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12-2008

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Recommended Citation

Krug, Julie Therese, "A Comprehensive Retreat Program for High School Youth Ministry Students" (2008). *Pastoral Institute*. 9.

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A Comprehensive Retreat Program
For High School Youth Ministry Students

A Pastoral Project
Presented to the Pastoral Institute,
University of the Incarnate Word, in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts in
Religious Studies

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Bachelor of Arts in English

Approved by:

Fr. Eulish Ryan
Faculty Advisor

Date: *Dec. 1, 2008*

Theology of Church and Ministry

One of my biggest challenges as a Catholic youth minister is fostering a sense of community and belonging in the teens and young adults with whom I work. Even without reading the latest surveys, I know we face a daunting task as Christian ministers in a culture where relativism is prominent, and many teens are searching for meaning. What does it take to attract them to church and ministry?

In his book, *Youth Ministry in the 21st Century*, Rick Lawrence cites “The Cool Church Survey” in which 10,000 Christian teenagers ranked ten factors in choosing a church. In the final analysis, seventy-three percent of the respondents chose “a welcoming atmosphere where I can be myself” as the number one reason for choosing a church (121). The *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* released a survey in 2008 which finds that “while nearly one-in-three Americans were raised in the Catholic faith, today fewer than one-in-four describe themselves as Catholics.” From the Pew survey it can be concluded that maybe the Catholic Church is not providing what most people, especially young people, are searching for in a church – a welcoming atmosphere. Consequently, the question for those working in Catholic youth ministry is: What can we do as ministers to create an atmosphere that enables us to develop committed, life-long Catholics?

In order to examine this question, one must understand how the “institutional” and “mystical communion” models of church, as defined by Avery Cardinal Dulles in *Models of Church*, differ yet depend upon one another. It is also important that youth ministry programming reflect this interdependence, because the future of our church depends on the success of this programming.

In his book *A People Adrift*, Peter Steinfels argues that the “Catholic Church can succeed as an institution while failing as a church. But it cannot succeed as a church while failing as an institution” (14). It only makes sense that there must be order and guidelines for any organization to succeed. As Dulles notes, from the earliest times there were recognized ministers and guidelines for worship (27). Unfortunately, throughout history the institutional nature of the church became more dominant as the Church came under attack. This is most evident in the counter-Reformation movement that resulted from the Council of Trent (1545-1563). To defend the faith against Protestantism the Church spoke as one voice, usually that of the Pope (Bernier 177). After Trent, the faith was passed on to the laity by the clergy as an extension of Rome. The Vatican was the center of thought and the faithful were told what to believe and how to practice it. Even the seminaries, a development of the Tridentine Council, became a place for high-level indoctrination. The institutional model of church became the predominant model of church for well over 400 years.

During this 400 years, the institutional model of church was not only taught, but widely practiced. During this period, the church stressed individualism in religious practice. While this made people responsible for their own religious practices, the community dimension of Christianity was lost, and along with it a welcoming atmosphere. As Bernier points out, the catechism of Trent taught that the purpose of our creation was for each of us to save our own soul. This reduced religion to not breaking the commandments and indicated a shocking lack of community (193). Likewise, Dulles points out that while the institutional nature of the church is necessary and good, when it is the primary or only model of church then it can mask the true nature of church (27). As Jesus reminds us in the beatitudes, a church should unite people into a

community of believers who effectively see to the needs of their neighbors and create a sense of justice and well-being among them (Mt 5:1-11; Lk 6:20-26).

To say that the Second Vatican Council was the most important event in church history in the modern era is an understatement. The Council called for sweeping liturgical changes, and most importantly described a church that was *of the world*, with an emphasis on a more Scriptural model of church. For years before the Council, theologians such as Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, and Edward Schillebeeckx had called for a shift in ecclesiology, one that resembled the communion ecclesiology found in the Gospels. Congar pointed out that, “the chief point of reference was what all members of the Church have in common, a share in the priesthood of Christ” (Austin, 181). *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* reflects this new ecclesiology:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Peter 2:9:4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism (#14).

In the same vein, Susan Wood notes in her essay “The Church as Communion” that the 1985 Synod of Bishops “affirmed that communion is the dominant image of the church in the documents of Vatican II” (160). Also, Richard Gaillardetz points out in his essay, “Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry in the Ordered Communion” that the Council returned to the biblical concept of communion and the ecclesiology of Paul. For Paul, life in Christ meant life in the body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor 12; Rom 12).

Like most things in the church, this shift in thinking was slow to take hold. Church leaders continued to operate out of a primarily institutional model with most of the power

centralized in Rome, while voicing a communion ecclesiology. Pope John Paul II is the best example of this. Dulles notes in his essay "The Ecclesiology of John Paul II" that John Paul's communion ecclesiology is very strong and evident in these words: "The Church may therefore be described as community is which the members are brought into supernatural relationship by their reciprocal membership in the body of Christ" (95). This communion model of church has a more horizontal dimension than the vertical dimension of the institutional model and seeks to reduce the distance between the laity and the ordained. Despite this horizontal depiction of the church, during the reign of John Paul II the papacy continued to assert its claim of central authority.

Understanding how these two models of church should complement one another is a major challenge for Catholic youth ministry. If youth ministry is to be successful in the world today, it needs to focus primarily on the mystical communion model of church while instilling an appreciation of the institutional nature of the church. If we spurn the institutional model completely, we lose the very foundations and structures of our faith, which give it the parameters for meaning. On the other hand, if we are so concerned with teaching the proper way to worship, what to say, and what not to do, we are missing what these young people hunger for the most – a sense of community and belonging. The term "mystical" as it is used to define the communion model of church refers to the spiritual nature of church. Dulles states, "The primary factor that binds the members of the Church to each other is the reconciling grace of Christ" (50). This "mystical communion" model of church points to more prayer centered activities, that both enrich the spirituality of the individual while fostering a deeper sense of community among the believers.

Beginning in the 1980's, catechetical models began to emerge that took into account research in the fields of sociology, psychology, and education. Catechetical lessons were now treated more holistically with regard to teaching methodology, age appropriate material, and scope and sequence. Religious educators, many of whom were now lay people, were more educated about learning styles and methodology. They understood the educational premise that to experience something spiritually is far more effective than lecturing and memorizing doctrines.

In 1997 the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops published *Renewing the Vision*, a framework for Catholic youth ministry. The overriding theme of this document is comprehensive youth ministry and its experiential nature. For the first time, the leadership in the Catholic Church in the United States recognized the importance of young people as contributing, active members of the parish community. The document states "In parishes, young people need to have a wide variety of opportunities to use their gifts and to express their faith through meaningful roles. They will develop a spirit of commitment within a community only through actual involvement in the many ways the Church exercises and carries out its mission" (13). The Bishops called for ministry with adolescents to be ministerial and pastoral, relational, goal-centered, multidimensional, holistic and developmental, people-centered, and needs-centered (3-4). In other words, meet young people where they are and make them feel welcomed and valued.

As a result of this document, many youth ministers attended certification courses and graduate courses to help them develop comprehensive youth ministry programs, personal spirituality, and theological frameworks. While this effort has been highly successful in developing youth ministers and improving programming, recent studies show we as a Church still have a long way to go. In the most comprehensive study ever done on youth and religion in

the United States, *The National Study of Youth and Religion: Analysis of the Population of Catholic Teenagers and Their Parents* (2004) revealed some dismal realities concerning our Catholic youth. Over one-third of teens who claim to be Catholic have never attended religious education or any youth group activity. Sixty-one percent of Catholic high school teens have never attended a retreat or conference. Seventy-five percent of high school teens have never been on a mission trip. Subsequently, for the majority of Catholic teens who attend religious education, their faith experience remains classroom based.

This reality does not bode well for the future of the Catholic Church in the United States. Its success as an institution and a church depends on the religious education experience of this generation of young people. For many of their parents it is too late. If we are truly serious about attracting and keeping our youth involved in the parish community, then their experience of Church has to change. If catechesis is to embody the mission of the church, it should also be the catalyst for balancing the different models of church, and minimizing the role of the institutional church.

As a minister to youth I study, promote, and implement programs that embody the models of church in a holistic, experiential fashion. For instance, on retreats young people experience community and a sense of belonging while experiencing and appreciating the familiar institutional/sacramental aspects of the church such as reconciliation and Marian devotions. In a society where it is common to “shop churches” as one grows older, it is increasingly important that we strive to instill Catholic identity and ownership in our young people. This cannot happen if we operate out of a primarily institutional model of church.

Change is inevitable. Dealing with change and cultural realities defines this critical period for the Catholic Church and its future. As Steinfels notes, the future of the church depends

on two key transitions, the passage of generations and the passage of clergy driven ministry to lay driven ministry (11). The generations who long for the days before the Council are dying out and the bishops who are still bitter over the changes will soon be replaced by bishops born after Vatican II. This generation of young people will experience more and better youth-directed liturgies and programming than ever before. They will also have more opportunities to attend retreats and mission trips, which are increasingly popular among high school and college age youth. These spiritual experiences will be critical because this group will also become the next lay ministers in the church. They will have more responsibility and authority than any generation before them. This is an inevitable result of a shrinking number of priests and members of religious orders. Steinfels concludes, "The future depends on what choices are made, or left to default, as this double passage is negotiated" (12).

Finally, by understanding how models of church and youth ministry programming work together and complement each other, youth ministers can make an enormous impact on the future of the Catholic Church. To cling to old models and forms of catechesis will only hurt the church, and may hasten the departure of young people to other religious denominations. It will be incredibly important for youth ministers and catechists to be qualified and compensated sufficiently to educate this generation of young Catholics. As daunting as this task may seem, we are not alone. The risen Christ is with us as we live and work in community.

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Pastoral Project Proposal

August 2007- April 2008

Description:

One of my passions is planning, writing, and implementing retreats for young people. In my ten years as a youth minister, one of my goals has been to create a peer ministry with our older teens that keeps them involved in the church community and in turn benefits others in the community.

As we begin the 2007-08 school year, my pastoral project will encompass five retreats that I will work on in collaboration with a team of young adult volunteers and approximately 20 high school juniors and seniors. The "retreat season" will begin with a leadership retreat in September 2007, two Confirmation retreats (December 2007 and March 2008), a freshmen lock-in retreat (January 2008), and a junior high retreat (March 2008). The team will meet weekly for 8 weeks prior to a retreat, at times working on retreats simultaneously, to plan and prepare. The team's tasks will include leading ice breakers, small discussion groups, large group activities, praise and worship sessions, and giving witness talks.

Project Proposal Outline

1. Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in New Braunfels, Texas has a membership of 3600 families. We have over 300 teens involved in high school youth ministry, including preparation for Confirmation. Retreats are a vital part of this ministry and confirmation preparation. Confirmation takes place at the end of 10th grade for most students, so the challenge has always been to create programs and catechesis for juniors, seniors, and young adults that keep them involved in a meaningful way in the church. This year we have registered our biggest group of juniors and seniors ever – 80 students are registered. Numbers and returning retreat leaders are strengths. The plan is to have 20-25 teens on the leadership team that plan and implement the retreats in this project, and another 22 teens and young adults on the Teen ACTS retreat team. The obstacle or challenge will be to involve as many teens as possible in retreat ministry. The budget for six retreats is always an obstacle, and working around the many activities these teens are involved in will certainly be another challenge. To overcome scheduling issues for meetings and retreats, we discuss days and times at the leadership retreat and the teens have a chance to sign up and work on the retreat that fits their schedule the best.
2. When I started working as a youth minister in 1998, there was only one yearly retreat for teens and that retreat was only for Confirmation students. This yearly retreat was planned and implemented by the retreat center staff where the retreat was held. There was no peer ministry. I hoped that creating a junior and senior retreat team would serve two purposes; it would create a mentoring relationship between older and younger students, and it would keep older teens involved in youth ministry after Confirmation. Over the years I have added more and more retreats in response to a growing number of teens and now young adults who want to be involved in retreat ministry.

3. The focus group is made up of teens, adults, young adults, and the Director of Religious Education – all who have collaborated in some way with the design and implementation of these retreats.

Director of Religious Education: Bill Smith

Adults and Young Adults: Matt and Kim Huckaby, Chris and Stephanie Kubala, Lori Schulte

Teens: Travis Hanson, Ryan Ortez, Elizabeth Coffey, Nicole Driscoll

4. N/A

5. The members of the focus group gave me feedback at the conclusion of the 2006-2007 retreat season and we made revisions in the retreat outlines for the upcoming season. Two things we discussed for the upcoming season were better preparing our retreat leaders to give witness talks and bringing in a praise and worship band for the Confirmation retreats. In preparation for my pastoral project I also wanted to turn over the running of the retreat meetings to the young adult volunteers and create evaluation instruments for each retreat as well as an overall evaluation from the retreat team.

