

The logo features a large, stylized black cross on the left side. To the right of the cross, the text "Steubenville South" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below this, "Diocese of Alexandria" is written in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font. At the bottom, "Catholic High School Youth Conference" is written in the same smaller, bold, black sans-serif font.

Steubenville South
Diocese of Alexandria
Catholic High School Youth Conference

- Group Leader Manual -

This manual has been created for group leaders, chaperones, and any adults who have a desire to learn more about the Steubenville South conference. The manual provides a wealth of information to prepare the young people as well as the adults who are attending the conference. It is highly recommended that you read through the entire manual. I know that you will find it helpful, not only in preparing for the conference but in your daily ministry as well. May God bless you for your service to the young people of our Church.

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PLEASE NOTE: Our office also has an "Apologetics and Resources Manual" available. It contains book, internet, and telephone suggestions for learning more about the Catholic faith, as well as helps for Special Needs (such as suicide, disorders, etc.). Please contact us if you would like a copy.

SAMPLE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE (2008)

For current schedule: e-mail: centraloffice@steubenvillesouth.com

or visit: www.steubenvillesouth.com

It would be a good idea to review the schedule with your chaperones, parents, and, if possible, the youth themselves before arrival at the conference. The following is a tentative schedule of the 2008 conference weekend. A final schedule will be provided in the program book upon check-in at the conference site.

F R I D A Y, JUNE 23RD:

3:30pm-4:30pm	Travelers' Mass [<i>Menard Gym</i>]
4:30pm-6:30pm	Participant/Volunteer Dinner [<i>Exhibition Hall & Dining Tent</i>]
6:30pm- 10pm	Opening Session [<i>Arena</i>]
	- Talk
	- Eucharistic Procession
10:00pm-10:30pm	Small Group Time [<i>Conference Tent; Upper Ring of Arena</i>]
12am	All on-campus youth and adults in sleeping areas
12:30am	Lights Out

S A T U R D A Y, JUNE 24TH:

6:30-8:30am	Breakfast [<i>Men's housing & Exhibition Hall & Dining Tent</i>]
8:30 - 11:30am	Morning Session [<i>Arena</i>]
	- Mass
	- Men's - [<i>Menard Activities Bldg and Gym</i>]
	- Women's Session - [<i>Arena</i>]
11:30am - 1:15pm	Lunch [<i>Exhibition Hall & Dining Tent</i>]
1:30 - 2:30pm	Entertainment
1:30 - 2:30pm	Chaperone/Group Leader ministry time [<i>Menard Activities Building</i>]
3:00- 3:30pm	Workshops
	1- [<i>Menard Gym</i>]
	2- [<i>Arena</i>]
	3- [<i>Menard Activities Bldg.</i>]
4:00 - 4:30pm	Workshops
	1. [<i>Menard Gym</i>]
	2. [<i>Arena</i>]
	3. [<i>Menard Activities Bldg.</i>]
4:30 - 6pm	Dinner & Small Group Time [<i>Dining Tent and Exhibition Hall</i>]
5:45pm	Conference Arena Doors Open
6 - 10pm	Evening Session [<i>Arena</i>]
	- Talk -
	- Empowerment & Eucharistic Adoration/Benediction
10 - 10:30pm	Small Group Time [<i>Conference Tent; Upper Ring</i>]
12:00am	All on-site youth and adults in sleeping areas
12:30am	Lights Out

SUNDAY, JUNE 25TH:

7 - 8:30am	Breakfast [<i>Men's housing & Exhibition Hall & Dining Tent</i>]
8:30am - 9:30am	Sessions
	Men's - [<i>Menard Activities Bldg and Gym</i>]
	Women's Session - [<i>Arena</i>]
10:15 - 12pm	Closing Session [<i>Arena</i>]
	- Mass - Bishop Ronald Herzog

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered at numerous times throughout the conference. The Bookstore will be open during all breaks and meals.

How to Use This Manual:

Here's what you need to know to successfully prepare for, attend, and follow up from the Steubenville South Conference! We've separated this manual into four sections:

1) Group Leader Prep

What you need to know, do, and have to prepare.

2) Chaperone and Parent Prep

Helpful tips on recruiting/training chaperones and preparing parents

3) Youth Prep

"How To's" for preparing your youth group

4) Appendix

Throughout the first three sections, we will reference further helps and information that can be found in this appendix.

Conference Policies and Procedures Note

Please see our "Policies and Procedures Booklet" for all Steubenville South Policies and Procedures. All Group Leaders ARE REQUIRED to read, follow, and make sure the group follows all of the Conference Policies and Procedures in order to attend Steubenville South.

If you need a "Policies and Procedures Booklet", please contact our office at centraloffice@steubenvillesouth.com or (318)473-0539. Thank you.

GROUP LEADER PREP

ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER:

The group leader should not serve as a chaperone unless absolutely necessary. Though group leaders have been counted as chaperones in the past, it has become apparent that group leaders should remain available to take care of special problems or needs that may arise during the conference weekend.

The responsibilities of the Group Leader include:

1. Intercession
2. Communicating with the conference office
3. Obtaining necessary information from each participant in your group
4. Promotion of the conference
5. Transportation
6. Fundraising
7. Networking with other group leaders; Instructions on YM network on our website
8. Preparing yourself
9. Recruiting and training chaperones
10. Organizing and hosting meetings with parents, teens, and chaperones
11. Preparing Teens for the Conference
12. Setting up small groups
13. Ministering to spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of your group
14. Planning follow up
15. Providing resources to youth, chaperones and parents

INTERCESSION

What is an intercessor?

An intercessor is anyone who prays for others. The Glossary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says "Intercession is...a form of prayer of petition on behalf of others. The prayer of intercession leads us to pray as Christ, our unique intercessor prayed." (2634)

Intercessors should pray with FAITH: The Catechism also says: "Since Abraham, intercession – asking on behalf of another – has been characteristic of a heart tuned to God's mercy." (2635)

Intercessors should pray with HOPE: God delights in answering the prayer of His trusting children, even more than loving earthly parents delight in giving good gifts to their children who ask. (Matthew 7:11)

Intercessors should pray with LOVE: Share the needs of your ministry with your intercessors. Let them know who it is they pray for, so they can really feel involved.

Intercessors come in all varieties. Some will spend a long time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Others will be busy and offer their work to God on your behalf. The suffering can intercede by offering any form of pain in union with Christ on the cross.

The effective intercessor will:

- ⇒ Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly
- ⇒ Trust in the mercy of God
- ⇒ Enlist the help of the Saints (see Devotion to the Saints in WHAT MAKES THE CONFERENCE CATHOLIC? on page 20)
- ⇒ Be aware of the needs of those being prayed for (those which can be legitimately shared)
- ⇒ Pray specifically for these needs

Gathering intercessors:

Asking persons to intercede for you and your ministry will reap a greater share in the harvest of God's grace. This way they get to share in the blessings as well: "You must also help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers." - II Corinthians 1:11

Approach prayer groups, shut-ins, rosary groups, and the general congregation. Be sure that the teens know that they are being prayed for and have them lift up their intercessors daily.

Some ways to gather intercessors include:

- ⇒ Write letters or send emails to possible intercessors asking for prayer for specific areas of need. Requesting a response often encourages commitment;
- ⇒ Keep a list of those who responded to use for future prayer requests;
- ⇒ Ask pastors to give announcements at Masses asking for prayer;
- ⇒ Thank and inform the intercessors of the status of the ministry.
- ⇒ It is also good to form a "Discernment Team" of a few serious, wise intercessors to meet with regularly in order to pray about all major decisions concerning the ministry.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE CONFERENCE OFFICE

Our preferable form of contact is email - centraloffice@steubenvillesouth.com. Due to the amount of information sent, we ask that you provide a correct email address (one that you check regularly), phone number, and mailing address. Be sure to check the website (www.steubenvillesouth.com) for mailings, and updates on due dates, and upcoming events.

OBTAINING NECESSARY INFORMATION FROM EACH PARTICIPANT IN YOUR GROUP

It is necessary that the Steubenville South office receive all necessary forms **by the due date given**. Therefore, all group leaders must give an appropriate amount of time to their youth to complete and return any forms necessary. The internet is a great tool to use to accomplish this. All forms are available at www.steubenvillesouth.com.

