Catholic Youth Ministry in England and Wales



Called to a Noble Adventure

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The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

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Cover design:

The artwork of the National Symbol for Youth Ministry, blessed by Pope Benedict XVI on the 18th September 2012, provides a symbol-rich platform from where to begin catechesis.

The first panel depicts Incarnation. The colour red is often used to symbolise the Holy Spirit, and blue illustrates heavenly grace of the Virgin Mary. In the lower half of the panel a human figure receives the Messiah; the colour purple represents royalty.

The second panel of Salvation shows the empty cross and crown of thorns; the colour purple once again indicating Christ's majesty and the red this time expressing his Passion and death. The green signifies our freedom through Christ's death and resurrection.

Symbols in the third panel portray the Great Commissioning. The yellow of the ICHTHUS fish, an early symbol of the Church, conveys purity and hope with red here proclaiming the blood of the martyrs, without whom our Church would not be what it is today.

In the final panel, Youth Ministry, we see predominantly the colour orange, which articulates courage, endurance and strength. Once again the red symbolising the Holy Spirit and the brown is our earthly humility.

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The Department of Evangelisation and Catechesis.
Catholic Bishops' Conference
of England and Wales.

A Vision for Catholic Youth Ministry
in England and Wales

"My dear young Catholics ...
This is the challenge the Lord gives to you today:
the Church now belongs to you!"

Pope Benedict XVI, Visit to the UK 2010.

Foreword

The visit of Pope Benedict to this country and his meetings with young people at St Mary's Twickenham, Westminster Cathedral Piazza and then at the vigil in Hyde Park undoubtedly gave fresh impetus to Catholic youth ministry.

This document has been in preparation for some and it tries to answer the question, "Is ministry to young people different from ministry to others?" And the answer has to be yes. The world of young people is so different in many ways from the world that I experience, and the energy and imagination of young people demands that we try and meet their needs in energetic and imaginative ways.

Here we see four goals for youth ministry; we want to try and ensure that our young people feel accompanied, that they feel that the rest of the Church is walking alongside them, and vice-versa. They need to hear a positive call to live as disciples of Jesus Christ and be rooted in the Church. We need to enable them to share as fully as they can in the life of the Church, however demanding that might be, and finally we ask young people to go out as prophetic witnesses and inviting the Church and world to be renewed in faith, hope and love.

This is the first document to come from CYMFED, the new federation of those engaged in ministry to young people. The very existence of that federation is a sign of commitment, optimism and trust among its members. I am sure that it has an exciting and fruitful future in store.

I want to express thanks to all who have worked so long and hard on this. It has clearly been a labour of love, and serves as reminder that this is indeed at the heart of ministry among our young, that we try to show them that they are loved.

Kieran Conry
Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis

'Dear young friends... we were made for love. This is what the Bible means when it says that we are made in the image and likeness of God: we were made to know the God of love, the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to find our supreme fulfilment in that divine love that knows no beginning or end. We were made to receive love, and we have... We were also made to give love, to make love the inspiration for all we do and the most enduring thing in our lives. Every day we have to choose to love, and this requires help, the help that comes from Christ, from prayer and from the wisdom found in His word, and from the grace which He bestows on us in the sacraments of His Church.'

Pope Benedict XVI, Visit to the UK 2010.

'You are the Church. You are often the best of the Church. You are vitally important to our present as well as to our future. I want to see all the vitality that young people bring, all the idealism. I don't want that idealism cut short, disappointed. I want to help them keep their ideals alive, and to believe that they can make a difference to the world through their generosity and through their passion for what is right.'

Archbishop Vincent Nichols: Message for Young People
on becoming Archbishop of Westminster.

'This is what we need: a Church for young people which will know how to speak to their heart and enkindle, comfort and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the Gospel and the strength of the Eucharist; a Church which will know how to invite and welcome the person who seeks a purpose for which to commit his or her life; a Church which is not afraid to ask much after having given much; which does not fear asking from the young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as following the Gospel.'

Pope John Paul II, World Day of Prayer for Vocation, 1995.

