



Mentor Training Guide & Discipleship Team Resources

A self help guide for mentors and small group leaders navigating the paradigm shift toward the relational discipleship model of youth ministry in the apostolic time.



"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:30

Diocese of Palm Beach

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What are we doing & Why are we doing it?



Why We Are Changing Focus: Ministering in an Apostolic Time

The Programmatic Focus and the Sacramental Conveyor Belt Are Failing Us

Dioceses and parishes around the globe struggle with youth ministry and Confirmation preparation: the process, the policies, engagement and retention. Each year out of an abundance of hope and in an effort to hold on to as many young people for as long as possible, an extraordinary amount of time and resources are spent attempting to assemble large groups of young people to meet the specific need or goal of a parish program or policy (i.e. service hours, catechesis, sacramental preparation, etc.). For many parishes, Confirmation has become the sole ministry to youth where countless hours and a multitude of resources are spent sustaining a process that has proven time and time again to have little return.

This is the conveyor belt of sacramental preparation where for many reasons, the “process” takes precedence over the people as parishes systematically move young people through a process that should have as its core goal conversion and salvation. However, the process has little room for the necessary elements to reach the goal: relationships, encounter, authentic formation, etc. nor the recognition of the movement of an individual’s will to actually receive the sacrament. This conveyor belt process tends to focus on the 4 P’s of policy, paperwork, participation and preparation and generally culminates each year in the big E - *EXODUS*:

- **Policy** - Above and beyond canon law, we add rules and constraints to “protect” the sacrament.
 - **Paperwork** - Are they registered, have they filled out the right forms, are they the required age, etc.
 - **Participation** - Are they physically present to meet the required classes, service, retreats, Mass, etc.
 - **Preparation** - May not equal actual conversion or knowledge gained. Did they google copy that saint report?
- **the Exodus** - 85%+ leave the Church post Confirmation and will not return.

If any of this sounds remotely familiar, then its time to ask some serious questions:

1. Why do we continue to do the same thing and expect different results?
2. Are we meeting our responsibilities to the young church?
3. What is our focus and could we do something different? Can we be do more?

In 2017, well before COVID-19, the statistics shocked many of us as the US officially gained membership in the world movement toward a post Christian society. For the first time in our own history, Baptisms fell below all other sacraments, and the exodus post Confirmation breeched 85%, with most of our youth checking out by the age of 13. For more than 3 decades the great heralds and evangelists of our faith and nearly every Church document directing our catechetical mission have been trying to prepare us for this moment, this move from maintenance (the Christendom mode) to mission (Apostolic mode) ... This is why (as Pope Francis says) we must concretely change – and why our office is answering that call, not just in Confirmation, but in every aspect of formation and family life.

Watch: [Christendom and Apostolic Modes of Engagement - St. Mary University](#)

For Further Study: [Prime Matters: Apostolic/Christendom](#)



People Process

An intimate and personal experience that brings young people to the Sacraments, to Jesus Christ.

We must concretely change if youth ministry is to successfully make the shift toward mission in an Apostolic Time. Parishes must create a rational, relational and relevant environment that in addition fosters in young people a desire to know, love and serve the Lord and to grow in knowledge and understanding of the faith. We must together build ministry that:

- Leads to encounters with Jesus, and a desire to receive Him in the Sacraments.
- Creates an organic process for leading young people through Sacramental Preparation naturally.
- Fosters a deeper faith and commitment to Jesus Christ leading to committed discipleship.
- Is focused on the 3 B’s of Evangelization: Belong - Believe - Become.

A Vision for Youth Ministry

Relational Ministry that accompanies and equips young people for the journey

What is Youth Ministry?

Youth Ministry is the response of the parish community to the needs of young people and the community's acceptance of the gifts and talents of young people in service to the community.

Renewing the Vision #1—USCCB

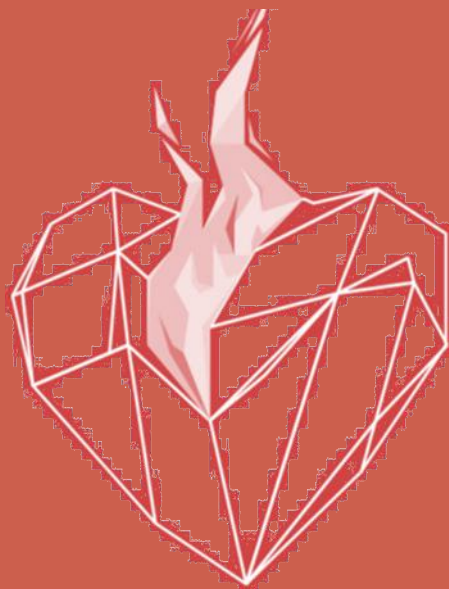
Our Focus: The Valley - After Meeting God on the mountaintop, He uses the valley to change our lives. God uses the valley to mold us and make us His disciples.