6. The goals of the project are:

- To foster a sense of community in the leadership team and the retreatants.
- To mentor and teach leadership skills to high school juniors and seniors.
- To create for the retreatants a spirit-filled experience that helps them in their faith journey.
- To provide opportunities for young adults in the faith community to share their gifts with young people.

The timeline for these goals will be one year and the evaluation process will involve a one day retreat to assess the previous year and plan for the next year.

7. Objectives for this year (2007-08):

- The retreatants will be able to participate in small group discussions, games, praise and worship music, and challenging activities with a high level of satisfaction. My role will be to make sure each retreat outline contains these components.
 - There will be six retreats that benefit teens of all ages with a variety of themes and objectives. My role will be to handle the budgets, parent communication, organization of the teams, supplies, and retreat outlines.
 - The retreatants will begin to develop relationships with other young people in their community. My role will be to encourage as many young people to take part in these retreats as possible. These retreats will be highlighted in my newsletters, parent meetings, and visits to the classrooms during religious education.
 - The teens on the retreat team will grow in their leadership and communication skills. My role is to design a leadership retreat that highlights these objectives and meetings that reflect time to work on honing these skills.
 - The young adults on the team will develop meaningful relationships with the teens they are working with. My role is to recruit young adults with the necessary skills and willingness to work with teens. I will also serve as a mentor for these young adults.
8. The knowledge needed to accomplish these goals is an understanding of faith development stages, adolescent development, and learning styles. One also needs to have some knowledge of what components should be in a retreat and the purpose behind each one. I am well prepared in these areas as I have teaching degrees in English and Communications as well as teaching experience. I also have a Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies from the Center of Ministry Development. My Graduate courses at the University of Incarnate Word have also helped give me background perspective on adolescent faith and catechesis models.
9. One of the skills needed to accomplish these goals is experience working with

retreats and teens. Another is communication skills. I have 10 years of experience as a youth minister and retreat leader. As a middle school teacher I taught peer mediation and communication skills. I am constantly learning how important it is to work in collaboration with young adults who often have college retreat experience and the enthusiasm and energy that it takes to produce good retreats.

10. I need to keep a positive and flexible attitude when working with teens and young adults on retreats. Most young people today have a lot of demands on their time. The teens we have on retreat team are band members, choir members, and members of varied sports teams. Games are scheduled at the last minute, people get sick, some teens don't follow through on assignments, so a retreat leader needs to be very flexible and prepared for anything. I have found that teens will take their cue from the adults in charge. If those adults have a positive and energetic attitude, then the teens will too. We constantly talk about modeling and mentoring.
11. I am currently working with our pastor, pastoral assistant, and DRE to hire another youth minister. In a program as large as ours, we badly need another staff person to help with middle school youth ministry and the retreat program. One of the young adults who has worked with me in retreat ministry for three years is our number one candidate for this position. I see the retreat program growing, especially with the addition of two Teen ACTS retreats per year in addition to the five outlined in my pastoral project. My goal has always been to create a youth retreat ministry that will not only survive, but thrive after I am gone. Hiring a second youth minister is a step in the right direction if this goal is to become a reality.
12. My personal learning goals this year are:
 - To learn how to let go. I don't need to "control" everything.
 - To trust my young adults to foster healthy relationships with our teens.

- To grow spiritually through this retreat ministry, and let the Holy Spirit do its work.

My professional goals this year are:

- To recruit and train young adults to run the retreat team meetings with little to no interference from me.
- To create retreat outlines that others could implement and find useful in ministry.
- To grow our retreat ministry to include as many teens and young adults as possible.
- To mentor teens in a spiritual setting, and teach them skills that will benefit them for a lifetime.

13. It would be great if my resource person had some experience with youth retreats and some ideas or activities that we could incorporate into our retreat outlines.

THE PROJECT
August 2007-April 2008

Preparing the Young Adult Team

- ✚ We will have two meetings prior to the Leadership retreat for the young adults that will be serving as team leaders on the retreats this year. Young adults for this year's team include: Kim and Matt Huckaby, Chris and Stephanie Kubala, and Lori Schulte
- ✚ The first meeting is to discuss expectations (see handout), answer questions, work out a schedule for meetings, and time to view the Sexual Misconduct video and required paperwork for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. All young adult retreat leaders are also included in the VASE (Victims Assistance and Sexual Exploitation) training required for catechists and all those who work with youth.
- ✚ The second meeting is to go over the Leadership retreat, plan activities, discuss assignments. The young adults also decide who will give personal testimonies and lead specific parts of the retreat. The personal testimonies given by the young adults are an excellent model for the teens who will give their own testimonies on the retreats. We also spend some time in prayer. For these meetings I use Carl Koch's *150 Opening and Closing Prayers*. Winona: St. Mary's Press, 1986 and related Scriptures. For our final meeting we have our closing prayer in the grotto of our church and say a rosary together.

Team Expectations

GOAL: The goal of our ministry is to create loving relationships and community. If there is any question of how we are to treat people, search the scriptures. Galatians is very clear on the fruits of the spirit. Use that as a guide to your life and to your behavior. Please consider that the violations listed below are offenses that could cause permanent damage to the teens we are ministering. You have accepted a LEADERSHIP position, a position of privilege, and must act in accordance with the written or unwritten expectations.

At all times:

- ✦ Underage drinking, use of tobacco products, or illegal drugs is prohibited
- ✦ It is not permitted for a male and a female to be alone together, please use caution in judgment, have another person with you – prevention not reaction is the key
- ✦ Do not counsel or advise
- ✦ Never privately speak with a person of the other gender alone
- ✦ No physical relationships other than friendly hugs

Teaming and Retreat:

- ✦ Team is not to miss more than 2 meetings without FIRST contacting an adult director
- ✦ Be on time to meetings unless you have contacted an adult director beforehand
- ✦ Meetings should be productive. They should include time spent on each aspect of the retreat.

On the Retreat:

- ✦ Others will rise to the level of your expectations
- ✦ Use common sense before trying to make it fun or easier: If in doubt, leave it out
- ✦ Redirect as your first method of correcting:
 - start by using an alternate behavior, not acknowledging the incorrect behavior,
 - give them a start over command
 - acknowledge the new action
- ✦ 3 R's: Rules without Relationships produce Rebellion
- ✦ No verbal abuse – any questions about how to address someone, ask.
- ✦ No physical discipline at all – any discipline must be directed to adults.
- ✦ Remember there is always an underlying cause for behavior

Any of these offenses may lead to immediate dismissal of the team at the Directors discretion. We want this team and retreat to be a positive experience for all parties involved. Thank you for volunteering to be on team.

Retreat Team Application
Sts. Peter and Paul Youth Ministry

Name _____ Grade in 2007-08 _____

High School Attending _____

Next year we will have several retreats. If you are interested in serving on the team, please fill out this application and you will be contacted later this summer.

- We will have a leadership retreat in September to kick off our retreat year.
- You must be a confirmed junior or senior
- You must commit to the required number of meetings per retreat.
- All team members should be open to giving witness talks.

Feel free to call Mrs. Krug (625-4531 ext. 202) and ask questions about these retreats. This can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your high school years.

DEADLINE TO TURN IN APPLICATIONS IS JUNE 1, 2007

1. I wish to serve on the retreat team because

2. My strengths are

3. These are the things I am involved in at school

4. The following experiences and training will help me be a good retreat leader:

The Leadership Retreat

LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Saturday

- Depart for retreat site. Invite the Pastor to do a send-off blessing.
- 9:30 am Arrive at retreat site, unpack, and settle in
- 10:00 am Orientation - Collect all cell phones and go over camp rules
(a representative from the retreat center usually helps with this)
- 10:15 am Overview of Retreat and Purpose
- Adjective Game:
Everyone makes a big circle. The first person states an adjective that begins with the same letter as his or her first name. For example, I use Jolly Julie. The next person repeats the adjectives and the names of all the people who came before him or her. The last person (usually the director) repeats all the adjectives and names. This is a great way to get to know one another and these adjectives will usually stick all year.
- 10:30 am What makes a leader?
1. Who God Uses (Powerpoint Slide 1) Resource 1
 2. Youth Becoming Leaders – (Slide 2) Resource 2
Using Bibles, read Exodus 3 and discuss Moses' excuses and how they relate to our own
- 11:00 am Break
- Becoming a Successful Leader
3. Responsibilities at retreats (Slide 3 and an adaptation of the "Team Expectations" given to the young adults).
 4. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey is used to illustrate the following: Paradigms / Principles (Slides 4-8)
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Group Development
Problem Solving, Team Kayak, Initiatives
- 4:00 pm Free Time
Waterfront, Game Room

6:00 pm Dinner
7:00 pm Witness Talk- (Getting out of our Comfort Zones)
7:30 pm Bible Search: Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Resource 3, Slide 9)
**Spiritual Gifts Handouts ** (Resource 4)
How do we understand these gifts?
What does it mean to have a Heart of a Servant?
8:00 pm Prayer Partner Pick (modeled by young adult leaders)
Discuss gifts and pray over one another
8:30 pm Night Zip Line
9:30 pm Bonfire and S'mores
10:15 pm Commissioning Ritual (Resource 5)
11:00 pm Lights Out

Sunday

8:00 am Breakfast
9:00 am Reserve time for Mass -- this will have to be adjusted depending on
Mass times near the retreat center
11:00 am Giving Witness Talks (Slides 10-11)
Witness Talk
11:40 am What holds you back from being a good leader?
(Obstacles- friends, family, peer pressure, time, media)
** May refer back to 7 Habits
12:00 pm Lunch
1:00 pm Rock Climbing or other team building activity
3:30 pm Wrap Up- What makes you ready?
Spiritual Growth, Prayer, Personal Relationships, Fellowship
4:00 pm Commitment Letters – Team leaders are asked to write themselves
letters considering the following:
How will I commit to this team?

How will I strengthen my relationship with Jesus Christ? Become more prayerful?

How will I strive to live out my Christian values at school, at home, and in my community?

What gifts do I particularly want to share with others?

4:15 pm Closing Prayer - Anointing

We begin with a reading from Matthew 20: 26-28

“As you come forward to be anointed with oil, remember that true leaders are servants first. Think about how you will serve others on this retreat team, how you will place God first, the other person second, and yourself third.”

As the young people come forward, anoint them on the forehead and hands, saying: “_____, I anoint you in the name of the community of Sts. Peter and Paul for this call to service. Lead with your heart.”

We conclude by joining hands and saying together the Our Father.

4:30 pm Pack and clean dorms

5:00 pm Departure

Sources used in this retreat:

Brown, Therese. *Graced Moments: Prayer Services for the Lives of Teens*. Vol. 1 and 2.

Schiller Park: World Library Publications, 2001.

Covey, Sean. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Spirit and Song. Portland: Oregon Catholic Press, 1999.

Voices as One. Schiller Park: World Library Publications, 1999.

YOUTH BECOMING LEADERS

Every Christian is called to be a leader. The call to follow Christ is a call to leadership. Jesus set the example; he led by serving others. The Bible has many examples of youth leaders:

- Mary was a teenager (14) when she was engaged to Joseph and became the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38)
- Samuel was a teenager when he was called in the temple (1Sam 3)
- Timothy was a young person when he was sent by St. Paul to begin a church (1Tim 4:12-16)
- David displayed great strength and remarkable leadership qualities as a young person (1Sam 16:19-23)

The following passages from Exodus are used to address the inadequacies student leaders often feel as they enter into peer ministry. While Moses was reluctant to lead, the Lord reminded him of who was really in charge.

“How many of you are a little nervous about being retreat leaders?”

“Moses, who is considered one of the most respected men in the Bible, had his own concerns and anxieties about being a leader. Open your Bibles to Exodus, chapter 3” (Read chapter 3 all the way through)

- Excuse #1 “Who am I?” (3:11 – unworthiness)
Why do you think he felt this way?
Have you ever felt like Moses?
How does God’s response deal with Moses’ feelings of Unworthiness?
- Excuse #2 “By whose authority do I lead?” (3:13 - unbelief)
What leads people to lack faith?
Note God’s response: “I am who I am”
How does this answer from God relate to Moses’ doubt?
- Excuse #3 “What if they don’t believe me? (4:1 – fear of rejection)
Are you concerned that your peers won’t accept you as a student leader? If so, why?
Note God’s response: “I am able to do all things”
Does this strengthen or encourage you? How?

