



## **Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly**

### **The Young Church: Witness of Hope Executive Summary Saturday, October 29, 2016**

#### **Morning Prayer & Welcome – Nancy Werner**

The Pastoral Assembly started with Morning Prayer led by Archbishop Carlson. Special thanks to Catholic Youth Apostolate. Welcome to all participants of the archdiocesan pastoral assembly. I serve as Chancellor and facilitator for today's assembly. Explanation of materials in folders at each table.

#### **Session 1: Youth Ministry Changes Lives – Steve Allgever, Vice President of Ministry Advancement for LifeTeen International**

Youth Ministry in St. Louis has a strong history, from CYC & Teen-town, to the days of Teens Encounter Christ (TEC), God's gang and the REAP team. While our Archdiocese has always provided many services for youth, something changed when Saint John Paul II visited St. Louis in 1999. The visit of Saint John Paul II with youth sent a clear signal to our Archdiocese – we have to continue to do everything we can to reach youth with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. In a world where there are so many things competing for the time and attention of our youth, we must use our resources and invest our very lives in the youth of our parishes.

Steve shared about his own experiences of working with youth at Incarnate Word before the youth program there really took off. They started small with only a handful of kids, but in those early days they built leaders and tried to identify who among their peers needed to be involved the most. Steve dedicated a lot of time to a devoted outreach to one young man, who no one ever thought would come to youth ministry. Steve did whatever it took, even things he wasn't good at or comfortable with (like learning to play roller hockey). After building the relationship on "safe" terms, Steve and the other teens invited this young man to church. Ten years later, Steve and the others who had built this relationship were sitting in the Cathedral for the ordination of Father Jim Theby. Effective youth ministry is built on personal relationships and personal sacrifices, investing into the lives of our kids. We have to do whatever it takes to reach our youth.

There are many alarming statistics about the youth in our church, but there is also hope. For more on the numbers, you can look into the National Study of Youth in Religion by Dr. Christian Smith from

Notre Dame. In the study, many of the teenagers who remain involved in their faith cite youth ministry and the investment of these adults in their lives in a personal way as a major factor.

If your parish program is struggling or has started small, don't worry. It generally takes three years of a heavy effort to see a youth ministry program take off. The more a parish has a holistic view of reaching youth and the more people than just the designated youth minister are involved, the more likely it is to be successful. Those serving our youth need the resources of the parish and of other parents and volunteers; they can't do it alone.

Jesus doesn't always call us to where we are comfortable, but he does call us to faithfulness. Commit yourself to youth, give Jesus your yes and step out and see what the Lord can do with you. Steve gave the Lord his "yes" in ministry more than 16 years ago, and he would have never imagined what the Lord could do with him and his willingness to serve. If you say yes, what can the Lord do through you?

### Large Group Feedback

**Our Lady Queen of Peace in House Springs:** Discussion of pastor involvement. Pastors being there for some of the meetings, such as PSR. It opens the young person's eyes that the pastor cares. We have an email service that goes out to our PSR. Music is always big for youth.

**St. Louis Life Teen and Multi Parish Youth Ministry Program at Bishop DuBourg High School:** One of the items discussed was the difficulty getting parishes to understand what happens with Youth Ministry Services. It can be difficult to engage certain youth in the services provided. Whether it be the parents or the others involved in the youth ministry, we need to get the parishes in a broader sense more involved in what youth ministry offers.

**Sacred Heart in Valley Park:** We found that through our discussions that it is difficult to engage a wider diverse young audience. Certain groups may be from the same background due to the parish, etc.

**St. Elizabeth's Mother of John the Baptist:** Our youth range from ages 2-25. We break them down into Junior Youth, which are seventh grade and lower. Senior Group is from eighth grade and higher. Our youth are in control of Mass every first Sunday of the month. They coordinate everything involved with these Masses. Group meetings follow Mass. We are trying to train our youth to take our places.