PROMOTION

- ⇒ **Get permission from the pastor** to promote the conference from the pulpit, in the bulletin, and through mailings.
- ⇒ **Create a flier** with theme, day, location, speakers, required age of participants, local contact information and deadline for deposit.
- ⇒ **Get a Promo Video** and show it before or after Masses and youth meetings. A video is available for \$5. Please contact our office for a copy.
- ⇒ **Make a list of all your needs** (some examples may include: intercessors, chaperones, transportation, funding, t-shirts, bibles and rosaries, a place for a retreat or training). Publicize these needs in several ways and get as many people involved as possible.
- ⇒ **Consider contacting your local newspaper(s)** to see if you can run a press release about the conference and/or your youth group.
- ⇒ **Send information to your Catholic newspaper.**
- ⇒ **Use your church or diocesan website, as well as email, to promote your needs, as well as other youth events.**

- ⇒ **Form a Promo Team** to visit different churches and functions in your area. Gather 10-12 youth from your group who have previously attended a conference. Have them put together a presentation:
 - 1) Play some praise music
 - 2) Show the promo video
 - 3) Have a sharing from 3 of your youth
 - 4) A time for questions and answers
 - 5) A Skit
 - 6) Play some worship music
 - 7) Closing Prayer
- ⇒ **Contact local high schools about any Christian organizations** that meet on campus. Send fliers to any of their meetings and/or post a flier in the high schools.
- ⇒ **It is important that the community remain updated about the plans, needs, and events pertaining to the conference.** Some ways to do this include: putting pictures in your local newspaper(s), making a scrapbook to put in the back of the church, having teens speak before, during and after masses.
- ⇒ **Above all, publicize your needs to everyone.** Make sure that all Catholic organizations in your area receive a letter about your plans and that you ask for help with scholarship funds and other fund raisers. (Examples of fund raisers are found on page 8.)

TRANSPORTATION

If you are staying On-Campus: you will have shuttles between the conference and housing sites.

If you are staying in hotels: you will be responsible for getting your group to and from the conference site.

The method of transportation that you use is strictly up to you. It is recommended that you use buses or vans for safety, and also to provide the opportunity for youth to be together on the trip.

Make your transportation needs known to the people of your church parish, who may be able to help get better deals on van or bus rentals.

Some ideas for travel time include:

- ⇒ Have your group meet together before you leave so you can have extra time to pray and have the teens share about what they hope to receive from the conference. If possible, have a priest give a blessing. Also make a handout for the adult chaperones so they can know what to do on the trip.
- ⇒ Travel ideas include: -Bible games -praying the Rosary -making up songs using Bible sayings -switching the youth around so that they do not sit next to the same person the entire trip -giving them questions that allow them to get to know each other better.

On the Trip Home: The main things going on in the young people on the way home are Excitement and Exhaustion. Try to focus on the excitement first. Ask questions.

- ⇒ Examples of questions include: What was the best thing that happened to you this weekend? What questions are you leaving this conference with? What are some things that we can do to continue this (it may be a good idea to have someone write down every idea)
- ⇒ Have a time of journaling. Encourage the youth to write their thoughts and feelings about the past few days and to include in this some thoughts about changes they want to make in their own lives. This is their journal and they should be encouraged to write in it daily. (Hint: You may want to purchase some small notebooks and pencils for them.)
- ⇒ Ask them to share their feelings about the conference, give testimonies and process their experiences on the way home.
- ⇒ Have them write letters to their pastors on the way home. The letter might include thanking the priest for the opportunity to attend, giving a brief sharing of the experience, and sharing ways that the church can better provide for their needs.

More follow-up ideas can be found in the Youth Prep, on page 17.

FUND RAISING

- ⇒ The best ideas come from other Youth Leaders. You can dialogue with them on this.
- ⇒ A Youth Ministers' Forum is available on the Steubenville South website (www.steubenvillesouth.com) as one way to communicate.
- ⇒ This is an excellent time to teach your youth about good stewardship. It is important that the group leader tell the youth about the many people who have given generously so that the youth could experience all that God has for them. They should also be encouraged to make the most of every moment at the conference.
- ⇒ Thank you notes, bulletin messages, and even small newspaper ads may be appropriate to thank all who donated time or money.
- ⇒ Get parents involved in fund raising.
- ⇒ Several fund raiser ideas include having your youth:
 - Work for people in the parish (babysitting, washing cars, mowing lawns, running errands, washing pets, etc.)
 - Give some type of performance for the public and charge admission.
 - Sell items such as candy, calendars, etc.
 - Have a day camp for jr. high and elementary aged youth and charge a fee per child.
 - Have a garage sale with donated items.
 - Cook a meal (or ask the Knights of Columbus to cook and donate) and your youth can sell plates and serve.
 - Raffle one or more items. You may have parents who can donate things to raffle.
 - Have a bake sale.
 - Get 100 empty white envelopes and number them from 1 to 100. Ask permission to place them in the church to be picked up after Mass. Each donor picks up the envelope with the number of dollars they can give (pick up envelope #5 and return it with \$5. inside, etc.) If all 100 envelopes are picked up and returned, the total is \$5000. Include info on where to return the envelopes with the money.

NETWORKING WITH OTHER GROUP LEADERS

- ⇒ There is a forum for youth ministers on the Steubenville South website: www.steubenvillesouth.com.
- ⇒ We will assign your group another group as a Prayer Partner before and during the conference. Please make every effort to contact them, pray for their intentions, and meet up with them during the conference.
- ⇒ We provide a list to you at the conference of all the groups in attendance. If you meet other groups during the weekend and would like to stay in contact with them to share ideas and support one another, please do so.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Youth ministry can only be as effective as the adults who minister to youth. While every aspect of this manual contains something that can be used with young people, the adults who work with these youth must be cared for, nurtured, empowered, and encouraged. For this reason, the following information is given:

An Invitation to Spiritual Growth

A Steubenville Youth Conference is primarily an invitation to spiritual growth. For some this means entering into a personal relationship with God for the first time. For others, this means a deeper and more mature acceptance of the gospel and the Church and a greater zeal to be a witness for Christ. The world today presents countless challenges to the gospel message and all that the Church stands for.

The conference weekend is about developing the gifts given at Baptism and sealed at Confirmation. It's about hearing dynamically orthodox speakers instruct and challenge teens in: prayer, chastity, service, and the power of the sacraments. You will discover that Christianity is not for the weak and timid; it is not a crutch; and it is not boring! It is about meeting hundreds of people on fire for the Lord: laughing, crying, talking, singing, praying, dancing and being encouraged to take a stand for Christ.

The teachings presented during the weekend are founded on solid Catholic Christian doctrines, with an emphasis on the importance of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Although many have intense spiritual experiences, these experiences are not the goal of attending the conference. The goal is to better understand how to love God and others, and that is always accomplished through the Holy Spirit, who moves in the heart of each person. He will be present during the weekend in both a general way and a personal way for each individual.

"Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware."
1 Corinthians 12:1

The gifts of the Holy Spirit, including expressive praise, are characteristic of what is sometimes referred to as "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." It is simply a fuller release of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given at Baptism and sealed at Confirmation. Some of the fruits of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit are:

- An increased attraction to and joy in prayer and Scripture
- A deep sense of peace and God's presence
- An awareness of God's purpose for one's life
- A desire to join with others in praising God
- A more powerful attraction to the Eucharist
- Help in mending broken, damaged relationships
- A new commitment or recommitment of one's life to Christ
- A release of the gifts of the Spirit

Spiritual Diet

You would be hard pressed to find an Olympic athlete whose diet consisted strictly of Whoppers, Big Macs, and Burrito Supremes. A balanced, healthy diet is essential to the athlete's success. Likewise, a lack of a proper spiritual diet in our lives can result in a spiritually malnourished walk with Jesus at best. If we are to experience the satisfying "abundant life" that Jesus offers, the following four areas must be included in our spiritual diet: Scripture, Prayer, Sacraments and Community.

Scripture

The Bible has appropriately been referred to as Basic Information Before Leaving Earth. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"(NIV).

Hebrews 4:12 declares that God's word is alive and working and is sharper than a double-edged sword. St. Jerome so eloquently stated, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

We need to see that this incredible library of books is a gigantic love letter from God, and not just a history book. It is the Christian road map to eternal life that speaks to the heart of God's people. It comforts, convicts, praises, teaches, excites, challenges, guides, encourages, empowers, and sustains, to name a few of its gifts to us. God's Word is foundational to spiritual growth. Jesus declared that we could not live on bread alone, but must have God's word to sustain us.