Vision for Youth Ministry

1. We cherish young people for who they are now, for all the energy, gifts, joys and challenges that they bring to our communities, and for who they are to become. Young people are both our present and our future. During this period of their lives they have a unique role to play and a unique voice to be heard. Young people should enjoy happy and healthy lives, with the support, love and encouragement needed for each one of them to grow into faithful adults in love with Christ and committed to the building of the Kingdom of God.

2. Catholic youth ministry accompanies young people through the transition from childhood to adulthood, so that they may deepen their encounter with Christ and be encouraged in faith, empowered with hope and supported in love to be the person they are called to be, now and in the future. Youth ministry is always exercised within the context of the Church, and is never separate from the wider community. The community provides nourishment for its young people so that they may encounter and come to know Christ. This encounter comes by participating in the life and mission of the Church, Christ's continuing presence in the world, by hearing the Word of God and by celebrating and living out the sacraments. Therefore, youth ministry is Eucharistic at its core: it is always in the context of community; it is nourishing; it is sacramental.

Young people need to encounter genuine and tangible faith that makes a difference in the lives of believers around them.

3. Catholic youth ministry invites young people to join in with a 'noble and authentic adventure'[1]. The call to adventure is one that resonates deeply with young people. They look for authenticity in their experiences and in relationships that

allow them to stretch themselves, take risks and make new discoveries, whilst also being enjoyable, worthwhile and rewarding. The adventure of faith invites young people to live a counter-cultural life, providing a compelling alternative to the secular pressures that weigh so heavily on them. Pope Benedict XVI described young people as a 'vibrant image' of the Church[2]. We need this vibrancy at the heart of our Catholic community in England and Wales. Our communities should be places where they are welcomed, valued and supported to participate fully. We are needed, therefore, to accompany them on this adventure. In sharing in this ministry of Christ towards His young people, we are privileged to receive back from them their youthful 'enthusiasm and hope'[3], 'faith, idealism and generosity'[4].

4. Young people need to encounter genuine and tangible faith that makes a difference in the lives of believers around them. They need to be able to preserve their enormous capacity for hope and know that God is a God of love who will not let them down when all else falls apart. In the adventure of following the Gospel we encounter these three virtues of faith, hope and love in the person and message of Jesus Christ. By ensuring our ministry reflects each of these virtues we can clear the way for young people to hear God's call and to be 'bathed in the light of the Gospel'[5].

5. As fellow disciples of Christ we must be ready to be with each young person, for youth ministry is not an optional extra, but rather an integral strategy at every level of the Catholic community; local, diocesan and national. In setting out our vision, we intend this to be the basis for Youth Ministers across England and Wales to work together to equip them and encourage others to join them in this privileged task. We seek, therefore, to inspire the development of a framework for youth ministry, which will enable youth ministers to review, plan and develop training, resources and methods for their work, guided by four common goals:

