problems, marital communication and enrichment, family therapy, as well as a host of clinical topics such as mood disorders (depressions, anxiety) and various problems related to addiction. The staff is experienced (with an average of 15 years post-graduate clinical experience) and, as a fully accredited mental health service, they extend a commitment to maintain the highest level of professionalism.

3838 Cathedral Lane, Arlington, VA 22203

Call (703) 841-2531 Fax (703) 841-2752

Ask for Dave Cavanaugh, Program Director or the Intake Worker.

Fredericksburg area:

The Fredericksburg District Office offers both Family and Childrens Service programs similar to those described above.

305 Hanson Avenue, Suite 180

Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Call 540-371-1124 FAX 540-371-9038

Ask for Pam Staszak, Program Director or the Intake Worker

Alpha Omega Clinic

The mission of the Alpha Omega Clinic and Consultation Services is to integrate professional expertise in the fields of psychology, mental health and social work with the principles of the Catholic faith to enhance personal, professional, familial, and marital development. Alpha Omega Clinic and Consultation Services is taking a leadership role in addressing the unique personal, familial, and professional challenges of life by integrating the totality of the human person with the best faith-based support.

The Alpha Omega Clinic provides services for such needs as Addictions, Anxiety, Assessments, Behavioral Problems, Communications Problems, Compulsive Disorders, Consultation on Corporate Development, Crisis Intervention, Depression, Discipline and Child-Rearing, Grief Counseling, Employee Assistance, Program Services, Ethical guidance, Marital Problems, Personality Disorders, Post Abortion Stress, Post Traumatic Stress, Psychological Testing, School Adjustment and Success, Spiritual Direction, Stress Management, Stress Reduction, and Work Related Problems.

Art Bennett, Director

Alpha Omega Clinic and Consultation Services

7007 Bradley Blvd

Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Phone: (301) 767-1733,

E-mail: alphaomegaclinic@verizon.net

Website: <http://www.aoccs.org/>

Center for Pastoral Counseling

We provide professional pastoral counseling: counseling that is sensitive not only to relational and emotional issues, but to spiritual and ethical issues as well. Whether or not our counselors are ordained clergy, all of us bring psychological, spiritual, and ethical frames of reference to our work. We also draw on medical resources and seek consultation with psychiatrists and other professionals when necessary. All of our services are accomplished with the greatest professionalism. We respect the spirituality of our clients and never proselytize. Because of this special perspective, we are well-equipped to respond to the issues of life that are often expressed in spiritual language: questions of purpose, meaning, direction, self-worth, and value.

There are multiple locations in Arlington, Annandale, Dale City, Manassas, Fairfax, Alexandria, and others in the local area. They provide services in many specialties such as: Adult children of alcoholics, HIV/AIDS, anxiety disorders, Bi-Polar assessment of personality, Brief, solution focused therapy, chronic illness, Conflict management, crisis counseling, cross cultural-racial identity, depression, dysfunctional families, eating disorders, family relationship issues, grief and loss, Learning Disabilities, Life threatening illness, obsessive compulsive disorder, phobias, sexual abuse, sexual identity, and substance abuse.

Call toll-free from Virginia: (888) 903-9696 or (703) 903-9696

Therapists in Private Practice:

William Cummins, PsyD

6400 R. Seven Corners Place

Falls Church, VA

703-536-0383

Mila Tecala, MSW, ACSW, LCSW, DCSW

Specializing in trauma, loss, grief, family issues, and adolescent issues.

1500 Mass. Ave, NW Suite 139

Washington, DC 20005

Phone 202-466-3557 FAX 202-466-5210

-limited appointment time at Centreville Office

Talking Points on Theology of the Body with Teens

by Elizabeth Sieb

Many people have heard the phrase “Theology of the Body” or “TOB,” for short, and have a basic conceptual knowledge of what it is about. However, if you are like the average TOB follower, you think it is GREAT but you may still struggle to know *how* to begin sharing this good news with teens. The following points are the backbone to the late Holy Father John Paul II’s teaching on Theology of the Body which came from 129 homilies that he delivered between September 1979 and November 1984.

Theology of the Body is easily broken down into **two** basic questions, or parts.