A problem that some of us have with the Bible is its intimidating appearance. "Where do I begin?" is a common cry from many. The following process will help us soak God's Word into our lives:

1. Start with a translation you will understand
2. Begin with the Gospels.
3. Read small portions at a time (no more than one chapter).
4. Underline and highlight (yes, write in your Bible!) what impacts you the most.
5. Journal and write down in your own words what you have read, and how it relates to you.
6. Memorize a few verses every week.
7. Find someone with whom you can share what you are reading and learning.

If God's Word is going to be active in our lives, it must be deposited within our minds, and it must take root in our hearts. Hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on Scripture are all ways in which it can take root in the Christian's life.

Prayer

Prayer is communicating with God. In any of our human relationships, this is essential. Without communication, no gratifying relationships can be built. The same is true with God. If we are not talking to Him, we are not walking with Him!

Prayer ushers us into a friendship with God; it's our avenue to intimacy with Him. We cannot keep the conference experience alive and make a lasting impact in God's kingdom apart from prayer. Once we are introduced to daily prayer, and we begin to experience the fruit of this new relationship with God, we will desire to spend more time with Him.

There are many different ways to pray. *Petition prayer* involves asking God to help us. *Intercessory prayer* is asking God to help others. *Scriptural prayer* involves meditating on Scripture. *Contemplative prayer* is meditating quietly, focusing on the Lord. *Repentance prayer* involves turning from our sins and asking God for forgiveness. *Rosary prayer* is praying and meditating on the Rosary. *Liturgical prayer* involves praying the prayers of the Church. *Thanksgiving prayer* is giving thanks to the Lord. *Expressive praise* is praising God with our whole being.

An effective prayer model that can easily be remembered by the simple acronym is - **ACTS**.

Adoration is prayer that honors God for who He is. It is selfless prayer. However, it is incredibly valuable for you because it establishes your relationship with Jesus as you convey your love to Him. Adore God by declaring to Him His greatness, power, majesty, and sovereignty. Read the Psalms to Him.

Confession is acknowledging your faults and sins before the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal ways in which you have missed the mark and humbly share them with Jesus. Ask for the grace to repent - never turning back to it. Know that he casts your sin as far as the east is from the west.

Thanksgiving is expressing your appreciation to God. Take some time to thank Jesus for the specific ways He has blessed your life. Remember that all good things come from God above.

Supplication is humbly and earnestly asking for things. What are your needs? What needs do others have? Ask the Lord to answer your requests. This is the part of your prayer life where you make your intentions known to the Father. Include your family, friends, political leaders, teachers, etc. Develop your own prayer list where you can record the results. Be specific in your prayers, have faith, and remember that God will respond according to His will. Always keep in mind that He has your best interest in mind.

It is also extremely important that you listen in prayer. Without this, your prayer experiences will often feel empty and one-sided. This may mean that distractions need to be removed. After all, God's voice is most often still and small. Be consistent in prayer. Find a time of day, place, and posture that is conducive to communicating with God. Prayer must become a habit if continual spiritual growth will take place in our lives.

Sacraments

For optimum spiritual growth, we must also practice the Sacraments on a regular basis, specifically Eucharist and Reconciliation. It is most likely that these two gifts from God made the greatest impact on persons lives during the conference. The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the conference has been a powerful life-changing experience for many to see the reality of Jesus' physical presence. Reconciliation gives you the chance to remove great burdens and heart struggles before a loving representative of Christ who declared to them God's great compassion and forgiveness, as well as counsel in how to get rid of the personal sin that separates them from their Father in heaven.

John 6:53-55 declares, "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink'"(NIV). Jesus made a pretty definitive statement here which suggests that we must regularly take Jesus physically into our bodies if we want to have life and grow spiritually. Make Mass a top priority in your life. Try to attend more than just once a week. If you really want a radically changed life, find a way to go daily!

In James 5:16, Paul says that we must "confess our sins to each other and pray for each other that we may be healed." Reconciliation gives us the opportunity to hear, verbally, of God's forgiveness for our sins. It reunites us with the Christian community and prepares our hearts to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. So often a lack of forgiveness for others and a lack of belief in God's forgiveness of us are primary blocks to deepening our relationship with God. Satan is the father of lies and loves to blind us to our own sin.

Community

Persons on fire for Christ need to surround themselves with others who also have a burning desire to grow spiritually. Faith is truly contagious. Having fellowship with other believers provides strength and accountability.

Every aspect of the Christian life requires accountability. This includes issues such as relationships, speech and conduct, weekend activities, and what we read, watch, and listen to. When Christ transforms and converts the lives of His people, He does not only ask for sections of our lives to be changed, but our entire existence. The strength to make such changes in our lives often comes through the encouragement of others. The phrase, "No man is an island" applies to our walk with Jesus. We cannot survive alone.

Practically speaking, we are the Body of Christ. This Body includes many members with many gifts that need to be shared. We must worship God as a community as the Psalmist declared, "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalm 95:6).

CHAPERONE AND PARENT PREP

RECRUITING, FORMING AND TRAINING CHAPERONES

Recruiting Chaperones:

- ⇒ Begin to make announcements from the pulpit, place announcements in the bulletin, and make phone calls 5 months before the conference.
- ⇒ Have a meeting with all of your chaperones 3 months before the conference.
- ⇒ Be sure to review and share the Conference Policies, Basic Requirements of the Chaperone (found in the "Policies and Procedures Booklet"), and Sample Chaperone Training Day (on page 22).

Spiritual Formation of Chaperones:

- ⇒ The first responsibility of the chaperone is to direct the young people to Jesus by their words, actions, and responses. Therefore it is important that chaperones have their own relationship with God and an understanding of the Sacraments.
- ⇒ Adults are in need of Spiritual Renewal, Catechesis, and Spiritual Formation. Take this opportunity to provide these things for your chaperones. Some suggestions for this include:
 - Bring your chaperones together for a day of prayer, including praise and worship, adoration, and teachings on the sacraments
 - Provide resources (see "Apologetics and Resources Manual")
 - Provide names of priests and others who can walk with them
 - Provide a list of any prayer meetings, retreats, or other adult gatherings that are held in your diocese
 - Make use of the information on Evangelizing Adults in the "Apologetics and Resources Manual".
 - Encourage your adults to have an accountability partner

Training Chaperones:

- ⇒ At least 3 hours should be set aside for training chaperones. This can be done by someone from your area who has attended the conference (preferably the group leader if he/she is comfortable with this).
- ⇒ A sample chaperone training may be found in the Appendix on page 22.
- ⇒ Information on how to lead small groups may be found on pages 14 and 24.
- ⇒ Once chaperones are in place and have gone through training, schedule a meeting of your chaperones and youth together. If at all possible, assign youth and chaperones to small groups before this meeting so they may have a chance to get to know each other.
- ⇒ It is important that chaperones be made aware of any special needs of the youth – including but not limited to physical health, emotional or spiritual needs, as well as any special situations (examples may be divorce, death in the family, etc.).

ORGANIZING/HOSTING MEETINGS WITH PARENTS, TEENS, CHAPERONES

Parents are a vital part of your youth ministry program. The more they learn about what is happening, the more likely they are to get involved and help out. Be sure to give them as much information as you possibly can regarding this conference and other youth activities in your parish.

- ⇒ You may want to invite them to a meeting or send a letter to provide information. (There is a Sample Parent Letter in the Appendix on page 22.)
- ⇒ Invite them to intercede for your group throughout the conference weekend.
- ⇒ Invite them to any preparation nights that you are doing for teens so that they can become more familiar with the conference.

Information to give parents includes:

- The time you expect youth to be at the place of departure and the estimated time of departure

- Items youth need to bring
- Contact information for the entire weekend
- Specifics about the conference including the theme, schedule, and speakers
- Time of return

We have found that teens who have been prepared have a much better experience during the weekend than those who have not been prepared. It is important that you read through the Sample Conference Schedule (found on page 3) and make sure to cover all of the different things that happen at the conference.