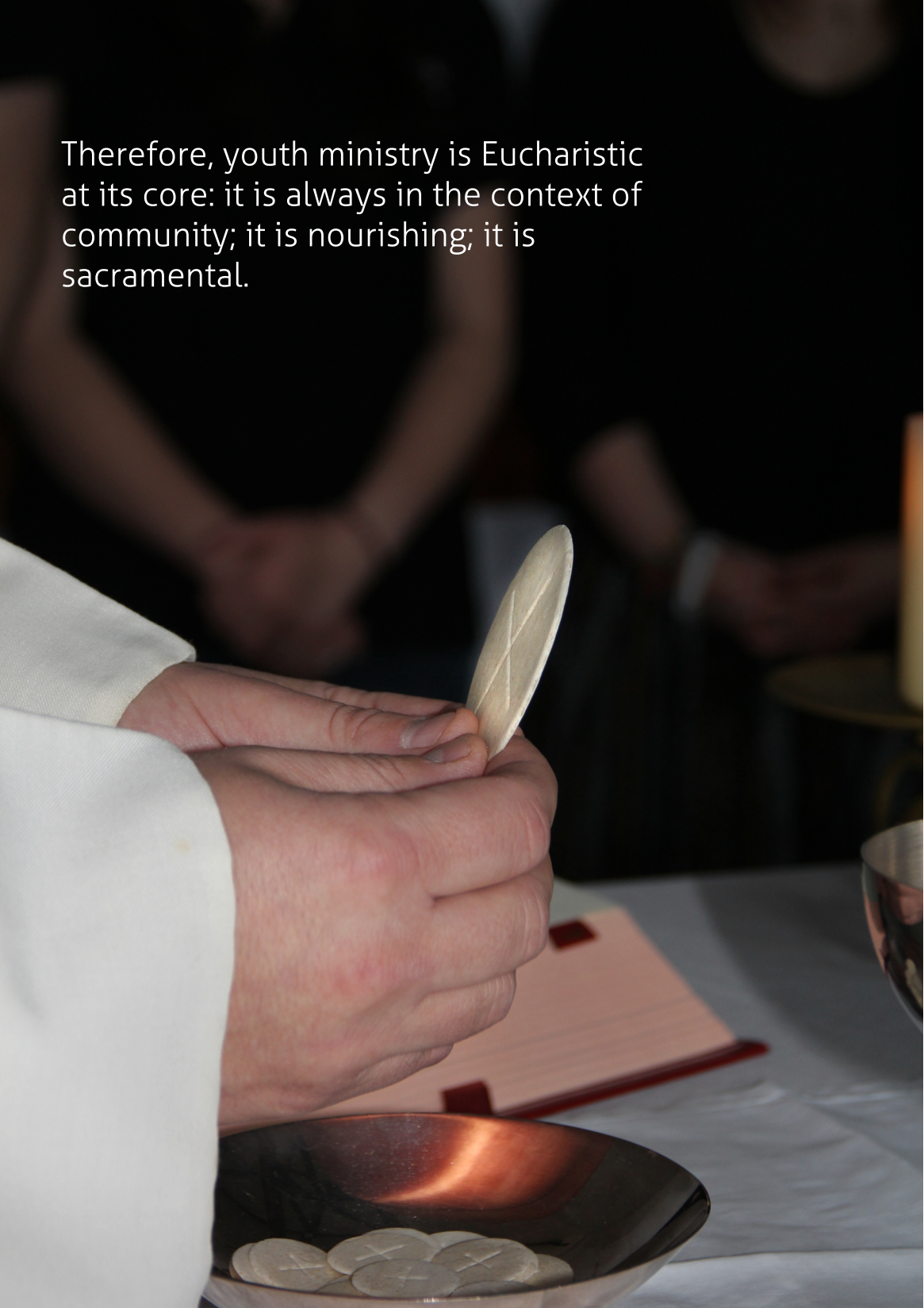
- **Goal A:** Youth ministry fosters the complete personal and spiritual growth of each young person, acknowledging the specific needs of young people in our society.

- **Goal B:** Youth ministry calls young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today, rooted in the living Tradition of our Church.

- **Goal C:** Youth ministry enables young people to participate fully in the life of the Catholic community, recognising the intrinsic value of youth and all that it has to offer to the Church.

- **Goal D:** Youth ministry sends young people out as prophetic witnesses of Christ, calling the world and the Church to a renewal of faith, hope and love.

We will elaborate on these goals on the pages that follow.



Therefore, youth ministry is Eucharistic at its core: it is always in the context of community; it is nourishing; it is sacramental.

Youth ministry today

6. Catholic youth ministry takes on many different forms in many different settings, working with young people ranging from 11-25 years of age, in a wide variety of circumstances. This period of adolescence and emerging young adulthood can be a time of challenge and turbulence. It is a decisive turning point, characterised by significant changes in all aspects of young people's lives. During this time of transition young people realise that they are no longer the child that they once were, nor are they yet the adult they are to become, and they often have a growing awareness that they are not yet the person they should be[6].

