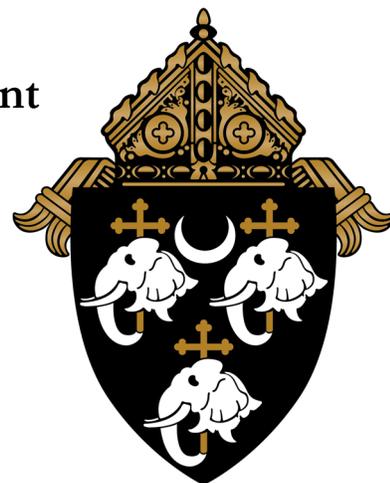


## Guide for Conversations

**A Parish/School Guide for holding  
Listening Sessions with Teens &  
Young Adults**

**Synod 2018: Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment  
Diocese of Camden, NJ**

For implementation during  
March 2017—May 2017



## Focus, Listening and Strengthening Pastoral Ministry with Teens and Young Adults

The Church of the United States is filled with great anticipation for the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on, *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*. The entire church is called to focus on teens and young adults and the expressed desire to get young people to be part of the process.

Dozens of teens and young adults have gone through the process of learning, sharing and creating ideas to be shared. Their voices speak of the challenges of being Catholic today and of the desire to be connected to Church, each other and their community. This is what we have learned so far:

- **Young people want to contribute to their parish, especially through service-related events.**
- **We may not have much treasure, but we do have time and talent to contribute.**
- **Help us see how the Church is relevant to our lives today.**
- **We can be the ones to unite our community and help them be more understanding of each other.**

Involving young people in the process of discussion and planning made it clear that having the time to talk about issues of faith was formational in itself. The young people provided some immediate feedback about their experience in these listening sessions that was affirming and inspirational including:

- **I was able to voice my opinion and feel that I could be part of the change.**
- **I feel better about my religion and am ready to get more involved.**
- **I'd like to start a youth ministry and bring more teens to Church.**
- **This was GREAT! Thanks for listening.**

This Guide for Conversations provides information for a parish, school, or deanery to hold “listening sessions” for teens and young adults. This may be changed and adapted for your setting. Pages 5 through 11 provide the agenda, forms, discussion questions, an evaluation tool as well as a Parish Evaluation form for you to share the highlights of your conversations with teens and young adults with the Diocese of Camden and the US Bishops as they look to submit input for the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*.

It's been over 30 years since the first World Youth Day celebration, where St. John Paul II called us to recognize young people as the Church of today. Pope Francis continues to affirm and challenge young people as disciples of Jesus to make a mark on the world and the church.

“Dear young people, we didn't come into this work to “vegetate”, to take it easy, to make our lives a comfortable sofa to fall asleep on. **No, we came for another reason: to leave a mark.** It is very sad to pass through life without leaving a mark. But when we opt for ease and convenience, for confusing happiness with consumption, then we end up paying a high price indeed: we lose our freedom. We are not free to leave a mark. We lose our freedom. This is the high price we pay.”

*Pope Francis, World Youth Day Krakow, Poland,  
July 30, 2016*



## **Listen & Create A Plan**

Your conversations with teens and young adults will provide the basis for strengthening and renewing effective pastoral ministry with young people and provide feedback for the Synod. Give them an opportunity to express their needs and desires in order to create a place of belonging and possibly events and activities that seek to grow disciples of Jesus Christ within your community.

### **⇒ Who will come?**

Conversations need to be age-specific, so hold separate events for teens (ages 14–18) and young adults (ages 18–39). Conversation sessions are the perfect opportunity to hear from young people who do not usually show up to church-related events. Encourage every young person to invite a few friends or teenage family members so you broaden the reach into the community. If your parish has an active youth group or groupings, start there. Think about those teens and young adults in liturgical, catechetical or service ministries of the parish or school and invite them to a session. Encourage your pastor and other pastoral leaders including a key member of the parish finance council and/or pastoral council who can listen and observe.