The main topics that usually bring questions and concern are those regarding praise and worship music, praying with hands lifted, manifestations of the Holy Spirit (crying, laughing, resting in the spirit, dancing with joy), altar calls, youth oriented liturgies, Procession and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

This manual includes information on all of these topics. Put together several evenings with your group or a whole day and try to allow them to experience praise and worship, a solid teaching, and a time for processing. See Sample Chaperone Training Day in the Appendix on page 22. A Sample Preparation Day for Youth can also be found in the Appendix on page 23.

YOUTH PREP

PREPARING TEENS FOR THE CONFERENCE (Sample Preparation Day for Youth found in the Appendix on page 23)

The best person to give a teaching on the Catholic aspects of the conference would be a priest. If you cannot get a priest, secure someone who is knowledgeable on the teachings of the Church.

It is important to begin meeting regularly with the teens who will be attending the conference. If you can't meet weekly, plan a time for everyone, including parents, so that you can give them an overview of the conference. You will probably want to show the promo video and begin to give conference particulars (it is available from the Steubenville South office).

It is also a good idea to explain spiritual aspects of the conference. Explanations of various things may be found in this manual or in the "Apologetics and Resources Manual". Also, see the Special Ministry Needs section on page 15.

If possible, try to answer most of the "why" questions before coming. This is a great time to introduce youth to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. By referring to the Catechism, we are reminding our youth that the conference is Catholic and that being Catholic is a blessing.

Youth with Special Emotional Needs:

- ⇒ Many youth have experienced divorce, abuse, depression, and other traumatic events. If possible, try to learn as much as you can about your youth before coming to the conference.
- ⇒ **REMEMBER** – Confidentiality is of the utmost importance.
- ⇒ Make sure that those with special needs are placed with adults who have experience in youth ministry.
- ⇒ Only share specifics with adults who are working with these teens.

Conference Music:

- ⇒ Try to have the youth listen to the theme song periodically so that they are familiar with it at the conference. It can be heard at this website: www.franciscanyouth.com.
- ⇒ You may want to introduce the youth to praise and worship music before coming to the conference. (See Scripture and Catechism References on Expressive Praise in the "Apologetics and Resources Manual".)

SETTING UP SMALL GROUPS

Small groups are necessary to process events with your youth.

- ⇒ Pray about how to create these groups. Assign one of your adults to each small group, and have the small groups meet with their adult leader so that they can get to know each other.
- ⇒ If your adults are not comfortable leading small groups, please make sure they receive some training or get someone else to lead.
- ⇒ Small groups should provide a safe place for youth to share. Small group leaders should step in when youth have specific questions.
- ⇒ **For more information on Forming Small Groups and Questions, see pages 24-26.**

SPECIAL MINISTRY NEEDS

Spiritual, Emotional, Physical

Spiritual:

What happens when we are at a Steubenville Conference?

1. They encounter a living Jesus.
2. The power of the love of God is an emotional tug for some of them.
3. They experience Mass celebrated with joy and a real respect for the Eucharist.
4. There is the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit moving among them, touching and freeing them from so many things. Hurts and self image problems that have been suppressed now begin to surface and sin comes to light for some of them as they hear the talks and must now face things that they were excusing or justifying.

What should the adult chaperones do?

Group leaders should do their best to keep the focus on the Lord. Our role as adults is to let God be God as we pray and intercede throughout the weekend.

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit may surprise you and the youth. These are not things to fear, nor should one assume something is wrong or bad. Here are a few suggestions:

- ⇒ Help them to experience this time to the fullest – let them know that it is a good experience, that God is touching them because He loves them.
- ⇒ Be gentle and confident.
- ⇒ Keep others from staring, surrounding, or thinking that something is “wrong”. Keep the group focused on the main event happening (i.e. the talk, Eucharistic Adoration, etc.).
- ⇒ If they are resting in the Spirit (experiencing His touch), keep it peaceful.
- ⇒ If crying, let it happen and comfort them. (Comfort should come from the chaperones. Other youth should stay focused.)
- ⇒ If laughing, let it happen as long as it does not become disruptive (for example, at the wrong time – during a talk, reception of Communion, etc.)
- ⇒ If there are manifestations that seem strange or unusual, let the prayer minister help you.

When should a prayer minister be called in?

Steubenville South Prayer Ministers are trained by a local priest, a licensed counselor, and the chairpersons of the Prayer Ministry Committee, to know if spiritual manifestations need a priest, a counselor, or the head Prayer Minister.

Our Prayer Ministers can be recognized at the conference by the Red Vests they wear. The primary responsibility of the Prayer Minister is to serve you and your young people during the conference. They are asked to pray and intercede for the youth so that they may experience God’s love in a real and powerful way.

The Group Leader and the chaperones should feel free to call upon the Prayer Minister if they encounter any spiritual situation that causes unrest or concern.

The Prayer Minister has been instructed that the Group Leader/Chaperone is the primary spiritual caregiver of the young person throughout the weekend. The Prayer Minister remains close by interceding and making him or herself available.

It would be advisable for you to meet the Prayer Ministers in your section and to let them know if you are here for the first time or if you have attended the conference before. This would also be the time for you to express any needs or concerns that you may have regarding special ministry.

The Power of the Priesthood:

Priests have the power to discern and bring under control things that may seem out of order. We encourage you to let Prayer Ministers help you locate priests to assist you before we try to remove anyone from the assembly.

Emotional:

The Role of the Counselor:

Very often at the conference, because it focuses on bringing youth to a reality of the world they live in, and on healing, they may remember, or accept fully different hurts that have been done to them, or they may acknowledge some responsibility they have had in harming others. At times the priests or youth ministers may refer the young person to a counselor.

Some of the issues that are dealt with by these professionals include:

- ⇒ Depression, past suicide attempts, self harm behaviors (i.e. cutting or burning themselves), family issues (i.e. alcoholism/drug addiction in parents, divorce),
- ⇒ Illnesses, anxiety disorders, low self esteem, eating disorders, grief, sexual, physical and emotional abuse. (Please see the "Apologetics and Resources Manual" for information on these issues.)

The role of the counselor is to assess problems, and if necessary make recommendations to the youth minister. If issues of abuse are current, the counselor follows up to make sure proper authorities are notified.

If the young person is in danger of any kind, the counselor informs the Group Leader or chaperone so that follow up can be done.

Physical:

- ⇒ **One of the group leader's biggest responsibilities is to see that each participant in the group is receiving adequate amounts of water, food and any medication necessary for their health. Many problems can be prevented by drinking enough water.**
- ⇒ A First Aid station is provided throughout the weekend to provide medical care for routine injuries and needs. Our first aid volunteers include RN's, LPN's, paramedics, and EMT's. First aid volunteers will also discern with prayer ministers and chaperones to decide if medical attention is necessary.
- ⇒ No individual will be treated without a liability form. We encourage each individual to know the name of his/her group and group leader in order to assist the First Aid personnel in providing treatment. It is also suggested that group leaders keep a copy of their group's liability forms with them throughout the weekend.
- ⇒ If emergency transportation to a local hospital is necessary, a chaperone must accompany the youth, and assist in notifying the parents/legal guardians.
- ⇒ See First Aid Protocol for Group Leaders on page 21.

Any special accommodations necessary to assist a youth with a handicap need to be made known to the conference office prior to arrival at the conference site.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Pope John XXIII prayed, "Come Holy Spirit as in a new Pentecost." The Holy Spirit responded by moving among the people of the Catholic Church in a way that is exciting and powerful, but not necessarily new. Read 1 Corinthians 12. Ever since the early Church, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on Christians in the sacrament of baptism. The ways the Holy Spirit manifests Himself are vast. We have already looked at the seven gifts listed in Isaiah. There are many other ways in which the Holy Spirit empowers His people.

"To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." 1 Cor. 12: 7

The gifts just listed are given primarily to build the life of the Church (although the gift of tongues builds an individual's own prayer life). The gifts are given as God sees necessary and will pass away with this life (i.e. there is no need for the gift of prophecy in heaven; we will speak to God face-to-face).

Some gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12 are:

☐ **Words of wisdom:**

This is related to the gifts of wisdom and counsel—God may give the gift of saying the right words in a particular situation.

☐ **Words of knowledge:**

God may give the gift of knowing how another person needs prayer.

☐ **Gift of faith:**

Related to the virtue of faith given at baptism, an individual receives a special grace to believe in God and the truths of the Catholic faith.

☐ **Healing gifts:**

The gift to pray with another for emotional or physical healing

☐ **Miracles:**

A manifestation of God's power and love beyond natural means.