7. On one hand adolescence is a time of intense vulnerability when physical, emotional and spiritual changes have a deep impact on the young person themselves, and of the adult of the future. They are searching to discover their own personality, spirituality, sexuality and their changing role within the family and society's structures. On the other hand young people enjoy times of outrageous hope and invulnerability[7]. Their optimism and idealism often shines as a light amidst the scepticism of today's world. As they meet the reality of the adult world for the first time, we must be alongside them. Values which we hope our young people naturally hold, such as justice, equality and fairness, will undoubtedly be challenged in their first endeavours towards independence and interdependence. They will encounter countless questions about how their ideals and values are to be lived out. How these questions are answered, and how their searching is fulfilled, affects the entirety of the future young adult who is emerging from the child.

8. In this sense adolescence is the most crucial time of formation in a person's life. The move from childhood to adulthood, during a relatively few years, is the period when identities are formed, opinions hardened, beliefs grasped and decisions

made about one's own place in the world and one's role within it. We cannot approach youth ministry by thinking of young people as either over-grown children or potential adults. Their stage of life is distinct and our ministry must be tailored to them[8]. It is that ministry with young people taking place in informal settings, although often in partnership with formal education. It is concerned with young people's wholesome development: helping to develop their personal, social and emotional growth as well as their spirituality[9]. Through youth ministry they are equipped to develop in awareness, appreciation and ownership of their own faith, and to live it out in their lives.

9. On the ground locally, youth ministry is going on in many different ways and places including parish based youth groups, programmes of sacramental preparation, prayer and liturgy, social action initiatives, sports teams and examples of youth work where parishes simply create safe and welcoming spaces for young people. Thousands of committed volunteers across the country give up their time to work alongside young people in parishes, together with a growing number of dedicated professional Catholic youth workers. We know that at times it can be a struggle and it can feel that no progress is being made despite good efforts. We encourage people to faithfully continue in their youth ministry, for it is vitally important to our Church and we know it can and does work. We encounter excellent examples where it is clear young people value the time given to them and the nurturing, challenge, fun and encouragement they receive helps them grow in faith, hope and love.

Young people enjoy times of outrageous hope and invulnerability. Their optimism and idealism often shines as a light amidst the scepticism of today's world.

10. Youth residential centres and outreach teams meet tens of thousands of young people each year. National agencies such

as CAFOD, the SVP and YCW engage with young people across England and Wales with their service and action groups helping to form young Christians committed to social and global justice and peace. Movements and communities, such as the Sion Community and Youth 2000, support young people's spiritually and growth in discipleship. Diocesan Youth Services, working with the movements, organisations, and Catholic schools, develop their own style, calendar and leadership to suit their particular context. Some have volunteer youth teams offering peer ministry in residential settings and outreach. Through the wide range of programmes, initiatives and pilgrimages they offer, Youth Services are developing ever more creative and flexible ways to deepen the journey of faith for each young person.

11. The formation of the national Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFed), has allowed dioceses, religious orders and congregations, agencies and movements to act collectively to advocate for good practice in youth ministry, provide training and resources and work collaboratively for the benefit of young people throughout England and Wales.

12. In addition to the more visible youth ministry undertaken by parishes, diocesan offices and organisations, we find excellent faith education continuing in Catholic schools by chaplains and teachers, and perhaps most importantly, at home within the family. All these places are opportunities for the young people to develop in the way God calls them to be, to discover their own vocation and the true source of their meaning and purpose in life. Within the many expressions of youth ministry provision in England and Wales it is desirable to have a common approach: one that starts where young people are, is interested in the whole person, calls them to faith, integrates them into the community, and pays attention to their voice, gifts and responsibilities.

An adventure of the whole community

13. Pope John Paul II, in his letter for the World Day of Prayer for Vocation in 1995, wrote: *'This is what we need: a Church for young people which will know how to speak to their heart and enkindle, comfort and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the Gospel and the strength of the Eucharist; a Church which will know how to invite and welcome the person who seeks a purpose for which to commit his or her life; a Church which is not afraid to ask much after having given much; which does not fear asking from the young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as following the Gospel'.*

14. This powerful vision of the Church's ministry with young people calls the whole community to take responsibility. It is God's work, being undertaken by our hands. We are all called to support young people in their journey through life and encourage them in faith. In fact, before we ask anything of our young people, we must have 'given much'; we must be ready to offer all that we have. We offer fidelity, genuine hope and abounding love within a welcoming and authentic community. Young people are drawn in, attracted by the gifts we offer and are engaged in a worthwhile journey of faith, introduced to the person of Christ and accompanied in life as they grow and change.