Excuse #4 "I can't do it" (4:10 – faithlessness)

Do you ever wonder if you will actually be used by God to make a difference in someone's life?

Note God's response: "I will help you, Go!"

How does God's response strengthen you?

Excuse #5 "Send someone else!" (4:13 – Unwillingness)

What are you afraid to do? What would you rather have someone else do than yourself in student leadership?

Note God's response: "I will help you and give you help"

God wants to use you. He could have called someone else, but he called you.

** Which of the five excuses that Moses used can you identify with?

** Which areas of leadership does God want to use you in?

Now read Joshua 1:1-9

What four things does the Lord command Joshua to do?

1. Be Strong
2. Be Courageous
3. Obey the Word
4. Meditate on the Word

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Tradition of the Catholic Church lists seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, based on those listed in Isaiah 11:1-2

Wisdom: enables us to approach any situation with the mind of Christ. It ties us to the truths of the Church and our knowledge of God. It helps simplify the complex.

Understanding: Allows us to apply the gift of wisdom to a situation. It helps us to see how the fundamental truths such as "love your neighbor as yourself" are played out in real life. Jesus showed great understanding.

Knowledge: Is when the Spirit helps us sort out fact from fiction, half-truths, and stereotypes. The Spirit helps us to process and apply the knowledge we have and continue to acquire so it will be there when we need it.

Right Judgment: Through the gift of counsel, the Holy Spirit gives us good advice and helps us make the right moral decisions.

Courage: Provides us with the ability to take a risk or to make a sacrifice in order to do what is right.

Reverence: Piety or reverence describes that intimate, loving attitude Jesus had towards his Father. Jesus' most basic motive in all he did was to please His Father and be a devoted child. This quality kept him focused. The gift of reverence helps us to maintain a childlike trust, dedication, and devotion to God.

Wonder and Awe: Helps to nourish in us a healthy sense of wonder and awe for God and all that God has made.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Activity:

1. Divide the group into three groups. Have each group read Isaiah 11:1-2. Look for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Record them on a piece of paper.
2. After they have identified the seven gifts, give each group seven pieces of assorted candy. Decide which type of candy connects with each gift of the Spirit.
3. After each group has completed the task, appoint a spokesperson for each group to explain their "connections."

Conclude with the following statement:

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to every Christian by virtue of their Baptism. The gifts of the Holy Spirit give us special help dealing with life. Remember: the number seven represents completeness.

These gifts are some of the ways we experience God's presence in our lives. The list includes only some of the ways that the Spirit conveys God's grace to us. The totality of God's grace is part of the profound mystery of God and is difficult to understand. What is not hard to understand is that the Spirit of God is with us in our hunger and our search, leading us to an awakening, and guiding us in our response to God's presence in our lives.

Spiritual Gifts

Take a few minutes to read the following passage:

Do not think of yourselves more highly than you should. Instead, be modest in your thinking, and judge yourself according to the amount of faith God has given you. We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body. So we are to use our different gifts in accordance to the faith that we have; it is to serve, we should serve; if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so. Whoever shares with others should do it generously; whoever has authority should work hard; whoever shows kindness to others should do it cheerfully.

Romans 12:3-8

Circle the number that represents how strong or weak you feel in the various spiritual gifts...

1. Speaking God's message

God has given me a gift for communicating clearly to others. When I explain situations and personal experiences, God seems to use my words to bring insight and understanding to others.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

2. Service

God has given me a special knack for helping out when a need arises. I am sensitive to other people and find it easy to respond to their needs.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

3. Teaching

God has given me a skill for helping others to learn. I am good at motivating other people.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

4. Encouraging Others

God has given me the disposition to see the best in others. I find it easy to compliment people -- to point out their strengths, to call forth their best.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

5. Generosity

God has given me a freedom to share myself with others. I find it easy to give, to reach out, to touch, and to care whenever there is a need.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

6. Leadership

God has given me a gift for organization. I can get things done. I find it easy to take responsibility and direct others.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

7. Kindness

God has given me the ability to be compassionate -- warm and tender -- whenever someone is in trouble or needs help. I can enter into people's pain feel with them, and minister.

(weak) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (strong)

Commissioning Ritual
Prayer Service
Leadership Retreat

Background/Setting

As the Coordinator of Youth Ministry, I plan and implement a leadership retreat each fall for the youth who will serve on our retreat teams. We put on four or five different retreats each year and the youth who will work on these teams give witness talks, lead activities, and lead small group discussion. The team is made up of juniors and seniors in high school and led by a team of six young adults. These young adults model witness talks and help lead activities on the leadership retreat. This leadership retreat is critical in forming the team.

The following prayer service is held at the end of the first day's activities when it is dark outside. Chairs are arranged in a semi-circle with a table at the head of the semi-circle. On the covered table is a large central candle (with three wicks) surrounded by enough candles (small candles in glass containers) for each retreatant. The gathering song is playing quietly and the lighting is dimmed as the young people are entering the prayer space. When everyone is seated, the lights are turned off. The leader and appointed readers will use flashlights to read their parts.

Gathering Song (played as retreatants are entering the prayer space:

Open My Eyes, Lord - Jesse Manibusen (*Spirit and Song* Vol 1 A- #11)

Gathering Prayer:

Let us pray....

Father God, you sent us your son, Jesus Christ, to give us the perfect model of leadership. Jesus led his disciples by example, always humbling himself to your will. Help us to follow His example by giving us the gifts of humility and service.

Lord God, help us to be good and moral leaders in the choices we make, the friends we choose, the words we say. Bless and guide our adult retreat team leaders with patience, wisdom, knowledge, and grace as they direct our youth

retreats this coming year. Bless in a special way all the retreatants we have yet to meet. Inspire in them the desire to learn more about your son, Jesus, and his saving message. Open their hearts to what we have to share with them.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit who resides in all of us, we ask these things in your son's name.

Amen

Content/Scripture:

(Read by one of the young adult leaders)

A reading from John 8:12-16

Again Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Then the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid." Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one."

The word of the Lord...

Response: Thanks be to God

Quiet instrumental music (Petrunak) begins to play... wait about 3 minutes to begin the following -

Reader 1: "The people that walked in darkness
(Kim) Have seen a great light.
On those who live in a land of deep shadow
A light has shown." Isaiah 9:1
(The leader lights one wick on the big central candle)

Reader 2: Fire,
(Lori) Our physical assault on the darkness.
No longer must we wait for the dawn,
For we are capable of bringing light
Into this darkness.

Fire,

Our commitment
To challenge the darkness
That threatens to envelop us,
For no amount of darkness can overcome
Our one, small flame.

Symbolic Action:

(The leader lights the second wick on the big candle and then invites each retreatant forward - one by one - to light one of the small candles on the table)

As the retreatant lights his/her candle, he/she says the following:

(instrumental music is playing softly in the background)

Retreatant: "Help me, Lord, to let your light shine within me and enable me to give light to others."

(This is printed in big letters and laying on the table)

After each retreatant has lit a candle, the leader concludes with:

Light a fire in our hearts, Lord,
capable of consuming and transforming the earth.
We ask this in the name of Jesus.

ALL: Amen *(The leader lights the third and final wick on the large candle)*

(The leader calls each retreatant forward one at a time, and hands each a lighted candle)

Leader: **N....., the light is now within you.**

(The retreatant blows out the candle and returns to his/her seat, taking the candle with him/her)

Closing:

Leader: **Never forget that you are children of God and light for the World as we read in Matthew 5:13-16:**

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Your candle will be a reminder to you throughout the year of Your commitment to this team, and your commitment to be light for the world. When you are having a difficult time at school, at work, at home, find a quiet space, light your candle, and know That God loves you and His light is within you. Also, know that as we have shared laughter and challenges this weekend, we also support each other in good times and bad. Do not be afraid to call on one another when you need help. We are God's light in this world.

Please stand, join hands, and listen as the final song is played.

Closing Song: 1. *Go Light Your World* - Chris Rice (*Spirit and Song*, Vol.2 D-#20)

Leader: Go now to love and serve the Lord...

All: Amen

Evaluation
Thanksgiving Prayer Service
November 18, 2007

1. Use a single word or image to describe your experience of this leader's style?
2. What did you like best about this prayer experience?
3. What helped you to pray?
4. What did you find distracting?
5. What did you think about the reflection on the gospel reading and Catholic social teaching? How did it help you understand the importance of Christian service?
6. Was music used well and appropriately? Explain
7. Was Scripture used well and did it help to convey the message of the service? Please explain
8. How are you planning to serve others during this holiday season?

Leadership Retreat

September 2007

Who God Uses

- *The next time you feel like God can't use you, just remember...*
- Noah was a drunk
- Abraham was too old
- Isaac was a daydreamer
- Jacob was a liar
- Leah was ugly
- Joseph was abused
- Moses stuttered
- Gideon was afraid
- Samson had long hair
- Elijah was suicidal
- Isaiah preached naked
- Jonah ran from God
- Rahab was a prostitute
- Timothy was too young
- Job went bankrupt
- John the Baptist ate bugs
- Peter denied Christ
- The Disciples fell asleep
- Martha worried
- The Samaritan woman was divorced
- Zaccheus was too small
- Paul was too religious
- Lazarus was dead!!

Scripture Search

The Reluctant Leader (Exodus – Chapter 3-4):

- ❖ Excuse #1 Who am I? (3:11) unworthiness
- ❖ Excuse #2 By whose authority do I lead? (3:13) unbelief
- ❖ Excuse #3 What if they don't believe me? (4:1) fear of rejection
- ❖ Excuse #4 I can't do it (4:10) Faithlessness
- ❖ Excuse #5 Send someone else! (4:13) Unwillingness



Retreat

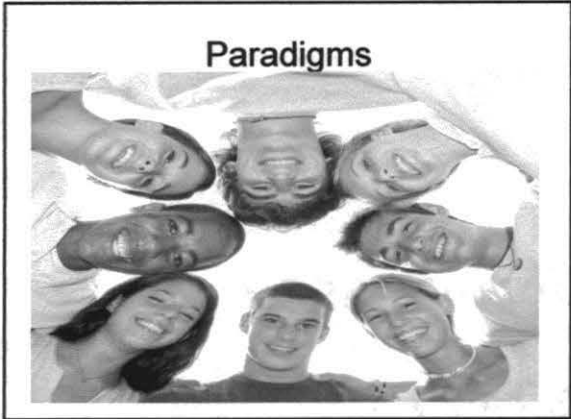
- Respect
- Energize Others
- Talk to Every Person
- Remember and Reiterate Confidentiality
- Establish a Safe Place
- Avoid put downs, being rude or sarcastic
- Take Turns

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

- Habit 1: Be Proactive
Take responsibility for your life
- Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind
Define your mission and goals in life
- Habit 3: Put First Things First
Prioritize and do the most important things first
- Habit 4: Think win-win
- Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, then to be understood
- Habit 6: Synergize – *Work together to achieve more*
- Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw – *Renew yourself regularly*

The 7 Habits can help you

- Improve your relationship with friends
- Get control of your life
- Make smarter decisions
- Get along with your parents
- Overcome addiction
- Define your values and what matters most to you
- Get more done in less time
- Increase your self-confidence
- Be happy
- Find balance between work, school, church, and everything else



Paradigms

- Another word for paradigm is perception
- Paradigms are like glasses – when you have incomplete paradigms, it's like wearing glasses with the wrong prescription.
- How do you see yourself? Is this how others see you?
- How do you see others? Do you have a tendency to judge others?
- What is your paradigm of life? What is the driving force of my life? What do I spend the most time thinking about? This is your life-center

Principle Centered Life

Principles Never Fail
If you live by them, you will excel

✓ Honesty	Fairness
✓ Love	Integrity
✓ Service	Loyalty
✓ Hard Work	Responsibility
✓ Respect	Chastity
✓ Gratitude	Dependability
✓ Moderation	Balance

Giving a Witness Talk

- Time frame: 10-12 minutes
- Organize the talk – write it out completely
- Keep to the theme
- Give an introduction of self
- Use an attention getter
- Use at least 3 Scripture quotes
- Use personal examples – stories, witness, testimony
- Only speak about yourself
- Wrap it up – challenge
- Prepare discussion questions

Steps in Writing a Talk

1. Mull it over – get an idea – walk around for awhile – sit in a quiet place
2. Write down Ideas – things I've done, read, learned
3. Look at Material – Scripture passages
4. Prepare – write down the entire talk or outline
Memorize as much as possible.
Be prepared to give it to the rest of the team.