☐ **Prophecy:**

God uses an individual to speak on His behalf to another individual or to a group by giving them the words to say.

☐ **Discernment of spirits:**

The gift to be able to discern or recognize if what is happening in particular situation is from the Lord, from the flesh or from the devil.

☐ **Tongues:**

One of the most common spiritual gifts is often the first gift given. Tongues is a gift of prayer in a different language. Those praying in tongues do not know what they are saying, only that they are praising God. "In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Romans 8:26).

☐ **Interpretation of tongues:**

God may give a gift of interpreting some tongues for the sake of giving a message to the group.

"But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as He wishes." 1 Cor. 12:11

FOLLOW UP

Your follow up plan must be made at least one month before the conference and you should be prepared to begin as soon as you return from the conference. Publicize your summer activities/events before you leave for the conference.

For the Trip Home: Please see the "Transportation" section on page 7 this manual.

Upon Your Return:

If it is possible, bring your group to a retreat center in your diocese or to another location away from everyone and spend a couple of days processing and planning. This is the ideal time because the fire has just been lit, and the young people want to stay together and experience it to the fullest. This is not an option for many groups but there are other things to do for follow up.

Make sure that the adult chaperones have the contact information of the people from their groups. Encourage them to touch base with them weekly, whether by phone, e-mail, a gathering at a home, or the large group gathering. This should be done throughout the summer so that the young person does not feel alone in his/her journey.

Give everyone in the group a list of the phone numbers and email addresses of everyone else in the group to encourage them to remain connected throughout the year.

One follow up idea is to prepare a letter giving youth ways to sustain their relationship with God. Have someone mail these letters on the day that you leave for the conference so that the young people will have them when they get home.

Possible things to include in the letter:

- ⇒ Affirmation
- ⇒ Ideas for daily prayer time (i.e. reading scripture, devotional books, lives of the saints)
- ⇒ Encouragement to attend daily Mass
- ⇒ Information about Eucharistic Adoration in your area
- ⇒ The date, time and place for your follow up meeting in this letter
- ⇒ The contact information for the group leader and for the chaperone of their small group

Other Ideas for Follow Up:

- ⇒ Begin a Bible study
- ⇒ Private adoration at a local chapel and/or invite youth and chaperones to public adoration
- ⇒ Group service projects (see below)
- ⇒ Forming a retreat team with teens who have attended the conference for more than two years (see "Forming A Retreat Team" on page 29)

Service Project:

Teens, as well as adults, are often self-focused and in need of someone to direct them as to the needs of others. Some ways you can do this include:

- ⇒ Explore Catholic Social Justice Teachings. These paragraphs of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are a good place to start: 1931-1932, 1936-1937, 2443, 2447, 2449, and 2833. (See below for further resources on Catholic Social Justice Teachings.)
- ⇒ Find out about the needs in your community (possibly homeless shelters, soup kitchens, halfway houses, prisons, Habitat for Humanity, etc.). Then have someone from the organization you choose speak one night and provide an opportunity for youth and adults to sign up to do a project there.
- ⇒ There are also many mission opportunities in the U.S. and other countries. A few contacts include:
 - Mustard Seed: www.mustardseed.com;
 - Family Missions Company: www.fmcmisions.com;
 - Young Neighbors: www.youngneighbors.com
 - Catholic Heart Workcamp: www.heartworkcamp.com
- ⇒ Inform parents of the various projects and invite their input and questions.

Resources on Catholic Social Justice Teachings:

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website on Social Justice:

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/placeatthetable/index.htm>

Visit the Vatican website at www.vatican.va to read these encyclicals on Social Justice:

- ⇒ *Rerum Novarum* – Pope Leo XIII
- ⇒ *Quadragesimo Anno* – Pope Pius XI
- ⇒ *Mater et Magistra* – John XXIII
- ⇒ Trilogy of John Paul II: *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Centesimus Annus*

APPENDIX

WHAT MAKES THE STEUBENVILLE SOUTH YOUTH CONFERENCE CATHOLIC?

Celebration of Mass Each Day:

- ⇒ 'At the Last Supper... our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. This He did in order... to entrust to His beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection..., a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.' (CCC1323)
- ⇒ Catechism references explaining the order of the Mass may be in the Appendix.
- ⇒ Your One Step Guide to the Mass by Fr. Dale Fushek is available through the Steubenville South bookstore for further reference.

Confession:

- ⇒ There are 3 ways in which sins are forgiven: baptism, prayer, and in the greater humility of penance [confession] (Sermon on Catechumens on the Creed 7:15, 8:16 [A.D. 395]).
- ⇒ Minor or venial sins can be confessed directly to God, but grave or mortal sins must be confessed, with sacramental absolution obtained (see CCC 1457, 1458).
- ⇒ After His resurrection, Jesus passed on His mission to forgive sins to His ministers [priests], telling them, "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you...If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).
- ⇒ In the confessional the sinner will encounter Jesus Himself in the guise of a priest. That priest has been taught by the church to encourage those who are ashamed of their sin, and to help those who uncover their weakness to repent. The priest will never tell anyone what is shared in confession.(see CCC 1467)
- ⇒ Basic Helps to Confession by Fr. Bill Murphy is available through the Steubenville South bookstore.

Encouraging the Discernment of Vocations:

- ⇒ The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraph 1656 , "They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation."
- ⇒ Though the above paragraph speaks about the family, this conference agrees with the Magisterium that there is a vocation that is proper to each, and we seek to provide an atmosphere that encourages each youth to at least consider with an open heart which of the four vocations God may be calling them to. We invite them to pray about their future and perhaps speak with adults in trusted positions about their feelings.
- ⇒ Discernment is the process of prayerfully seeking God's will regarding any given situation. It is aided by the wise counsel of holy persons of spiritual authority and patient attention to signs of Divine confirmation.

All seven sacraments are listed and explained in paragraph 1113 and following of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

(Taken from Pocket Catholic Dictionary, Published by Doubleday, © 1980)

- ⇒ This is adoration of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist (introduced in the 13th century under the influence of the newly established feast of Corpus Christi). In the ceremony, a priest or deacon removes the Sacred Host from the tabernacle and places it in the lunette of the monstrance and then on to the altar.

- ⇒ An Hour With Jesus by Queenship publishing is available through the Steubenville South bookstore.

Altar Calls in the Catholic Church:

- ⇒ "Most Catholics receive the Sacrament of Baptism as infants. However, there is still a need to make personal what was given to them on the faith of others. **Altar calls**, through which individuals respond to an invitation to respond personally to the gift of God's life and love, is one way to accomplish this."
- Bishop Sam Jacobs
- ⇒ "...Catholics have an 'altar call' every week – the call to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. There is no more personal relationship we can have with Christ... than to be united with Him the Holy Eucharist." - Matt Pinto's Did Adam & Eve Have Belly Buttons?

Fidelity to the Holy Father:

The *Pope*, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful."⁴⁰² "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered." *Lumen Gentium* 22 (CCC882)

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

(Catechism of the Catholic Church references to this devotion are found in paragraph 487 and following.)

- ⇒ **487** What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.
- ⇒ **148** The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that "with God nothing will be impossible" and so giving her assent: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word."¹² Elizabeth greeted her: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."¹³ It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed.¹⁴
- ⇒ **149** Throughout her life and until her last ordeal¹⁵ when Jesus her son died on the cross, Mary's faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God's word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

Devotion to the Saints:

- ⇒ Asking for the intercession of the Saints is the same as asking a Christian brother or sister to pray for you. The difference is that the person praying for you or your situation has been perfected in holiness and grace and is in the presence of God. Their prayers are perfect and powerful. The saints are canonized, officially recognized by the church, because of the evidence, including miracles, of their sainthood or presence with God.
- ⇒ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, **828** states:
By *canonizing* some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors. (Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 40; 48-51) "The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church's history." (John Paul II, *Christifideles laici* 16,3)

Importance of Christian Prayer:

- ⇒ Prayer is a necessary part of any Christian's walk with the Lord.
- ⇒ Prayer is conversation with God. Types of prayer include: **Petition** (prayer of need), **Intercessory** (prayer for others), **Scriptural** (praying biblical

scriptures), **Contemplative** (deep meditative prayer), **Repentance** (confession and sorrow for sin), **Rosary, Liturgical** (Holy Mass and other official prayers of the Church), **Thanksgiving**, and **Expressive Praise** (see below)

- ⇒ Intercession is covered in THE ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER (pages 5-6 of this manual).
- ⇒ Expressive praise and jubilation is not a common experience, and can be surprising if someone is not prepared. In the Appendix are Scripture and Catechism References on Expressive Praise to explain and support the different expressions of praise that may be seen during the weekend. It is important to remember that expressive praise is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit, supported by and within the guidelines of Sacred Scripture and Church teaching.