### **⇒ What time works best?**

The goal of the conversation session is to get good feedback after the discussions. For the young adults who are able to provide their own transportation, allow 1 1/2 hours, evenings or weekends work best. Teens may need a bit more time to warm up in the small groups, so allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours for the session on a weekend day or at a normal youth group meeting.

### **⇒ Where will we meet?**

How much space you need depends on the number of small groups you have. Seating at small tables in groups allows for the discussion to happen naturally. The size of the group varies on the age of the participants, but a general rule would be grouping of 5 to 7 teens together and 3 to 5 young adults.

### **⇒ How do we conduct the discussions to get the best results?**

It can be awkward for young people when they first get into groups with people they do not know well, yet hearing new opinions is part of a successful conversation session. The questions in this manual are created to focus on real concerns and get positive, useable feedback. You may need to add one or more questions if there is a specific issue that needs their input. Provide one large sheet of paper per group so they can record their answers. These papers are documentation of the discussions most important points. Refer to these as you plan opportunities of growth for your young disciples including events and activities throughout the year.

### **⇒ How many adults are needed to host the event?**

It's helpful to give a few people a role in this session so no one person has all the work—see the lists below for ideas. When working with teens, adults should be Safe Environment compliant, please consult your parish's safe environment coordinator.

⇒ **What will you eat?**

Catholics are so good at “gathering around a table” and this event is no exception. Hospitality is a requirement. By providing food, you create a setting that is social, comfortable and sets the tone for conversation.

⇒ **How can we make youth & young adults feel welcome?**

Some of the participants may not have been to the meeting space before so mark entrances and rooms clearly. Consider posting a greeter at the front entrance to welcome participants and guide them in the right direction. Nothing says “Glad you came” like a warm smile and friendly face.

Below is a simple checklist that will help you get your conversation sessions organized. Before the event it will be helpful to divide these responsibilities with others who will process the findings and work to implement possible events and activities in your parish/school/deanery to support young disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Materials/supplies**

- Invitations and/or flyer
- Permission Forms (if the meeting is held off of your parish or school property)
- Food and drinks
- Signs for inside and outside
- Sign in sheet
- Agenda and Handouts
- Pens, markers, poster paper, index cards

**Roles**

- Greeting and Welcome
- Opening Prayer
- Presentation about the Conversation Session
- Dividing into small groups
- Facilitate large group discussion
- Wrap up
- Closing Prayer

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**DEFINITION of Comprehensive Ministry with Youth & Young Adults**

The Catholic community *responds* to the *needs* of young people; and

- The Catholic community *involves* young people in sharing their unique *gifts* with the larger community.

**GOALS of Catholic Youth & Young Adult Ministry**

- ◇ Discipleship: To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
- ◇ Participation: To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community.
- ◇ Growth: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

## Conversations with Teens

Agenda

### 1 hour before:

Set-up—post signs outside and inside, food and drinks, CD/music, pens/markers and paper on tables, greeters at the door

### 30 minutes before:

Registration opens—sign-in table, nametags

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### Welcome

10 minutes

Opening prayer—asking God’s blessing on the gathering, the youth and the upcoming synod—see prayer composed by young people from our diocese on page 12

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### Warm-up/Icebreaker

20 minutes

In 5 minutes the participants at each table have to find 5 things that they hold in common. Each table stands and tells their 5 commonalities to the whole group (post their list) Now, the whole group lists one (or more) thing (s) that every teen in the room has in common?

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### Presentation—

25 minutes

- ◇ **What is a Synod?** The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution established by Pope Paul VI, 15 September 1965, in response to the desire of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to keep alive the positive spirit engendered by the conciliar experience.

Literally speaking the word “synod”, derived from two Greek words *syn* meaning “together” and *hodos* meaning “road” or “way”, means a “coming together”. A Synod is a religious meeting or assembly at which bishops, gathered around and with the Holy Father, have the opportunity to interact with each other and to share information and experiences, in the common pursuit of pastoral solutions which have a universal validity and application. The Synod, generally speaking, can be defined as an assembly of bishops representing the Catholic episcopate, having the task of helping the Pope in the governing of the universal Church by rendering their counsel.