**Washington University:** A lot of times in traditional parish settings young people feel like there is not a lot geared toward their needs. It is geared toward families. They are not necessarily excited about music in the sense that if they see people just going through the motions of singing and they are being told that there is a miracle occurring on the altar, they may not be seeing that. Another obstacle is the idea of consuming rather than creating. So often young people will come from the standpoint of, what am I going to get out of this, instead of going out and creating and sharing their faith.

**Nancy Werner:** How is recruiting Catholic youth at Washington University going these days?

**Washington University:** At Washington University, we have had the benefit of having a program that has been established for quite some time. We do a lot to establish personal relationships with incoming students. If you make personalized invitations towards the youth that shows you care about them.

**Nancy Werner:** How are we going to keep young people engaged in the church after confirmation?

**Nick Lee, Director of Young Adult Ministry with the Archdiocese of St. Louis:** Our target is 21 to 35. We work with Lindenwood University, Maryville University, UMSL, Washington University, St. Louis University, and Webster University. High school into college is also where we lose youth, just because of everything going on. It has to be a parish commitment to reengage these college students.

**UMSL:** I think that deep listening is key. Listening to what is going on in the youth's lives. We at UMSL are smaller in group numbers than Washington University so training our student leaders is key. We also have something called safe space which is where the young people feel comfortable asking questions and discussing things, otherwise they will go somewhere else. After college is really a challenge with young adults.

**Question:** Is there a group at the Pastoral Assembly that helps young adults coming out of college?

**St. Francis Xavier College Church Next to SLU:** We started our young adult group from ages 25-35. We have a bible study. We also have our very successful program called Tap into Faith. It is held at Urban Chestnut Brewing Company where we bring different speakers for the young adults.

**Tom Lancia:** Resources found in your program regarding youth ministry. We need that relationship with our youth and care about what they have to say, so that they will open their hearts to Jesus Christ.

### [Session 2: Youth Ministry Changes the Church – Panel and Brian Miller, Executive Director of Catholic Youth Apostolate, Archdiocese of St. Louis](#)

**Nancy Werner, Chancellor, former Director of Youth Ministry, NFYCM board member:**

In order for our church to be at its best and most effective, we need to continue a commitment to Youth Ministry, instead of making it the first cut in any budget crunch.

We have to invest in future leaders of youth ministry in our parishes, whether that be youth or young adults. How are we accompanying those who are serving the youth? Without support, people can't do it, and they'll burn out quickly. We need to tell our young people that serving the Church is important.

**Amy Eschelbach, Associate Director of Youth Ministry, Archdiocese of St. Louis:**

I saw a big transformation in my parish through Youth Ministry. It started with very dedicated volunteers when I was in high school, and now is a full time program. Without the investment of those volunteers, there is no way I would be working in the Church today. Don't ever say that what you have to offer isn't enough, you don't know how it will impact even one kid.

There's no silver bullet. Also, no one perfect program. No matter what we have, the most important thing is that the program is intertwined with the greater parish life. The youth ministers have a plan and

talk with pastor, and parish council gets on board, parents backing the youth minister and buying in. It doesn't happen overnight, but it can happen. No one person can do it alone.

**Judy Krenn, volunteer youth minister, Holy Name of Jesus Parish:**

I kept asking my parish to invest in youth ministry and I got tired of waiting, so I dove in. It grew to be a full-time position but was recently cut due to budget constraints. It's so important to reach these kids that I'm working on a volunteer basis again in Youth Ministry. Don't wait until the time is right, the time to act is now – we're called to do what we can, and it's often more than we think.

Youth Ministry should be very involved with the parish as a whole, not separate. We need our youth not only to volunteer to help the parish, but to be a real part of the life of the parish. Youth bring hope and life to the parish that is essential. Keep telling youth that we value you and you have wonderful things to bring to the world and church and you are part of the Body of Christ. They belong.

