

## EARLY ADOLESCENTS

Early Adolescents follows from the reception of First Reconciliation and First Communion into the often very difficult middle school years. Parishes will find that if they wait until young people are in middle school (or worse, high school) before inviting them into the life, mission, and ministry of a faith community, those young people will have already lost interest. Besides ongoing, gathered faith formation opportunities, it is important to, in the words of St. John Bosco, "Go out to where young people are and invite them to arrive where they ought to be." Never, ever, underestimate the power of personal invitation.

### Indicators for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Early Adolescents

- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to encounter Christ through retreats, rallies, camps and other experiences. (1,5,6)
- ❑ We invite young people to be connected to the diocesan Church and to participate in regional and national gatherings. (5,6)
- ❑ We introduce young people to the fundamentals of prayer and praying together. (1,4,5)
- ❑ We introduce young people to the basics of Scripture. (1)
- ❑ We introduce young people to service experiences. (6)
- ❑ We encourage young people to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. (2,3)
- ❑ We introduce young people to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. (2,4)
- ❑ We encourage young people and their families to participate in the Mass on a regular basis. (2,4)
- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to become further initiated into the Catholic Church through the sacrament of Confirmation. (1,2,3,4,5,6) (see Confirmation section)
- ❑ We provide events where parents and their young people can participate and explore the faith together. (1,5,6)
- ❑ We accompany young people on their journey of faith and introduce them to a relationship with Jesus. (1,2,3,4,5,6)
- ❑ We do not wait until young people are in middle school to invite them to be involved in parish life. (5)
- ❑ We celebrate the contributions of young people and their milestones in the larger parish community. (5)
- ❑ We give care to minister appropriately to those from different cultures by offering opportunities to learn about and participate in diverse cultural celebrations. (5,6)
- ❑ We introduce young people to opportunities that allow them to be a part of the larger parish community. (5,6)
- ❑ We have clergy and religious that are visible and present to our young people. (5,6)
- ❑ We recognize the opportunities to catechize young people outside of the classroom setting. (1,5,6)
- ❑ We seek the best resources to form and catechize our young people. (1)
- ❑ We reach out to young people intentionally, not accidentally. (5)
- ❑ We pastorally care for young people in times of crisis. (5,6)



“All are hoping, searching, and wanting to see Jesus. For this reason, believers, especially catechists, must not only ‘speak’ of Christ, but in a certain sense, ‘show’ him to others. Our witness however would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated His face. (Pope Francis)”

## Indicators for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Adolescents

- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to encounter Christ through retreats, pilgrimages, conferences and other experiences. (1,5,6)
- ❑ We invite young people to be connected to the diocesan Church and to participate in regional and national gatherings. (5,6)
- ❑ We give young people the skills and opportunities to pray together. (1,4,5)
- ❑ We give young people the skills and opportunities to read and study Scripture together. (1,5)
- ❑ We invite young people into opportunities to serve others and invite them to reflect theologically about these opportunities. (1,4,6)
- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to learn and apply Catholic Social Teaching to their daily lives. (1,6)
- ❑ We ask young people to speak for their own needs and advocate for their peers. (5,6)
- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. (2,3,4)
- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to participate in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on a regular basis. (2,4)
- ❑ We catechize young people to fully understand the Mass. (1,2,4)
- ❑ We encourage young people to participate in Sunday Mass on a weekly basis. (2,4)
- ❑ We offer opportunities for young people to become fully initiated into the Catholic Church. (1,2,3,4,5,6) (See *Confirmation section*)
- ❑ We recognize the opportunities to catechize young people outside of the classroom setting. (1,5,6)
- ❑ We seek the best resources to form and catechize our young people. (1)
- ❑ We empower parents to be partners in ministry through formation and resources. (5,6)
- ❑ We offer various opportunities for young people to learn about their faith, wrestle with moral questions, and discuss with their peers. (1,3,5)
- ❑ We accompany young people on their journey of faith by continuing to challenge them to live out their lives as disciples of Christ and apply moral principles to their everyday lives. (1,3,4,5,6)
- ❑ We reach out to young people intentionally, not accidentally. (5)
- ❑ We pastorally care for young people in times of crisis. (5,6)
- ❑ We celebrate the contributions of young people and their milestones in the larger parish community. (5)
- ❑ We recognize that all parishioners have an essential role to play in ministry to young people. (5)
- ❑ We give care to minister appropriately to those from different cultures by offering opportunities to learn about and participate in diverse cultural celebrations. (5,6)
- ❑ We welcome young people into leadership roles within the parish. (5,6)
- ❑ We encourage young people to look at the ways in which God may be calling them to serve his Church, including vocation to the priesthood and consecrated life. (5,6)
- ❑ We have clergy and religious that are visible and present to our young people. (5,6)



**“A parish that is both Catholic and effective in its ministry welcomes all young people regardless of how they identify themselves as children of God.”**

## Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Early and Older Adolescents

*Pastoral Ministry with young people is defined as a parish's response to the needs of young people and how to involve them in sharing their gifts with the larger community. As a parish, it is necessary to determine the specific needs of the young people in your community. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to ministry with young people. With that in mind, the following recommendations can help in determining the needs of your young people and building a ministry in response to those needs.*

### Form a Ministry Team

- ❑ A youth ministry team comprised of parish leadership, parents, other parishioners and youth leaders helps to involve the whole parish community.
- ❑ This team needs to be properly formed in understanding the goals and components of comprehensive ministry to young people.
- ❑ The role of this team will be to assess the needs of the young people of the parish community, formulate a unified vision ministry to young people and help build a comprehensive program from middle school to high school including Confirmation.
- ❑ The team can also educate the other parish councils on their ministry to young people.

### Adopt a Comprehensive Vision for Ministering to the Young People of your parish

- ❑ "The most effective catechetical programs for adolescents are integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral ministry for youth that includes catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship (NDC 48.D)."
- ❑ Many parishes have middle school religious education, Confirmation preparation and high school youth ministry as three separate and distinct ministries. A comprehensive program looks at how young people are formed from when they enter 6th grade all the way through high school graduation.
- ❑ Confirmation preparation, in particular, should be seen as a part of the larger parish ministry to young people not as a separate program entirely. This helps prevent the idea of trying to catch up the young person or form them entirely in one or two years.

- ❑ Comprehensive ministry also looks for opportunities outside of the regularly scheduled religious education classes or youth nights to form young people.

### Empower Parents to be Partners in Ministry

- ❑ Effective ministry to young people happens when parents are engaged in the formation of their children. Here are some ways to partner with parents:
- ❑ Have parent information sessions at the beginning of every year
- ❑ Effectively communicate calendars and event dates with parents
- ❑ Provide faith formation opportunities for young people and their parents to come together. For example: family movie nights, family prayer nights, holiday celebrations, family mission nights, and family reconciliation sessions
- ❑ Send home resources to parents on topics being covered with questions for them to ask their children on the way home
- ❑ Provide service projects that invite the whole family to come together

### Incorporating Youth into the Life of the Parish

- ❑ Youth are specifically invited to take on leadership roles in the celebration of the Mass through altar serving, being members of the choir, lectors, ministers of hospitality, and (assuming they are 16 years of age, Confirmed, and properly formed) Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- ❑ Youth should be invited into leadership roles for parish events such as parish festivals, Stations of the Cross, fish fries, bake sales, pancake breakfasts, ethnic and cultural celebrations, etc.
- ❑ A mature and well formed young person could represent and advocate for the needs of their peers on the parish council.
- ❑ The milestones and achievements of young people should be recognized to the whole parish community. These milestones could be: academic, athletic or artistic achievements, scouting awards, and graduations.