1. Part I: *What does it mean to be human? (Versus being an animal, a robot, etc.)*
2. Part II: *What is true happiness and how can I find it?*

Use these very questions as discussion starters for you and your teens. These are universal questions and it is in the teenage years that we begin to ask these questions. Starting a conversation is the easy part, now you need to be ready for what will follow. Memorizing the following points and then remembering common responses that you get from teens will help you to better answer and discuss with them the beautiful message of Theology of the Body.

Each of these two questions can be further divided into **three sections** or additional questions.

Part I: <i>What does it mean to be human?</i>	Part II: <i>What is true happiness and how can I find it?</i>
Section I: Our Origin <i>What was man’s experience with the body before sin entered the world?</i>	Section I: Celibacy for the Kingdom <i>What is celibacy and why do people choose it?</i>
Section II: Our History <i>What was man’s experience with the body after sin entered the world and after Jesus redeemed it?</i>	Section II: Christian Marriage <i>What is a true Christian marriage? What is this analogy about God marrying the Church?</i>
Section II: Our Destiny <i>What will man’s experience of the body be like in heaven in a glorified state?</i>	Section II: Sexual Morality and Procreation <i>How far can I go before I am being immoral? How does the truth of sexuality set me free for true love?</i>

Below are the very basic beginnings of questions and suggestions on how you can get teens talking about these themes within the context of Theology of the Body.

Part I: **Introduction:** *What does it mean to be human?*

- Ask teens the following questions.
Who am I? What is my purpose in life? Why did God make me male or female? Why is there evil in the world and how do I overcome it? How can I find a love that really satisfies me?
- Have teens create a collage, a poster, a mixed CD of music, or a short video using popular culture to get them to try to explain their answers to these questions. From these creations you can begin to draw out the ultimate truths that believe as Catholics such as belief in God, belief in suffering, belief in need of redemption, belief in an afterlife, and the belief of free will.
- Pope John Paul II said, “The body, in fact, and it alone, is capable of making visible the invisible: the spiritual and divine.” Open this point up by asking a teen to “Show me your soul.” No one can really show their soul so this gets teens to see that our bodies and souls are intrinsically connected. Ask teens to create a list of things that

are invisible. Then ask them to explain *how* we experience these things. (hint: by the 5 senses of our bodies)

- Use Play-Doh or sculpting clay and ask teens to sculpt God and their relationship with him. Focus on how they represent God and how they represent themselves. There are no wrong answers.

Section I: **Our Origin:** *What was man's experience of the body before sin entered the world?*

- Introduce the idea of God having an original plan for us. Spend time getting teens to imagine what The Garden of Eden was like. Remind them of God's perfection. Remind them that there was no sin. Play a game or create a list of what the world would have been like if sin had not entered the world.
- Read and study Chapter 2 of Genesis. What did man and woman experience? What does it mean to be "naked without shame?"

Section II: **Our History:** *What was man's experience with the body after sin entered the world and after Jesus redeemed it?*

- The Effects of Sin: This is a great time for personal, quiet reflection for your teens on the hurts and pains they have had in life. Then reflect on God mercy and forgiveness.
- The Redemption of Sexuality: Offer a healing night with adoration and adult volunteers to meet one-on-one with teens to listen. Offer confession.
- Look at the difference between Love and Lust. Have teens make a list of what they think love is and what they think lust is.
- Have teens take popular movies and rewrite them so that they are "redeemed" in the Christian sense by promoting chastity, purity, and dignity in the new version.

Section III: **Our Destiny:** *What will man's experience of the body be like in heaven in a glorified state?*

Part II: **Introduction:** *What is true happiness and how can I find it?*

- Does God want me to be happy? Many teens do not believe or are unsure if God loves them or wants them to be happy. True happiness is knowing and believing that we are loved by God beyond our imagination.
- Celibacy points to heaven where we will all "marry" God.

Section I: **Christian Celibacy:** *What is celibacy and why do people choose it?*

- Celibacy and the Religious Life: When sexuality is reduced to sex, than celibacy is in opposition of sex and is completely misunderstood. (See "freedom" below.)

Section II: **Christian Marriage:** *What is a true Christian marriage? What is this analogy about God marrying the Church?*

- God's Mystery and the Spousal Analogy
- Read Ephesians 5:22-23
- Read the book of Tobit and about the wedding of Tobias and Sarah.