The Diocese of Palm Beach vision for Youth Ministry has at it's heart the principles of Belonging, Believing and Becoming.

- Belong is focused on creating welcoming environments that engage young people and foster intentional moments of encounter with Jesus Christ that build trust and curiosity between the young person and trusted adult mentors.
- Believe grows from small group discipleship ministry that creates a pattern of listening, caring, responding and sharing to encourage teens to dive deeper into a relationship with Jesus Christ and builds desire for to lifelong learning about the rich deposit of faith that is the Roman Catholic Church.
- Become is ultimately concerned with true conversion, salvation in Jesus Christ and a commitment to become a missionary disciple within the evangelizing parish community. This is also the desired outcome of Confirmation.

Confirmation:

With this approach, preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation falls naturally within the framework of youth ministry. Reception of Confirmation organically becomes the natural response of a young person to the movement of their will toward a deeper life in Christ. This approach builds up parish ministry that is sustainable and works. This is ministry in the valley, parishes accompanying young people in their everyday lives. This is the ministry that prepares young people for an encounter with Christ by leading them to that mountaintop experience with Him, and then accompanying them and their experience in the descent back into the valley. this ministry mirrors the ministry of Jesus Christ.



The CONVERSION Process

Accompanying People Across Thresholds

1 **BELONG:**

FOCUS: Relationships,
Community, Immediate
Needs, Christian Witness



2 **BELIEVE:**

FOCUS: Authentic,
Intentional, Sacramental



3 **BECOME:**

FOCUS: Commit, Grow,
Live, Share, Serve



Conversion Threshold:



1) Trust



2) Curiosity



3) Openness



4) Seeking



5) Missionary
Discipleship

[Credit: Thresholds of Conversion - Sherry Weddell, Forming Intentional Disciples](#)

There is a gap between my life and the life
God invites me to live. There is a gap between
the person I am and the person God has
created me to be. I have a long way to go.
But I have started and I hope you will join
me on the journey.



Decision Point
Dynamic Catholic

**How are we going
to do it?**



Three Steps to an Encounter with Jesus Christ

The 3 B's of Evangelization: Youth Ministry through the lens of the Catechumenate

BELONG is a period in evangelization ministry whose elements include invitation, relationship, inquiry, witness, gospel, creation, mission, and salvation. The goals of this period are to build trust and curiosity that lead to deeper encounters and a desire to know more about Christ and His Church. Not unlike the period of the precatechumenate in OCIA, belong is not for deep catechesis. It is a time of evangelization: where faithfully and consistently, the living God is proclaimed (in word and witness) and Jesus Christ, who He has sent for the salvation of all.

"...the precatechumenate, is of great importance and should not normally be omitted. For within it takes place that evangelization in which the living God is confidently and constantly proclaimed, together with the one whom he sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ, so that, as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts, that they may be freely converted to the Lord as believers and sincerely hold fast to him who, since he is the way, the truth, and the life, fulfills all their spiritual expectations, and indeed infinitely surpasses them. (OCIA36)

Belong is about building committed relationships with the young people and their parents, addressing their immediate needs (what is holding them back), building trust. To share the living Christ through intentional proclamations of the gospel and the sharing of one's own witness to faith so that the young person, having encountered Christ in word and witness, begins to build curiosity about Jesus Christ and His church. The final goal of this phase, *"... so that the will to follow Christ ... may mature."* (OCIA 37)

BELIEVE is the period in which a person's trust and the curiosity formed through belonging is cultivated, leading to a longing for something deeper. The elements added to this phase take place in young discipleship teams (small groups) where catechesis based on individual needs is introduced, questions are authentically answered, curiosity is fed, and life changing witness is experienced. The Believe phase leads individuals toward a deeper encounter with Christ and a continued conversion to Him. Young discipleship teams (small groups) are where young people are fed truth, community is built, and lives are transformed. This period is also the phase in which sacramental preparation takes place at the appropriate time and based on the movement of a person's will to receive Confirmation. – Goals of this period are desire, openness, continued encounter, deeper understanding, and a deeper longing for life in Christ.

Like the Period of the Catechumenate, this period of time is when *"They are assisted on their journey by Mother Church."* (OCIA 75.3)

BECOME is the period when a young person arrives at the threshold of continued conversion. The elements of this phase are fulfilment, reception, lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi (the law of what is prayed is what is believed and is what is lived). Goals include mission, commitment, growth, acceptance and discipleship. It is here where individuals, being formed in young discipleship teams, and having developed their sense of belonging to the parish community, continue to grow stronger in their relationship with Jesus, and continuously seek encounters with Him. It is here we see young people accept fully their life in Christ and begin to display that behavior first by reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation and see the fulfillment of the formative process in its coming full circle in the life of a missionary disciple.