15. Youth ministry works in partnership with young people themselves, recognising that their life of faith and all the unique gifts they bring are vital to our community. This means being welcoming to all young people, no matter their ethnicity, economic or educational background, ability or disability, or whether they bring particular needs and challenges to our work. We must pay special attention to each individual's needs ensuring our ministry is inclusive. For if any one of our young people is excluded the whole Church community suffers. As Pope Benedict XVI said to a crowd of young people in Brazil: '*You young people, are not just the*

We need a Church which does not fear asking from the young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as following the Gospel.



future of the Church and of humanity . . . The Church needs you, as young people, to manifest to the world the face of Jesus Christ, visible in the Christian community. Without this young face, the Church would appear disfigured'[10].

16. Once their faith is alight, they become a beacon for all around them: a role model for younger ones, a leader among their peers and a sign of hope for the whole community. It is easy to find such teenagers in biblical and church history. It is as if, at certain points of particular challenge, God chooses a teenager to show the people of God a new direction. David brings a spiritual kingship to the Israelites for the first time[11]. Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant, one to be written on hearts not tablets of stone[12]. Mary says 'yes' to the Holy Spirit and ushers in a whole new age[13]. St Francis of Assisi brings the Gospel back to the poor, reminding the Church of what true discipleship looks like. And St Thérèse of Lisieux gave us a most profound insight into God's love for us, and what that love looks like in a community. In every case, God used the young person's ability to be flexible and think in new ways, to be ridiculously optimistic, to commit with wholehearted passion. These young people set history alight, and carried the Kingdom of God forward into new territory.

17. This kind of faith can also be found in the Church today, where we see young people who have been attracted to a passionate journey of faith, lived in an authentic way. Speaking to young people during his visit to the United Kingdom in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI called them to be 'the future saints of the twenty-first century'. He said 'when I ask you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best'. Here, the Pope was laying out a vision of faith of the highest quality, a vision our ministry should honour. Our four goals for youth ministry guide us in how to faithfully honour this vision.

Goal A: Youth ministry fosters the complete personal and spiritual growth of each young person, acknowledging the specific needs of young people in our society.

18. Youth ministry exists for the sake of each young person, so that they may grow fully into who they are called to be, in order to live freely and responsibly in relationship with God and one another. Youth ministers must attend to the whole of the human person, aware of each individual's situation, their needs, where they really are in their life and in their journey of faith. Our ministry, then, is by its nature relational. We are eager to enter into relationship with young people and come to know and love those whom we are called to serve. In this way we ensure that young people themselves are always the focus of what we do, so that Christ may become the focus of their lives.

19. In Luke's Gospel account we read of Jesus' accompaniment of the Twelve, travelling together through towns and cities in building up the Kingdom of God (Luke 8:1). We humbly follow Christ's example and as adult youth ministers we see ourselves as companions on the adventure of faith with our young people. Furthermore, just like Christ did on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) we are called to recognise young people's vulnerability, uncertainty and developing faith at this stage of their lives. As young people encounter the change, excitement and challenge which meeting Christ brings, youth ministers should not make presumptions about what the faith of their young people is, but take care to start from where they really are. Young people need to be provided with the space, the time and the encouragement to question

Youth Ministry is a pastoral work that cannot fall into routine or mediocrity.

and experiment so that they feel safe enough to admit their real situations and the role which faith plays in their lives.

