

Evangelization

“The Church exists in order to evangelize.” -Pope Paul VI

Evangelizing means *“bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”* (Evangelii Nuntiandi,18)

As Coordinators of Youth Ministry we are called to bring the Good News to young people. Not just the 500 young Catholics who are registered in your parish...the thousands of young people (Catholic and non-Catholic) who live in your parish boundaries! (Yikes...)

Our Protestant brothers and sisters are typically much better at sharing the Good News of Jesus than we are as Catholics. We can certainly learn some lessons from some of them...for example, the Fairfax area Young Life Leader (a non-denominational/Protestant based youth organization) tells a story of how he evangelized a local public high school:

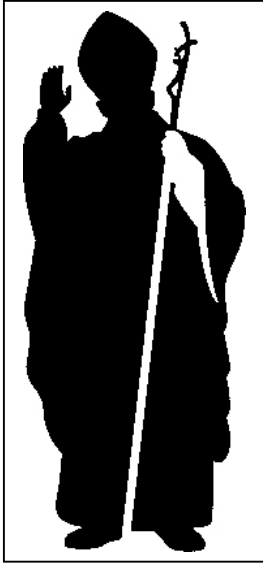
“I signed up to be a substitute teacher in the school, and also volunteered to be the soccer coach. This daily presence in the school gave me the ability to build relationships and to ‘earn the right to be heard’. I was able to build a large Young Life group that would meet weekly to sing fun songs, play fun games, and act out hilarious skits. At the end of each meeting I would give a short witness about Jesus Christ.

In time, there began to be a group of young people in the school who did not like the Young Life kids. So I decided to start a second group. We would meet weekly to talk about what we did not like about Young Life, then we would sing fun songs, play some fun games, act out hilarious skits. At the end of each meeting I would give a short witness about Jesus Christ.”

Within every parish there are young people who like “youth group”. However, there is probably a larger group that does not like “youth group” and would never cast a shadow on the door of the youth room. How can we evangelize those young people?

In this chapter, we offer the following:

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The New Evangelization and Youth Ministry

by Fr. Pollard

In 1990, Pope John Paul II issued the Church's latest document that addressed the issue of mission work or evangelization. It was called *Redemptoris Missio*. That document was the culmination and summation of 22 years of the Pope's preaching, teaching and personal example regarding evangelization. It, as well as other documents of the Church, contains four ideas about evangelization that are essential to every work of the Church and therefore to youth ministry as well.

1. Evangelization describes the overall effort of the Church to offer Christ to people. Whether we are talking about speaking to people who have never heard of Christ, to teenagers attending religion class in a Catholic high school or a Catholic talking to his Buddhist friend about the Church's teachings on abortion, all are examples of evangelization.

2. The first step in evangelization is personal spiritual renewal. This must be more than "I'll pray harder or read the Bible some more." The Holy Father reminded us that we must first radically recommit ourselves to Christ, cooperate with His grace and truth, leave all sin behind, embrace a challenging and practical spiritual life and deliberately pursue holiness. If we aren't at least committed to and beginning that project, then our evangelization is fraudulent.

3. Evangelization must be part of every work of the Church. If we invite people to a prayer meeting, to help with a parish play, or to bring food to the poor, some active effort of outreach with the Word of God, motivated by the love of God, must be consciously included in that work.

4. The New Evangelization specifically describes the mission work of the Church done in those places where the culture was once, but is no longer, Christian in its foundation. In other words, the New Evangelization is meant specifically for Europe and the Americas. It implies an admission of failure on the part of the institutional Church in those places. Specifically, people and institutions were not adequately served by the Church nor were the people and institutions so open to the Church for the Faith to be effectively understood, embraced and carried into daily life.

5. The Pope described the context for the New Evangelization by referring to St. Paul's sermon in the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). St. Paul came to the people of Athens where they gathered, and spoke to them in words, concepts, and images already familiar to them. Thus, the Pope admonishes us that we must find the modern "Areopagoi" (the places where people gather) and speak to them in their own idiom about the reality of who Christ is.

Thus, there are a few practical ways to apply the New Evangelization to Youth Ministry:

1. Youth ministry must have a component of reaching out into:
 - the lives of the youth;
 - the lives of their families;
 - the life of the parish and the life of the community.

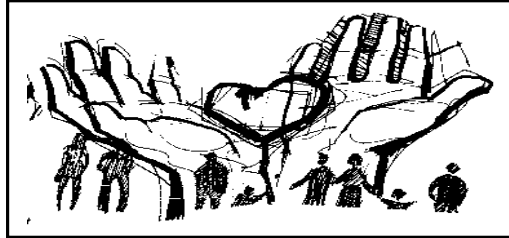
If youth ministry only serves those who come to the Church, there is no outreach.

2. Those in youth ministry need commitment and support to begin to lead the Gospel life without compromise. This includes: sincere daily prayer; regular reception of the Sacraments; the ongoing study of the Word of God; discerning and faithfully living one's vocation; embracing the Cross; supporting the work of the Church; and participating in the works of the Church (the corporal and spiritual works of mercy).
3. Every work of youth ministry must have some component of offering Christ and what He gave the Church, the Deposit of Faith. Hence, works that are purely social aren't ministry.
4. Youth ministry programs and workers are called upon to examine themselves and their work to see how effectively they are authentically living and offering Christ. We must apply to ourselves the words of Christ: "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old" (Matthew 13:52).
5. Youth ministry programs and approaches have the two-fold challenge of accommodating themselves to culture and circumstances of young people, both individually and collectively, while at the time faithfully offering Christ in His fullness. St. Paul describes this when he says: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Fr. Pollard is the Parochial Vicar of St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Springfield.

Youth Evangelization

by Todd Faxon



Listed below are elements of Evangelization. In parentheses are the terms used by a number of Catholic Documents.¹ Be aware that these elements might not be linear or sequential. Your first task will be in assessing the current environment of ministry. Your existing situation will help you determine the priorities and focus. The ideal would be to have Youth Evangelization branching out of parish-wide evangelization initiatives. In reality, sometimes we have to lead the way.

I. Ministry of Presence (Witness)

Show up. If we honestly seek to reach every young person, that will only happen when we find ourselves in places where the young people “live.”

Not all young people “live”:	So youth workers must:
At the church	Step beyond the limits of their church property.
At athletic events	Do more than visit sporting events
At band/orchestra concerts, plays, ect.	(You get the picture.)

If we want to reach every young person, we will humbly admit we won’t be able to reach them ourselves. Who else can reach teens where they “live?”

*Our rich diversity of adult volunteers: yes.
The parents of the teens: yes.
Teens reaching their peers: yes.*

We can quickly list the above. But how about these (Catholic and non-Catholic)?:

a) school teachers; b) school faculty; c) coaches; d) secular youth organizations; e) other Christian organizations (Young Life, Wildfire); and f) other Christian churches

What about the last three? Remember not all of their teachers or coaches are Catholic, either. But can they help “foster the total personal and spiritual growth of every young person”? If you answered yes, then you must be willing to play a part in developing a “well-ordered collaboration”² between these various agents of evangelization.

¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, n. 3.

² The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers (Washington, D.C.: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1993); also addressed in *Renewing the Vision, A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops/USCC (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1997).

Agents of Evangelization? How can they be? They are not Catholic! So start by going where these agents “live”. Earn the “right to be heard” by the other adults and build trust with them. Once this happens, you will be able to evangelize all present (both young and old) about your Catholic faith.

