



## A process for using the “Y Church” report and planning for the future

### **Before you start:**

This process is intended to be useful for all parishes, whether they have a full programme of youth activities, or nothing going on currently. It will help you to look again at the provision for young people in your parish. It is a creative process, and the results may well surprise you. There is no one model for doing youth ministry; rather a different answer for every parish depending in their resources and particular situation. The process can be done either over a Saturday, or 3 evening meetings. Although this may seem like a lot of time to give to discussion, in the past we have too often rushed into trying things out without seeing if the young people want them. We have far too few young people in our congregations to risk wasting more time and resources in this way. Therefore, we need a process of planning through the whole diocese, with a firm foundation of strategy to underpin it. These discussions will lead to new or renewed activity in your parish – no talking shops here!

You'll need to gather together all the different people with an interest in youth ministry: among others, young people, parents, leaders, teachers, catechists, members of the parish council, and clergy. Make sure that everyone has had a copy of the shortened version of the Y Church Report and a chance to read it through. You can get extra copies from the youth office, 01844 273 337.

### **Practical information**

You'll need a flip-chart, or lots of big pieces of paper; plenty of markers; and blue-tack to stick the pages up around the room. If there is a large number of people, break them into smaller groups, making sure that one person in each group has looked at the questions in advance, and can lead it. Page numbers after the sections below refer to the Y Church Report, and so people will need to bring their copies to the meetings with them. It works best to keep to the same groups over the three sessions. Feedback time should be confined to the end, otherwise all the time will be taken up with hearing from all the groups. This meeting is about getting ideas together, and having a realistic look at the present situation. The more creative the meeting, the more ideas you will have to work from, so stress right at the beginning that there aren't right and wrong answers, just lots of ways of looking at the same situation. Each session will take about two hours, and it is important not to get sidetracked right at the beginning, or you will be there until midnight! Make the most of the prayer times by changing the lighting, lighting a candle, and adding a hymn or song (if your group is comfortable singing!). Perhaps set up a prayer focus in the room, which could include photos of your young people and youth leaders. The end of session prayers might not be necessary if you run the sessions over a day, rather than over a series of evenings.

*If you have any questions about the process or the report, contact Avril Baigent on 01844 273337, or [avril@nymo.org](mailto:avril@nymo.org)*

## Session 1 – Being a young Catholic today

This session looks at the background knowledge we need to understand our current situation: what is it like to be a young person, and what is it like being a Catholic today. This gives the foundation for all the programmes and planning for the future (in market research terms, finding out who your market is).

### Passage for prayer and reflection (10 mins)

The call of David – the youngest and most unlikely of the brothers is chosen by God: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13.

- What does this passage tell us about the nature of ministry?
- How might this be applied to our ministry with young people?

You could have a time of intercession for the young people and youth leaders of your area. If the group is large, you could ask each person to think particularly of one or two who need God's help. Finish by asking the Holy Spirit for guidance for the work ahead.

### Small groups - *Being Young* – pp 4-7 (45 mins)

Put the following questions on big bits of paper and stick them somewhere they can be written on:

- What is it about youth culture that makes it hard for young people to be a Catholic and what can we do about it?
- What is it about youth culture that makes young people open to the Gospel and how can we make the most of it?

Looking at pages 4-7, work through the questions in the text, writing up the answers to these questions if they come up in discussion. When you get to the end of the discussion, either draw out the various points people have made which also answer these over-arching questions, or get them to look at the questions directly.

### Coffee break (15 mins)

#### Small groups - *Being a Catholic* – pp 8-9 (30 mins)

In the small groups, read through those pages and discuss the following questions:

- What images would you use to describe the Church today?
- What images would young people use?
- What do young people want from the Church, and what do they need? Are there differences between the two?
- What is there about the Church today that stops young people seeing it as a 'spiritual' place (eg the rules, the teaching on sex and contraception, 'hypocrisy', the music, difficult language, 'boring' services, few young people, not feeling God/prayerful during Mass)?
- What can the Church do to make itself more accessible to young people?

### Whole Group (20 mins)

Make a shortlist of the most important factors discussed in both sessions that have to be taken into account in the practical planning stage (the next session). Limit this to the top four or five.

### Final prayer

Finish by thanking God for his blessing on the discussions, and for perseverance to take it forward.

## Session 2 - Youth Ministry – today and in the future

This session looks at the ways we minister to and with young people – what’s going on at the moment in the diocese, and what’s good practice elsewhere. The second half takes all the discussion so far and brings it together in a set of aims and objectives.

### Prayer session (10 mins)

Feeding the five thousand – achieving the impossible. John 6:1-14.

- Get under the skin of the boy in the reading. Image why he was there, what he was thinking about the crowd and what was going on. Perhaps he was hanging out down the back with his mates, while his mum was up the front with the rest of the women.
- What is Andrew’s reaction to the boy? Imagine what others were saying. Who on earth would offer to feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fish?
- What is Jesus’ reaction? In what ways can our ministry with young people encourage them to bring forward their gifts, no matter how small, for the nourishment of the whole community?

### Whole group - What is youth ministry? (15 mins)

Start the session by getting some ideas about what the purpose of youth ministry is. Who is it for, who does it involve, and what is its aim? Look at the aims for the diocesan office for youth ministry on page 13. What aims would you choose for your parish youth ministry?

### Youth ministry in your parish – pp 10-13

#### Whole group (15 mins)

Begin by reminding people of the list of important points they made at the end of the previous session. Stick these up somewhere prominent. Then make a list of all the activities for young people in your parish. Include everything from toddler groups to young adult activities, including sacramental preparation, servers, children’s liturgy and occasional trips. List in order of age so that gaps become obvious. Then, using the sheet with all the activities in the deanery, see if any of those gaps are being filled locally. Try not to get into a big discussion about what you might be doing – there’s lots more to discuss before getting on to that!