- ◇ **Top 10 Quotes from the Preparatory Document**

Before the session, the leader reviews the *Preparatory Document on Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* and shares key concepts [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20170113\\_documento-preparatorio-xv\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html). Please include that in October of 2018, the Church is calling a Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment and seeking input from teens and young adults.

- ◇ **Desire to hear their voice and seek their input**

Through this conversation session, teens could be encouraged to help plan and implement at the local level. Their thoughts and opinions are respected and do make a difference.

Table discussion using the questions on page 7 (each teen receives the questions handout.)

**Sharing**—Each group reports on their responses to the questions  
Start with Question #1 and have all groups respond. Encourage additional comments  
Continue with #2 through #7 allowing the facilitator to summarize

**30 minutes**

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**Brainstorm the Next Steps**—

**20 minutes**

Your follow-up to the conversation session is customized to your community.

- What will the follow-up look like?
- Who will meet, and when?
- How do the youth want to be included in future parish/school plans?

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Receive immediate feedback with the **A-B-C Evaluation** and Closing Remarks

**10 minutes**

The main task for us all is that of a new evangelization aimed at helping younger generations to rediscover the true face of God, who is Love. To you young people, who are in search of a firm hope, I address the very words that Saint Paul wrote to the persecuted Christians in Rome at that time: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13).

*Pope Benedict XVI World Youth Day, February 22, 2009*

If parishes are to be worthy of the loyalty and active participation of youth, they will need to become "youth-friendly" communities in which youth have a conspicuous presence in parish life.

These are parish communities that value young people—welcoming them into their midst; listening to them. . . These are parish communities that see young people as resources—recognizing and empowering their gifts and talents, giving them meaningful roles in leadership and ministry, and encouraging their contributions. . . In short, "youth-friendly" parish communities make a commitment to young people and their growth.

*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, USCCB 1997*

O Lord Jesus Christ,

keep these young people in your love.

Let them hear your voice and believe what you say,  
for you alone have the words of life.

Teach them how to profess their faith,  
bestow their love, and impart their hope to others.

Make them convincing witnesses to your Gospel  
in a world so much in need of your saving grace.

Make them the new people of the Beatitudes,  
that they may be the salt of the earth and the light of the world  
at the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium!

Amen.

*St. John Paul II*

*Homily at the Mass concluding World Youth Day*

*July 28, 2002*

## Questions for Teens

Your group has 30 minutes to answer the seven questions below.

Choose one person to: + Read the question + Write down the answer

+ Be the spokesperson and explain your answer

The discussion is for everyone...each voice counts!

1) If your group could sit down with Pope Francis and tell him three things about you and your friends, what would you tell him?

5) If you and your peers were given the opportunity to contribute something big to the world, the Church, or your communities, what would it be?

2) What are some challenges that young people face today?

6) If you were responsible for creating a youth ministry program that would respond to the needs of your peers, what would it look like? (e.g. activities, areas of emphasis, effects on those who attended)

3) What do young people really ask of the Church?

7) In what ways can the Church (parish, diocese, national and international) be present and more engaging in the digital world?

4) Do you feel heard in your parish or school community?

## Conversations with Young Adults (those in their late teens, 20s & 30s)

Agenda

### 1 hour before:

Set-up—post signs outside and inside, food and drinks, CD/music, pens/markers and paper on tables, greeters at the door

### 30 minutes before:

Registration opens—sign— in table have nametags

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### Welcome 10 minutes

Opening prayer—asking God’s blessing on the gathering , the young adults and the upcoming synod—see prayer composed by young people from our diocese

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### Warm-up/Icebreaker 20 minutes

Introductions—Your name (as it is written on your nametag) and finish the sentence, “When my friends describe me they say…”

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### Presentation— 25 minutes

- **What is a Synod?** The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution established by Pope Paul VI, 15 September 1965, in response to the desire of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to keep alive the positive spirit engendered by the conciliar experience. Literally speaking the word “synod”, derived from two Greek words *syn* meaning “together” and *hodos* meaning “road” or “way”, means a “coming together”. A Synod is a religious meeting or assembly at which bishops, gathered around and with the Holy Father, have the opportunity to interact with each other and to share information and experiences, in the common pursuit of pastoral solutions which have a universal validity and application. The Synod, generally speaking, can be defined as an assembly of bishops representing the Catholic episcopate, having the task of helping the Pope in the governing of the universal Church by rendering their counsel.