First Scenario³—Ministry of Presence: a lot of the Catholic teens at Parish A were not attending parish activities but were going to Young Life functions. Parish A was able to extend their ministry of presence to these young people when a few Catholic adult leaders also became involved as volunteers in the area Young Life, offering a Catholic presence, especially to the parish teens.

II. Ministry of Love (Outreach)

Love them. Once we have stretched ourselves to where the young people “live,” we cannot just wait for them to come to us. After we have “earned the right to be heard,” after time and consistency of presence, we must extend a hand of concern. This is where you say “hi”, learn names, drop a few hints about church goings-on and extend invites.

Second Scenario—Ministry of Love: a few volunteers at parish B made themselves present at many school athletic events easily because the parish had teens only attending a few high schools. These workers took the initiative to learn about the friends and family of the Catholic athletes. Soon the volunteers found not only many of the Catholic athletes appreciated their attendance, but the other athletes and parents felt the love of these volunteers as well. This developed into an environment for the volunteers to share the reason they are involved with helping teens –God.

III. Ministry of Seed-Planting (Proclamation)

Tell them God loves them. The Good news of Christ is first proclaimed outside the walls of the church. It is not enough to program to-the-max to get all the young people you can to church, then “preach the gospel” and “teach about Jesus.” It starts on the playground, the basketball court, after the band concert, at a break of a youth organizations committee meeting, etc... No tracts need to be handed out. Just use the given context to talk about God. Figure out you own style of “witnessing” and do it. Commit to planting seeds that might bear fruit without you seeing it.

Third Scenario—Ministry of Seed Planting: a few volunteers at parish C made the habit of visiting the local skate hang-out where a few teens from the parish “lived.” Over a number of visits they became familiar to other young people that also would stop to converse with the volunteers. These teens were mostly apathetic or hostile towards religion. One of the volunteers was well versed in the particular music genres that interested these teens and would point out Scripture passages in his pocket-Bible that lyrics alluded to or paralleled. In time, the volunteers were pleased to hear one of the originally “hostile” teens admit he had borrowed his grandmother’s Bible to “check some things out.” Sometimes the Holy Spirit gives us hints of how effective our “seed planting” can be.

IV. Ministry of Fun (Invitation)

Call them to follow Jesus. The disciples followed Jesus because they were convinced He had something worthwhile. Our parishes must also offer something worthwhile. It is crucial that young people feel safe and are not wasting their time. We must make the parish “fun” in the biggest sense of the word.

Fourth Scenario—Ministry of Fun: parish D had found that the active program teens were not attending Mass. The youth worker surveyed the young people and began to collaborate with the priest and music director to make a Sunday evening Mass more “youth friendly.” A time later the youth worker, priest, and

³ These scenarios are not intended to be copied by parishes with different circumstances and results may vary—depending on the plan of the Holy Spirit!

music director were meeting monthly to plan the upcoming “youth friendly masses.” Not only did the active teens start to come, but they began to bring their friends not involved in the Church.

V. Ministry of Connection (Conversion)

Connect them. The parish youth ministry must be equipped to respond to the “yes” of young people who have responded to the call to follow Jesus. Smoothly connecting them to appropriate programs offering faith investigating, faith formation, and sacramental preparation is the priority of this step.

Fifth Scenario—Ministry of Connection: parish E had been recently overwhelmed by fruits from the efforts of other evangelization elements, and had many teens want to investigate the faith or even become Catholic. The youth ministry recruited adult volunteers and was able to begin a Rite for Christian Initiation for teens and a Faith Investigation group that began meeting the specific needs of the young people.

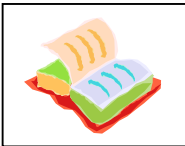
VI. Ministry of Sending (Discipleship)

Send them. This is where disciples are prepared and sent. Young people can and do qualify to be disciples. Catechize them, encourage them, and empower them to help evangelize their peers, adults around them, and all of whom they influence.

Sixth Scenario—Ministry of Sending: parish F developed an apologetics group for a number of teens that were sharing their faith with friends at school but wanted to know how to better address their friends intellectual objections.

Show up- Love them - Tell them - Call them - Connect them - Send them

Great resources about Youth Evangelization:



Growing Teen Disciples: Strategies for Really Effective Youth Ministry by Frank Mercadante. St. Mary’s Press. 2002.

O’Malley, William J., *Converting The Baptized* (Allen, TX: Tabor, 1990).

Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*.

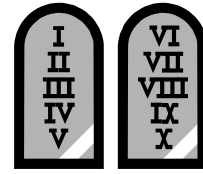
The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization: Called to Be Witnesses and Storytellers (Washington, D.C.: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1993).

Renewing the Vision, A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, National Conference of Catholic Bishops/USCCB (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1997).

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The Ten Commandments of Relational Youth Ministry Practice

by David Bristow



In an attempt to foster relational ministry practice, I hereby set forth the ten commandments of relational youth ministry practice. My hope would be that Catholic Coordinators of Youth Ministry (CYMs) everywhere would take two primary ideas from them - the first being that personal “face time” with the youth is just as important (if not more so) than setting up a perfect youth night, and the second being that prayer, in the context of a striving for holiness, is the most faithful ministry tool one can possess.

With respect to the first idea, CYMs cannot get lost in the day-to-day workings of a ministry program to the neglect of their youth. At times we are forced to leave the office and our “busy work” so that we can visit the youth in their schools, games, plays, and homes. *This point is critical.* The youth do not so much remember a great youth night or advertising poster as much as they do the relationships bridged with adult mentors and the other teens that care for them. A great way of getting “face time” is to make a sign up sheet of the teens’ upcoming events. Have them give you places and times of their events and then make room in your schedule to attend as many as possible. Youth ministry is thus not about creating a perfect program; it is about creating relationships in Christ’s truth, freedom, and radical care.

In further discussing the second idea CYMs must engage in prayer and sacramental devotion on behalf of themselves and their youth. Every week CYMs need to make time in order to pray for their youth and the ministry of the parish as a whole. A great way of doing this can be before your youth nights even begin. Ask some of the youth to come early so that they too can pray with you, setting up a foundation of prayer in the community. People tend to forget that relational ministry is not so much about the relationship between CYM and youth, but rather the relationship between the CYM, their youth, and our Blessed Lord.

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1. Seek to become a *faithful* youth minister ever before attempting to be an effective, relevant, or progressive one (Galatians 2:16).
2. Don’t merely be yourself around the youth; *be like Jesus Christ who points to the will of the Father in Heaven* (Matthew 10:32).
3. Regularly participate in sacramental practices (i.e. Eucharistic Adoration, Confession, etc.) on the youth’s behalf as much as for your own (John 6:48). At the same time, immerse yourself daily in the ‘Word of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16).
4. Actively pray for the youth you encounter and/or serve. Afterwards, tell them how blessed you are to be in their presence or to have made their acquaintance (Matthew 6:9).
5. Love and accept the youth for who they are *now* and not for what you hope they become later (John 8:11).