Section III: **Sexual Morality and Procreation:** *How far can I go before I am being immoral? How does the truth of sexuality set me free for true love?*

- Freedom. Sexuality is "who we are" as either male or female. Sex is an "act we do" that fulfills the purposes God intends it to do. By teaching teens to see the difference they can recognize the freedom to choose what is good; to choose against a single act and still embrace their sexuality as male or female.
- Chastity.
- Counterfeits. All you have to do is look to the present culture and media to see the lies it tries to get us to believe. Make it a point to use songs and slogans, magazines, and videos to uncover the counterfeits, the lies, that our society is faced with and contrast them to the beauty of the Truth.

Basic Points of TOB

- Christianity does not reject the body; it in fact, respects and honors it.
- Human nature is both physical and spiritual. We are not spirits trapped in our bodies.
- Love is FREE, TOTAL, FAITHFUL, and FRUITFUL.
- Love equals communion. Love is complete self-gift to others.

Five Practical Tips when Talking to Teens about Theology of the Body

1. Tell them the good news.
 - 93% of teens are unimpressed and unaffected by statistics.
 - Share the Church's teaching as a "source of joy."
2. Speak their language.
 - Use digital media as a visual resource to reach the teens.
 - Challenge them to look critically at magazines, movies, and internet to see what is influencing them and the moral decisions they make.
3. Use a multidimensional approach.
 - Take into account their life situations and cultural backgrounds.
 - Teach not only to teens but to their parents and the church community.
4. Teach TOB as Vocation
 - TOB is much more than just a "sex talk."
 - Teach with a holistic approach and confront the questions "Where am I going?" and "What is God calling me to?"
5. Recognize TOB as a conversation and not just "The Talk."
 - TOB cannot be taught just once and then forgotten about. It must be an ongoing teaching and way of life that both you and the teens embrace.
 - Incorporate the teachings on chastity, purity, modest, and TOB in all activities that you have.

Resources:

www.TOBforTeens.com

Theology of the Body for Teens by Jason and Crystalina Evert and Brian Butler printed by Ascension Press (This really is the BEST out there. Highly recommended and very, very practical and easy to use.)

Theology of the Body for Beginners by Christopher West printed by Ascension Press

Called to Love by Carl Anderson and Fr. Jose Granados

FASHION CLOTHING GUIDELINES

Taken from <http://www.purefashion.com/modesty>

Pure Fashion models are more than just fashion models; they are ROLE MODELS!

Our goal is to show the public that it is possible to be stylish, cute, and MODEST!
All styles should flatter the figure, but not draw extreme attention to any certain area.

SHIRTS

- The neckline should not be lower than four fingers below the collarbone.
- The material should not be sheer, very thin, or spandex.
- Shirts should not be tight across the bust.
- The shape of the bra should not be seen in the back (if visible, the shirt on top is too tight).
- The backs should be modest. For example, no strappy backs, halter, or backless garments.
- Tank tops should be modeled only with a shirt, jacket, or sweater over them.

PANTS

- Should not be too tight, especially in the seat or thigh area.
- Should fit well, but not be skin-tight. One should be able to pull them away from the leg.
- Shorts should be modest. They should not be very short and/or tight. When the arms are straight down at the side, the bottom of the shorts should be below the longest finger. Remember, clothing worn by models on an elevated runway appears shorter to the audience.
- Make sure that "panty lines" are not visible on stage. If necessary, wear pantyhose or a "thigh shaper" to create a smooth appearance in the clothing.

SKIRTS

- Should not be very tight fitting.
- Should not be constructed of a material that is too thin. If necessary, wear a slip.
- Should not be shorter than four fingers above the top of the kneecap.

DRESSES

- Should follow the shirt guidelines.
- No sleeveless, strapless, or spaghetti (or other thin strapped) dresses, even if worn with a wrap.
- Dresses should have sleeves or be worn with a shrug.

FINAL NOTES

Undergarments should never become outer garments. Bra straps should not be exposed, etc.