Gifts of the Spirit

- Isaiah 11:1-2
- Find and name the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom	Courage
Understanding	Reverence
Knowledge	Wonder and Awe
Right Judgment	

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LEADERS

Small Groups

- Should be between 5-8 people
- They should foster a sense of community
- Provide a forum for problem solving
- Create a safety-zone for open discussion
- Encourage assimilation of ideas
- Raise questions
- Build self-esteem
- A key element to the success of a small group is establishing trust

The first time a small group meets, ground rules need to be established. This is something we can go over as a large group, but these rules must be reinforced by the group leader in the small group setting.

These rules might include the following:

- Everyone should have an opportunity to talk and share
- Everyone has the right to pass
- No put-downs will be tolerated by others or self.
- Each person has a responsibility to the group for confidentiality
- Everyone has a responsibility to the group to practice good listening by:
 1. Not talking when others talk
 2. Refraining from disruptive behavior
 3. Avoiding laughing at someone's input (that doesn't mean you can't laugh with them)
 4. Talking only when it is your turn (group leaders need to establish how that is to be made known)

Discussion Leaders

- Initiate group interaction
- Ask questions
- Model sharing
- Clarify and ask for clarifications
- Summarize
- Give and ask for feedback
- Timekeep – keep the discussion going

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP LEADERS

1. **LISTEN!**
2. Respect and care for each person in the group
3. Sharing is essential. Thoughts, feelings, and experiences are the life-substance of the group. We all need them so that insights may be discovered, understanding deepened and growth achieved.
4. Express feelings, not just ideas. Feelings are the best indicator of what people value.
5. Support needs to be expressed. Don't presume that people somehow know you are feeling supportive. They won't unless you show it.
6. Putting people down, even in fun, closes them up.
7. Gently confront others about their unused strengths.
8. Encourage the use of the word "I" when group members are sharing. Growth primarily occurs when individuals apply the topic to their life.
9. You are neither Therapist or Judge. Your role is not to set others straight, not to solve their problems, but to share, help, and encourage.
10. No one should be expected to share more about himself or herself that he or she wishes to express.
11. Keep what you hear in the group.
12. Mostly speak to individuals. A series of monologues to the entire group can be deadly.
13. Be flexible. Try new approaches
14. In not already provided, prepare lead questions to encourage the group to open up. Avoid questions which require just "yes" or "no" answers. Use questions which require some explanation.
15. **LISTEN!**

GUIDELINES FOR LARGE GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Retreats use a variety of large-group presentations. These include the initial welcome and introduction to the retreat, prayer services, icebreakers, a reconciliation service, liturgy preparation, introduction to a film, the wrap-up, and announcements.

Always consider the following when giving presentations to large groups:

1. Focus on the purpose of the presentation, the length of time allowed for it, and the different ways the material might be presented.
2. Prepare an outline for your presentation – even if it is only giving directions. It is important to know what you are going to say ahead of time. It also helps if you can give personal examples that the group can relate to.
3. Make sure you talk in a voice that can be heard (or use a microphone) and speak at a rate that is neither too slow nor too fast.
4. Avoid using language that begins “You should...” Instead use phrases like “I hope you will seriously challenge yourself...” or “I strongly encourage...” These words leave the decision up to the individual. Using should implies that you know what is good for someone.
5. Be conscious of making eye contact with the retreatants. Making eye contact helps to maintain the attention of the listeners and also keeps them aware that you know what else might be going on in the room.
6. If you are giving directions, give them twice. This is particularly important for icebreakers and procedures.
7. Speak in the first person. Speak as one person speaking to another person, sharing what is in your heart. Do not speak as an adult of expert.

STEPS IN WRITING A TALK:

- 1. MULL** – Get an idea – walk around for a while (beach, woods, park, etc) – sit in a quiet place (chapel, church, bedroom)
- 2. WRITE DOWN IDEAS** – Things I've read, things I've learned, things I've lived that relate to the topic.
- 3. LOOK AT MATERIAL** – Organize material. You can do this by writing the entire talk or just outlining it.
- 4. PREPARE** - Your talk should be memorized – this means you need to practice giving it. Be prepared to give it to the retreat team at least twice.
After the first time, the team will make suggestions for improvements and the second time will give you an opportunity to incorporate those suggestions.

SUGGESTIONS

- Be yourself
- Prepare well
- It should cost you something: MIND, IMAGINATION, EMOTIONS
- This is necessary if you are going to get through to people as someone who knows and shares what they are going through

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A "WITNESS" TALK

There are various types of talks.

SERMON: a speech given as instruction in religion or morals, a serious talk on behavior, responsibility, etc.

HOMILY: a talk, especially about something in the Bible

INSTRUCTION: knowledge, information given or taught

WITNESS: testimony, to give a first-hand account of something.

**** Peer Ministry talks should be a healthy balance of INSTRUCTION AND WITNESS**

1. When giving a talk, first give a complete *introduction of yourself* ... where you're from, school, family, etc.
2. Keep within a reasonable time frame- twelve to fifteen minutes for teens.
3. Organize the talk so that the group is quickly drawn into what you are talking about. Use an attention getter. This should quickly introduce the tone and subject in a captivating manner.

KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE: "**SAY A FEW WORDS!**"

SIMPLE STATEMENT: What are you talking about? ...define

AMPLIFY – Instruction time (share your knowledge on the subject)

FEW EXAMPLES: personal witness, stories, testimony (one or two examples)

Only speak about yourself. If you are telling a story with someone else in it, do not reveal his or her identity unless it is necessary.

WRAP IT UP – Pull things together...maybe offer a challenge

4. Don't get preachy! Don't tell people what they have to do. Invite them to look at themselves, their own experiences and see for themselves what needs to be done.
5. Stay on the subject. Make sure the talk is concise as well as interesting with enough content to lead into the next activity.
6. Prepare guidelines and questions for discussion leaders if a discussion is to follow.

Personal Testimony Critique

Purpose: To help the speaker with your suggestions and encouragement. Think of this critique as the speaker and the team working together to benefit the retreatants.

Points to consider:

1. How well did the speaker keep his/her talk focused? What can he or she do to make it more focused?

2. How does the presentation represent the teachings of the Catholic Church?

3. How does the personal testimony fit the theme of the presentation? What could be changed to make it more appropriate to the topic?

4. Does the personal testimony end with a Resurrection story (positive ending)? Comment

5. How is this personal testimony appropriate for high school teens?

6. The most important thing I learned from this testimony...

Signed _____

Sample Meeting Agendas for Confirmation Retreat

Meeting One:

1. Opening Prayer (led by young adult leader)
2. Ice Breaker: Human Knot
3. Expectations, meeting attendance, etc.
4. Discuss the goals of the retreat
Goals for team: What do you want to gain from this experience?
What gifts and talents do you bring to this retreat?
5. Read through the retreat script – team should start thinking and praying about what they will lead.
6. Assign retreat team partners – assign opening and closing prayer for next week
7. Closing Prayer (young adult leader)

Meeting Two:

1. Opening Prayer (led by teen team member)
2. Ice breaker: Adjective Game
3. Go over “Guidelines and steps in preparing a Witness Talk”
4. Assign talks and activities
5. Meet with your retreat team partner and ask for specific prayers for the coming week.
6. Assign opening and closing prayer for next week
7. Closing prayer (teen team leader)

Meeting Three:

1. Opening Prayer (teen team leader)
2. Ice breaker: Samurai
3. Go over guidelines for leading small groups
4. Role plays – small groups
In the first round give the two group leaders these instructions: Female leader: you are only worried about yourself. You dominate the conversation and let your small group know you are worried about your witness talk. Male Leader: You are tired and can't be bothered to look people in the eye. You act as if you'd rather be anywhere else. In the second round have the leaders act as they would on retreat and assign different roles to group members: ex/ chatty Cathy, sullen Sam, hyper Holly, bored Bill.
5. Firm up any unassigned activities or talks. Remind the team of the dates for the retreat, pass out permission forms and packing list.
6. Assign prayer for next week, meet with prayer partners
7. Closing Prayer (teen team leader)

Meeting Four:

1. Opening Prayer (teen team leader)

2. Ice Breaker: Famous Couples
3. Go over "Guidelines for leading Large Groups" This is especially helpful for those who are leading the icebreakers.
4. Break up into talks / activity leaders. Two young adults will meet with the four teens giving witness talks (one talk will be given by the young adult). The remaining young adults will meet with the teens leading activities. Go over each activity and its directions in detail.
5. Closing Prayer – Prayer requests – assign prayer for next week

Meeting Five:

1. Opening Prayer (teen team leader)
2. Ice Breaker: Knight, Mount, Carry
3. Role play small groups – follow the same pattern as before only use different people in different roles.
4. Run through the retreat – talk through questions. Remind those giving talks that they need to prepare 4-5 discussion questions that follow their talks. Talks will begin next week.
5. Closing Prayer – Prayer requests – assign prayer for next week

Meeting Six:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Tonight 2 teens will give their witness talks – use critique sheets to give them feedback.
3. Go over retreat information and updates
4. Talk through four of the activities (Poster project, Clay Symbol, Prayer Partner, the web)
5. Closing Prayer – Prayer requests – assign prayer for next week

Meeting Seven:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Two teens and the young adult will give their witness talks – use critique sheets to give them feedback.
3. Talk through the remainder of the activities (parable skits, faith fall , clay pots, Teen creed cards, commitment letters)
4. Look over initial list of retreatants – help divide them into groups.
5. Closing prayer – prayer requests – assign prayer for next week

Meeting Eight:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Work on decorating bed tags for the retreatants – the group lists should be complete
3. Talk through entire retreat
4. Answer questions, collect permission forms, give instructions for when the team will leave and what the driving arrangements will be.
5. Closing Prayer – prayer requests – pray for the success of the retreat.

CONFIRMATION RETREAT

Fall 2007 Spring 2008

	Retreat Team Leaders	Color	Gift
1		Red	Reverence
2		Orange	Wonder & Awe
3		Green	Right Judgement
4		Pink	Knowledge
5		Purple	Understanding
6		Yellow	Courage
7		Blue	Wisdom

Note: We hold two Confirmation retreats per year. They have the same format, but different retreat leaders, retreat sites, and free time activities

Team Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Retreat Goals:

- That the retreatants are open to and explore the Holy Spirit working in their lives
- That the retreatants experience prayer as a means to draw strength from the Holy Spirit
- That the retreatants begin to recognize what it means to be a Catholic Christian
- That the retreatants are introduced to a life of faith and commitment in Christ

Each retreat team leader will have an activity to lead, some will have personal testimonies. Those assignments are decided during the first two meetings.

SATURDAY

Departure from the church. Invite the Pastor to do a send-off blessing

9:00 AM Arrive and settle in at Retreat Site

- Assign each retreatant to a color group: use colored bandanas and name tags
- Color Group leader takes their group members to their cabin.
- Retreat leaders: Eat, sleep, and sit with your color group.

9:30 AM Welcome and Introduction of Team Members

Discuss Holy Spirit- why we are here!! (Adult Leaders)

- To feel the Holy Spirit working in our lives
- To experience prayer through the strength of the Holy Spirit
- The importance of staying connected to God and your community

Full Value Contract – Rules! (Adult Leaders) – Everyone Signs

9:50 AM Icebreaker: Knight, Mount Carry _____

10:00 AM Opening Prayer Service (Talks Area) (Praise and Worship Team)

* A large candle with three wicks is used for prayer.

1. Opening Song(s)
2. Prayer leaders lights the candle
3. Scripture Reading: John 14:15-17, 26 (the promise of the Holy Spirit)
3. Reflection by Prayer Leader
 - * Wind and Fire... a breeze and a flame. The two do not often exist together, for one may put the other one out.
 - * Fire – flickering or blazing, is the light of Christ burning in our hearts.
 - * Wind – blowing or breezy, is the Holy Spirit speaking to us, calling us to change, to grow in Christ
 - * This candle is a visual symbol of the Holy Spirit with us. Wind and fire exist together, without the fire going out. The Holy Spirit keeps the fire of faith burning for us and protects that flame from those who would try to put it out.
 - * The flame symbolizes Christ. The halo symbolizes the Holy Spirit, our protector. The wax represents the chrism and the promise of being “sealed with the Holy Spirit.” The three wicks symbolize two things: the trinity (God, Son, and Holy Spirit) and they represent each of us and our need to call on the Spirit To keep the fire of Christ burning in our hearts.