6. Praise the youth openly and vocally without embarrassing them; discipline the youth quietly and respectfully without drawing unnecessary attention upon them (Luke 6:31).
7. ‘Awkwardness’ is simply another way in which God reminds us that we are not Him. Don’t fear silence or uncomfortable quiet moments when engaging the youth; rather learn to exhibit patience *with* them instead of always talking in their place (Galatians 5:22).
8. Sit, eat, dance, sing, play, smile, worship, and pray with the youth *by their sides* – always and everywhere (Mark 10:15).
9. Be of the mindset that the youth can teach you as much as you can teach the youth. Doing so empowers the youth while simultaneously showing them true humility and openness (Proverbs 22:4).
10. Conduct all relational ministry practices with the knowledge that there is no such thing as a Youth Ministry Utopia – *there is only sacrificial youth ministry*. The joys of youth ministry are often found in the sacrifices and toils of loving the youth unconditionally (Mark 10:21).

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David Bristow currently serves as the Director of Youth Formation at Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Herndon, VA. He is married with a daughter and enjoys relating contemporary Christian theology to youth ministry practices.

The 1x3x5 Challenge

by Jim Beckman

The *Renewing the Vision* document by the US Bishops is referred to as “a blueprint for the continued development of effective ministry with young and older adolescents.” Within the document, the driving goals of youth ministry are clearly established: (1) To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today, (2) To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community, and (3) To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.¹

When you reflect on these daunting goals, you quickly come to the conclusion that the only way you can hope to achieve them is if you have “relationships” with the young people you work with. Without a relationship, and even more important, the foundation of any good relationship, “trust”, you cannot possibly hope to make any progress towards these goals. A trusting relationship is essential.

Indeed, building healthy, trusting relationships with young people is at the heart of any effective youth ministry. Yet youth ministry efforts can sometimes become so focused on programming and activities that they miss the deeper connections of relationship that young people are so hungry for. Teens are looking more for models and witnesses than they are teachers. As Pope Paul VI said in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “Modern man listens more readily to witnesses than to teachers, and if they listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses.”² And the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further emphasizes this need: “In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of life of Christians. The witness of a Christian life and good works, done in a supernatural spirit, have great power to draw men to the faith and to God.”³

The challenge becomes building the relationships – literally creating ministry-connecting points that foster an ever-deepening relationship of trust with a young person. Over the years, I have struggled with consistently making these relational connections happen, and have struggled even more helping make them happen with volunteers. It can be a somewhat intangible thing to say to a group of volunteers, “Go and build relationships with the teens!” - even if that is a heart-felt desire among many of your volunteers.

The “1x3x5 Challenge” was developed to address this and to help volunteers by providing a tangible, practical goal for weekly relational contact with teens. The idea basically flows from the primary ways that we, as adults, can make “contact” with the young people we minister to: in person or “face-to-face”, by phone, and in writing. All three can be effective, yet personal, face-to-face contact will always do the most to help grow a relationship. Yet, a phone call, though not as effective as a face-to-face connection, is probably more effective than a written note.

¹ *Renewing the Vision*, USCCB

² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paragraph 41

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Paragraph 2044

The “1x3x5 Challenge” was created to serve as a weekly tool for volunteers. It challenged them to set up one face-to-face or personal contact during the next week, three phone calls they would make to young people during the next week, and five notes they would send. The numbers can be adjusted if these goals are unrealistic for volunteers; for example, make it a “1x2x3 Challenge”. The point is to get volunteers consistently making relational contact with teens, and the challenge serves as a practical way to hold them accountable to this.

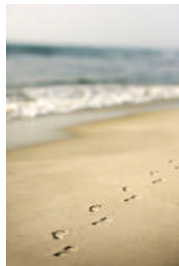
One practical way to use the “1x3x5 Challenge” is to have volunteers make a photocopy of their challenge sheet each week after they have filled it in with names of the teens they will be making contact with. This allows the Coordinator of Youth Ministry to keep track of which teens are being connected with, and even to make sure there isn’t any accidental imbalance occurring with particular teens.



Here are a few other practical tips for implementation:

- Make sure that volunteers have the necessary information they will need readily available: addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, birthdates, etc.
- Provide clear training on the guidelines about your Diocesan Safe-Environment policies in regards to this type of relational ministry, and hold your volunteers accountable to the standards.
- Encourage written notes to be sent via “snail-mail” rather than email or text. There’s actually a new phenomenon for young people around receiving an actual letter in the mailbox– it’s much more exciting than an email or text which they receive all the time.
- Accommodate volunteers with postcards, birthday cards, stationery, etc. to make the task even easier (*Many of my volunteers would frequently stay after for 10-15 minutes on a night we had just met with teens to write their five notes and leave them with me to mail – which saved them all the postage!*)

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good News!” (*Romans 10:13-15*)



Jim Beckman serves as the Director of Impact Center, a ministry designed to nurture and train youth ministers. He has been involved in youth ministry for ...a really long time. He is a dynamic and passionate speaker who has served as a host for Franciscan University of Steubenville’s Summer Youth Conferences and has built solid and thriving youth ministry programs in several parishes over the years. He lives in Denver, CO with his wife and five children.

WEEKLY CONTACT MINISTRY CHALLENGE

1 X 3 X 5

1 Teen you are going to get together with:

Name:	Where?:	When?:	Notes:

3 Teens you are going to make a phone call to:

Name:	Calling For?:	Date:	Notes:

5 Teens you are going to write a note to: *(b-day card, encouraging word, etc.):*

Name:	Writing For?:	Date:	Notes:

CORE Team Member's Name: _____ Week of: _____

Evangelization in Public Schools

by Brian Kissinger

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing youth ministry in Northern Virginia is the hectic pace of life that our teens are immersed in. Involvement in sports, music, drama, and a host of other extra-curricular activities coupled with demanding workloads at school, these teens lead busy lives. Often we find our youth ministry programs competing with these other pressing demands in their lives, and it is simply impossible for many teens to attend our regularly-scheduled events. Contact work, or reaching teens beyond the walls of the parish buildings, is an absolute necessity in effective youth ministry.

This kind of ministry is not just important to reach the teenagers that do not attend our meetings; it is also a key component of serving those teens that are already involved in our ministry. As Pope John Paul II said, “If the Church holds back from the culture, the Gospel itself falls silent.” For our ministry to be relational, as Christ’s own ministry was, it is essential that we are present in the lives of the teens in our parish, not just those that show up for a youth ministry event. One of the greatest opportunities to engage the teen culture is in the public school system. Building a presence within the public school system must begin with building relationships with key stakeholders in the school.



Here are a few suggestions for establishing a presence in the public schools:

- 1. PRAY.** The most important thing we can do is to ask God to open doors and hearts. Pray for the Principal by name, pray for the teens that you know at that school, ask God for “divine appointments” and opportunities to reach out to new kids.
- 2. Talk to the teens at the school to find out who your allies are.** It is really helpful to learn ahead of time if there are any Catholics or other Christians that are on the faculty, staff, or administration of the school. It is also important to find out if there are any Christian organizations or clubs at the school that are already meeting regularly. Sometimes the advisors or moderators for these clubs can be your biggest supporters as you begin to build a presence in the school.
- 3. Stop by the school to set up a meeting with the Principal.** It is important that you stop by the school to arrange the meeting, as Principals are very busy and voicemails just don’t get the immediate response that a personal visit will elicit. This meeting is key toward establishing a relationship with the administration, and assuring the Principal that you want to offer your support to the school. This is where it is important to already have connected with teachers and staff at the school, as you can reference these connections when meeting the Principal. Assure the Principal that you want to support the teens of your parish, to offer a positive influence on their lives, and this will go a long way in gaining his/her trust.