MORE PURE FASHION GUIDELINES

1. When buying clothes and dressing to express your personal dignity as a young lady:
Remember that first impressions are important. People who never have the opportunity to speak to you can still see you. How do you want them to remember you?
2. Remember that individuals live in many different positions. People sit, stand, lean over, climb up stairs with others behind them, and sit at tables facing speakers, bosses, or teachers. How do your clothes or lack of clothes appear to someone seated alongside, above, and below you in all of your daily positions?
3. Blouses and shirts that are too loose can be as immodest as tight ones. If the neckline droops from the body when a woman bends over, everyone can see the body parts the blouse was designed to cover. If the armpit is too loose, think about the view of the person standing alongside.
4. Blouses that button sometimes have see through gaps between the buttons, so if there is a side view to the inside, this may not be the blouse to buy or wear. Is the blouse too tight and comes unbuttoned easily? A full slip or tank top may need to be worn underneath.
5. With arms lifted overhead when looking in the mirror, does the back or belly show? If so, a longer look or a layer underneath is necessary.
6. When going upstairs at work or school, a short skirt will show the upper thigh to those below you. This is not a body part for a dignified woman to openly expose in public.
7. Many of today's V-necks have plunged to all new "lows." They can even become more revealing when worn by young women of short or medium height. Layering one's tops ensures that your private parts remain private.
8. Make sure that undergarments are doing their job protecting modesty during the warm summer months. Try an extra lined bra for the months that it is too warm to dress in layers. If wearing light colored pants, ask yourself, how thick is the fabric and how loose are the pants? Also, choose a bra that has a little padding in the event of a chill.
9. Let the clothing be an advertisement of your dignity as a young lady. Be careful about dressing "grungy" even if it is modest. Typically, how you dress and how you behave will correspond. If dressed sloppily, one's actions are more likely to be sloppy. If dressed like a young lady, you are more likely to behave like a young lady.
10. Finally, walk, stand, and sit with dignity. Think of yourself as a person who deserves respect. Ask for it by dressing in a dignified manner.

Taken from <http://www.purefashion.com/modesty>

Speaking to Teens about Homosexuality

by Fr. Scalia

The topic of homosexuality represents the intersection of two classic adolescent issues: sexuality and identity. Teens want to understand and be comfortable with their sexuality: *What does it mean to be male or female, a man or a woman?* At the same time, they struggle with broader identity issues: *Who am I?* Sprinkle into this mix the adolescent interest in justice and penchant for rebellion and you have something like a perfect storm: issues of sexual identity that generate demands for justice and occasions for rebellion. We must strive to address this issue, as always, with clarity and charity. What follows are some guidelines for navigating these rapids.

I. Know the Church's Teaching on Sexuality

Your foundation must be the Church's doctrine on sexuality. Moral truth follows doctrinal truth. Always address homosexuality within the context of the Church's teaching on sexuality in general. Be familiar with and conversant in that teaching.

Be confident in the truth and that the truth is good for souls. *You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free* (Jn 8:32). The Church's teaching on sexual morality is not her exclusive possession. It is a matter of the natural moral law (cf. J. Budziszewski's *Designed for Sex*). One does not need to be Catholic, Christian, or even to believe in God to understand the truth about human sexuality. When you speak these truths, you are witnessing to a truth of human nature – a truth obscured by original sin and a sinful world, but still able to resonate within every human heart.

The Church's teaching on human sexuality is simple, clear, and consistent. The human person's sexuality has a twofold purpose or end: procreation and union, life and love. Procreation, because human life comes into the world through the sexual union of man and woman. Union, because physical intimacy is a sign and expression of a deeper, interior love. This twofold purpose of sexuality can only be accomplished by the complementary union of one man and one woman. To violate sexuality's twofold purpose of life and love in any way (e.g. masturbation, fornication, adultery, contraception, homosexual acts, etc.) is gravely immoral.

II. Know the Church's Teaching on Homosexuality

The Church's teaching on homosexuality has three distinct levels: the act, the attraction, and the person.