4. Pause for intentions of the Day
5. Closing:

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with the fire of the love of Jesus Christ. Send forth the winds of change to give us the courage to learn and grow in faith. **Amen**

Note: Leave candle lit throughout the retreat

- 10:15 AM What are the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit? _____
- 10:30 AM Small Group Activity- Poster Project _____
- Each small group receives a poster and markers
 - Do a get-to-know you activity in your small group (M&M game, dice game)
 - The group then designs a poster including a group slogan to go with their color and Gift of the Holy Spirit (the color and gift of the Holy Spirit must be in the slogan)
 - Group leaders discuss the following questions with your group – list your answers under your group slogan.
What is this gift of the Spirit?
Why do we need it in our everyday life?
Give an example of a way we can use this gift?
 - Each member will sign the poster board
- 11:15 AM Present Posters
- 11:30 AM Ice Breaker-Famous Couples _____
- 12:00 PM Lunch
- 1:00 PM **FIRST TALK: “Choosing to be a Catholic Christian”** _____
- 1:15 PM Small group gathering – Use Discussion Questions
- 1:30 PM **Talk Activity- Clay** _____
The retreatants will create a *symbol of Christianity* out of their clay and explain it to their group.
- 2:00 PM **SECOND TALK – “The Power of Prayer”** _____
- 2:15 PM Small Group Discussion – Use Discussion Questions
- 2:30 PM **Prayer Activity-** _____
Retreatants will pair up with *anyone* on the retreat and pray for each other. This is not a time to talk to one another; it’s a time to pray for one another. Most retreatants know someone on the retreat and they know what they need prayers for, so discussion for prayers should not be necessary. (Lori and Kim will explain and model this activity)
- 2:50 PM Parable Skits _____
Assign each small group a parable from the Bible. Their assignment is to prepare a modern-day skit portraying the themes in this parable. The rest

of the retreatants will try to guess what parable is being portrayed. Small groups should spend the next 40 minutes preparing for their skits. Skits will be performed after dinner at 7 PM

****See handout on this**

3:30 PM Free Time / **Ropes Course**

5:30 PM Return to cabins (pass out "love letters")

6:00 PM Dinner

7:00 PM **Skit Presentations** on the Parables

7:15 PM Large Group Activity "**The Web**"

Theme: **Forgiveness**

Adults

1. Each small group gets a ball of yarn the color of their group. Within the group they toss the ball of yarn, calling the name of the person they are throwing to, and wrapping the yarn around their middle while holding the string taut. Continue this until all group members have been "wrapped."
2. Now have the groups call out their color as they throw it across the room to another group, eventually connecting all the groups. Each group should have a connection with all the others (count the colors represented in each group to make sure).
3. The leader now points out how tangled and connected the groups are. The small groups represent our local community or church community. The larger group represents the world. We are all connected in some way.
4. Now have one person tug hard on a strand of yarn. Ask who feels the tug (you should have people from other groups who feel it). Have different people try this so the kids get the idea of just how connected they are.
5. What we need to realize is that when we sin, we don't sin in a vacuum. What we do affects others, maybe even people we don't know. Sin is communal and destructive. When we sin, we sin against our community. When we go to reconciliation the priest not only represents the healing power of God, but he also represents the community who you are asking to forgive you.

7:30 PM **THIRD TALK – "The Power of Forgiveness"** _____

7:45 PM Small Group Discussion - Questions created by speaker

8:00 PM **Clay Pot Activity** – done in small groups – If done correctly it really fits the theme of forgiveness – Some direction for this activity should be done at the beginning. One person should tie this activity together at the end to make sure each retreatant understands the significance of this activity

9:00 PM **Closing Prayer Service:** Praise and Worship Music

10:00 PM Bonfire / S'mores (If weather permits)

11:30 PM In Cabins for the night

SUNDAY

7:15 AM Wake up

8:15 AM **Morning Prayer** _____

8:30 AM Breakfast

9:15 AM **FOURTH TALK – “Faith”** _____

9:30 AM Small Group Session – Use Discussion Questions
Teen Creed Cards – Group members write one positive attribute for each person on his/her card

9:45 AM **Talk Activity- Faith Fall/Walk** _____

- Pair up with someone in your small group
- One partner will stand about 1 foot away and the other partner will put their arms across their chest, close their eyes, keep their legs stiff, and fall back.
- Falling partner says: “Partner ready.” Catching partner replies, “Ready.”
- Falling partner says, “Falling.” Catching partner replies, “Fall on.”
- Catching partner will back up another foot and repeat.
- Then switch and repeat
- Purpose: Even when you can’t see or don’t know the outcome, you must have faith in our Lord to catch you and show you the way.

10:00 AM **FIFTH TALK – “The Commitment” (Service, Faith, Prayer)**

10:15 AM Small Group Session – Use Discussion Questions

10:30 AM **Talk Activity- Commitment Letters** – _____

- Each retreatant will receive some paper and an envelope
- The retreatant will write a letter to themselves explaining the commitments they want to make in their Christian journey. They can set goals, write what they learned over the weekend, or simply encourage themselves to grow.
- The retreatant also addresses the envelope to themselves and seal it. They will be mailed within 3 weeks.

10:50 AM **Group Picture** /Free Time/ Clean up cabins/ Pack up

12:00 PM Lunch

1:30 PM Mass at retreat site if possible

2:15 PM Load the bus and Depart

Skits on the Parables of Jesus
(reference: Catholic Youth Bible p. 1510)

1. Canceled Debts: Luke 7:36-50 - "A Sinful Woman Forgiven"
2. The Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37 - "The Parable of the Good Samaritan"
3. Honor at a Banquet: Luke 14:7-14 - "Humility and Hospitality"
4. Laborers in the Vineyard: Matt 20:1-16 "The Laborers in the Vineyard"
5. Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32 "The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother"
6. Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16: 19-31 "The Rich Man and Lazarus"
7. Unforgiving Servant: Matt 18:23-35 "The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant"

CLAY POT ACTIVITY

Materials Needed:

- Small clay pot
- Sharpie marker
- Brown paper lunch bag

Directions:

1. On the outside of the brown bag, write words that describe who the world sees when they look at you.
2. On the outside of the pot, write words that describe what you let your family and close friends see.
3. On the inside of the pot, write words that describe what only you and God know about you.

Once you have finished writing on the pot, place it into the brown bag. Hit it once (gently) on the floor. It should break, but not shatter. This breaking of the pot symbolizes sin and how it destroys our relationships.

Now glue your pot back together. This gluing symbolizes Christ's healing presence in our lives. This is what we call the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Play meditative music during the gluing of the pots.

TALK ONE CHOOSING TO BE A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN

Must be included in your talk:

- What does it mean to be a Catholic Christian?
- What changes or things that have happened in your life have brought you closer to Christ? **Use a personal story.**
Use may use wind as a metaphor for change – just like the wind blows rain storms in and out, the wind (storms) in our lives can be a catalyst for change.
 - Who do you look up to as a faithful Christian person? Why?
 - How has being a Christian affected your decisions? Why?
- How does the Sacrament of Confirmation call us to change and grow in Christ?

Points to Consider:

- Have you ever felt a nudging from God to do something?
- How do you know it was God calling you to action?
- Do you believe in coincidence? Or does everything that happens to us have a purpose, orchestrated by God?
- Can suffering be a call to change in some way?

Possible Bible verses to use (these are only suggestions) –

** Must use at least three verses in your talk:

Ephesians 5:1-2

Philippians 4:13

Philippians 2:5

John 13:12-16

Jer 1:4-10

Mt 4:18-22

28:16-20

Mk 1:16-20

Lk 5:1-11

TALK TWO THE POWER OF PRAYER

Must be included in your talk:

- What does prayer mean to you? How important is it to being a Christian?
- How, why, when, and where do you pray?
- Do you use any tools to help you in prayer? **Use personal examples, stories**
- Who taught you how to pray? Important influences in your life
- When have you turned to God in prayer and felt relieved or got an answer? **Personal story**

Points to consider:

- Bring examples of prayer books you use
- Do you use a prayer journal?
- How do you use Scripture in prayer?
- How is the Mass a prayer?

Bible Verses to consider using – you must use at least three – these are only suggestions...

Matthew 6:5-13 (Jesus teaches his followers how to pray)

Matthew 7:7-8

Matthew 21:22

Mark: 11:24

Ephesians 6:18

TALK THREE RECONCILIATION AND THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

Must include the following:

- Reconciliation is a powerful Sacrament in our Catholic faith.
- Who and what have you had to personally forgive in your lifetime?
Include a personal story
- How did this affect your life?
- How has the Sacrament of Reconciliation helped you get back on track?
- From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – 977 “Our Lord tied the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism.”

Points to consider:

- Forgiveness is a powerful element in our lives.
- Unless we can forgive those who have hurt us, we cannot move on with our own lives.
- Forgiving doesn't mean forgetting, but it does mean letting go of all the pain and resentment in our hearts.
- Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves.
- The gift of forgiveness we can give to others is priceless.
- To withhold forgiveness and make another suffer is a sin.

Bible Verses to consider using – you must use at least three – these are only suggestions...

Gen 33:1-17

Ps 51

Mt 18:21-25

Lk 6:27-36, 23, 24

Jn 8:2-11

TALK FOUR
FAITH – The fire of Christ burning within us

Might include the following:

- In the Bible, fire is used as a sign of God's presence: examples – the burning bush, the Transformation, The fire in the courtyard when Peter denies Jesus, in the form of tongues, as of fire, the Holy Spirit rests on the apostles on the morning of Pentecost.
- What experiences have brought you closer to God and lit a fire in your heart? **Personal examples**
- What challenges have you faced where your faith was tested?
Personal examples
- Who has looked up to you as a good Christian model
- From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – 696 “While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions.”

Points to consider:

- What excites you and energizes you to do good?
- How do you get through discouragement and tough times?
- How do you know God is really present in your life?
- What feelings / emotions do you experience when God is present?
How about when he is not present?
- How does God talk to you?
- Consider using the Eucharist as an example of God's presence in our life. How does this make us special as Catholic Christians?

Bible Verses to consider using – you must use at least three – these are only suggestions...

Hebrews 11:1 (purple box in the CYB)

Ephesians 2:8

2 Corinthians 5:7

Colossians 1:15

Mt 18:20

Ps 23

Jer 18:1-11

TALK FIVE THE COMMITMENT

Must include the following:

- What does serving others have to do with Christianity?
- How does the sacrament of Confirmation call us to a deeper commitment?
- Who have you seen that is committed to Christ? What characteristics do they have? Jesus serves as the greatest example of one who came to serve. Examples: Foot washing, healing of the sick, caring for his mother.
- How have you committed yourself to Christ? How is this commitment an ongoing process? **Use personal stories**
- From the Catechism of the Catholic Church – 608 “Christ’s whole life expresses his mission: to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- What can the candidates do to be more committed to Christ and the church? Give them solid examples

Points to also consider:

- We cannot earn our way to Heaven – that’s not why we do service.
- Heaven is a gift – freely given.
- We serve because we want to and it is what being a Christian (someone who follows Christ) is all about.
- Is it real service if we do it grudgingly? Or expect recognition?
- How will you take what you have learned from your own experiences and use it the rest of your life?

Bible Verses to consider using – you must use at least three – these are only suggestions...