#### ◇ **Top 10 Quotes from the Preparatory Document**

Before the session, the leader reviews the Preparatory Document on Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment and shares key concepts [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20170113\\_documento-preparatorio-xv\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html). Please include that in October of 2018, the Church is calling a Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment and seeking input from teens and young adults.

- **Desire to hear their voice and seek their input**

Through this conversation session, teens will help plan and implement at the local level. Their thoughts and opinions are respected and do make a difference.

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**Table discussion using the questions on page 9** (each young adult receives the questions handout.)

### Sharing—Each group reports on their responses to the questions 30 minutes

Start with Question #1 and have all groups respond. Encourage additional comments. Continue with #2 through #7 allowing the facilitator to summarize

### Brainstorm the Next Steps— 20 minutes

Your community’s follow-up to the conversation session is customized to your reality

What will the follow-up meetings look like?

Who will meet, and when?

How do the young adults want to be included in future plans?

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### Receive immediate feedback with the A-B-C Evaluation page 11 and Closing Remarks 10 minutes

## **Small Group Conversation for Young Adults**

Take a minute to collect your thoughts and jot down your ideas on the following questions.

Choose one person in your group to:

- Write down the answer on the poster paper
- Be the spokesperson and explain your answer to the larger group:

1) What three things do you want Pope Francis and Bishop Sullivan to know about young adults?

2) What are the top five realities facing young adults today that occupy your thoughts and/or conversation with friends?

3) What are the main challenges for young adults in our country and area?

4) What are the most significant joys for young adults in our country and area?

5) If your group was given the opportunity to contribute something big to the world, the church, or your communities, what would it be?

6) Do you feel you belong in your parish? What could a community do to increase a sense of belonging?

7) How can the Church help you on your faith journey?

# A B C Evaluation

Every listening session with teens and young adults should include an evaluation by the participants. This helps in planning for the future and lets the participants know that their opinion is valued and respected. Get immediate feedback about the event with this simple assessment tool.

Have brightly colored index cards on every table and ask the participants quickly grab a card in their favorite color and write three large letters on the card: A, B, and C.

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Tell them that

***A stands for Action***

***B stands for Benefit***

***C stands for Comment***

Direct the participants to write three words or phrases on their card:

- 1) Next to the A: write an action that you will take because of this session (check a website, call a friend, read the Preparatory Document, talk to the pastor...)
- 2) Next to the B: Write a word to describe the benefit of attending the session
- 3) Next to the C: Offer one comment on this event

Here are some examples that could be gathered after Conversations for Teens and Young adults:

**A = Action you will take**

Bring more teens to youth ministry  
Make my faith known in school  
Develop relationships with teens and possibly coordinate an event  
Join my Youth Group and get involved  
Get close to the Church

**B = Benefit in attending event**

I'm really proud to be here  
I helped the Church understand teens' desires  
Learning about other people my age  
I want to spread the word to many people  
Feel better about my religion

**C = Comment on your experience**

People need to see why Catholics do care about others  
I was comfortable in speaking what I want to  
Happy I came, excited about helping out  
This was very helpful to get rid of misconceptions of youth  
Everyone had great ideas

**Parish Evaluation Form**

We want to hear from your community! Please share the highlights of your conversation with us. We want to add this to our report to the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*.

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**Host for the Conversation (parish/school/deanery)**

**Date of Conversation**

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**Leader of the Conversation event email**

**Phone #**

**What are the top three things that Pope Francis and Bishop Sullivan need to know about youth and young adults?**

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**What do parishes need to know about youth and young adults?**

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**Based on the questions for teens and young adults, what were the key findings?**

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**What follow-up will you have to this conversation?**

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Youth and young adults all around the Diocese will be talking about issues of faith as we move toward the Synod of Bishops in 2018 and we want to keep the conversations going. Can we tell others about your event and share your findings with others?