4. **Establish regular opportunities for outreach at the school.** This depends greatly on the willingness of the Principal to give you access to the school, and this may begin with you assisting in the Christian Bible Study or some similar group. If the Principal seems open, it would be a great opportunity to ask if you could visit your teens at lunch regularly. It's important to let him/her know that your sole intention is to support and catch up with the students that belong to your parish, let the Principal know that you are not going to lunch to proselytize or baptize any students in the school water fountain. Another possibility within the school is to set up a weekly Bible study or prayer group, possibly meeting in the morning before school. You would need to find a teacher who will let you meet in their classroom, and students are usually pretty aware of any teachers that might be Christian or Catholic in the school.

5. **Show up.** One of the best things you can do to further your relationships with the students is to just be present in their lives. Your presence at the students' activities will have greater impact than you will ever know. Attendance at games, matches, meets, recitals, concerts, and performances also serves to extend the reach of your ministry. This will also offer both parents and school administration an opportunity to see your investment in the teens. *Even if the Principal, administration, and staff won't let you in the school, you still have an opportunity to be present to students.*

Youth ministers must be willing to reach beyond the parish buildings to reach teens for the Gospel. Our parish youth ministries must be incarnational and deeply invested in the lives of the teens we serve. There is certainly a great deal of comfort lost when we walk out of our offices and into a cafeteria filled with teens wondering why we're there. If we are honest, there is still an element of anxiety as we awkwardly walk from table to table, praying that we will see some teens that we know and hoping that those teens will admit to knowing us. But as we know, the Gospel is always worth the cost.

Brian Kissinger has been the Coordinator for Youth Ministry at Saint Mary of Sorrows Catholic Church in Fairfax, VA since 2007. Brian does not like cats.

Hospitality

by Patrick Drury

Create a Culture of Inclusiveness

One of the most important characteristics of a successful youth ministry program is an environment in which everybody feels welcome. In order to bring teens closer to Christ, they have to stick around long enough to hear our message. Once they come in the door, it's our job to keep them there and to ensure they want to come back. If we can help them feel a sense of belonging and community, the hardest part is behind us.

Get Everybody Involved

The Coordinator of Youth Ministry cannot be the only person working to create a welcoming environment. Every adult volunteer and every student leader needs to do their part as well. The more that people focus on welcoming and including others, the more successful they will become at it. With everybody pitching in, new students will quickly see that your ministry is an inviting and comfortable place to spend time. And as those new students become veterans in your ministry, they will do their part to perpetuate that culture of inclusiveness.

Little Things Matter... A Lot

Young people are incredibly attentive to their environment and to the people around them. They will remember things that you say or do, even when *you* do not. They will remember how they are treated the first time they attend an activity in your program. They will remember how the other teens act toward one another. They will remember whether or not people make an effort to welcome and include them. That is why we need to pay attention to the small stuff, because it really can make a big difference in the impression we give to young people.



Practical Applications: Engaging Newcomers

1. Say hello to every new face that walks through the door, make eye contact, and smile.
2. Introduce yourself. If you cannot remember whether or not you met them already, introduce yourself anyways. It is always better to over-introduce than under-introduce.
3. Talk to them. Small talk can be incredibly helpful in making connections with teens. Find out any information that might help you welcome them or connect them with somebody else (like the school they attend, sports they play, extracurriculars they participate in, etc).
4. Introduce them to other people. Ideally you can connect them with other students that share something in common with them.
5. Give them space. After your initial conversation has come to a natural close, it's okay to leave them alone and move on to other people. We do not want to smother anybody and scare them off.
6. Encourage veteran students to approach newcomers, without being obvious that you are doing so. Often new students will feel more welcomed if their peers make an effort, so enlist the help of teens who have been involved in your program for a while. Be subtle.
7. Welcome newcomers in your large group setting. Typically this involves cheering and fanfare. If appropriate, have the new person/people introduce themselves to the group (but only if they are willing—some people are too shy).



Practical Applications: Inclusion

1. Name tags are a simple way to help people get to know one another. Use them often.
2. Pay attention to the dynamics of your group and be on the lookout for any individuals who are by themselves or on the exterior. Reach out to them, or enlist other students to do so.
3. Open up conversation huddles to include people nearby. Many times when people get to talking, they naturally form a circle. Other people will not be able to join in the conversation unless somebody makes room for them.
4. Explain inside jokes. It is easy to feel left out if you do not understand what the group is talking about. A brief explanation of background info will help people feel included, even if they weren't there in the first place.
5. Icebreakers are an excellent tool to get people interacting in ways they would not otherwise. Mixers can split up cliques, connect people with one another, and help students meet new people and build community.
6. Small group discussions are another way to get people interacting with one another. Mix groups up as much as possible and keep them small in size. Have facilitators concentrate on getting the group to talk to each other.



Practical Applications: When Newcomers Return

1. Greet them, make eye contact, and smile. Let them know you are glad they came back.
2. Remember names! It seems like a small thing, but it is really a big deal. I still remember situations in high school and college when people remembered my name.
3. Ask them questions about the information you learned before (like "How is basketball/the play/band/your shrunken head collection?"). Remembering details about their life shows them that you care.
4. Re-introduce them to people. Again, it is always better to over-introduce than under-introduce.

Be Yourself

The best way to make people feel at ease is simply to be yourself. If you are comfortable, the young people around you will be comfortable. Share with them who you are, and they will be more willing to do the same. And they will be more willing to be themselves around the other students in your ministry program. Now what is more welcoming than that?

Patrick Drury has been the Director of Youth Ministry at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Alexandria, VA since 2004 and has been involved in youth and campus ministry since 1997. He and his wife Cynthia have a lovely daughter named Isabelle and hope to one day catch up on sleep.

Oh my! Junior High! by Angie Pometto

Few Coordinators of Youth Ministry have ministry to junior high students in their position descriptions. However, because these are the years when young people are forming their opinion on the faith, and because most of the teens in the parish are participating in the Confirmation program, a Coordinator of Youth Ministry should spend some time with these teens to begin building a relationship and providing them with experiences of relational youth ministry. This extra effort will make it much easier to encourage these teens to participate in high school ministry when they enter the ninth grade.

According to *Renewing the Vision*, “Effective ministry with adolescents provides developmentally appropriate experiences ... to address the unique developmental and social needs of ... adolescents.” But discovering what is “developmentally appropriate” for Jr. High teens can be quite challenging.

Jr. High teens (usually grades 7-8, ages 12-14) can be rambunctious, emotional, and moody. They laugh and have fun at one moment and cry in the next. In front of a video camera, they are just as likely to jump, scream, and go wild as they are to be quiet, camera-shy, and self-conscious. And to top it all off, their attention span is about the size of a mustard seed (which is also how much faith you’ll need to work with them).

It is a vast range of personalities and emotions. However, all of their behaviors stem from a single question—a question that they begin to ask themselves as they grow and change. It is a question that is central to every human being: “Who am I?”

“Who am I?” As a son or daughter? As a student? As a friend? As a boyfriend or girlfriend? As a child of God and member of the Catholic faith? This question is at the core of every Jr. High teen, although they may not realize it is there. They each answer the question in different ways, but as a youth minister, it’s important to be sympathetic to them during this time. It is the youth minister’s job to journey with them as they experience all the ups and downs that occur and to provide them a good, positive environment in which they can explore this question more thoroughly.