1. The *act*. Homosexual acts are *intrinsically* disordered – always and at all times immoral. No situation, circumstance, or affection can make them moral. They are disordered because they cannot – ever – realize either purpose of human sexuality. Indeed, they are ordered away from those ends.
2. The *attraction*. Homosexual attractions are *objectively* disordered. Such feelings or emotions are directed towards a use of sexuality contrary to its twofold purpose. Having such attractions or tendencies does not make the person immoral and is not itself a sin. Nevertheless, they incline individuals to unchaste actions and therefore are disordered.
3. The *person*. The human person is always a good and always to be respected – indeed, loved. The person – no matter his attractions – bears the likeness of God, is redeemed by the Blood of Christ, and (if Baptized) is a child of God.

Therefore the most important work is to distinguish the *person* from the *attractions*. Most errors in this area arise from an equation of the person with the attraction: *A person who has homosexual feelings must be homosexual*. This reduces the human person to the sum total of his sexual desires. It is a great temptation for youth, who want so much for these issues of identity and sexuality to be settled. To make such an equation short-circuits their sexual, emotional, and personal development. It locks them in a box that is very hard to get out of.

III. Beware of the Myths

In addition to knowing the truth, you must be familiar with the myths:

1. *Homosexuality is genetic and therefore must be accepted.* No scientific research has proven this assertion. Science tells us only that certain biological factors can predispose someone to homosexual attractions. Further, *even if* homosexual attractions were genetic it would not follow that homosexual behavior is moral – anymore than alcohol abuse would be permitted if alcoholism were genetic.
2. *The Catholic Church teaches that homosexuals are disordered.* Do not permit this calumny against the Church! As we have seen from the above, it is not the *person* that is disordered but the *acts* and *attractions*. The Church defends the dignity of the individual by refusing to reduce him to a sexual attraction.
3. *Homosexuality is an orientation.* Although our culture speaks about “sexual orientations,” there is really only one orientation: heterosexual. Anything apart from that is a *dis-orientation* – meaning it is not oriented to the proper purposes of sexuality. The culture’s seemingly endless proliferation of “orientations” (gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, transgendered, transsexual, queer, questioning, etc.) confirms this.
4. *People cannot change.* In many cases the homosexual inclinations are so powerful and deep-seated that an individual may not be able to understand that they do not define him as a person. Nevertheless, research and experience indicate that, with effort and dedication, a person can achieve a greater or lesser degree of freedom from the attractions and even the development of heterosexual attractions.
5. *The only difference is sexual.* Some homosexual activists use the acronym GAY: for “Good As You.” This captures the idea that people with same-sex-attractions (SSA) are just like everyone else except in their sexual attraction. In reality, those who experience SSA do so as a symptom of a deeper problem associated with identity, friendships, relationships in general, etc.

IV. Language is Power: Use It Properly

1. *Avoid insulting words* – and teach young people to avoid them. Words such as *fag, homo, queer, etc.* can be extraordinarily damaging – especially since they may harshly confirm someone in his mistaken view of sexuality.
2. *Avoid politically charged words.* Certain words used in popular culture have a political or philosophical bias. Such words as *gay, lesbian, queer, transgender, etc.* (used by the homosexual community) all presume a sexual orientation or identity based on attractions rather than on the objective truth about sexuality. They also carry certain political implications associated with “homosexual rights.” Even the terms *homosexual* or *homosexual person* are insufficient because they reduce the person to his sexual tendencies or attractions.
3. *Use precise, non-labeling terms.* It is better to speak of people having *same-sex attractions* or *homosexual inclinations* than to label them *gay, queer, etc.* Do not allow youth (who are inclined to do so) to label themselves or others.

V. Respond Properly to a SSA Teen

1. *Do not label...or permit the labeling.* Communicate as clearly and strongly as you can that SSA is something that the teen *experiences* and not something that defines him. The slang terms *lug* (Lesbian until graduation) and *gug* (gay until graduation) indicate the awareness (even in the homosexual community) that SSA for young people can be a passing phenomenon that disappears as one matures.
2. *Beware of abuse.* The rate of sexual abuse among people with SSA is very high. It is an aggravating factor in the development of SSA. If a teen comes to you with SSA, there is the possibility also of sexual abuse. For this reason (among others), a child should be encouraged to speak with his parents.
3. *Be aware of the propaganda.* Typically teens experiencing SSA will go online to find out more about it. They instantly find those groups that confirm (i.e. trap) them in that identity and provide the phrases and concepts to defend it.
4. *Have referrals on hand.* Always be ready to hand this one off to someone with more expertise. Knowing certain priests and/or counselors that can help is essential.