Job 36:11

Philippians 4:9

James 1:12

Romans 8:28

James: 1:22

Isa 42:1-6

Mt 20:20-28

Mk 10:35-45

Jn 13:1-17

Freshmen Lock-in Agenda

January 19th & 20th 2008

Team #	Team Member	Team Member
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Theme: New Beginnings (Genesis)

Goals:

1. That the retreatants will make some new friends
2. That the retreatants will begin to see Jesus as a friend
3. That the retreatants will learn something about themselves from witness talks
4. That the retreatants will relax and have fun with peers

Location: J & R Gymnastics – (a local gym is perfect for this lock-in retreat)

Timeline: Team and Retreatants will meet for Mass at 5 PM Saturday
 Pizza will follow Mass in the gym
 Retreatants will arrive at J & R at 6:30 PM
 Lock-in will be from 6:30 PM Sat – 8 AM Sunday
 Pick up will be at J&R at 8 am Sunday

Preparation Time Line:

- Dec. 12 Assign duties and talks. Outline prayer services
- Jan. 2 We will go over the Stranded at Sea Activity, Colors Activity, Icebreakers, Prayer Services
- Jan. 9 Give First Two Talks. Review small group discussion questions
Organized games / activities
- Jan. 16 Give Second Two Talks. Review small group assignments
Review entire retreat

Freshmen Lock-in Agenda January 19th & 20th 2008

Saturday	Activity	Responsibility
6:30 p.m.	Retreatants arrive	
6:45	Opening Prayer Service	
7:00	Opening Icebreaker (Large Group) "I packed for this retreat" (Starts with the first letter of your name)	
7:15	Welcome/Introduction of Team	All Team Members
7:20	Small Group Session 1 – Stranded at Sea	Group Leaders
7:50	Large Group Share – Stranded at Sea – Characteristics we value in people/friends	
8:10	First Talk "Knowing Who We Are"	
8:20	Small Group Discussion Questions	Group Leaders
8:30	Colors Activity – Large Group	Julie
9:00	Icebreaker – Samurai Game	
9:20	Second Talk "Opening your Circle – the friends we choose"	
9:30	Small Group Discussion - Handout 1 – "The friends we choose"	Group Leaders
9:40	Large Group Organized Activities	J & R Gymnastics
10:50	Third Talk "How to Forgive our Friends"	
11:00	Small Group Discussion on Forgiveness	Group Leaders
11:20	Fourth Talk: "How is Jesus our Friend?"	
11:30	Small Group Discussion Questions	Group Leaders
12:00 a.m.	Prayer Service, Scripture, & Music	
12:20	Free Time – Organized games and activities	
7:00	Breakfast / Clean up	
7:30	Closing Prayer Service	
8:00	Pick up	

Freshmen Lock-in

Talk One "Knowing Who We Are"

- God made all people in his likeness and image (Gen 1:27)
- We cannot allow others to define who we are:
Examples: joining gangs, peer groups who do drugs or drink alcohol
- Ways to discover our true selves:
Service opportunities – service oriented groups at school
Attendance at church – church youth groups
Spending time with people who share your religious and moral convictions.
Time alone contemplating your purpose in life:
- Personal story of how you came to a better understanding of who you were
- How does personal happiness and contentment relate to understanding who we are?

Bible passages to consider:

Gen 1:27 1 Cor 3:1-9

Jn 15:12-17 Phil 2:1-11

Micah 6:8

Mk 8:34-38

Lk 9:1-6

Freshmen Lock-in

Talk Two

“Opening your Circle – the Friends we choose”

- Discuss the importance of having friends
- What is more important to you: having lots of friends or a few close friends who you trust and can share anything? How has your view of this changed over time?
- Discuss how we make friends – same interests, sports, clubs, parents’ friends
- What characteristics do you look for in friends? What is the number one requirement you have of someone you call a friend?
- How do your friends affect your decision making?
- Does how we judge others keep us from reaching out to certain people in friendship?
- Personal story of a particular friendship – possibly one you could never have imagined – an unlikely friendship
- How does reaching out to others impact friendship? Do you have to reach out and take chances to become a friend and gain friends?
- Friendship is not a one way street – discuss your own responsibilities as a friend

Bible passages to consider:

Ruth 1:1-19

1 Sam, chapter 20

Sir 6:5-17

Jn 15:12-17

Mt 7:1-5

Gal 3:26-28

Rom 14:1-12

Freshmen Lock-In

Talk Three

“How to Forgive our Friends”

- Who can hurt you?
- When someone is close to you, relative or friend, they have the power to hurt you terribly.
- Personal story of a friend or family member who hurt you
- How did you forgive this person? And why?
- What is your relationship like today? (should be positive)
- How does trusting someone make you vulnerable? Is it good to be vulnerable? Can you have true friendship without trust?
- In true friendship we have to possess trust. This does make us vulnerable, but the rewards should far outweigh the chance we take.

Bible passages to consider:

Gen 33:1-17

Ps 51

Mt 18:21-35

Lk 6:27-36, 23:34

Jn 8:2-11

Freshmen Lock-in

Talk Four

“Jesus as our Friend”

- There is one person we can trust to always be our friend – Jesus
- How do you make Jesus a part of your life and decisions?
- How do you talk to Jesus? How does he talk to you?
- How do you recognize him in others? How have your perceptions changed with your experiences.
- What characteristics does Jesus (from the Scriptures) have that make him the perfect friend? How does he model friendship?
- How do you stay close to Jesus? Give concrete examples
- Personal story of how you have discovered Jesus is your best friend

Bible passages to consider:

Phillipians 4:13

Jn 13: 34-35

Jn 13: 12-17

Lk 6:37-42

Mt 5:1-12

Lk 10:25-37

Freshmen Lock-in Agenda

January 19th & 20th 2008

Small Group Discussion Questions

Talk #1

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. How do you think others would describe you? Do those two definitions match?
3. What kind of music inspires you and why?
4. If you had only one more day to live, what would you do and with whom?
5. What in your life are you most proud of and why?
6. Describe an experience in your life that has made you who you are.
7. Do you consider yourself a follower or a leader? Why?
8. Who is your role model and why?

Freshmen Lock-in Agenda

January 19th & 20th 2008

Small Group Discussion Questions

Talk #2

1. How important is it to have friends?
2. What is more important to you: having a lot of friends or a few close friends? Has your view of this changed over time?
3. What do you look for in a friend?
4. What do you bring to a friendship?
5. How have you reached out to others in friendship?
6. If you could ask any one of your friends an honest question, what would it be and why?
7. If you only had one more day to live, how would you spend it and with whom?
8. Why are the friends you have your friends?
9. How do you let others influence you? In good ways and bad.

Freshmen Lock-in Agenda

January 19th & 20th 2008

Small Group Discussion Questions

Talk #3 – Forgiveness

1. Who can hurt you?
2. What part does trust play in relationships?
3. How does trusting someone make you vulnerable? Is it good to be vulnerable?
4. Can you have true friendship without trust? Why or why not?
5. How do you forgive someone when they break your trust?
6. Have you ever had to forgive yourself? When and how?
7. Is it harder to forgive yourself than it is to forgive someone else?
Explain

Freshmen Lock-in Agenda

January 19th & 20th 2008

Small Group Discussion Questions

Talk #4

1. How are you making Jesus a part of your life in a meaningful way?
2. How do you talk to Jesus? How does he talk to you?
3. How do you see Jesus in other people?
4. Do you consider Jesus a friend – in what ways?
5. How will you continue to grow closer to Jesus?

Stranded at Sea Small Group Problem Solver

Objective: To determine from a group of eight people stranded at sea which three should survive and which five should be thrown into the sea.

Directions:

- 1) Divide into small groups of eight
- 2) Assign characters
- 3) Read the directions below to the group
- 4) Give the group 15 minutes to determine the survivor

You were on a cruise liner in the Atlantic Ocean when your ship collided with an iceberg, and no distress signals were sent. No one knows your ship has sunk. Eight of you are now afloat in a lifeboat. You know you are five days from reaching land and there are only supplies enough for three people to survive. You must throw five people into the ocean. You have 15 minutes to debate who is more valuable to society. At the end of that time, a spokesperson for each group will tell the big group which three people survived and your group's logic behind these choices.

****An adult leader will write down reasons for keeping certain people as each group reports their decision. At the end the adult will synthesize the reasons people gave and talk briefly about values and what we as Christians value in others and for our society.**

PEOPLE PROFILES

- 1) **Ashley Wright** – 38 - A school English teacher, married with three children ages 14, 10, and 3. Her husband is a paraplegic injured in the line of duty as a police officer.
- 2) **Max DoLittle** – 50 – A neurosurgeon and very famous in his field. He is divorced with no children. He gives no money to charity. He does have a girlfriend.
- 3) **Penelope Carr** – 22 – She is a single college student paying her way through college as a bartender. She was orphaned at age 5 and has lived in foster homes her entire life. She is studying to be a social worker.
- 4) **Brad Lovelocks** – 27 – A famous actor and America's latest heartthrob. He has been married for two years and has a new baby, 4 weeks old. He gives a lot of money to charity.
- 5) **Melody Parker** – 66 – A housewife and mother of six children and 20 grandchildren. She is a widow who raised her children alone after her husband died in Vietnam. She is a volunteer for many local organizations.
- 6) **Father John O'Leary** – 42 – A popular New York City priest. He is one of eight children and devotes much of his time to ministering to AIDS patients.
- 7) **Emma Mayfield** – 4 – She was on the cruise with her grandparents who died in the shipwreck. She is an only child and her parents are unable to have more children. Emma is a very sickly child and there is much concern that she won't be able to survive for 5 days.
- 8) **Jason Jackson** – 16 – Is a high school football star. He is one of five children. His parents are ranked in the top ten wealthiest people in America. Jason doesn't know it but his girlfriend is pregnant.

Middle School Retreat Agenda

March 29-30, 2008

Team #	Team Member	Team Member
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Theme: Discovering our true selves and finding our mission

Location: Deer Creek Camp

****Team will travel to Deer Creek early and Travis Hanson will show all the team members the location of the team building activities and explain how each one is done.**

SATURDAY

12 Noon Leave Sts. Peter and Paul Church

2 pm Arrive at Deer Creek – settle in

2:15 pm Intro Theme - Bill or Julie
Introduction of team – (Door Skit)

2:30 pm Icebreaker

1. Noah's Ark **Leaders:** _____

Give each person a card with an animal name on it and ask him or her to keep it a secret. Make SURE that you have two of each animal. Team leaders can fill in if necessary.

Instruct everyone to make a noise or a motion, or both, to indicate the animal each has. All must get up and move around the room doing this until they find their partner animal. Once they have found their partners, they go stand in Noah's Ark and continue to make the noise or motion. When everyone is in the Ark, talk briefly about how cramped and smelly it must have gotten after 40 days. Everyone must have been anxious to get off.

To leave the ark, animal partners must be able to introduce each other to the group. They leave together.

2:50 pm Small Group Formation
M & M Game in small groups

3:10 pm Opening Prayer: **Leaders:** _____

Middle School Retreat Agenda

March 29-30, 2008

Leader One: Light the Prayer candle

Leaders Two: Read Matthew 22:34-40

Leader One:

In Saint Matthew's Gospel, The Pharisees test Jesus by asking which of the commandments is the most important. Jesus sums up the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament in two commandments: Love God and love your neighbor.

Leader Two:

Let us pray...

Jesus, you loved God the Father above all else and set an example for all of us. You also served others unselfishly.

Guide our efforts to put you first in our lives, and to truly love and serve our fellow man. Grant us the ability to see you in all we meet, to listen to your call and to follow you. Amen.

3:20 pm

"Learning to Love who I Am"

Talk: _____

Points to consider:

- Before we can love God with our whole heart and serve others as he commanded in Matthew's gospel, we must first love ourselves and He made us.
- What obstacles have you overcome in an effort to accept and love who you are?
- Who are the people in your life that help you remember who you are? Who can you be real with?
- How does choosing friends affect how we see ourselves? Or like ourselves?
- Discuss the idea of being comfortable with and accepting who we are? God doesn't make junk – we are made in his image (Gen 1:27)
- How do we find our giftedness? How did you discover what you were good at and how has that helped your self-confidence and love of self?
- Scripture passages: Psalm 107, 1 Thes 5:18-22, 2 Cor 4:16-18

3:30 pm

Small Group Activity: People Collage (or hand prints)

Directions: In small groups discuss some of the questions included in the talk outline, especially how the retreatants are gifted. After some discussion and getting to know each other, pass out the paper cut out of a person. On the cutout, each person will write his or her name and then draw images or words that describe his or her gifts. When finished these cutout people will become a collage – an image of our community.

Middle School Retreat Agenda March 29-30, 2008

4 – 5:30 pm

Building Confidence and Community

➤ Each small group will do three team building activities. Following each activity, you will discuss the following questions...

1. How was this activity similar to life?
2. How was this activity similar to our faith life and faith community?
3. What obstacles or fears did you have to overcome?
4. How did it feel to successfully complete your part in this activity?
5. Did we do a good job of working as a community in this activity? Did we share our gifts with each other? Take some time to discuss who was gifted in certain areas and how that helped the team to accomplish its task.

	4 pm	4:30 pm	5 pm
Group One:	Uranium	Treasure Hunt	Maze
Group Two:	Treasure Hunt	Maze	Ski Poles
Group Three:	Maze	Ski Poles	Uranium
Group Four:	Ski Poles	Whale Watch	Space Discs
Group Five:	Wall	Space Discs	Whale Watch
Group Six:	Whale Watch	Wall	Treasure Hunt

6 pm Dinner

6:45 pm Skit preparation
Each group will draw one of the Ten Commandments, and plan a dramatization of that commandment. It will be up to the other groups to guess which commandment you are acting out.