No matter how the Jr. High Ministry program is organized, it is important to stress the positive. Even one negative comment could be incredibly hurtful to these teens. In terms of Jr. High girls, praise them frequently. Anything from congratulating them on a good performance at sports games or musical concerts to commenting on new hair styles or fashions. No matter how often you do this, it will take a long time for that message to sink in for young ladies. For the boys, allow them to be wild and crazy—within reason. Don’t stifle their energy or spend time telling them what *not* to do. Instead, allow them to be as they are, within reason.

In terms of youth ministry programs for Jr. High teens, the focus has to be on fun. The teens need to see that it’s okay to have fun at church events. Don’t be afraid to hold several fun-only nights per semester. A trip to laser tag or a games’ night can pull in teens who wouldn’t normally come to any other event. After they are hooked on the games and food (it’s always good to have food around, but make sure snacks are light on caffeine and sugar), invite them to return and insert a teaching and time for prayer into your normal activities.

These activities focus on relational ministry, which is at the heart of any Jr. High program. Building relationships with the teens when they are young builds a solid foundation. From that bedrock, youth ministers continually reach out to invite the teens to participate. First, the invitation is to come to Jr. High events, then to stay involved in High School, and eventually,

to remain faithful in college. It starts with being present to them—in the midst of their confusion and moodiness as they search to find answers.

But every night can't be all fun. It's important to teach them as well. A typical night might include a time for games, a talk, small group discussions, and prayer. For large group activities, it's best to split the friendships up. When surrounded by close friends, the Jr. High teens are more likely to be rowdy and disruptive.

When giving a talk, props—audio, visual, tactile—are a must. Props help engage and keep them interested. In the end, a youth minister really only has about three to five minutes of their solid attention. That's all they can give, collectively. So, everything that happens around those central five minutes should enhance the main point of the night. Anything from an old car to a slideshow featuring a plastic traveling cow, can help these teens stay focused—and as a general rule, the weirder the better.

Despite their many quirks, one very positive aspect of Jr. High teens is that they are incredibly open and receptive. Their biggest doubts reside within themselves. When someone in authority speaks, they will listen and take it to heart. For a youth minister, those moments of complete attention and contemplation are golden opportunities that should not be wasted.

Because of their natural openness at this age, providing a quality Confirmation Retreat is vital. Retreats are powerful tools that allow teens to step away from the world; be taught, challenged, and shown what it means to be Catholic; and then return refreshed and renewed.

As eighth-graders, their attention span can be stretched a little further, and they are at a point when they can seriously discuss issues of faith and still be open enough to really listen to what is said. At the end of eighth-grade, the teens are ready to be done with one stage in their life and anxious to start high school. But before this year ends, they are still receptive and able to be molded.

Single-sex, overnight Confirmation retreats provide the best forum to create this positive atmosphere for Jr. High teens. Providing a quality Confirmation Retreat has many benefits:

- Through Confession and the Eucharist, teens encounter the person of Christ in a very real and powerful way.
- Talks from faithful adults challenge the teens to think differently about matters of faith and morals. Personal testimonies from adults solidify the concepts discussed.
- Small groups allow the teens to ask important questions about their faith in an environment where a faithful adult is present to guide them toward understanding.
- Fellowship through games, activities, and free time will form friendships and build up the parish community.
- Youth ministers can recruit (invite) the teens to stay involved with parish activities. This also provides an opportunity to invite the eighth-graders to start participating in high school ministry events, which will excite the teens. If they are hooked into youth ministry events as an eighth-grader, they are far more likely to continue participating in High School.

“To thine own self; be true,” Polonius advises his son, Laertes, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, this good advice is worthless if one does not know who “thine own self” is. Middle school is a time when teens begin searching for the answer to this important question. It may take the rest of their lives to discover the entire answer. A youth minister's job is to travel with the teen as they search for an answer and provide them new ways to think about themselves, others, and God. A youth minister is also there to help them discover “Who Jesus says you are.” If a youth minister is able to patiently endure the Jr. High peculiarities, there is no better reward than being present as they discover their answers.

Angie Pometto is the Associate Director of Youth Ministry at St. Mark Church in Vienna. Originally from Iowa, she has served as a youth minister in the Diocese of Arlington for five years.

the aRts

by Miguel De Angel

I've maintained the key highlights of the original version of this article summarizing a Bryan Belknap article¹ about encouraging art in youth ministry. This summary differs only in that I have added a few more excerpts from the Belknap article, some specific activities the Diocese of Arlington offers to help youth ministers in this effort, and my own ideas and suggestions based on things I have done in my own youth ministry program.

Have you ever thought to yourself “If I could only get through to that one teen!” Belknap starts by reminding us that “*the arts use emotion and experience to communicate—a perfect tool for reaching postmodern teenagers. Today’s kids long to experience God, to taste him... Art reaches past teenagers’ defense mechanisms to capture their souls.*” With such a powerful tool at our disposal, shouldn't we all look for ways to use art in our ministries?

Even if you have been blessed with talents *other* than artistic talents or know no students with them you can start using art in your ministry by simply **encouraging critique**. Find some of the latest Christian music, books, and movies and engage your teens in a discussion about the themes as well as the execution of the particular piece of art. Don't be afraid to compare them to mainstream art and music because...

It's worship to offer our best to God.

Whether critiquing mainstream and commercial works of art or the students' own work, set the bar high—artistic excellence isn't simply the result of good intentions. If our best work praises God we should evaluate all work by its execution, not just its intention (this doesn't mean belittling what your young people produce, but rather seeking out themes and giving concrete feedback in love... always validating before critiquing.)

All art is rooted in a relationship with God.

Don't expect teens to open themselves up to critique, or even get the courage to show you their artistic creations out of the blue. Try to **encourage the arts** by providing an environment that welcomes art and by affirming the gifts of your young people. Resist the notion that people can only love God by becoming a missionary or minister (beauty queen Esther, politician Joseph, and wrestler Samson don't fit in neat little molds).



The following are a few ways to encourage your teens to use their artistic talents:

1. Display art in your youth room. In our program we started by having my own art on the walls, framed art as well as a mural. Now we've taken much of my framed art down to make room for student's art.
2. In much the same manner, reserve space on your bulletin board for a *Creation Corner* where they can display their art regularly. I started ours in one of the bulletin boards in the youth room with my own art and invited them to post their own art. As student's work fills the bulletin board I remove some of my own. If I see the board is becoming stagnant,

¹ Bryan Belknap, “The Artist-Friendly Youth Group,” *Group*, Vol. 28 no. 6 (Sept/Oct 2002): p. 67-70.

I can add some new artwork of my own and students respond with their own. It is a very informal and organic process, yet a public way to share their work.

3. The *Creation Corner* draws enough attention that you start seeing who has an interest in art. Having identified a few individuals with talents and interest you can start a *Drawing Group* where students can bring their work to share, draw and learn from each other. Painting, art, poetry and music could all be welcome.

The next step after building some interest is to **provide opportunities** for them to apply their talents and be surprised at how many they'll come up with on their own. Create an art gallery in your Church featuring student paintings and sculptures, or line the Church halls with teens' artwork(s). Invite them to create a mural for your meeting room, write poems inspired by your current series of talks, volunteer to edit your summer camp video footage, or even compose an original song.