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The Vocation of Marriage

by Matt and Sharon Farinholt

June 22nd, 1985, my husband, Matt, and I were joined together in Holy Matrimony for life. Now, many years later, we love each other more than we did that day in 1985. Those vows we made to one another really didn't mean as much then as they do now. Only now can we truly appreciate those promises that we made to one another.

Perhaps if someone had explained the meaning of those vows to us when we were younger, we would have taken them a bit more seriously on our wedding day. Maybe we would have really understood the promises that we were making before God. It is our hope that we can give young people a bit of insight on what it really means to love one another.

Most of the young people today will choose the vocation of marriage. However, statistics show that the success rates of marriages are not so good. About 50% of all marriages end in divorce. Catholics don't fare any better. About half of all Catholic marriages also end in divorce.

With such a high rate of failure, why do most young people choose to get married? The number one reason would probably be for love. Another reason is so that they are not alone. And yet another is to start a family.

But what is love? Most young people think of love as an emotion. But love is not an emotion. It is an action. Here is the best definition of love that I have heard: *Love – the total, unconditional giving of one's self for the good of another without expecting anything in return.*

Let's break this definition down a bit more to better understand it. **Total**- complete; everything; nothing left out or held back. **Unconditional** – no strings attached. It would be wrong to say that one would love their spouse only under certain conditions. **Giving of one's self for the good of another** – all that we do for and with our spouse must be for their good. **Not expecting anything in return** – what we do out of love is not done with the expectation of receiving something in return. If we do things for our spouse with expectations of something in return it becomes an act of selfishness. This may be the hardest part because most of us are selfish by nature.

If both people go into a marriage with this understanding of what love is, what a blessing their marriage will be! If this definition of love is lived in a marriage we will see many more young people growing old together in marriage.

Marriage is a vocation. It is a lifelong commitment. It is what we will be doing for the rest of our lives. This person is who you will be with as long as you are walking on this earth! Let's take a look at the traditional wedding vows:

The Priest asks: *"Do you take _____ as your lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish until death do you part?"*

Think about these words! This Covenant between these two people is also a promise to God! Think about this promise you are making to one another. Can two young people in love really live up to this promise? It is not an easy one.

Let's look at it again... *"Do you take _____ as your lawful husband?"* That's an easy one. Sure, it's legal. Let's move on... *"to have and to hold from this day forward"*... a little trickier. You are saying that you will be together from this day forward. Not from this day until he makes me really mad, or from this day until I find someone else.

Now it gets even more difficult to promise---*"for better or worse."* It is important for young people to know that there are many "worse" moments in a marriage. A true commitment gets through those worse times as well as enjoys the better times.

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Back to the marriage vows: “for richer and poorer.” This is a difficult one to swallow.

Financial stress can be very difficult for a marriage. But having money is not what makes a marriage a success. It is good to remember that God does not give us more than we can handle. For those of us with the vocation of marriage; God gives us a spouse to help carry the load. It is always important to remember that our possessions will not get us to Heaven.

The next part of the marriage vow is, “in sickness and in health.” It can be very difficult to be a caregiver to someone you love. It is easy to believe when you are young, that illness can’t happen to you. Helping one through an illness is a huge sacrifice. And it is important to remember that prayer and the Sacraments will help make any marriage a success, no matter how tough times may get.

The final part of the wedding vow: “to love and to cherish until death do you part.” Notice that love is a verb in this sentence. It is an action...to love. If young people can really learn how to love then they will have a beautiful marriage together filled with many blessings.

In the late Pope John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio* he states, “The Church is deeply convinced that only by the acceptance of the Gospel are the hopes that man legitimately places in marriage and in the family are capable of being fulfilled” (13). Without living the Gospel and putting our Faith in the Lord, what we have is nothing more than a friendship between two people. One can not have a marriage without Christ being the center of the marriage.

How can a Coordinator of Youth Ministry help the youth of today know the importance of the Sacrament of Marriage? To begin, if you are married you should be a living example. If you are not married but believe it is your vocation, why not pray for your future spouse with your youth group? They can also pray for their future spouse with you.