The structure for this phase does not change but continues into what we have come to know as continued formation. *"A genuinely fuller and more fruitful understanding of the "mysteries" is acquired... For having been renewed in mind, having intimately tasted the good word of God, having shared communion in the Holy Spirit, they have come to realize how sweet the Lord is. From this experience, enhanced by day-to-day living, they draw forth a new understanding of the faith, the church, and the world" (OCIA 244) To accompany!*

Young Discipleship Teams: Phases of Conversion and Formation

Phase One Theme: Evangelization / Kerygma	Phase Two Theme: Made for More / Theology of the Body	Phase Three Theme: Sacramental Life / Sacramental Economy	Phase Four Theme: Confirmation / Preparation & Reception	Phase Five + Theme: Discipleship/ Missionary Service
FOCUS: BELONG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Relationships Cultivate Trust Witness the Faith Feed Curiosity Encounter Jesus Proclaim Gospel Parent Partners 	FOCUS: BELONG + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Belong Anthropology Sacredness of Body Objective Truth T.O.B. Unmistakably Made God's Desire for US Our Response 	FOCUS: BELIEVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Belong The Sacraments Life in Christ Knowledge and Participation Encountering Christ Holy Mass True Presence Focus on Eucharist 	FOCUS: BELIEVE + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Belong Discern Readiness Discern Sponsors Communion of Saints Reception of Sacrament Mystagogia 	FOCUS: BECOME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Belong Accompany the Encounter Form Deeply Serve Purposefully Continued Encounter & Conversion
YDisciple RESOURCES:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Invitation Jesus Kerygma Prayer Gospel Sharing your witness Icebreakers 	YDisciple RESOURCES:   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anthropology Sacredness of Body Chastity LGBTQ+ God's Desire for Us Our Response <p><small>*Leaders should preview these resources ahead of time to ensure the appropriateness of the resources and the target audience.</small></p>	YDisciple RESOURCES:   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sacraments Eucharist Sacramental Life Life in Christ True Presence Holy Mass Discernment 	YDisciple RESOURCES:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saints The Church Confirmation Holy Spirit Mission / Service Discernment 	YDisciple RESOURCES:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living the Life Prayer Life Moral Life Sacred Art Vocation Large Group Human Person
What needs to be done: Jesus started His ministry with BELONG and ministry to young people and their families should look like Jesus' own. Jesus invites, He shares, He picks up, He dusts off, He heals – He calls. Jesus didn't start with a book, a guideline or a rule; He started with a smile, an invitation, a meal, a journey – by his words and actions. He showed that all people belong (through him) to His Father. Jesus built relationships, He listened, He met their immediate needs and He shared life and community with them. Our ministry is about bringing the young church to an encounter with Christ that leads to a conversion and acceptance of Him as savior, culminating with their reception of the sacramental graces given by Him in the Sacrament of Confirmation. It's about the salvation of souls and it begins with Relationships, Community, Christian Witness, Intentional Scripture and Jesus Centered Catechetical Conversations.	What needs to be done: Young people now more than ever need to be immersed in truth about who they are, who they were created to be and the gift that is their body. Thankfully the Great Saint Pope John Paul, II left us a beautiful road map to that truth, beauty and goodness in his Theology of the Body. Young people need deep mentored conversations that lead them to a clearer understanding of who God created them to be and how they can respond to God's deep desire for their lives.	What needs to be done: With the Eucharist as the source and summit, the sacraments are the life blood of the Christian existence and young people need a powerful reintroduction to the Sacramental Economy. With Christ's own Paschal Mystery as the focus, each of the sacraments are not just introduced in conversation and study, they are experienced and witnessed. This is apprenticeship faith, study by participating, witnessing Baptism or the profound witness of an RCIA candidate(s), the loving embrace of Reconciliation, the strengthening and perfection through the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, the healing power of the Anointing of the Sick, the powerful witness of Marriage, the Godly desire for true vocation and the powerful sustenance and commissioning of the Eucharist.	What needs to be done: Using the plethora of resources on the sacrament, deeper conversation on the parts of the Rite and the Liturgy take place within the young discipleship teams. Guided discernment over the role of and the choosing of a sponsor. Our role in the Communion of Saints and the Church's desire for us to bring our baptismal name into sainthood. Frequent meditation before the Blessed Sacrament and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After the reception of the sacrament a period of Mystagogia takes place within the young discipleship teams. This Mystagogia culminates with the continuation of the young discipleship team into their remaining high school years.	What needs to be done: The Sacrament of Confirmation is not an end to the process but rather the beginning of a new life. That new life needs to be cultivated and fostered into a life long relationship with Christ. We have a responsibility as a church to help young people live their fullest life in Christ. Young Discipleship Teams continue the small group formation that began in Confirmation. The focus is on discipleship ministry where a pattern of listening, caring, responding and sharing are present. Opportunities for teens to open up, discover more and to desire a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and to lifelong learning about the rich deposit of faith that is the Roman Catholic Church. Young Discipleship Teams are ultimately concerned with continued conversion and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Planning Your Small Group.