7:30 pm Act out skits

8 pm Games: Leaders:
Knight, Mount, Carry
Peanut Butter / Jelly
Over, Under, Around

9 pm "Loving God above all others"
Talk: _____

- How do I try to follow the first of Jesus' commandments? "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." He says this is the greatest and first commandment.
- How does a healthy and active prayer life help to keep God first in your life?
- Discuss some ways you have found time for prayer in your busy life?
- How do you honor God in the way you live your life?

Middle School Retreat Agenda March 29-30, 2008

- How is God first in your life? Do you struggle with this? How and why?

Scriptures: Matt 6:19-21, Matt 7:33, John 8:12

9:30 pm

Campfire Circle

Closing Meditation: Leaders: _____

Leader One: Today we have explored our love of self and the fact that we are made in the image and likeness of God. Each one of us is unique and that uniqueness added something to our group and what we were able to accomplish. Maybe you discovered something about yourself today that you never knew before, an unexpected gift.

Leader Two: God created each one of us with special gifts and talents. He created us to be a light in this world.

Read Deut 30:15-16, 19-20

- **Leader One:** Have all retreatants face away from the fire.
“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shown.”
Isaiah 9:1
- Have the retreatants turn around. Bryan and Ray will light the candle of one person and have each person light the candle of the person to their right.
- **Leader Two:**
Our physical assault on the darkness.
No longer must we wait for the dawn.
For we are capable of bringing light into this darkness.
Fire,
Our commitment to challenge the darkness that
Threatens to envelop us,
For no amount of darkness can overcome our one, small flame.
- **Leader One:** Ask for prayer intentions
- Blow out the candles – have team leaders bring around the box to gather up candles.
- Join hands and close by saying the Our Father together

9:50 pm

Enjoy S'mores

10:30 pm

All in cabins

11 pm

Lights Out

SUNDAY

7:30 am

Wake up

8:30 am

Morning colors / Prayer

Middle School Retreat Agenda March 29-30, 2008

Breakfast

9:15 am "Trusting God – Trusting Others"

Talk : _____

- Matthew 6:25-34
- Talk about a time in your life when you had to put your trust in God. How easy or hard was this?
- Talk about how easy or hard it is to trust others.
- Give examples of people you trust and why.

9:30 am Small Group Activities on Trust

High Ropes Challenge Course: Groups 1, 2, 3

	9:30 am	9:50 am	10:10
Group 4	Trust Fall	Trust Tag	Log Walk
Group 5	Trust Tag	Log Walk	Trust Fall
Group 6	Log Walk	Trust Fall	Trust Tag

- Trust Fall (The group members will make a tight web with their arms and one member will stand on a table – backwards – and fall into the manmade web)
- Trust Tag (This is the usual game of tag, except that the players play in groups of two. One partner must wear a blindfold. His teammate guides him by holding his/her hand and shouting directions. The object is for the blindfolded player to tag another blindfolded player.
- Log Walk (Group members will be blindfolded, one at a time, and walk across an elevated log. The other group members will stand on either side of the log, and keep their group member from falling off).

10:45 am High Ropes Challenge Course – Groups 4, 5, 6

	10:45 am	11:05 am	11:25 am
Group 1	Trust Fall	Trust Tag	Log Walk
Group 2	Trust Tag	Log Walk	Trust Fall
Group 3	Log Walk	Trust Fall	Trust Tag

12 pm Lunch

1 pm "Serving Others – A Challenge and a Commandment"

Middle School Retreat Agenda

March 29-30, 2008

Talk: _____

- How can serving others be a challenge?
- How do you share your gifts with others? What types of service projects or activities do you most enjoy?
- How is serving others rewarding?
- What is the meaning of community? How is our faith connected to community?
- How do we serve our faith community?
- Can you live as a Christian without serving others? Why not?
- Scripture passages: Acts 2:37-42, 2 Cor 4:5-10, 2 Timothy 2:14-17, John 13:34-35

1:15 pm

Small Group Activities not done the day before

Use the questions below for discussion after each activity:

1. How was this activity similar to life?
2. How was this activity similar to our faith life and faith community?
3. What obstacles or fears did you have to overcome?
4. How did it feel to successfully complete your part in this activity?
5. Did we do a good job of working as a community in this activity? Did we share our gifts with each other? Take some time to discuss who was gifted in certain areas and how that helped the team to accomplish its task.

	1:15	1:45 pm	2:15 pm
Group One:	Whale Watch	Space Discs	Ski Poles
Group Two:	Space Discs	Uranium	Whale Watch
Group Three:	Treasure Hunt	Whale Watch	Space Discs
Group Four:	Uranium	Treasure Hunt	Maze
Group Five:	Maze	Ski Poles	Treasure Hunt
Group Six:	Ski Poles	Maze	Uranium

3 pm Discussion on Middle School Activities / Evaluations

What activities did you enjoy?

What would you add?

What would you change?

3:30 pm Clean up / Pack the bus / Group photos / Shop in Store

4:30 Leave for Boerne (Deer Creek will pack sack lunches for supper that the kids will eat on the bus)

6 pm Mass in Boerne

8 pm Arrive back at Sts. Peter and Paul

Middle School Retreat Agenda

March 29-30, 2008

Description of Team Building Activities

Ski Poles – (located in grassy area across from Great Hall)

Using 1 set of 2x4's with ropes attached team members place one foot on each "ski", take up their ropes and as one unit move forward or backward

Treasure Hunt – (patio of Great Hall)

The director creates a list of 15 items that can be found in nature. Each team gets the same list and times how long it takes to find them. Examples of items: orange cone, flower, clover, oak leaf, flat rock, rock with a hole in it, a stick 6" long, acorn, thistle, moss.

Maze – (located in woods near the front entrance to Deer Creek)

Participants are blind folded as they try to find their way through a rope maze. Team mates shout directions / encouragement or they can send mixed messages.

Space Discs – (located near the campfire circle)

Using stacks of tires (one more tire than there are team members) the entire team has to get from one end of the course to the other, stacking the tires at the end of the course. The challenge is that once a tire has been put into play, a team member has to be touching it at all times.

Whale Watch – (located in the woods across from the Great Hall)

The object is to balance the platform. All team members must be on the platform. You may designate that only one person can give directions. This is a good way to get the shy person to talk.

Uranium – (located in the woods to the left of Papa Bear's house)

This is a series of ropes tied to trees that can be moved up and down. The team, using the ropes, must hook the "uranium" log and then move it and place it in the PVC pipe that sticks out of the ground.

Gap Wall – (located across the driveway from the campfire circle)

This activity is only done by the older students because of its complexity. The entire group has to get over the wall. The front of the wall is vertical and the back side has a steep incline and a rope.

RETREAT EVALUATION – RETREATANT RESPONSE

December 2007
Slumber Falls Camp – 29 respondents

**** Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion on the following statements.**

1= Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=No Opinion 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

The witness talks were well prepared and I gained something valuable from them...

1	2	3	4	5
	//	///	/// //	/// ///

I enjoyed participating in the icebreakers and games

1	2	3	4	5
	/	/// /	///	/// /// /

The praise and worship band helped me worship in a powerful way

1	2	3	4	5
	/	///	/// ///	/// ///

I felt like my retreat team leaders did a good job of leading our small group discussions

1	2	3	4	5
//	/		///	/// ///

The clay activity (making your own symbol of Christianity) helped me explore my image of God

1	2	3	4	5
//	//	///	/// /// //	///

The web activity and clay pot activity on forgiveness helped me to see the significance of forgiveness in my spiritual life

1	2	3	4	5
//		///		/// /// ///

I feel like this retreat helped me prepare for Confirmation

1	2	3	4	5
	/		/// //	/// ///

I feel more connected to my church and the other confirmation students since attending this retreat

1	2	3	4	5
//	/	/// //	/// //	/// /// //

Overall I was very satisfied with this retreat

1	2	3	4	5
/	//	/// //		/// /// /// /

**FRESHMEN LOCK-IN
STUDENT EVALUATION – 16 Respondents**

**** Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion on the following statements.**

1= Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=No Opinion 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

The witness talks were well prepared and I gained something valuable from them...

1	2	3	4	5
		///	/// /	/// /

I enjoyed participating in the icebreakers and games

1	2	3	4	5
/	/	//	/// ///	//

I liked the fact that the lock-in was at J&R Gymnastics

1	2	3	4	5
//		///	//	/// //

I met some new people and feel more connected to my freshmen confirmation class as a result of this retreat

1	2	3	4	5
	///	///	///	///

I felt like my retreat team leaders did a good job of leading our small group discussions

1	2	3	4	5
/	/	////	//	/// ///

I enjoyed the activity on my personality profile (the "colors" activity)

1	2	3	4	5
/	//	/	/// ///	///

Overall I was very satisfied with this retreat and would recommend it to next year's freshmen

1	2	3	4	5
	///	/	////	/// ///

RETREAT EVALUATION – RETREATANT RESPONSE

March 2008

Deer Creek Camp – 35 respondents

**** Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion on the following statements.**

1= Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=No Opinion 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

The witness talks were well prepared and I gained something valuable from them...

1	2	3	4	5

I enjoyed participating in the icebreakers and games

1	2	3	4	5

The praise and worship band helped me worship in a powerful way

1	2	3	4	5

I felt like my retreat team leaders did a good job of leading our small group discussions

1	2	3	4	5

The clay activity (making your own symbol of Christianity) helped me explore my image of God

1	2	3	4	5

The web activity and clay pot activity on forgiveness helped me to see the significance of forgiveness in my spiritual life

1	2	3	4	5

I feel like this retreat helped me prepare for Confirmation

1	2	3	4	5

I feel more connected to my church and the other confirmation students since attending this retreat

1	2	3	4	5

Overall I was very satisfied with this retreat

1	2	3	4	5

JUNIOR HIGH RETREAT STUDENT EVALUATION – 42 Respondents

**** Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion on the following statements.**

1= Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=No Opinion 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

I enjoyed this retreat and would recommend it to my friends

1	2	3	4	5
			/// //	/// /// /// /// /// ///

The retreat team leaders were very helpful and kind

1	2	3	4	5
		///	/// ///	/// /// /// /// /// //

I learned something about myself during the team building activities

1	2	3	4	5
		/// ///	/// /// ///	/// /// ///

I enjoyed the high ropes and would love to do them again

1	2	3	4	5
	/	///	/// ///	/// /// /// /// /// ///

I got something out of the witness talks

1	2	3	4	5
		///	/// /// /// //	/// /// /// ///

My favorite activity on the retreat was _____

My favorite activity all year was _____

My least favorite activity all year was _____

I wish we could do more _____

My favorite thing about class time is _____

End of Year
LEADERSHIP TEAM EVALUATION

**** Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion on the following statements.**

1= Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=No Opinion 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

I felt like the leadership retreat was very helpful in preparing me to serve on the retreat team

1	2	3	4	5
		/	///	/// ///

I liked the location of the leadership retreat

1	2	3	4	5
		/	//	/// ///

I enjoyed the team building activities on the leadership retreat

1	2	3	4	5
			///	/// //

Our retreat meetings were productive and worth my time

1	2	3	4	5
			/// /	/// /

The team members who gave witness talks were well prepared

1	2	3	4	5
		///	/// /	///

My group really bonded during the small group discussion times

1	2	3	4	5
		///	///	/// /

I grew spiritually as a result of serving on this team

1	2	3	4	5
		/	///	/// ///

I grew in my leadership skills as a result of serving on this team

1	2	3	4	5
		/	///	/// ///

I improved my communication skills as a result of serving on this team

1	2	3	4	5
		//	////	/// /

I would be willing to serve on this team again next year

1	2	3	4	5
				/// /// //

Please write one thing that you believe the **entire team** needs to work on

****See attached**

Evaluation from Leadership Team
And Focus Group
April 12, 2008

Note: 12 of the 20 teens that served on team attended our end of year retreat day. All of the focus group were present. We discussed the positives and the negatives of the past year. Following is a summary of comments from the team:

Positive Changes – Things that worked well

- Having the retreat team go the night before really makes a difference in how smoothly the retreat runs
- The young adult leaders were praised for their leadership.
- Acting out small group scenarios improved the leadership in small groups
- The talks were better in the second half of the year because we made some adjustments.
- Overall the retreatants had a positive experience
- All the team members felt like they had grown in their leadership skills

Items that the team needs to work on

- Work harder at being a Christian example at school and in the community
- Team members need to be more organized and serious at meetings
- The talks still need to be more focused and better prepared
- Team needs to work behind the scenes more
- The team needs to set a better example on retreat – don't just sit with team, but interact more with retreatants
- More one on one time with God – reflective time alone
- The Leadership retreat is very important and should definitely be held every year. It should also be mandatory if a student wants to serve on team.
- The teens on team will be part of the selection process for next year's team, with the understanding that the adult directors will have the final say on team selection.