YES

NO

Please share with us your parish's or school's response with us by email [gregory.coogan@camdendiocese.org](mailto:gregory.coogan@camdendiocese.org) or fax 856-338-0826

Prayer for Youth & Young Adults  
*composed by St. Damien Parish, Ocean City  
Youth & Young Adult Ministry*

God of unconditional love  
Draw near to all your sons & daughters  
As they seek & discern  
Your perfect will for their lives.

Give them the eyes to see  
The ears to hear  
And the mind to know  
It is you who is the source of all love & all joy.

Show them how to love one another  
In the way that You first loved us.  
And give them courage to stand firm in their faith.

Protect them & lead them, Lord  
Through all that they encounter  
And stir in their hearts a desire to  
Serve You in all that they do.

Amen



## DIOCESE OF CAMDEN

*Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry*

Attention all those ages 14-39! You have a voice in the Catholic Church and we want to hear it. The Diocesan Office of Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry is conducting an area wide survey of all Youth & Young Adults to help understand your spiritual and social needs. This includes all those in middle, high school, college students, young singles, young families, etc. We are interested in the responses of those who regularly attend Mass, occasionally attend, and those who may have left the Catholic Church or are no longer practicing. If you are a Teen or Young Adult, *or if you have Teenagers or Young Adults in your family*, please visit <http://www.camdendiocese.org/synod-2018/>. It only takes 5-12 minutes to complete and all responses are anonymous. The results will be shared with pastors and church leaders to help reach your needs. The more responses the better, so share with your Teenage and Young Adult family and friends. The survey will be live through the end of May.

Prayer of Youth & Young Adults  
*composed by St. Damien Parish, Ocean City  
Youth & Young Adult Ministry*

God of infinite love & mercy  
Guide us along the path you have set before us

Help us to seek you & love you  
Before all things.  
Give us strength to endure our trials,  
Courage to overcome our fears  
And hope in your perfect plan for our lives.

May we be filled with the joy & peace  
of the Holy Spirit  
And may our lives always be  
A reflection of You,  
For we are made in your image.

We thank you for every good gift  
You have given us  
And we pray that you renew our spirit daily  
As we fix our eyes on You.

Amen

LET YOUR  
**VOICE**  
BE HEARD

IF YOU ARE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 14 & 39

Pope Francis wants to hear from you! Help us to better serve you in the Diocese of Camden by sharing your thoughts and participating in the survey. We will compile the information and insights about your needs, concerns and desires, and share these results with parish leaders, Bishop Sullivan and Pope Francis so that we can better respond and connect to you and your peers.

Scan this QR Code or Visit  
<http://www.camdendiocese.org/synod-2018/>  
To submit Your Response Online



DIOCESE OF CAMDEN  
*Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry*

# LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD



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To submit Your Response Online