20. There is widespread concern in the UK about the conditions young people are growing up in today. Significant inequality exists between different young people, both in economic terms and in the opportunities which they enjoy. Although our Catholic young people say that they value the support from their family and friends, the majority remain concerned about money, study and work, and how they are portrayed by the media and the wider adult community[14]. The reality of young people's lives is such that they are increasingly pressured with sometimes inhumane expectations to succeed and conform pushed upon them. As the pace of change in society speeds up, so the issues facing young people become more complex. Youth ministry must become creative in the way it responds. Cardinal Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, said on World Youth Day in 2009, 'Youth Ministry is a pastoral work that cannot fall into routine or mediocrity. It demands constant conversion of heart and a continual quest to find new ways to preach Christ.'

21. We are also aware that there is a wide variety of young people who are connected to our Catholic communities today. They have a broad range of complex identities of belief, practice and behaviour[15]. They have a variety of ways of engaging, or not, with the Church. Many have no contact at all except by family history or through Catholic education, which for many is their only experience of belonging to Church. Typically we find it hard to reach most of these young people through our youth ministry. Even of those who say they are Catholic, and indeed have traditional expectations about what being a Catholic means, few attempt to live by the beliefs and practices that they say are important. For many, they are happy to hold different beliefs side-by-side with no apparent tension arising from the contradictions. Today, from the perspective of many young Catholics, there is simply no single way of how they identify with and live out their faith. We need

a comprehensive ministry to deal with the complexity of these different types of young people, which seeks to serve them, whether visible and in our midst, or those apparently distant and harder to reach. To do this, we must be prepared to accompany them in their present reality, whilst always remaining faithful to our aim of drawing each young person into an intimate relationship with Christ.

Goal B: Youth ministry calls young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today, rooted in the living Tradition of our Church.

22. All youth ministry starts with calling. In extending this call, in whatever form it is expressed, we are, in a humble and genuine sense, the instrument of the Lord. It is His work not ours. When Jesus called His disciples, the response was immediate: 'they left their nets and followed Him' (Mark 1:18). It involved a complete change of life, but Jesus made no apologies for being so demanding. Despite having to leave everything, the disciples did not stop to think twice, acting instinctively and spontaneously, setting out on their adventure of faith, without the apprehensions and misgivings adults often need to consider. Jesus knew that the disciples would misunderstand Him, be frustratingly slow to pick up His message, prevent other people from coming to Him, and ultimately would run away when He most needed them. At the same time, He saw the potential for transformation within them, and knew that these unlikely people would be the start of His Church on earth. When we call young people we are expressing this same love and affirmation of Jesus, recognising that each young person is precious and each young person is open to transformation.

23. It is a great privilege for us to call young people; a precious moment and a practical act of love which may have a profound effect in a young person's life, opening up the

horizons of their faith in a new way. We stand on the thresholds between the Church and society and seek to create opportunities to invite a young person to cross between the two. The reality of society today and modern youth culture, which as Pope John Paul II said is uniquely their own[16], presents a huge challenge for the Church. How do we speak into this culture? How do we call young people if they have stopped listening to us? What do we do with our religious language, when so many do not identify with it?[17] How can we reach those who are on the edges or outside our communities and whom might not have any obvious link with the Church? Each local Catholic community needs to address these questions, being attentive to the reality of young people within their locality and open to the challenges which they might bring to our ministry.

Young people already called into our communities are the means to call others.

24. Often the best people to offer the solutions to these challenges will be those young people already in our midst. In our ministry to young people we come face-to-face with the modern world, and as a Catholic community we have the opportunity to learn the language and stories to be used to communicate faith today. Young people are a bridge into a foreign and fast-moving culture.[18] They can show us the way to effectively communicate with both their peers and the wider world. Moreover, just as Jesus called Andrew and Philip, who go on to invite Simon and Nathaniel (John 1:39-45), these young people already called into our communities are the means to call others.

25. Young people are the 'first apostles of the young' and the best witnesses to other young people.[19] Peer ministry becomes most effective when it is a planned element of a youth ministry strategy with opportunities offered to young people to be role models, witnesses to their peers, and contributors of creative ideas. However, they will only become leaders in

their own right if affirmed, formed and invited to this task. Peer ministry is still to be accompanied by adults in the community, who have the role of maintaining an overall vision for the work, and to make provision for their safety and for the safety of those who work with them.

