
◆ Youth Ministry: In Touch ◆

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YOUTH CONFERENCE 2009!

By Leigh E Sterten

By the time you read this, you should be close to having your group registered for the sixteenth annual Diocesan Youth Conference, which will take place in West Plains, March 27-29. Remember that the postmark deadline for early registration is March 6.

This year's theme is "CATHOLIC AND PROUD: OUTPRAY•OUTLOVE•OUT LOUD." Our planning team, youth and adults from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Springfield, chose it to reflect our focus on Catholic identity and its importance in the diocese.

WHAT'S NEW?

This year, we will close our Saturday night with an hour spent in adoration before the blessed sacrament. This is new, and comes as a result of careful reading of the evaluations, which are very helpful to us.

The importance of adoration is realized in the culmination of our weekend, the eucharistic liturgy, which we will share as usual, on Sunday. We are hoping that Bishop Johnston's schedule will allow him to celebrate with us that day.

Also new is the theme for Saturday night's dance. Because of our extended prayer time, the dance has been reduced to two hours, but that is plenty of time to celebrate our favorite holidays.

Yes, we are asking everyone to come dressed as their favorite holiday—random, wacky, made up—it does not matter! And we are asking each group to make a song request in advance, in order to facilitate that process for the dance.

HIGHLIGHTS

Our keynote speaker this year will be Bob Perron, pictured above, who makes his first appearance with us. Bob directs youth ministry and the St. Thomas More Center for Des Moines, Iowa.

Bob is known as the "Stooge for Christ" and is a favorite presenter across the country. He uses humor to get his message across and we are



sure that he will be a big hit in southern Missouri.

This year we will continue to offer a few workshops designed for both youth and adults to attend together, as well as an adult track for those who do consider themselves youth ministers.

As always, we hope to see you and the young people of your parish. On average, roughly 475 high school-aged youth and adults attend each year. At \$55 for the event, it is still one of the best deals in town. Registration materials are available at www.dioscg.org.

From the Director . . .

Dear Friends:

Greetings! Spring seems to be a busy time of year for many of us, with Lent taking center stage liturgically, and many programs occupying our time. Here in the Office of Youth Ministry, we find ourselves just concluding the Retreat for Adults in Youth Ministry (see below) while ramping up preparation for the Youth Conference (see page 1).

Although we were a small group for the retreat, we made a big splash, so to speak, at the Lake of the Ozarks. I am always so impressed by adults willing to take time away from family, work, and other commitments to spend even a little time focusing on their own spirituality for ministry.

Kudos to Kim Sellers, youth ministry coordinator in Jackson, for bringing nearly her entire adult team to the retreat! Kim understands the value of retreats and the necessary rejuvenation to ministry and to life that they provide. We were blessed to have Juan & Alma Garza from Noel, however they

had to leave early, and we missed having Cindy Jansen of Leopold, whose father died during the weekend. Our prayers are with Cindy and her family in this time.

So how about you? How do you recharge and renew for ministry? I know I write about it often, but paying attention to your own needs in ministry is every bit as important as the needs of the youth whom we serve. As the old adage reminds us, “you cannot give what you do not have.” Think about a retreat for yourself, and plan on the national adult conference (NCCYM) in New Orleans, 2010. While not a retreat, it is a good chance to refresh your “yes” to ministry. Mark your calendars now, December 10-12, 2010.

I hope to see you in March at the Youth Conference. In these challenging times, know that I appreciate all you do to bring young people to this cornerstone event in the diocese.

God bless you and your ministry with youth. Peace!

Leigh E Sterten, Director of Youth Ministry

ADULTS SAY YES TO JESUS ... AGAIN

By Leigh E Sterten

On a beautiful weekend in early February, which hinted at spring, eleven youth ministry leaders from the extreme east and west corners of the diocese gathered at the Windermere Conference Center for a brief retreat.

The biennial event, which lasts less than twenty-four hours, affords these leaders a chance to relax and refocus themselves, especially in relation to their ministry with youth.

This year’s theme was, “Saying Yes to Jesus... Again.” The majority of participants serve as members of Immaculate Conception’s (Jackson) core team, but also present was a team member from St. Vincent de Paul (Cape Girardeau), and the youth ministry leaders from Nativity of our Lord (Noel).

In the course of the retreat, participants remembered

their initial “yes” to youth ministry, along with why and how that yes occurred. Saturday evening was reserved for food and fun, including a marathon game of “Apples to Apples.”