#### Small groups (30 mins)

Divide the group up according to their interests and experience. Each group needs to discuss their situation, and think about some practical recommendations. If they write on sheets from a flip chart, they can be stuck on the walls for people to see. One person will need to present their results to the rest of the group:

\* Catechists to discuss the questions on sacramental programmes on page 11.

\* Other groups to discuss (using the questions on these pages):

- Involvement in the liturgy (pg 12)
- Outreach (pg 12)
- Widening the range of activities and ages (pp 11,12)
- Using young leaders (pg 13)
- Sports (pg 13)
- Involvement with other local groups (pg 10)
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#### Plenary Session (45 mins)

Gather everyone back together to decide your priorities for your strategy. Each group should present their thoughts and recommendations. Then, through general discussion, make a shortlist of priorities for the parish for the coming year, and over a longer period (say 5 years).

### **Final prayer**

Thank God for all the activities that are currently happening, and ask him to bless your plans for the future.

## **Session 3**

### **Strategy**

#### **Prayer session**

David and Goliath – wise thinking in the face of the impossible. 1 Samuel 17:4-11, 26-30, 38-50

- What are our modern day Goliaths?
- What can we learn from David's victory?

#### **Objectives**

Whole group (10 mins)

Re-visit the short-list of priorities you established at the end of the last session, and your aims, making sure they are visible to everyone. Read through the list of pilot schemes on pages 16-17 and ask people to bear these in mind in their discussions. Explain to the group that they are going to set some objectives for the youth ministry in their parish, and outline what objectives are for – they are the way-markers on your journey, not the final destination. Objectives should be **SMART**:

**Specific**—not “We want to change the world” but “we will start a youth group for 11-15 year olds”

**Measurable**—eg “We will double the number of young people involved in the Sunday liturgies”

**Achievable**—make sure that you are not too ambitious, otherwise people may get demoralized very quickly

**Relevant**—there is no point in starting a football group if all your young people hate sport.

**Timely**—“in 12 months time we will have . . .”

It might be helpful to have written these on to an acetate slide or the flip chart so that people can bear them in mind in the ensuing discussion.

#### Small groups (10 mins)

Looking at the priorities, ask each small group to come up with three objectives (they can look at the diocesan ones on page 14 of the report if they want examples). Encourage them to state which of the aims each one is fulfilling.

### Whole group (30 mins)

Write up a list of the different objectives. These will need to be reduced to an achievable number for your parish – probably somewhere between 2 and 5, depending on the resources available. Make sure that there is a free discussion at this point, and that the person whose idea each one was can talk to the group about the thinking behind it. Remember that this is going to set your direction for the year, so it is important to iron out as many problems at this stage as possible. At the same time, however, be positive! A lot can be achieved in a year with planning and fired-up people.

### **Coffee break (no more than 15 mins!)**

#### **Strategy**

##### Small groups (35 mins)

Divide the group into as many groups as there are objectives. This time is for them to brainstorm the practical details of their particular objective, coming up with a possible plan of how it would work. Among others, think about the how, where, when and who of the project, using the questions on page 10 to think creatively about involving more people. Each group will need a copy of the “planning youth ministry” sheet.

##### Plenary Session

Wrap up the day by saying that only the first step has been taken, but that it’s a giant one! Ask if the groups are willing to go away and continue working up those objectives into proper plans. Agree a time when you will gather again for an evening (say in a month’s time) just to catch up on everyone’s progress and see how the plans are coming along.

Thank everyone for coming, and end with a short time of prayer and praise to let off steam, and thank God for all that will be happening in your parish.

### **After the session**

**Make dates and keep them** – otherwise everything will grind to a halt, and the enthusiasm will disappear.

**Widen your circle** – any new project should involve new people. Some ways of doing this include:

- Be specific—about the job, the time involved, the skills needed.
- Reassure people that if they volunteer once, they are not committed forever, nor will they be asked to help out at every youth event in the parish.
- Offer training and support—lots of people have wonderful skills with young people, but are not confident. Don’t throw them in at the deep end, or they may not come back!
- Match the job to the person—busy people are often willing to do a small but specific job: eg a great cook might do your summer BBQ or someone working in marketing could produce posters and flyers.
- Challenge parents to help on a rota basis. People who don’t want to lose every Friday night might well help out once a month.
- Make volunteering fun—if possible, get a big enough group to mean that not everyone has to turn up every time; meet regularly to discuss how things are going (in the pub?); have a “thank you” gathering at least once a year; watch that people are

not feeling stressed or out of their depth.

It is also important to consider child protection issues. Your parish child protection coordinator and the diocese have useful resources for this: contact the youth office for information about good practice and details of any training coming up, 01844 273337.

**Make plans** - draw up a detailed plan for the next year, and an outline plan for five years, based on your objectives. Include details of resources, helpers and finance needed, what the group(s) will do, how the group(s) will fit into the overall plan, and how it/they will develop.

**Get started** - no matter how large or small the first step is, it is important for everyone's morale that something comes out of the process. You can always build on your successes, and develop something more ambitious as time goes on.

**Keep reviewing** - have regular meetings of the group even after things are up and running to make sure that you keep to your goals and objectives. This will stop things getting stale, and keep open lines of communication between different groups in the parish.

**Keep praying** - involve the congregation in praying for your young people and their leaders—it's something everyone can do no matter what their skill, or how busy they are. Remember, it's the Lord's work you are doing, and with God, nothing is impossible!