Whenever we attempt to create something out of nothing, we're imitating what's at the core of God's nature.

Hold special events like the Diocesan Youth Ministry One-Act Play Competition and Short Film Festival every spring. At my parish we started a poster contest for our International Festival. I'd like to think that my pictorial prayers, meditations and comics in the weekly youth ministry columns in the bulletin have helped create an environment to allow for such a contest to happen, but otherwise I had nothing to do with the decision to start this contest.

Plan a coffeehouse evening for poetry reading, dramatic monologues, and original music. Make it an outreach event by encouraging your group members to invite their friends from school.

Be open: welcome new modes of artistic expression (web design, graphic design, etc.); *You have young people in your group right now with talents that are considered applicable only outside the church—bring them inside.*

Be open to subject matter – not every artistic work has explicit Christian themes, and that's okay. *Allow your students latitude in expressing themselves without contradicting scriptural truth* [or the truth guarded in Tradition]; show them the Church is a safe place to talk about the real issues affecting them. ...*and don't forget to have fun!*

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.’”(Exodus 31:1-5).
There you have it. The first "Spirit-filled" person was an artist.

After an art career spanning from multimedia design to cartoon animation and children's books, Miguel De Angel felt the call to youth ministry loudly. It did not take long before he leaned into it and took a Youth Ministry position at Good Shepherd. Miguel now looks for ways to use his artistic talents in ministry.

Using Music in Ministry

by Kevin Heider

While one may be curious as to what exactly it is about music that sometimes persuades a man to let himself slip into partial unconsciousness to experience the great mystery of the aesthetic sensation which it brings, the objective of this article is not to determine the effects of music on the human psyche, for that there are effects is presupposed here, but rather to discuss how music can be used, for lack of a worse pun, as an instrument, as a source of light in a dark world.

The goal of this article is to develop a fuller understanding of music akin to Father St. Maximilian Kolbe's understanding of film: "We must convert the movies. If we give them the proper direction they will stop harming people." In other words, we must take what we have on this earth, the talents and gifts we have been given, and use them for the greater glory of God to the best of our abilities in accordance with His divine grace and will. Effectively using music in ministry towards this end is, like many modern money-making models, a three-step process, here involving (1) Understanding Historical Functions (2) Critical Analysis and (3) Determining Proper Order and the Effectiveness of Current Trends.

Although we can't always determine why a particular emotional response is drawn from us, understanding the historical functions of music will no doubt enlighten us to its power. In cases of classical works, the title of a piece is all one needs to know in order to make sense of the aesthetic, to give the sound and the feel of the music itself a context. Beethoven originally began composing his grand Romantic opus no. 55, "Eroica," for instance, in honor of Napoleon Bonaparte, viewed in his earliest conquests as a freedom fighter for France. However, in May of 1804, when Beethoven received word that Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor, he understood the arrogant declaration to be the act of a tyrant. Having originally been titled "Buonaparte," Beethoven's finished work was thus renamed *Sinfonia eroica, composta per festeggiare il sovvenire d'un grand'uomo* ("Heroic symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man"). The words of our own national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," are themselves one man's reflection on the awesome spectacle of the British attack on Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland during the War of 1812. The tune of our anthem was reportedly borrowed from a popular British drinking song of the time. It is no wonder then that the musical retelling of the victorious defense of the fort, fondly recalled with images of "bombs bursting in air" and flags triumphantly waving, set to the soaring, dramatic melody unique to well-constructed drinking songs, still manages to rouse patriotic sentiment almost 200 years after Francis Scott Key first touched pen to paper. It was the rebellious tone of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son," coupled with its angst-ridden lyrics, that drew Vietnam War protestors to rally behind its familiar anti-battle battle cry.

While the lyrics to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" seem to include important questions for any man to ask, such as "How many years can some people exist before they're allowed to be free?," the overall significance of the song is even more striking in light of the fact that Dylan wrote the lyrics in the midst of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's and that the song's melody was borrowed from an old slave



song. And though Dylan's initial efforts were unsuccessful, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, a championship boxer who spent 19 years in prison for murders he didn't commit, was granted a second trial in 1976 as a result of publicity from Dylan's hit song, "The Hurricane," which recounted the tale of how the boxer was wrongly framed and convicted by racist authorities. Placing all of these familiar songs within their respective and proper historical contexts allows us to more fully understand the truly awesome power of music. When employed as a means to an end, when functioning as an instrument of change, music has the ability to rouse sentiment for the rejection of tyrants, for the reformation of unjust institutions, and for the beginning of a revolution within the hearts and minds of men, the everyday men who will one day be the heads of their own states and cultures. Simply put, music has the power to make a prince a pauper and a pauper a prince. The problem, however, is that today's young generation seems primarily concerned with the aesthetic qualities of music and so ignores the lyrical message that their brain still subconsciously absorbs. This is precisely why objective critical analysis is vital when examining the music of today's American popular culture.



Whatever Bono may have been thinking or feeling when he wrote the words to U2's second #1 song "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" in 1987, it seems all who hear his melodic, heartfelt cry cannot help but empathize with him in longing for something more. Aside from discussing how the aesthetic experience with a particular song makes one feel, it is essential that today's teens be encouraged to ask two vital questions concerning a song's lyrics: (1) What exactly is being said? (2) What does it mean? "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" provides a nice starting point for such an exercise. *PluggedIn Magazine*, a Focus on the Family publication, for instance, considers the song's message

to be negative or objectionable: "While U2's Bono acknowledges Christ's sacrifice, he can't seem to find solace there...." Though this is a perfectly understandable interpretation of the lyrics, we should always strive to dig deeper, and too many people too often neglect to use the artist of a work as a source for better understanding. In *Rattle and Hum*, a 1988 documentary about the band, U2's The Edge states that "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" was written as a Gospel song. *PluggedIn Magazine's* interpretation, therefore, seems somewhat off in light of this information. Why would someone write a Gospel song about the insufficiency of Christ's sacrifice? An alternative interpretation that might reconcile the song's intended genre with its seemingly hopeless lyrics might be found in the famous words of St. Augustine: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." While we do not know whether or not St. Augustine's words had any direct influence on this composition, one cannot deny that the sentiments expressed seem quite similar. That said, it would be most beneficial to have the teens discuss the overall implications of both interpretations.

Two more excellent songs to use as examples here are popular British rock quartet Coldplay's 2008 Grammy-winning "Viva la Vida" and Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young." We will start with the former. It is clear from the lyrics of "Viva la Vida" that the song is about a once-mighty king who has been stripped of his earthly power, left to "sweep the streets alone," and now faces the threat of execution at the hands of "revolutionaries" who wait for his "head on a silver plate." In May of 2008, the teens gathered at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Woodbridge, VA were each given a copy of the song's lyrics. Because the song is sung in the

first person perspective, they were asked to try to figure out what historical figure might be singing the song. They were to defend their answers by citing relevant lines from the song, and the evidence needed to be consistent. With suggestions ranging from Jesus, Moses, and King David to Judas, Pontius Pilate, Nero, Julius Caesar, and even Napoleon Bonaparte, the group had one of their most interesting and lively discussions to date. To draw the conversation to a close, the Coordinator of Youth Ministry handed each of the teens a translated account of King Louis XVI's execution in France as written by Henry Essex Edgeworth, the priest who accompanied the king to the guillotine in 1793. The imagery in Edgeworth's account - from the anxious revolutionaries, to the sound of the drums, to the beheading of the king - strikingly parallels the imagery in Coldplay's song. (*It is also interesting and important to note that the cover art for Coldplay's "Viva la Vida" album is actually a painting by Eugene Delacroix from 1830. The painting is called Liberty Leading the People, and commemorates the July Revolution of 1830 in France.) "Viva la Vida" is a song ripe with romantic historical imagery of fallen kings and revolutions, as well as plenty of fodder for discussions on what it really means to be a king in this world in light of what we as Catholics believe about the next. Regardless of what a group participating in this exercise concludes about the song, the teens will be forced to think and use their imaginations, and they'll no doubt have a fun time trying to solve this musical puzzle.



Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young" is one of those timelessly catchy tunes that even Catholic music lovers often can't help but sing along with, which is especially interesting in light of the fact that the song is about a man trying to lure a young Catholic girl, presumably a virgin, into bed with him! The challenge here is to determine what line(s) in the song, if any, offer a positive insight or glimmer of hope for the singer. Though the song is replete with Catholic imagery for the sole purpose of mocking the Church's sacred traditions, two lines in particular seem to acknowledge, whether intentionally or not, that there is an inherent power in faithful prayer. In the first line, the singer suggests to the girl, whose name is Virginia: "You didn't count on me when you were counting on your rosary." In the second line, the singer comments about the girl's mother: "She never cared for me, but did she ever say a prayer for me?" Both lines seem to illuminate the singer's mindset, that he might be a bit more respectable, respectful, and understanding in his advances had one of the people who thought him so disreputable taken the time to pray for him. While you might consider this interpretation somewhat loose, and understandably so, I feel it is necessary to note and discuss any line from this song that could be considered redemptive in the slightest, if for no other reason than that this song contains the lyric that could arguably be the motto for most of modern American popular culture: "I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints / the sinners are much more fun." It is also interesting to note that this song, released as a single in 1977, didn't really start gaining popularity until a radio station at a Catholic university in New Jersey banned it from their airwaves. It eventually peaked at #24 on the Billboard Hot 100. Billy Joel later claimed: "I did write a letter to the archdiocese who'd banned it, asking them to ban my next record." Mentioning statues, temples, fate, stained-glass curtains, sin, sinners, saints, white dresses, confirmation, brand new souls, crosses of gold, the rosary, and prayer, "Only the Good Die Young" provides ample opportunities to correct common misconceptions about sacred Church traditions and to

really enhance the spiritual, historical, cultural, and theological significance of those traditions in engaging discussions with teens.

Once we have helped teens understand the historical functions and power of music and have critically examined popular works, they will be better able to identify the current order of music, that is, the end to which it is presently directed. Unfortunately, much of today's popular music is ordered to self-gratification, sex, drugs, violence, and teeny-bopper-bubble-gum notions of "love." So as Maximilian Kolbe said about film almost a century ago, we must now say about music: "We must convert music. If we give it the proper direction it will stop harming people." In a letter to artists delivered at the Vatican on Easter Sunday 1999, Pope John Paul the Great stated: "Those who perceive in themselves this kind of divine spark which is the artistic vocation—as poet, writer, sculptor, architect, musician, actor and so on—feel at the same time the obligation not to waste this talent but to develop it, in order to put it at the service of their neighbor and of humanity as a whole." He goes on to write that the work of artists can and should reflect genuine "epiphanies of beauty" and "moments of grace." As teachers, ministers, counselors, and role models, Coordinators of Youth Ministry are in unique positions of influence to help teens better understand and determine this proper order of music. Throughout his Pontificate, John Paul II repeatedly called for two significant renewals: (1) a renewal of the vision of Catholic Youth Ministry and (2) a renewal of the culture. Having been enlightened to the power that music has exerted over hearts and minds in the past, it should be clear now that the two go hand in hand.

We cannot expect to effectively renew Catholic Youth Ministry without also working to renew the culture (and vice versa). The teens entering our programs today have been bombarded their whole lives, even if only subconsciously, with music and a culture that seems increasingly ordered to the self. We must help them to acknowledge that tragedy and to understand that all things, all gifts and talents, should be ordered selflessly to God and to the good of others - *ad majorem Dei gloriam* ("for the greater glory of God"). The end result of all our efforts in this regard is to inspire them to use their own gifts and talents to create work that glorifies God and that genuinely strives to better understand the human in light of the divine, to let them know that they can indeed wield music's awesome power to change the world! But before the inspiration can really take hold, we must encourage teens, at the very least, to actually actively think about, acknowledge, and understand what it is they're listening to. Before the revolution can begin, there must be consciousness. Unless we first realize that the reason we keep stumbling is because we've been moving in the dark, we will not think to turn on the light.

Recommended Website



www.plugginonline.com - It's Focus on the Family's "Plugged In" magazine's website. In both the film and music review sections they do a good job of telling us about the positive and negative content in most of today's popular films and music. It's not nearly as in depth as what I recommend in the article, but it's a great starting point.



Recommended Songs for Group Discussions

- *The Sound of Silence* - by Simon & Garfunkel - While this folk classic is a bit mysterious/ambiguous, many of its poetic lines (such as "people talking without speaking, people hearing without listening," and "and the people bowed and prayed to the neon god they made") are great for discussing the nature and importance of silence, especially in relation our relationships with each other and with God.
- *Blowin' in the Wind* - Bob Dylan - Virtually every line of this song asks a really good question. Answer them together or in small groups.
- *The Hurricane* - by Bob Dylan - Examine the history/background of the actual people/events that inspired the song, as well as how the song itself affected the lives of the people about whom it was written.
- *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* - U2 - What exactly is the singer saying here? I mention in the article that this song is great for discussion.
- *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* - U2 - great for talking about war from a Christian perspective. Providing a history/background to what actual events inspired the song is essential.
- *Where the Streets Have No Name* - by U2 - great for a discussion about artistic notions of heaven.
- *Yahweh* - by U2 - uses incredible poetic imagery to talk about our need and desire for God.
- *Pride (In the Name of Love)* - by U2 - a song about the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. that includes parallels and references to Christ.
- Any U2 song on the albums "The Joshua Tree," "All That You Can't Leave Behind," "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb," and "No Line on the Horizon," is ripe for discussion.
- *Viva la Vida* - by Coldplay - I mentioned a great exercise for this song in the article.
- *Only the Good Die Young* - by Billy Joel - I mentioned a great exercise for this song in the article.
- *Life's Been Good* - by Joe Walsh - This song is about an incredibly self-centered, self-indulgent man. It would be good for talking about what's really important in life and how to not waste what we've been given.
- *Brick* - by Ben Folds Five - This song is about the lead singer's experience with an abortion that his high school girlfriend had and how deeply and tragically it affected them both.
- *Can I Live?* - by Nick Canon - This song is about the lead singer's gratitude that his mother did not go through with an abortion when she was pregnant with him.
- *My Story* - by Da Truth - The lead singer/rapper tells his "average" testimony about being Christian. A lot of teens will be able to relate to what he's saying.