The final reflection time allowed participants to reflect on their continued yes to youth ministry, understanding their sources of support, as well as ways to continue saying yes.

Our retreat concluded with Mass, celebrated by Fr. Tom McGann of Catholic



Pictured: top row, Brian Bauknecht, Lisa Asmus, Shawn Asmus. Middle, Leigh Sterten, Layna Kirchner, Cindy Beussink, Theresa Baugh. Bottom, Linda Mittrucker, Janell Hinkebein, and Kim Sellers. Not pictured, Juan & Alma Garza. Photo by Rosie Francka, courtesy of Layna Kirchner.

Campus Ministry in Springfield, who generously agreed to celebrate with us. We hope to offer another retreat in 2011 and pray that you will be able to join us. You deserve it and the youth will benefit from it as well.

RESOURCE PAGE

Understanding the Religiosity of Adolescents as they Mature: A Summary of the Findings of the NSYR Wave 2 Report

By Charlotte McCorquodale, PhD

INTRODUCTION

This article will summarize the findings thus far of the National Study of Youth and Religion based upon data collected from 2002 to 2005. The NSYR longitudinal survey began as a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 English- and Spanish-speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. Wave 1 data was collected by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with the teen respondents and one of their parents between July 2002 and April 2003. The second wave (Wave 2) data collection took place from June 2005 through November 2005, with teenage respondents only, when they were between the ages of 16 and 21.

According to the NSYR researchers (Denton, Pearce, & Smith 2008), stability in religious belief and practice was found within Wave 2 data with subtle changes, not dramatic ones (3). However, the respondents' self-evaluation of the increase or decrease in their overall religiosity seems to tell a different story. This reinforces the conclusion that indicators of religious engagement for younger adolescents may not be the same for late adolescents or young adults. Additionally, in examining the overall religiosity of this age group, self-identified religiosity and personal beliefs may be critical factors in evaluating the religiosity of adolescents as they mature—in comparison to more traditional variables of personal and public religious practices.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION FINDINGS

The most significant changes in religious affiliation came from a quarter (25%) of the young people who were affiliated with protestant denominations in Wave 1, who in Wave 2 indicated that they no longer had that affiliation. The change shows that these young people now identify either with no religion (15%) or with a non-protestant group (about ten percent). The NSYR researchers noted that generally this move came from those protestant young people who in the first wave would be considered non-active in their faith, so while

this is a shift, it does not indicate radical change. Overall, the net difference was an eight percent overall decrease in protestant affiliation and an eight percent increase in those reporting no affiliation. However, there was a slight increase (one percent) in those adolescents reporting an affiliation with the Catholic Church. Denton, Pearce, and Smith concluded from the Wave 2 data that parental religious affiliation continued to be an indicator of adolescent religious affiliation (5-6).

Download the full report "Religion and Spirituality on the Path Through Adolescence" (source of all quotes in this article) from the NSYR website: www.youthandreligion.org

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS FINDINGS

The report indicates a minor but consistent shift indicating a decrease in overall religious belief. According to the NSYR researchers, "The majority kept their beliefs the same, but when adolescents did shift their beliefs slightly, they were more likely to shift them towards less conventional beliefs and away from more conventional beliefs" (13).

PUBLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The analysis of Wave 2 data in comparison with Wave 1 shows notable differences in public religious practices, such as attending religious services, as well as participation in religious education and youth groups. From the data, it is difficult to conclude if the decreases in participation in religious education and youth groups are due to an "aging-out" of these types of programs and the lack of similar programs available to older adolescents. However, the sharp declines in religious service attendance do indicate that there is a trend toward reduced public religious engagement.

EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

Findings from Wave 2 data indicate that of those respondents that still attend religious services, there is little change in their evaluation of religious congregations, with the general attitude remaining quite positive. The researchers noted that those who might offer a more negative view or opinion might have already stopped attending, so they are unable to explain at this time the views of those not participating, which could lead to an overestimation of adolescents'

satisfaction with their religious congregations (19).

PRIVATE RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Generally, the same trend toward lower levels of religious practice continues in examining data on private religious practices, such as prayer, reading the Scriptures, honoring a day of rest, meditation, and fasting, with the most dramatic changes in the area of reading Scripture alone.

- Forty-eight percent of respondents report never reading the Scriptures alone, an eight percent increase from Wave 1 data.
- Those respondents indicating that they prayed alone at least once a week or more decreased by ten percent from Wave 1 (66%) to Wave 2 (56%).