FIRST AID PROTOCOL FOR GROUP LEADERS

There will be two rooms set up inside the Coliseum for First Aid:

- 1) A small room located near the main entrance
- 2) A larger room with cots near the east entrance

There will be RN's, EMT, and medical volunteers available at all times throughout the weekend to handle any situations.

All conference participants are required to have a complete medical (liability) form which provides health and insurance information and parental consent for treatment. No one is to be treated without this form. Be sure the information is updated and correct, as teens tend to be poor medical historians and sometimes do not know their allergies or names of medications they take. Also this may be the first trip without a parent where they have been asked to provide any type of medical information. At times we get a discrepancy between information given by a participant at first aid and information given by a parent on the sheet. It is also very important to have correct contact phone numbers for participants in case of emergency.

Any participant coming to First Aid for treatment needs to be accompanied by a group leader. They will be signed in by First Aid and given a name tag assessed and given appropriate treatment. Vital signs will be taken, blood pressure, heart rate, pulse, respiration, and if diabetic, Accuchecks will be done. It is strongly recommend that you keep a close watch on participants who are asthmatics, diabetic, depressed____, etc. For diabetics, we recommend they follow their medication regime closely and come to first aid for Accuchecks (check blood sugars) throughout the weekend-everyday. First Aid will have juices, etc., available for emergencies. First Aid is available to handle most emergencies.

Please note that we have 3 to 4 wheelchairs available during the weekend. If a participant is going to need a wheelchair for the weekend, please make arrangements ahead of time. If wheelchairs are borrowed please return them whenever possible. They get to be in great demand.

Anyone needing to go to the ER will be transported by ambulance or Steubenville South van. No one is to transport by private vehicle. We will use Christus St. Francis Cabrini Hospital unless the patient requests otherwise. Security will be posted all around the coliseum and can call First Aid in an Emergency. First Aid will have extra staff available in evening hours.

We request that chaperones and participants do not wander outside after dark, after sessions begin, for safety and due to risk of accidents.

If a group leader is uneasy and not sure whether a participant is in need of spiritual or physical intervention, they can locate a prayer minister (in the red vest) who will assist them. If there are none available, they can locate security, who will call a First Aid person to quickly assess and get a prayer minister for them. A participant who is resting in the Spirit requires space and air to breathe, so remember that with your group of teens.

Things to make your weekend go a lot easier, healthier:

- Pray
- Eat three meals a day
- Drink lots of fluids
- Get sleep
- Take prescription medication at right times
- Wear comfortable shoes

SAMPLE CHAPERONE TRAINING DAY SCHEDULE (Also see Chaperone and Parent Prep on pages 12-13.)

- ⇒ Praise and Worship at times throughout the day
- ⇒ Scheduled breaks throughout the day to allow chaperones to discuss what they hear, ask each other questions, etc.
- ⇒ Topics for talks may include: (info on these can be found in this manual and from the Steubenville South office)
 - Why Bring Youth to Steubenville South? How to prepare and follow up with youth
 - Music: Praise and Worship; How teens relate to music, etc. (Promo Video may help. It can be ordered for \$5. from the Steubenville South office.)
 - A time for questions and answers
 - The spirituality of the chaperone - "You can't give what you don't have." (see Evangelizing Adults in the "Apologetics and Resources Manual)
 - Priests can give teachings on Mass and the Sacraments
 - Gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Scripture and Catechism References on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the "Apologetics and Resources Manual")
 - Praying with and ministering to teens during and after the conference (See Special Ministry Needs on page 15)
 - Recognizing the need for counseling and the role the counselor plays during the conference (See Special Ministry Needs on page 15)
 - Preparing parents for the conference
 - Have teens give personal testimonies to provide insight on what young people are struggling with and what they need from chaperones and/or other adult leaders
 - Allow a time of empowerment (Empowerment is prayer for an increase and release of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were received at Baptism. This can be done in a closing Mass or prayers with a guest priest.)

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

DATE

Dear Parents,

The trip to the Steubenville South Youth Conference is fast approaching and I would like to share more details about this exciting event. I ask that your son or daughter be at the church parking lot no later than *(time)* on Friday, *(date)*. We will leave promptly at *(time)*. Your teen will need to bring a sleeping bag, pillow, change of clothes, toiletries, a Bible, and a notebook or paper. *(If you are stopping at fast food restaurants, you will need to mention money, and if you want them to pack a lunch, parents will need to know this too.)*

(Name) will be an at-home contact person for our trip. He/she will be home all weekend, and if there is an emergency regarding your teen, I will call him/her. In turn, he/she will contact you. Likewise, if there is a family emergency that cannot wait until we return on Sunday evening, you can call *(name)* at *(phone number)* and ask him/her to contact us. *(Name)* will also call you with our estimated time of arrival on Sunday.

Now I would like to take a moment to explain some of the specifics of the conference to you. Numerous youth groups from across South and other places will be attending the weekend event. This conference stresses the teachings of the Catholic Church, fidelity to the Holy Father, and the importance of the sacraments and Christian prayer. Mass is celebrated daily, and the sacrament of reconciliation will be offered during the weekend. There will be talks by guest speakers, skits, time for recreation, and small group discussions.

The Saturday evening session will feature Eucharistic Adoration. At this service many teens come to truly experience the Lord's love for them and their need to either commit or recommit their lives to Him. The weekend closes with Sunday Mass, lunch, and departure.

Your youth will see and hear many forms of expressive praise during the weekend. Expressive praise can be characterized by raised hands, individually praying aloud, praising God out loud, praying or praising God in tongues, dancing, and clapping. Expressive worship is joyful, exciting, and need not scare you or your youth. It is not unlike David's dancing before the Lord, or the Apostles' singing and praying in the Upper Room at Pentecost. I have taken time to familiarize your youth with this form of worship. If you would like more information regarding expressive praise, I would be happy to speak with you.

Throughout the weekend, the chaperones and young adult leaders serve as small group facilitators to help your teen discuss and process what he/she has learned. There will be (*number of youth*) teens attending from our area this year, and I will assign adult chaperones to be responsible for certain groups. I take very seriously the responsibility of having your son/daughter in my care. Again, if you have any questions, please feel free to call me (your phone number).

Thank you for granting permission for your son/daughter to attend the Franciscan University Youth Conference this year. I pray it will be a tremendous and unforgettable experience for all of the kids, and I am honored to be a part of their spiritual journey. One last thing I need your support in a very important area: **PRAYER**. Please pray for our travel safety, and for the Lord's will to be done in the lives of each of the teens attending the conference. Thank you again, and may God bless you with His peace.

Sincerely in Christ,

SAMPLE PREPARATION DAY FOR YOUTH

This can be done in a day, over a weekend, or weekly for an hour and a half at a time. The important thing is that you cover all the topics listed below.

- 10:00 a.m.** **Prayer**
Gathering music and icebreakers – 10 minutes
Praise and Worship music – 15 minutes
Teaching on Praise and Worship (Church teachings, quotes from the Holy Father, a young person's viewpoint, a quote from a praise and worship leader) – 20 minutes
- 10:45 a.m.** **Mass** with teachings about the Mass by a priest (Mass should be scheduled at a time convenient to the priest.)
- Noon** **Lunch**
- 1:00 p.m.** **Talk: Sexuality and the Teachings of the Church**
Explain why there will be men's and women's sessions at the conference and what they may expect to see there. The men's and women's sessions focus on chastity, as well as other aspects of being male or female (for example: self-esteem issues). The whole idea is to challenge them to be men and women of God.
- 1:30 p.m.** **Break into small groups**, answer questions about Praise and Worship and discuss the sexuality teaching. Have some questions prepared ahead of time so that there is an order to the group discussion.
- 2:15 p.m.** **Break** with snacks
- 2:45 p.m.** **Talk: the Sacrament of Confession**, why, who, what, where, when, how?????
- 3:30 p.m.** **The Holy Spirit:** Give a short teaching about the gifts and also how the Spirit manifests itself in and among us at different times. Explain that when there is such a large group praying, like at the conference, many people will have varied experiences or manifestations. No person should ever judge the level of his or her spirituality or of another person's in terms of the experience that he or she may have during the weekend. God knows us and has known us from the beginning. He will give us what we need and it is not important that we feel or see anything. We must trust and believe that His word is true and

that He is faithful. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." I Corinthians 1:9 "And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6

4:00 p.m. Small groups (See pages 14 and 24-26)

4:30 p.m. Free time

5:30 p.m. Dinner

6:30 p.m. Talk: What is Eucharistic Adoration? Why do we do it? What happens? Remember, **Adoration** should be present at both **Benediction** and a **Procession** of the Blessed Sacrament, but they are all three different things. Explain all of this.