Discussion on meetings – things to be incorporated next year

- Opening and closing prayer needs to be better prepared.
- Team members need to be on time – we may have to adjust the meeting times so this is possible
- Eat dinner together each week instead of occasionally
- Continue to practice small group leadership with role plays
- Each personal testimony needs to be typed and turned in to the director. All testimonies will be given to the team twice, once is the rough draft. The second should be after corrections and additions are made.

PROJECT EVALUATION

1. The focus group was made up of teens, young adults (mid-twenties), and older adults who served as team leaders. The primary function of the teens is to lead the retreat. The primary function of the young adults is to train the teens on the team, and to help with various organizational items. The young adults on team were extremely helpful. They did a great job of training the retreat team, especially on the leadership retreat. They also spent extra time helping the teens with their personal testimonies. On each retreat, one young adult gave a personal testimony which helped model what we wanted from the teens. I could depend on these young adults to run the meetings even if I wasn't there. I took care of the behind the scene tasks, and they took care of mentoring the teens. It was also gratifying to see how much these young adults grew in their own faith by working with the teens.

I consulted frequently with Bill Smith, DRE, throughout the year. We work together on transportation issues and budget. Since he coordinates middle school religious education, he and I worked together to write the Middle School Retreat.

The teens in the focus group are four dependable, mature teens. I also chose these four because when I ask for input they do not hold back. Their ideas and suggestions are extremely on target and most helpful. Travis, Ryan, Elizabeth, and Nicole are great role models and they definitely stood out as leaders on the team.

2. **Goal 1:** To foster a sense of community in the leadership team and the retreatants.
Evaluation: This sense of community and mutual respect definitely happened for the team, and in a lesser way for the retreatants. It takes time to build community and the team met for several weeks before each retreat to plan, share a meal, and spend time together. They became a very cohesive group. The retreatants were only together for a weekend, so their experience was very different. However, the evaluations did show that they generally felt closer to the other retreatants as a result of their time together. I also noticed that many of the team members sought out the retreatants who had been in their small groups just to visit or say hello.

Goal 2: To mentor and teach leadership skills to high school juniors and seniors.

Evaluation: The results of this goal were varied. I noticed a great deal of growth in leadership for some of the teens, and not so much growth in others. After working with teens for many years, I firmly believe that leadership comes more naturally for some than others. Some are born leaders and quickly pick up on the skills we are trying to teach. For others it takes more time. Where I really notice these skills taking shape are in the small group discussions. After the first retreat, we paired weaker team leaders with stronger ones to even out some of the problems we experienced with small group activities. That

seemed to work very well, and the weak leaders really improved in their communication skills.

Goal 3: To create for the retreatants a spirit-filled experience that helps them in their faith journey.

Evaluation: The retreat activity that helped meet this goal was the praise and worship time. On the two Confirmation retreats I hired local praise and worship bands that led music and also gave testimonies. The retreatants responded extremely well to both of these groups and that is reflected in their evaluations. I have been asked by several team members and retreatants to invite these bands back. For many teens music is the number one way they feel closer to God and I witnessed that on these retreats.

Goal 4: To provide opportunities for young adults in the faith community to share their gifts with young people.

Evaluation: About three years ago we started a young adult group which has steadily grown over this same time period. They are a very diverse group, and many of them have college or high school retreat experience. These young people are more than eager to work on retreat teams. They have been invaluable to me as a director. Their energy, knowledge, spirituality, and openness are a blessing to this community. The teens (both on team and the retreatants) respond to them in ways they will never respond to adults who often remind them of their parents.

3. The knowledge I described in my proposal I have gained in classes and workshops on youth ministry. Having been a teacher really helps in the planning of retreats, because I understand how objectives relate to goals. There was one issue that came up during the planning and implementation of these retreats that I did need more knowledge on. Many of my young adults are single and high school students don't always see them as adults, so defining these relationships for both the high school student and the young adult is something that needs to be done. For example, one high school girl was continually texting a young adult male to come hang out with her and her friends, to meet for coffee, go to concerts, etc. The young adult male felt uncomfortable and came to me for advice. Warning bells immediately went off, and I knew I had to do something. I was really at a loss as to how to handle this, so I asked for advice from a friend, Jim Behling, who runs summer camps and trains young adult counselors. I considered him my project resource person as I consulted with him more than once during the past year, especially on this topic. From now on, the training piece he helped me with will be implemented at the leadership retreat (included with the outline of the Leadership Retreat).
4. The skills I need to organize and direct these retreats are constantly being honed. Each retreat is different and the skills needed vary. One skill that I have really worked on is

empowering my young adults. Standing back is not easy for me, so I have to practice being an observer. Another skill I worked on this year was leading prayer. I took a class from Sister Martha Ann Kirk in the fall of 2007, and that class helped me plan better prayer experiences for my teams and for the retreatants. We had to plan three prayer services and I used at least two of these services on retreats. These are both skills I will need for future work in youth ministry.

5. Keeping a positive attitude is always a challenge when you are working with youth. This year we had the unique experience of having far more juniors than seniors on team. Their lack of maturity and commitment at times was frustrating. I will never understand how they don't know what their schedules are from one day to the next. If one cannot have a positive attitude, then he or she should not work with youth.

6. Because of all the demands on young people's time, several obstacles came up during the retreat season. The first was a playoff football game that conflicted with our first Confirmation retreat. Three of our teens were in the band, one was on the dance team, and one was a football player. This meant we were five members short and we had only one week's notice. Two band members went to their director and asked if they could do the retreat. He agreed, but I know they suffered consequences because of it. This may have been one of my proudest moments all year. The young adults filled in as small group leaders and two gave witness talks, which is how we discovered how important it is to have at least one young adult talk. It makes the quality of the other talks that much better. To top it all off, my daughter went into labor on the first day of the retreat and I had to go to the hospital for several hours and greet my new granddaughter. The young adult leaders and adult chaperones covered for me, and all went well. We definitely felt short handed on that retreat, but overall I think we met these challenges in a positive and productive way.
Another obstacle was inappropriate behavior on the part of team members on two separate retreats – and two very different situations. While these situations weren't life threatening or illegal, they were definitely harmful to the image of a church retreat team, so those members won't be returning next year.

7. My greatest contribution to the leadership capacity of others is the work I did with my young adults. After the incident with the high school girl and the young adult male, we had a meeting to go over guidelines and procedures for this type of issue. It is only natural that high school students become close to their young adult leaders. I just want it to be an appropriate relationship. This is also a pastoral ministry issue. These are the very situations that can destroy a program, so clarification and leadership is extremely important. I think we all learned a lot this year.

8. Personal Learning Goals:

- To learn how to let go.
 - This is perhaps my most challenging personal goal. It is the one thing I worked on the hardest. Letting my young adults run the meetings without being there was definitely the right thing to do. It helped their relationship with the teens and empowered them to lead.
- To trust my young adults to foster healthy relationships with our teens.
 - Choosing the right young adults is the first step in being able to trust them in dealing with teens. I have worked in this parish long enough that my instincts are pretty good when it comes to choosing young leaders. The young adults that worked on retreat teams this year were the best I've ever had – exceptional leaders.
- To grow spiritually through this retreat ministry, and let the Holy Spirit do its work.
 - Just being able to sit back and take in the retreat without being in charge of everything was a spiritual awakening for me. I could really see God's hand in the work we were doing as a team.

Professional Learning Goals:

- To recruit and train young adults to run the retreat team meetings with little to no interference from me.
 - It took a little more training than I first thought, but overall this goal was met and even surpassed in the performance of the young adult leaders.
- To create retreat outlines that others could implement and find useful in ministry.
 - I don't believe any of the retreats I have outlined are difficult to implement. In fact, there are many activities that could be substituted for the ones we used. It is definitely a challenge to design an overnight retreat that will have a lasting impact.
- To grow our retreat ministry to include as many teens and young adults as possible.
 - Each year we have more teens and young adults involved in ministry. What I have discovered is that each group brings its own challenges. This year's group was young, but that means I can expect exceptional leadership next year. The retreat teams continue to be the single most important reason why juniors and seniors stay involved in youth ministry after Confirmation.
- To mentor teens in a spiritual setting, and teach them skills that will benefit them for a lifetime.
 - My goal has always been to teach "life skills." Whether it's working on small group communication or developing speaking skills, these skills will help young people as they move into college or the work force. The added benefit is learning these skills in a Christian environment. What I can see happening in our parish is

that many of the young adults who now mentor high school teens, were once part of the same program. We are building a program that has generational impact.

9. My project resource person is a former deacon at our church who now owns and operates a retreat center and summer camp – Deer Creek Camp in Medina, Texas. He always gives me good feedback after our retreats. As I stated earlier, he helped me with training and guidelines for our young adults. Because of the distance and the fact that not all of our retreats are at Deer Creek, his input was limited.

The Final Analysis

As I reflect on the project and my original theology of church and ministry, I believe that my original position has been affirmed. There is a growing need in the Catholic Church to offer programs that illustrate a different model of church, especially for young people. When I started working with the young adults who would eventually lead the retreat meetings and work with the high school youth, we had several interesting conversations. They confided that they did not really feel like they were a part of our church. The Pastor did not know their names; they knew very few people at Mass; and they missed the interaction and community they had experienced in college. What started out as a project to strengthen the faith lives of our high school students, quickly became a project to also help our young adults connect to their new faith community.

One of the areas that the *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* (2008) points out is that most people depart the Catholic Church in their 20's while in college or shortly afterwards. Many marry non-Catholics and are drawn to more welcoming, contemporary churches. The young adults I worked with this past year, including those who worked on the Teen ACTS retreats which were not part of this project, were mainly in their mid to late twenties. A few had joined the church through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. These new Catholics really felt a lack of community and were seeking to find a place to fit in.

By working on retreats together, the young adults started to form friendships, even though their life situations were very different. Some were married; some were not.

They started going to dinner and movies together, and attended the same Mass on Sundays. Gradually, I realized that this retreat ministry was helping them form a small community within a larger one. The added benefit was the model they presented for the high school teens. We had a few teens whose parents did not attend church. It was common for these teens to sit with the young adults at Mass. In fact, before I knew it on most Sundays the first two pews of the church were filled with my retreat team members.

When a male teen was having difficulty in school and life in general, one of the young adult males made it a point to spend more time with him outside of church. He took him to lunch and just let him know someone else cared whether he succeeded or not. This made a big impact in the young teen's life and I also believe it empowered the young adult. This was about more than just working together to plan and implement good retreats; this was about building community and relationships that last far after an event is over. Because of the influence of this young adult, it is possible that one day the teen will mentor someone else in the same way.

Several of the young adults working on the retreat teams were married couples. During Lent they decided to do a married couples' study. They divided into two groups and invited other young couples they knew at church. These groups met weekly for seven weeks to study Kevin Leman's *Making the Most of Marriage*. They took turns hosting the sessions in their homes and everyone contributed food to the evening's gathering. They enjoyed their time together so much, that they decided to continue to meet for dinner and to look for a Scripture study they could do together in the fall. This new community was a direct result of their involvement in youth ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

As a result of this pastoral project and the emphasis on evaluation, our retreat program is stronger than ever. We have identified areas that need work, but overall the focus group concluded that we had succeeded in meeting our goals for the year. Most of the juniors who served on team this year will return next year, and there are several new young adults who have expressed an interest in helping on retreats. So the training pieces we put in place as a result of this project will benefit our church community for years to come.

The practice of ministry is always pastoral in nature and has to be flexible enough to meet the demands of an ever-changing world. Ministry is hard work and it doesn't take place in an office. It takes place where the people are, both physically and spiritually. What I discovered in doing this project is that ministry happens in several ways. In training young adults to take leadership roles with the youth of the parish, I inadvertently empowered them to form small faith communities. Ministry is service. The youth and young adults I work with reinforce this for me everyday. They serve their community in a variety of ways, with more enthusiasm than any generation that has come before. I believe more than ever that we can learn to appreciate the institutional aspects of our Catholic faith when we work out of a predominantly mystical communion model.