Contemporary Christian Music

Most of the songs mentioned in this article fall into the category typically referred to in Christian circles as "secular music." This decision was made for two reasons: (1) Most of today's teens are already immersed in secular pop culture in one way or another, whether consciously or subconsciously - if not at home, then at school, on the TV, on the radio, at the movies, at friends' houses, etc. (2) Analyzing and actively engaging in art that doesn't necessarily reflect 100% of it's audience's professed beliefs or worldviews requires much more from the individual in that he or she is forced to think more deeply about what is being said and ask significant questions concerning the content and the manner in which that content is presented. In regards to music, it

gives the individual listener the opportunity to stretch his intellect and develop a more active thought process as he attempts to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, when contemplating a song's meaning or it's artist's intention.



That said here are a few suggestions for good contemporary Christian alternatives to secular music. Because its much too difficult and restricting to categorize Christian artists by style or genre or compare them to secular acts that they may occasionally sound like, here's a big alphabetized list for you to check out at your leisure:

Audio Adrenaline, Avalon, Bebo Norman, Bob Rice, Brian Kissinger, Caedmon's Call, Casting Crowns, Cheer Up Charlie, Chris Padgett, Chris Rice, Chris Tomlin, Danielle Rose, Da Truth, David Crowder Band, David Hust, DC Talk, Delirious?, Father Stan Fortuna, Grace Ellen, Ike Ndolo, Jaci Velasquez, Jacob and Matthew, Jars of Clay, Jeremy Camp, Josh Blakesly, Katie Rose, Kelly Pease, Kevin Heider, Kutless, Leeland, Marie Miller, Mat Kearney, Matt Miller, Matt Maher, Matt Redman, MercyMe, Michael W. Smith, Newsboys, Paul Vegrinc, Phil Wickham, Popple, Rebecca St. James, Relient K, Righteous B, Scarlet Biberstein, Skillet, SONICFLOOD, Stellar Kart, Stephen Curtis Chapman, Steve Angrisano, Superchick, Switchfoot, Third Day, TobyMac, and Todd Agnew

While it's virtually impossible to name them all here, this list includes a wide variety of the older and more well-known Christian musical acts, as well as some up-and-coming artists you'll want to keep a close eye [and ear] on. Thanks for reading. And enjoy the music! Peace!

Kevin Heider has been the Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Woodbridge, VA since September 2008. A singer/songwriter eager to share his faith through music, Kevin hopes that his artistic contributions will act as a catalyst for the cultural revolution. For more information on Kevin, his ministry, or his philosophy on music, visit his official website at www.KEVINHEIDER.COM.

Bible at the Bou by Christine Najarian

*“Bible at the Bou” is a weekly Bible study program conceived of by **Christine Najarian** and the young people at Holy Spirit Parish. The program is a simple and yet effective way to reach out to young people.*

In assessing the needs of our youth ministry, I came up with a pattern of what our weekly youth meetings would be. Each meeting could vary from learning about types of prayer, to playing a game of basketball. It became important that we would have something available each week that was comprised of only discussion of faith matters. No games, no icebreakers, just the Word of God.



When Caribou Coffee opened across the street from our church, we knew he had found the spot for our Bible study. I met briefly with the manager, and with the employees who worked while we would be meeting. They were very open to what we would be doing, and suggested the large table in the back would be best for our purposes.

Our meeting time is from 7:00-8:00, one night a week. During the year, we usually have 10-12 people, and during the summer, 15-18. The teens arrive (usually with money and Bible in hand), get their drinks, and have a seat. By the time we get settled with our coffee (or blended iced thingee), and situated around the big table, it is usually around 7:10.

One of the teens opens our meeting with prayer. We then read the Gospel for the coming Sunday, aloud. After it is read aloud, everyone re-reads the passage silently to themselves. Once everyone has read the Gospel thoroughly, we begin discussion. Our discussion time is relaxed and unstructured.

It is helpful for the leader to do background research on whatever will be discussed, and have a few questions in mind that would inspire conversation. However, I rarely put together an extensive list of questions; the discussion usually takes on a life of its own. The only other preparation that needs to be done for the meetings is an email the day before the meeting as a reminder that includes a copy of the reading to be discussed.

After discussion has finished, we close with prayer, and often with a challenge for the coming week. In any extra time, we also go back to the Gospel from the previous week and discuss anything new that we heard in homilies, or how we put it into practice in our lives. This weekly meeting has been a wonderful gift to our ministry, and has had consistent attendance in the two years of its existence. The biggest challenge at times has been figuring out how to accommodate numbers as they grow!!

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Publicity: How do you get the teens to show up?

by Jane Treado

The best way to ensure that teens will show up and be involved in your events is to build a personal relationship with them. Know them by name, call them, and email them; get to *know* them. Make them feel they are important, even the teens who are not involved. Never give up on any teen. Personally invite them to activities. Make sure you go out of your way to have a conversation with them.

It is a good idea to mail, not e-mail, out a calendar once a month to all the teens who are registered in your parish. Teens love getting mail! It is important to include everyone, not just those who participate. You never know how you might reach a teen and letting their parents know what is going on never hurts. The calendar you send can have upcoming events for your program or anything else going on that you think might interest your teens. You can put on the back of the calendar an informational flyer listing all the events that are on the calendar and explaining the events in detail with times, dates, and other relevant information. This mailing is a great opportunity to include any other flyers for upcoming events, including retreats, RALLY, fundraisers, Workcamp information, and more. Make the flyers fun and informative. Use a teen-friendly font, clip art, and bright colors. You can generally put three pages in the envelope without needing more postage.

- If you have a special event, send out a special invitation. Teens love this. Make it a different size envelope so they don't think it's your usual monthly mailing.
- Make short announcements after Mass explaining upcoming events and telling anyone interested to check the bulletin for more info. If you have a Teen Mass, have one of the teens make the announcements.
- Make colorful, eye-catching posters and put them around where people are sure to see them.
- If you are having a large event where other parishes are invited, contact other Coordinators of Youth Ministry and invite them. Give them any flyers, invitations, or any other info they may need to advertise in their parish. If it is a really big event and you want to invite the whole diocese, contact the Office of Youth Ministry with all the information and they can add your event to the bi-weekly CYM email.
- Have a teen section in the bulletin listing all the upcoming events with dates, times, and any other important details. Keep this in the same place in the bulletin so the teens will know right where to look. If the teens don't read the bulletin, the parents might. It is

important to let the parish know what is going on in your program. It never hurts to have more support.

- Have a Teen Mass and make sure to invite them. Always invite the teens to Sunday Mass even if you do not have a Teen Mass. If you have a section reserved just for teens, invite them to sit in that section. Get the teens involved in the Mass. Have them join the music group. Have them lector. Have them usher. Have them greet people coming in.
- If you are having a big event and you want to invite people outside the church, contact the local paper and the Arlington Catholic Herald. The newspapers have a special section for upcoming events. You can also contact them to attend your event and take pictures. Pictures in the paper are a great advertisement for the next time you hold your event.
- Recruit teens to help in planning your program. If they have to show up to help, they will probably bring friends. One of the best ways to advertise is by word of mouth.
- Consider setting up a Facebook group. In addition to posting information and links to your web site, you can “Message All Members” and easily get a message to your teenagers. In 2009, teens seem to respond more quickly to Facebook messages than to email. More than ever before, text messaging has become very effective and popular with teens. They’re great reminders and quick advertisements. They’re also a great way to remind the teens that you’re thinking of them.

Jane Treado has been the Director of Youth Ministry at Saint Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Purcellville, VA since 2002. She feels that God has called her to do the work that she does and she loves working with the teens. She feels blessed just knowing them. When she is not with her teens, she is outside working on her yard or at the beach.