7:00 p.m. Eucharistic Procession, Adoration and Benediction

7:30 p.m. Small Groups ministry time. This gives the young person a chance to express his or her thoughts and/or experiences during the Adoration time.

7:45 p.m. Confession available. Time of ministry continues. Very often, we want to fix the problems that may come up within a young person during Eucharistic Adoration. More often than not, the Sacrament of Confession brings the healing and freedom that is needed.

9:00 p.m. Dismissal

FORMING SMALL GROUPS:

Have adults who attended a conference and led a small group in the past, share their experiences. You may wish to do the same. Facilitation by the group leaders is greatly fueled by the numerous issues that will be raised in the youth throughout the weekend. Tell them that it is important to remember that God will actively work in each youth. Questions for each small group time at the conference are provided in the program book.

Practical Skills for Small Group Leader's Training:

The most important thing the small group leader must learn is how to actively listen to the person who is sharing. This means to give the person your undivided attention by making eye contact and appropriate facial expressions.

The small group leader does not have to agree or disagree with the person sharing. He or she must simply **validate** the feelings and thoughts of the person sharing.

Teach the young people to depend on and trust God in situations. Don't try to "fix" their problems.

Role of the Small Group Leader:

- ⇒ Be a role model/Christian example through personal sharing and positive speech.
- ⇒ Learn and use the names of the youth in your small group.
- ⇒ Maintain discipline and order.
- ⇒ To share God's love with young people.
- ⇒ To guide the youth through discussion in order to aid them in relating and applying the talks to their own lives.
- ⇒ To allow the youth to express their opinions.
- ⇒ To share your personal faith.
- ⇒ To pray with the youth.

Setting/Environment for a Small Group:

- ⇒ Find an area with minimal distractions.
- ⇒ Sit where everyone can be at the same level.

Discussion Leading Skills:

- ⇒ Begin and end with a prayer
- ⇒ Pose an open-ended question, and then allow the youth to respond.
- ⇒ Don't be afraid of silence.

- ⇒ Be patient.
- ⇒ Keep speech positive. Do not allow cut-downs, negative humor, or foul language.
- ⇒ Do not allow one person to monopolize the discussion.
- ⇒ Prevent disruptions.
- ⇒ Deal with a difficult youth in private if possible and/or take the difficult youth to the group coordinator if he/she persists in his/her problematic behavior.

Attitude Tips:

- ⇒ Realize the significance of your role.
- ⇒ Yield to God's guidance and allow Him to lead the sharing.
- ⇒ Trust that the youth have been "divinely appointed" to your group.
- ⇒ Make the most of each small group meeting.

Guidelines for Developing Small Groups for Youth:

- ⇒ Goals and Purposes of the Small Group:
 - To help the young people relate to what is being said, and to help them apply it to their lives.
 - To give an opportunity for youth to share with and learn from one another.

Important Factors within Small Groups:

- ⇒ Gender of Youth: Separate small groups for young men and women are most effective for the following reasons:
 - Distraction may be caused by mixing males and females.
 - It is awkward to discuss sexuality with members of the opposite sex.
 - Needs and maturity levels of adolescent males and females differ greatly.
- ⇒ Size of Small Groups:
 - The ideal is 5 to 8 youth with 1 group leader or 2 co-leaders.
 - Groups with more than 8 may become too large for personal sharing.

Assigning Youth to Small Groups:

- ⇒ Facilitate more freedom for the youth to be him/herself, as well as create the opportunity for new friendships, by not assigning friends or cliques to the same small group.
- ⇒ Maintain these small groups throughout the year for continued growth and fellowship for the youth, if possible.

POSSIBLE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Feel free to use these questions in the way that will best serve your group. It is a good idea to begin and end all small groups with prayer. (Look at the schedule for the current year and adapt the order of small group sessions.)

- Friday Evening – Small Group 1:
 - ⇒ Was there anything from the talk tonight that impacted you?
 - ⇒ What are some of your initial reactions to the conference after the first session?
 - ⇒ What are your expectations for the weekend?
- Saturday Lunch – Small Group 2
 - Men (questions to follow Men's session)
 - ⇒ How can a young man keep his way pure?
 - ⇒ In what ways do you struggle to live for God?
 - ⇒ How can you stand up and be a good witness for God among your peers?
 - ⇒ What is the most encouraging thing you heard in this morning's men's session?
 - Women (questions to follow Women's session)
 - ⇒ What do you think is most difficult about being chaste?
 - ⇒ How can you maintain chastity in a relationship?
 - ⇒ How can you stand up and be a good witness for God among your peers?
 - ⇒ What is the most encouraging thing you heard in this morning's women's session?

- Saturday Dinner – Small Group 3
 - ⇒ What break out session did you attend this afternoon?
 - ⇒ Have the youth summarize what was presented at the session they attended.
 - ⇒ Tailor questions to specific young people from what they shared about the session they attended.
 - ⇒ How is your experience of the weekend so far?
 - ⇒ What are you expecting for tonight’s session?
- Saturday Evening – Small Group 4
 - ⇒ What reaction did you have to the speaker’s talk?
 - ⇒ What are the benefits of living a life according to God’s will?
 - ⇒ What was the most helpful thing you learned from the talk?
 - ⇒ Do you think God worked in your life tonight? How did He work?
 - ⇒ Have you had any experiences like this before that got you really excited about your faith?
 - ⇒ What can you do to keep this experience alive in your life?
 - ⇒ What support can you seek when you get home?
- Sunday Afternoon – Small Group 5
 - ⇒ Do you have any fears or hesitations about coming home?
 - ⇒ What are some goals you would like to accomplish when you get home?
 - ⇒ Did anything change in your life this weekend?
 - ⇒ What things do you need to do when you get home to keep this experience alive in your life?
 - ⇒ Are there any people you can look up to for support when you get home?
 - ⇒ What kinds of things can we do to support one another?

Suggested Scriptures:

Learn from Jesus himself: **Matthew 11:29, 30**

A relationship with Him is “daily”: **Luke 9:23-26**

Jesus teaches us: **Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 (all three chapters)**

How to live a life worthy of our calling: **Ephesians chapters 4 & 5, I Pt. chapter 1**

FIVE DON'TS FOR QUESTION-MAKING

- 1. Don't use yes or no questions.**
- 2. Don't use right or wrong questions.**
- 3. Don't fish for the right answers.**
- 4. Don't be afraid of silence.**
- 5. Don't use questions as a spring-board to preach.**

DO PREPARE IN ADVANCE, MAKE QUESTIONS INTERESTING, MAKE USE OF CONTENT, FEELING, AND BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS, ANSWER QUESTIONS WITH QUESTIONS, VARY YOUR APPROACH TO QUESTIONS; (Written questions, open-ended questions, journaling, raise hands)

A PLAN FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

The job of ministering to young people can seem overwhelming at times. The following plan encourages youth ministers to delegate responsibilities. There are many gifted people in each parish. These people may not feel comfortable ministering to young people but they may still want to serve the youth in some capacity. Your job is make your needs known to the whole parish so that you can form a Youth Ministry committee.

Job Description for Youth Minister: The Pastor, along with a committee of laypersons, should create and implement a job description for the Youth Minister. The National Office for Youth Ministry, Life Teen, and the various diocesan offices have such descriptions. The search committee should gather these and create one that fits the needs of the parish. A probation period should be included in this description.

Job Descriptions Should Include the Following: Youth leaders and those working with youth should take full advantage of the trainings, retreats, and gatherings provided for them by the diocese. This is not only educational, informative, and spiritual, but it is the building of the community of those who have a passion for young people.