PERSONAL RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Questions examining the importance of religious faith and closeness to God indicate a slight decline but the majority of respondents in both Waves of data reports high levels of importance of faith and closeness to God. However, according to the researchers, trends in this area support the conclusion of a gradual shift away from conventional or organized religious belief and practice among adolescents.

- Those responding that religious faith is important (extremely, very, or somewhat) in shaping how they live their daily lives decreased from Wave 1 (83%) to Wave 2 (76%) by seven percent, with an increase of the same percentage among those stating it was not very important or not important at all.
- The number responding that they feel at least somewhat close to God, all the way through to feeling extremely close to God, decreased by 12% from Wave 1 (72%) to Wave 2 (60%).
- There was a increase of five percent in those adolescents who reported that the statement that they are “Spiritual, but not Religious” is either somewhat or very true.

SELF REPORTS OF PERSONAL RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Respondents in Wave 2 were asked to provide a self-evaluation of their religious change in the past three years. Twenty-seven percent reported that they have become more religious, 57% reported that they have stayed about the same, and 16% stated that they became less religious. The NSYR researchers noted the contrast in the self-reported evaluation of change in religiosity versus the other measures of religiosity that showed a general decrease.

The researchers concluded, “This suggests that

when it comes to ways adolescents define religiosity as a whole, they may place more emphasis on the aspects of religiosity that have changed the least—belief in God, the importance of faith in daily life, and closeness to God. At this point in their life course, they may include religious practices the least. Also, it could be that as adolescents develop and mature, they take more ownership of their own beliefs and practices, so that their religiosity feels stronger and more authentic—regardless of the levels of belief or behaviors they report” (25).

Researchers asked an open-ended question about the reasons for the change. The most common responses from those who said they became less religious included a disinterest or intentional distancing from religion (32%), and a life change or specific event as the cause, such as divorce, death, or challenging life situations (30%). The most common responses from those who indicated an increase in religiosity included having a new religious understanding, meaning, or experience (34%) and those who identified transitions or events in their lives that contributed to an increase in religiosity (21%).

The responses sheds some light on the perceptions of Wave 2 respondents’ own self-evaluation of change, but as the researchers concluded, “Some adolescents pointed to life crises as the reasons for their movements toward religion, while others claimed that these same types of crises drove them from religion. Similarly, some adolescents claimed that getting older, and presumably wiser, allowed them to understand and embrace religion more. Others cited increased maturity and wisdom as a reason for their religious decline” (30).

CONCLUSION

The National Study of Youth and Religion is by far one of the most significant pieces of research regarding the religious beliefs, practices, and attitudes of adolescents. The longitudinal study has recently completed a final wave of data collection that will undoubtedly continue to help religious congregations and parents to better respond in fostering religious engagement among adolescents and young adults.

However, this Wave 2 report makes this youth ministry researcher wonder if the measures of religiosity that are effective in examining adolescents are less effective as those same adolescents mature into young adulthood. This leads to the conclusion that a comprehensive study of youth adult religiosity comparable to the NSYR is needed if we hope to engage young people in matters of faith as they mature into adulthood.

IN TOUCH . . . WITH RESOURCES

The Catechist's Tool Box: How to Thrive as a Religious Education Teacher, Joe Paprocki. Loyola Press, 2007. \$9.95

[from the publisher] “*The Catechist's Toolbox* is an invaluable collection of techniques, tips, methodologies, and advice for all inexperienced catechists who must learn on the job. Master teacher Joe Paprocki shares the wisdom he has gleaned in two decades as a catechist, high school teacher, and religious educator. Employing the metaphor of a homeowner's toolbox, Paprocki explains how a new catechist is like a do-it-yourself builder who needs the right collection of tools to do the job; throughout the book, Paprocki explains what the tools are, what they can do, and how to use them skillfully and effectively.”

The book is also available in Spanish.

Forming Generous Hearts: Stewardship Planning for Lifelong Faith Formation, Leisa Anslinger and Victoria Shepp. Twenty-Third Publications, 2007. \$14.95

[from the publisher] “Conversion, discipleship, stewardship. Leisa Anslinger and Vikki Shepp believe that these three giants of parish life are essential components of a vibrant parish. They provide seven indispensable principles to guide pastoral leaders as they seek to transform their parishes into places where people embrace and live Christian discipleship. These principles are rooted in the wisdom of the Church and reflect years of pastoral experience, their own and that of many other pastoral leaders across the country. . . . an excellent planning tool for all pastors, parish teams, stewardship teams, and parish ministers.”