The youth of today have so many negative images of marriage. Not only are movies and TV shows filled with examples of unhealthy marriages, but adult role models in teens’ lives such as teachers and parents of friends, have real-life, unhealthy marriages. Unhealthy marriages have become too commonplace and even seem expected to today’s youth.

Have a night dedicated to the vocation of marriage. Have the teens discuss in small groups where they have seen unhealthy marriages as well as healthy marriages. Be sensitive to young people who are living in separated or divorced families. Try to share with them a newer and brighter perspective of marriage and how they can have a holy marriage despite their parents’ choices.

It is also a good idea to have a happily married couple come and give a talk to the youth about marriage and the sacrifice involved. Our parish has also had a renewal of marriage vows ceremony where any married adults are invited to come and renew their vows. This would be a wonderful thing for the youth of the parish to sponsor and invite their parents to attend, as well as the parish community.

Matt and Sharon Farinholt have been coordinators of Youth Ministry at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Winchester, VA since 2005. They were married in June 1985 and are the parents of seven wonderful children.

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Dating is to Marriage What Seminary is to Priesthood

by Rev. Brian G. Bashista

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Our ultimate goal in life is to get to heaven, to become a saint. This call or invitation by God to be united with Him and one another forever in paradise is a universal call. However the way we live out this universal call is not universal. It varies according to the specific purpose or mission for which God has created each of us. This mission, simply put, is our vocation. Often youth have never heard the word vocation or if they have they are confused or fearful of it. What's important to teach is that each person has been called to a special and unique mission by God. Therefore the purpose of any vocation, married life, priesthood, consecrated life, permanent diaconate or a dedicated or consecrated single life, is to assist us on our journey to heaven, as well as enable us to be instruments of God's grace leading others there as well. Youth ministers that work with young people on a regular basis are often those instruments of God's grace, those who will journey with teens and help them to unfold and understand their mission; their vocation in life.

As the diocesan director of the Office of Vocations, many young people will ask me, "Does God really have a personal, specific vocation in life for me?" St. Paul gives us the answer in his letter to the Ephesians, "[E]ven as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (Eph 1:4-6).

Christ has called us all by name, our first name in fact, at our baptism to share His life, to share His mission of salvation. Therefore we all have a vocation. We are all called in some way to play a role in salvation history for love of Christ and His people. All vocations are therefore rooted in love because they are rooted in Christ. This is the essential first truth to be taught to young people when speaking about vocations. This love is sacrificial and selfless, in other words, it is Christ-like and other-directed. The Servant of God, Pope John Paul the Great, once wrote, "Love is not a feeling, it is an act of the will that consists, of preferring in a constant manner, the good of others to the good of oneself." Young people today constantly see the contradiction in our society of self-love; therefore, it can never be expressed enough that love is not a feeling but rather it is a self-less act for the good of another.

The Life He has Chosen for Us

A vocation is a life of love in a concrete and particular form because authentic love is always concrete and particular. It is never sentimental or nebulous. A vocation begins with Christ's total gift of Himself to us and is then realized in our response to His gift, namely our total gift of ourselves to Him for the sake of others. A vocation is the concrete life He has chosen for us and for which He has specifically created us. Therefore we cannot choose our vocation but rather, we discover it. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (Jn 15:16). Love is not chosen; it is discovered and responded to. Young people desire to know that they have something specific to offer so when speaking about vocations with young people it is important to emphasize the uniqueness of the gift of vocation each person is called to. It is also important to discuss how one discovers a vocation and the necessary openness required to accept God's will in their lives. Properly speaking, someone does not choose another to marry but discovers, with the other, a mutually shared Christ-centered love that eventually leads to an invitation to enter sacramental marital love. The same is true for priesthood — one does not choose to become a priest, he discovers with and through the Church, Christ's invitation to be one of His priests. The freedom that is absolutely necessary to enter a vocation is not rooted in a choice, but in a response, a response to an invitation. We can choose an occupation or a career, but a vocation is not an occupation or a career. Young people often

do not understand this distinction right away. A good example to use when explaining the difference is that a priest or sister does not live out his or her vocation from 9 to 5 anymore than a husband or wife or mother or father lives theirs 9 to 5. They all do so 24/7, always and everywhere. A career is primarily “what I do”; a vocation is “who I am” in Christ in relation to the “other” I am called to love.