Training: It is the responsibility of the Pastor to require his youth ministers to be trained. This should be part of the job description. The office of Youth Ministry provides such trainings and also has information on opportunities throughout the state and the country. It is the responsibility of the youth minister to provide training for all those involved with youth ministry in the parish.

The youth minister's committee should consist of (but not be limited to) the following:

Volunteer Chairperson: This person's primary role is to recruit volunteers to do the following;

- ⇒ Mail Outs
- ⇒ Phone calls
- ⇒ Create files and maintain them
- ⇒ Send minutes to each team leader when any meeting occurs. (This includes any meeting that deals with plans for youth ministry.)
- ⇒ Assist the Youth Minister with any clerical projects.
- ⇒ Collect monthly evaluations from each chairperson. You may be able to do this over the phone or by e-mail.
- ⇒ Sign up drivers and/or chaperones for various events

Food: The chairperson of this committee will:

- ⇒ Determine the menus for each function
- ⇒ Solicit volunteers to prepare them.
- ⇒ Meals for:
 - Retreats
 - Youth Nights
 - Boxed lunches for days of service
 - Plate lunches for Fund Raisers

Public Relations: (this will take at least two people) The first and most important function of this person is to communicate all plans with the pastor.

- ⇒ Gather every e-mail, address, phone number, and fax of newspapers, television stations, and radio stations in your area.
- ⇒ Maintain the youth portion of your church website or create and maintain your own youth website.
- ⇒ Return e-mails, phone calls, and mail in a timely fashion.
- ⇒ Write a press release when something is happening in your church and write an article after the event has occurred.
- ⇒ Tape a PSA (public service announcement) to advertise your event. Contact the radio stations and find out if they will play it. (There are many people who own home recording studios who would tape these free of charge.)
- ⇒ Send your information to community calendars, newsrooms, and shows that feature information on local events.
- ⇒ Write announcements and meet with the church secretary to make sure that the announcement runs in the church bulletin.
- ⇒ Write a pulpit announcement and give it to the priest or make the announcement yourself.
- ⇒ Have someone make signs and post them throughout the church and other buildings.
- ⇒ Secure a photographer and have pictures taken during the event.

- ⇒ Teach young people how to speak in front of an audience and have them invite other young people to events. Have these same people come back and report to the congregation regarding the success of the event.
- ⇒ Make a photo album and put it in the back of the church.
- ⇒ Assign one person to each weekend mass. Do this four times a year and anytime you need to inform the congregation of a special upcoming event. This person would speak for five minutes at mass. The purpose of this talk would be to inform the congregation of the things that the youth have done and to solicit prayer and help for upcoming events.

Liturgy Chairperson:

- ⇒ Obtain and train readers for mass. Have one Saturday a month to train and assign the readers to the different masses.
- ⇒ Meet with the priest, the music minister, and the youth leader weekly if possible.
- ⇒ Train and assign ushers to each youth mass.

Outreach Chairperson:

- ⇒ Gather every address, e-mail, and phone number of all the teens in your parish.
- ⇒ Send postcards and make phone calls to inform teens of every function that involves youth.
- ⇒ Create a "phone tree." The outreach chairperson will call five of your youth leaders. Each of these people will call three people and these three will in turn call three people. If e-mailing works better, have them e-mail. The main purpose of this is to make sure that someone from your church contacts all of your young people somehow each week.
- ⇒ Obtain the calendars from every school in your area. Share these with the people who work with youth. Assign someone to each school. This person should make sure that there is representation from your parish at every school function.
- ⇒ Plan Service Projects. (Call Hope House, Turning Point, Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army, Soup Kitchens, Habitat for Humanity etc.)
- ⇒ Identify teens with special needs: divorce, depression, those using alcohol/drugs etc. Assign someone to walk with these persons more closely.
- ⇒ Conduct evaluations of your program twice a year. (This allows the youth to have a voice.)
- ⇒ Find out about community activities for youth and have the PR chairperson advertise it. (Example: YMCA run)

Evangelization:

- ⇒ Learn everything you can about evangelizing teens. Work to invite new teens to your youth functions more closely.
- ⇒ Follow up with the Outreach Chairperson to make sure that people are attending school functions.
- ⇒ Create and train a Youth Outreach team.

Hospitality:

- ⇒ This person is responsible for getting a team of people to greet the teens at the youth mass and at the youth group meetings.
- ⇒ Take care of the needs of any special guests such as speakers.
- ⇒ Teach those who work with youth to sit with groups of youth around the church and at the youth meetings.

Special Events: (This person may also serve as a fundraising chairperson.)

- ⇒ Gather calendars from the diocese office.
- ⇒ Advertise your events through the diocesan youth office.
- ⇒ Work with the chairpersons in planning the event
- ⇒ Decide upon the amount of money you need to raise.
- ⇒ Come up with a list of possible fundraisers.

- ⇒ Put fundraiser dates on the calendar immediately. (You will have to work with the church secretary in order to secure the room, building, or parking lot depending upon what you are doing.)
- ⇒ Call a meeting of the chairpersons and tell them of the plans.

Crisis Management: (This person should be a professional counselor.)

- ⇒ This person should investigate the laws and policies regarding minors.
- ⇒ Each church should have at least three professional counselors that have offered to serve as resources in time of crisis. The Youth leader should contact one of these persons as soon as a crisis occurs. The plans of managing this crisis should come from a professional counselor.
- ⇒ The youth leader should appoint a crisis team and have them trained by a counselor. This team should consist of five to seven people. This should be done on a parish and a citywide level.

Logistics, Environment, and Transportation:

- ⇒ This person is in charge of set-up for all meetings and special events. This includes obtaining a stage if necessary, setting up chairs and/or tables, sound systems, and whatever else the event calls for.
- ⇒ Secure vans, cars, and/or buses for any trip that your youth may be taking. Remember to remind the youth leader of the need for liability and permission forms.

Music Chairperson:

- ⇒ This person is in charge of providing music for youth liturgies, youth nights, praise and worship gatherings, bible studies, and prayer meetings.
- ⇒ This person should be accountable to someone who has experience and knowledge in this area.

There are many churches that have paid people for many of these positions.

FORMING A RETREAT TEAM:

If you feel led to organize a youth retreat team in your parish, begin by submitting to your pastor and then to the discernment of a team of spiritual leaders. Next, gather some intercessors who will pray daily for this ministry.

The team should be comprised of teens aged fifteen and older who have had some type of spiritual awakening/experience and are ready to share the Gospel message with others. The members of the retreat team must be willing to meet weekly. This meeting is two-fold: first and most importantly, to spiritually feed and challenge them on their journey, Secondly, to plan retreats.

Some Suggested Requirements for the Retreat Team Members:

- ⇒ Have a spiritual director
- ⇒ Have an accountability/prayer partner
- ⇒ Be willing to follow the teachings of the Church with regards to sexuality
- ⇒ Refrain from underage drinking
- ⇒ Attend weekly gatherings, and extra practices
- ⇒ Be present for all retreats (there are naturally exceptions here)

Some Specifics:

- ⇒ Gather together a music ministry team and set up practices for them.
- ⇒ Choose several themes for retreats (these can be one day retreats, overnight retreats, or weekend retreats).
- ⇒ Come together to pray about the themes and to create retreats using the different themes.
- ⇒ Skits, music, talks, and testimonies should all reflect the theme.

- ⇒ Have several good icebreakers, games, and activities prepared.
- ⇒ Have a training in order to teach the young people how to prepare a testimony and also how to prepare a talk based on a certain theme. Be sure to listen to them before they speak in front of others.
- ⇒ Some of the topics may require a priest or adult speaker.

Advertising, Promoting, and Booking Retreats:

You should come up with a stipend for retreats. This price is not one that will make money but one that will help with the expenses of the ministry. Also, included in your contract would be housing, food, and mileage. It is also important to put your sound needs into the contract. This will depend upon how many musicians/vocalists you have and whether or not wireless microphones are required. Make postcards or fliers and send them to churches in your diocese.

PLEASE NOTE: Our office also has an “Apologetics and Resources Manual” available. It contains book, internet, and telephone suggestions for learning more about the Catholic faith, as well as helps for Special Needs (such as suicide, disorders, etc.). Please contact us if you would like a copy.

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4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria, LA 71303 / (318)473-0539 / centraloffice@diocesealex.org
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