Idea Corner

by Leigh E Sterten

‘Tis the season (or year) for fundraising, so here are a few ideas from the Diocese of Rochester:

Holy Bears: Wonderful personalized “beanie baby”-style bears with hundreds of personalized logos and words on them. Parish gets 50% of profits from the sales. Especially good around first sacraments, Mother's Day, and graduation. Call 713-849-1980 or visit www.holybears.com.

Wal-Mart allows fundraisers outside their doors and will allow car washings (and they provide the supplies) on site. If you contact them six weeks prior to the event, in

writing, they may be able to match all funds you raise during your fundraiser. See store manager for details.

Car Window Wash: During the warmer months, have a group of youth wash all of the car windows during each weekend Mass.

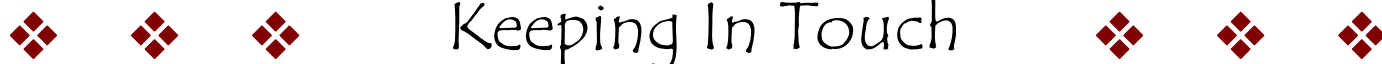
After Communion, have a couple of the now “very dirty” youth get up and explain what they did while everyone was in Mass. Tell them that youth will be available at each of the exits to take donations that will help send them to whatever particular event. Be sure to have plenty of cleaning supplies and people on hand to accomplish this feat in an hour. (Trust me, it can be done!)

Important Dates:

March 6
Early registration
for Youth Conference

April 15
First deadline for
NCYC groups
(scholarship
applications due)

Youth Ministry: In Touch is a publication of the Office of Youth Ministry, 601 S Jefferson Ave, Springfield, MO 65806. (417) 866-0841. Email: lsterten@dioscg.org. The purpose of this publication is to serve as a means of communication between the OYM and the youth ministry community in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau. Letters to the editor are welcome; letters must be signed and are published at the discretion of the editor. Ms. Leigh E Sterten, Director and Editor
Mrs. Rosie Francka, Administrative Assistant



Keeping In Touch

Important Dates, Programs, Meetings, and Events

<p>MARCH 17 Happy St. Patrick's Day! Perhaps an opportunity for a fundraiser (see page 5)?</p>	<p>MARCH 20-22 Leigh is leading a retreat for the women of Our Lady of the Cove in Arkansas (yes, a week before the youth conference. Crazy).</p>	<p>MARCH 27-29 The 16th Annual Diocesan Youth Conference, held in West Plains. We hope to see you and lots of your high school-aged youth!</p>	<p>APRIL 4 Region 3 meeting of youth ministry leaders, hosted by Lebanon, noon—2 pm. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to Leigh.</p>	<p>APRIL 5 Region 1 meeting of youth ministry leaders, hosted by Webb City, 2-3:30 pm. Bring a snack to share. Please RSVP to Leigh.</p>
<p>APRIL 9 Holy Thursday, the beginning of our celebration of the Triduum. A great time to talk about the union of Scripture and tradition in our faith.</p>	<p>APRIL 10 Good Friday, when we remember the death of our Lord. Catholic Center offices are closed for the day of obligation.</p>	<p>APRIL 12 Happy Easter! Jesus Christ is risen, again, Alleluia! Happy Easter season to you and your family.</p>	<p>APRIL 13 Easter Monday holiday, all Catholic Center offices are closed today.</p>	<p>APRIL 15 Your tax return is due, but so are scholarship applications if you are an NCYC '09 group!</p>
<p>APRIL 20 Region 4 meeting of youth ministry leaders, hosted by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, 7-8:30 pm. Snacks will be provided. Please RSVP to Leigh.</p>	<p>APRIL 22-24 Meeting of youth ministry directors in the dioceses of MO, IA, NE, and KS in Des Moines, IA. Leigh will be out of the office to attend.</p>	<p>MAY 5 Cinco de Mayo! All in all, a pretty American holiday, but perhaps another fundraising opportunity?</p>	<p>MAY 10 Mother's Day, a time to remember and honor all mothers, and another fundraising opportunity, maybe a flower sale or special meal.</p>	<p>MAY 13-15 NFCYM board members' meeting in Washington, D.C. Leigh will be out of the office to attend.</p>
	<p>MAY 20-21 Tentative May Staff Planning Days for Catholic Center staff, held offsite, but offices will remain open.</p>		<p>MAY 25 US observance of Memorial Day, a time to honor all who have served, especially those in your parish and community.</p>	