All vocations involve some form of being “wedded” to another. This union involves the offering of mutual love and support, which then is open to bringing forth new life. You can share with young people that for most men this wedded life will be freely entered into with a wife through the beautiful sacrament of marriage and the openness to father children through the order of nature. For other men, those who are called to be priests, this wedded life will be freely entered into with a “Supernatural Wife,” the Church — his Spiritual Bride with whom he will father new sacramental life or supernatural children through the order of grace. It is vital that we discover our vocations. Our fulfillment, our blessedness, our salvation and more importantly the salvation of others depend upon our acceptance of the mission, the vocation that Christ invites us to embrace.

Discovering a Vocation

As youth ministers, the question for those in our ministry is how do you help young people to discover their vocation? The first step is to encourage them to talk to the One who created us. The first step is for them to pray, to talk and more importantly, to listen to God. The second, like the first, is for them to talk to others. Youth ministers can foster this communication by bringing in representatives of all vocations to talk and share with their teens. Those called to the married life will talk to others, so too do those called to the priesthood. This is one of the major reasons why my office exists — to talk and to listen. If fear is keeping a young person from talking to a priest when they feel God is calling them to the priesthood, perhaps the following could be shared with them. Many men who meet with me never take the step to enter the seminary. For some, this is a realization they come to, for others it is the Church’s realization. The seminary application process is much more rigorous than many realize. Our diocesan application itself is 28 pages long. It includes a physical examination and psychological evaluation, as well as a criminal history and sex offender record check. We ask for eight letters of reference, including one from their pastor, professor, friend, sibling and parents. The applicants must write a 10-plus page autobiography and essays answering two questions: “What does the priesthood mean to me?” and “Why I think the Lord is calling me to the priesthood?” School transcripts and sacramental records are additional required documentation.

Praying, talking and listening to God and others are essential to discover a vocation; however, if someone simply does these alone they will never ultimately come to realize their true calling. They must act. Once someone has sensed that God might be calling them to this vocation or the other, they must act upon these inspirations. Rather than resist the promptings, they should move toward and act upon them. They should place these thoughts before the “other” to see if they are mutually shared. Youth ministers, again, can be instrumental at building confidence and offering support to a young person who may need a little push in taking a step forward in discernment. Someone who feels called to marriage can pray and talk about this all they want, but never come close to getting married. They must act upon the promptings they received in prayer and as a result of conversations. They must date and get to know the other, and the other must get to know them. This is also true for someone who feels prompted to explore the possibility of a call to the priesthood. He can pray and have numerous conversations with others but never come close to taking the first step to act upon these promptings by applying to enter the seminary. In fact a man who enters the seminary has no firm idea that he is called the priesthood, just that he senses that he might be. On the flip side, he is not being accepted by the bishop to enter the seminary to definitively become a priest, just that the bishop senses that he might be.

It is as unrealistic for someone to be certain they will marry someone before they date them as it is for someone to be certain they are called to the priesthood before they enter the seminary.

Dating is to marriage what seminary is to priesthood. Both are a type of courtship that leads to the discovery of where someone is truly called, or not called. People who are called to marriage typically date several people before they discover the one to whom they are called to marry. So too, some men date and then enter the seminary only to discover after some time that they are not called by God to be a priest. After leaving the seminary they may again date and ultimately get married. It is essential that youth ministers communicate to young people that this discovery or discernment is a process of getting to know the other and responding positively to the love Christ is calling them to share. For the future priest, this “spiritual courtship,” while in seminary, takes a minimum of six years after an undergraduate college degree. This is much longer than most experience in a dating relationship that can ultimately lead to the discovery of a vocation to marriage. In conclusion, all youth ministers play a critical role in developing and fostering an atmosphere for youth that teaches them to pray, listen, be confident, to act upon what they hear, and desire God’s will for their lives.

Reverend Brian G. Bashista was born and raised in Northern Virginia. He received a BA in Architecture from Virginia Tech. Father Bashista was ordained to the priesthood on May 15, 1999. As of 2003, Father Bashista is currently serving the diocese as both Promoter of Vocations and as Director of the Office of Vocations. He can be reached at vocations@arlingtondiocese.org.

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