Basic questions for planning the small group session:

What is the theme? What are the questions and or topics being raised?	What are your thoughts? What is your approach? What is your desired outcome?	What resources will you use? YDisciple Resources or other Outside Resources to be used?
What icebreaker do you have planned? What does your group like to do? What is the desired outcome of the icebreaker?	Have I made time to find out their highs & lows of the week? This will help you know where your young people are at the moment and allow you to meet needs.	Have I prayed intentionally for my young people? Have I reached out to them and their parents? Building trust with parents is just as important as building trust with young people.

Additional Resources.

Additional Resources and Links:

Scripture:

- [USCCB Bible](#)
- [USCCB - Daily Readings & Reflections](#)
- [4 Steps to Sharing the Gospel](#)
- [Ascension Press - Bible in a Year w/Fr. Mike Schmitz](#)
- [EWTN - Devotions](#)
- [30 day Walk with Jesus](#)

Prayer & Liturgy:

- [USCCB - The Mass](#)
- [USCCB- Liturgy of the Hours](#)
- [USCCB - Liturgical Calendar](#)
- [AMEN - Agustin Institute](#)
- [LIFETEEN - How to Start Talking to God](#)
- [Ascension Press - Catholic Prayers](#)
- [EWTN - Seasons & Feasts](#)

Catechism of the Catholic Church /

Belief & Teachings:

- [USCCB - Searchable Catechism](#)
- [Ascension Press—Catechism in a Year w/Fr. Mike Schmitz](#)
- [Baltimore Catechism Online](#)
- [Teachings of Faith - EWTN](#)
- [Catholicism Library - EWTN](#)

Saints and Angels:

- [Catholic Saints & Angels](#)
- [EWTN - Saints](#)
- [LIFETEEN - Best Saints for Confirmation](#)
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(Web links are always changing and we are periodically updating this list. If you find a broken link or have a suggestion, please email jbaker@diocesepb.org)

Additional Resources and Links:

Discipleship:

- [Forming Intentional Disciples Cliff Notes](#)
- [FOCUS - Discipleship Resources](#)
- [12 Marks of Discipleship](#)
- [Loyola Press - Discipleship](#)

Apologetics:

- [Word on Fire - Answering Atheists](#)
- [Catholic Answers - Catholic.com](#)
- [National Catholic Register - 15 Apologetics](#)
- [EWTN - Apologetics](#)

Sacraments:

- [USCCB - Sacraments & Sacramentals](#)
- [Decision Point - Confirmation](#)
- [OCIA—Order of Christian Initiation of Adults](#)
- [National Eucharistic Revival - Learning Resources](#)
- [LifeTeen - Making a Good Confession](#)
- [Examination of Conscience](#)

Vocations:

- [USCCB - Vocations](#)
- [Diocese of Palm Beach - Vocations](#)
- [Vocation - God Calls Us to Many Things](#)
- [Vocation Match - Religious Communities in the USA](#)
- [Women Religious in the USA](#)

(Web links are always changing and we are periodically updating this list. If you find a broken link or have a suggestion, please email jbaker@diocesepb.org)

Additional Resources and Links:

Tough Topics:

- [Creation/Flood/Science Vs. the Church](#)
- [Sophia Institute—Talking to Kids about Tough Topics](#)
- [Sophia Institute - Responding to Transgender Ideology](#)
- [Sophia Institute - Middle School; Every Day TOB](#)
- [Person and Identity](#)
- [Theology of the Body](#)
- [Dignity of the Human Person](#)
- [Catholic Social Teaching - CRS](#)
- [Helping Teens Understand Catholic Social Teaching](#)
- [Understanding Racism - USCCB](#)
- [Combating Racism - NFCYM](#)
- [LifeTeen - Journey Through Grief](#)
- [Sadlier - Children Dealing with Death, Tragedy and Grief](#)
- [CatholicMom.com - Talking to children about death](#)
- [National Catholic Register - Talking about Death](#)
- [Catholic Answers—What Happens After We Die?](#)
- [Purpose of Life—FORMED.org](#)

Other Topics / Resources:

- [NFCYM - Topics](#)
- [Word on Fire - Free E-books](#)
- [Franciscan Catechetical Institute](#)
- [Ascension - Revive Parishes](#)
- [Fr. Rob Galea - Music and Topics](#)
- [FRG Ministries—Podcasts, Music, Mass & More](#)
- [Ascension Presents - Topics](#)
- [Chris Stefanik - Real Life Catholic - Topics](#)
- [Kinetic Catholic \(Kid Catholic\) - Topics](#)
- [ProjectYM - Games](#)