DIOCESE OF CAMDEN

*Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry*



## DIOCESE OF CAMDEN

*Office of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry*

### **Top 10 Quotes from Preparatory Document on Young People, the Faith & Vocational Discernment**

1. As for important things in life, vocational discernment is a long process unfolding over time, during which one continues to monitor the signs used by the Lord to indicate and specify a vocation that is very personal and unique.
2. No seed for vocations can be fruitful if approached with a closed and “complacent pastoral attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’” and without people being ‘bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities’ (Evangelii Gaudium, 33).
3. If society or the Christian community want to make something new happen again, they have to leave room for new people to take action.
4. The young will find the Church more attractive, when they see that their unique contribution is welcomed by the Christian community.
5. The Church herself is called to learn from young people. Many saints among youth give shining testimony to this fact and continue to be an inspiration for everyone.
6. The search for ways to reawaken courage and the impulses of the heart must necessarily take into account that the person of Jesus and the Good News proclaimed by him continue to fascinate many young people.
7. Various research studies show that young people have a need for persons of reference, who are close-by, credible, consistent and honest, in addition to places and occasions for testing their ability to relate to others (both adults and peers) and dealing with their feelings and emotions.
8. To “go out” into the world of young people requires a willingness to spend time with them, to listen to the story of their lives and be attentive to their joys, hopes, sadness and anxieties; all in an effort to share them. This leads to the inculturation of the Gospel and for the Gospel to enter every culture, even among young people.
9. In an increasingly noisy society which offers a plethora of stimuli, one fundamental objective in the pastoral care of young people is to provide the young with opportunities to enjoy the value of silence and contemplation and to receive formation in understanding one’s experiences and to listen to one’s conscience.
10. Each young person can discover in Mary’s life the way to listen, the courage that faith generates, the depths of discernment and dedication to service...In her eyes every young person can rediscover the beauty of discernment; in her heart every young person can experience the tenderness of intimacy and the courage of witness and mission.

### Sample Goals to Strengthen Ministry with Young People

These sample goals are suggestions that could be used as part of a goal-setting process in the parish. Engaging young people in active participation will benefit your community.

Dimensions of Growth	USCCB Goals	Parish <b>BEGINNING</b> a ministry with and for Teens/Young Adults	Parish with an <b>EXISTING</b> ministry with and for Teens/Young Adults	Parish with <b>STRONG</b> ministry with and for Teens/Young Adults
<b>Spiritual Awareness</b>	To empower young people as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today	<p>Visionary—Start a Bible Study or faith sharing with young people</p> <p>Step: Adults and pastor hold listening sessions to learn of the needs and concerns of young people and develop young leaders</p> <p>Step: collaborate with neighboring parish on a youth or young adult retreat</p>	<p>Visionary—link parish to the local Catholic high school to share ideas and resources on teen formation</p> <p>Step—work with young people to develop a schedule of retreats for all ages</p> <p>Step—increase number of spiritual experiences (pilgrimages, Advent/Lent services) for youth</p>	<p>Visionary—recruit parishioners to write grants to fund programs, staffing and training for teens and young adults</p> <p>Step—take the young people on a tour of places of worship around Southern New Jersey</p> <p>Step—Increase the number of parent or inter-generational events and activities</p>
<b>Service</b>	To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic Faith Community	<p>Visionary—create a connection with a local food pantry or soup kitchen that allows young people to attend regularly</p> <p>Step- provide experiences of service with time for reflection afterward—gather their impressions and post on your website/social media</p> <p>Step- Survey the young people of the parish on their service interest</p>	<p>Visionary—offer a film or speaker series on Catholic Social Teaching and allow young people to create a new ministry</p> <p>Step- Collaborate with another parish on mission trips for young people</p> <p>Step—Increase number of young people who attend events with a mission parish locally, nationally or internationally</p>	<p>Visionary—participate in a Life &amp; Justice series or FaithFULL Food Drive and create a parish plan for addressing hunger insecurity</p> <p>Step—Teens apply for participation in the Summer in the City Experience or Urban Challenge Program at the Romero Center in Camden</p> <p>Step- Increase the number of teens sent to regional or national conferences</p>
<b>Incorporation into Parish Life</b>	To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person	<p>Visionary—Create a team of parishioners in developing a comprehensive young ministry</p> <p>Step—Publish stories in the bulletin of young people who are exemplary Catholics, parishioners submit names</p> <p>Step—Increase the number of young people that participate in liturgical ministries of the parish</p>	<p>Visionary—Include two positions on the Parish Council for teens and young adults</p> <p>Step—Hold a Ministry Fair with a specific focus on youth and young adults of the parish to inform and invite</p> <p>Step—Provide more formation and opportunities to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation</p>	<p>Visionary—Work with the Office of Youth &amp; Young Adult Ministry to develop Peer Ministry training in your parish</p> <p>Step—Pastor meets with youth and young adults each week in order to prepare homilies that address their needs</p> <p>Step—Include more youth and young adults in Religious Education Program as aides and catechists.</p>