**Father Chris Martin, Director of Vocations, product of youth ministry at Incarnate Word:**

Youth Ministry is so good at living what Pope Francis calls "accompaniment" – walking with someone on their journey in the faith and in life. As a confused young person, having role models and people to talk to in a youth ministry program is life changing; it helps keep us in the Church and keep the church and the faith as the center of lives.

Something that leads to vocation is authentic witness that you give to young people. Don't just talk the talk but speak of your own experience. Put yourself out there, giving young people the courage to do the same. 1 out of 4 young people seriously consider a vocation. The number one reason they don't respond is because no one ever asked them personally. While many of our vocations in the Church today are coming from youth ministry, the studies tell us we can do even better in asking youth to consider God's call and plan for them. We have to be more intentional.

I lean on the seminarians who come out of good youth ministry programs to become leaders in the seminary because they have the capacity to disciple others as well.

### **Large Group Feedback**

**Our Lady of the Holy Cross in North St. Louis City:** First suggestion is that youth ministers bring youth to events in Archdiocese. For example: the Mass Mob; it shows how each parish celebrates the Mass. The next one will be on January 8<sup>th</sup> at St. John Nepomuk. Second suggestion: men need to go to the Catholic Men for Christ Conference. Let the youth see what a group of men in a Catholic environment can do.

**Epiphany of Our Lord Parish:** Getting them involved in every aspect of the parish is very important. Developing a sense of mentoring, where they feel immediately welcome and maybe somewhat of a sense of leadership. In regards to getting the pastor involved – it may be easy to tell an older adult no, but if a young person approaches the pastor and invites them to something they may say yes. Be sure to keep asking your pastor about something if you feel it is important for them to attend. St. Louis Life Teen made up of about 20 parishes that meet at Bishop DuBourg High School on Wednesday nights.

We meet at a neutral site so that it allows various parishes to be involved. Social Media is huge for connecting with young adults.

**St. Monica Parish:** We have small faith groups, so maybe reaching out to the young people would be a great idea along with a personal invitation.

**Nancy Werner:** Part of the goal today was to affirm the great work everyone does, but also to challenge everyone to reach out to the areas that we had discussed such as junior high, after college.

**St. Gianna Parish in Wentzville:** Relatively new parish, 10 years. A youth group was started March of this year. We have integrated service into our group. Young people want to be able to help.

**St. Sabina in Florissant:** How does the youth ministry relate to the Safe Environment Program?

**Answer:** We have a framework for youth ministers to follow.

**St. Andrew in Lemay:** As a church, we are called to be in the world and not of the world. Is the Archdiocese still supportive of the scouting program for youth ministry?

**Answer:** Office of Catholic Scouting was merged in with the Youth Ministry Office about a year ago. It has set the vision that scouting is youth ministry. We know there are some growing pains, but ultimately more resources will be available to scouting as youth ministry.

**Question:** Can we do anything at the archdiocesan level to ban sports on Sundays from CYC?

**Answer:** Bishop Paprocki in Springfield, Illinois, stated that sports is ingrained in our culture, so if we don't use sports as a means to reach these young people then we are going to miss out; they'll end up in other programs. The games in CYC do not start until 1 p.m. to honor morning Mass.

**Tony Phillips:** References material in packets. Questions to fill out and take back to your parish and talk to the people that have input on this, reflect, and call us at the Office of Youth Ministry.

### [Session 3: Listening Session with Archbishop Carlson](#)

Question topics included messaging for youth leaders, funding for youth programs, how to encourage youth to participate in their parish, importance of Catholic education/Beyond Sunday campaign, how to engage youth in discussions about racism, addressing transportation issues with youth, teacher knowledge about the Catholic faith, and the Catholic Church's social teachings.

### [Closing Remarks – Nancy Werner](#)

Remember to complete your evaluation form in your packet. Special thank you to all of you for attending this annual Pastoral Assembly. Next year's assembly is Saturday, October 21, 2017. It was a privilege to be with you.