26. In the words of Christ to 'come and see' (John 1:39), He is calling His disciples to enter into relationship with Him. The invitation is not conditional and He does not ask of them any deep level of understanding of His future plans. Rather Jesus offers them the opportunity to discover something by spending time with Him and by getting to know Him. Our ministry with young people follows this example seeking effective ways of allowing them to spend time with the Lord and becoming attentive to Him and His message; in relationship with others, in prayer, in Word and Sacrament, in action and service. The message needs to find its way into everyday places, taken by us into everywhere young people are to be found; youth clubs, street corners, front rooms, shopping centres, cinemas, pubs and clubs, coffee shops, schools and sports pitches.

Goal C: Youth ministry enables young people to participate fully in the life of the Catholic community, recognising the intrinsic value of youth and all that it has to offer to the Church.

27. Pope Benedict XVI, speaking to young people gathered to welcome him during his UK visit in 2010, described the heart of the adventure of faith: 'Dear young friends... we were made for love. This is what the Bible means when it says that we are made in the image and likeness of God: we were made to know the God of love, the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to find our supreme fulfilment in that divine love that knows no beginning or end'. The Pope said that it is necessary to 'choose to love' every day and that this requires



Young people are the ‘first apostles of the young’ and the best witnesses to other young people.

help, help which comes from Christ and His Church. As a community we seek to assist young people in this daily decision so that they may draw from prayer, reflection, reading and understanding Scripture, taking part in the sacraments, sharing in leadership, and being an active member of a community.

28. When addressing their faith formation it is most effective to start with the needs and abilities of young people themselves. As the General Directory of Catechesis describes, 'the most successful catechesis is that which is given in the context of the wider pastoral care of young people, especially when it addresses the problems affecting their lives' (GDC 184). Within our programmes, projects and initiatives, we should focus on helping young people stick with their faith through adolescent turbulence and come out into their twenties with good reasons for being Catholic[20]. In the ever changing context of young people's lives we are called to make an 'adaptation of catechesis to young people' so that the message of Jesus can be translated into their own terms, relevant to their daily lives (GDC 185), and so that they may grow in their desire and competency to fully participate in the life and mission of the Church.

As we travel with them on their adventure of faith, we must be prepared to travel with humility.

29. Our whole approach to forming young people in faith must allow them to explore their beliefs, to ask questions and experiment with different approaches, within the boundaries that we have[21]. The Gospel message can come to young people by using Jesus' own technique of transforming the ordinary to throw new light onto the spiritual, for example using story, drama and art. At the same time, there is great need for liturgical catechesis to enable young people to engage fully with the Mass, finding meaning in the Sunday mystery that spills over into their daily lives[22], and to explore

with them how the Sacrament of Reconciliation is relevant to making a difference in their lives. If faith formation is not tailored to their particular needs – in fact, if too much knowledge or faith is assumed – it will not be as effective[23].

30. Parents, youth leaders, catechists, priests and religious, along with the example of the saints, are many of the good guides needed for young people in their journey of faith. However, this element of youth ministry is the task of the whole worshipping community. For example, the adult community can show young people the possibilities of a prayer life that truly nourishes and guides, bringing them into a relationship with the person of Jesus. It will take time and careful planning to engage the whole community in this process. The results can be spectacular, both for young people, who have a new sense of value and responsibility to their community, becoming ever more involved in its life and its mission, and for the adult congregation, whose faith is refreshed and revitalised.

31. As our ministry seeks to enable young people to participate fully in the Church, we seek to help them to develop their relationship with God within the mix of their real lives and within the community of believers. This '*communio*' with God and each other is, at its heart, sacramental. This is what makes Catholic youth ministry distinct. As youth ministers, whether it be in an adventure playground, on a residential retreat, in a youth group or within the Sacred Liturgy, we seek to open up for young people the sacramentality of our faith. In the midst of ordinary daily life our young people can discover the grace of God. As they grow in the practice of the faith and are drawn to the sacraments, most especially the Eucharist as the source and summit of their lives, they will discover how their own lives are sacramental in nature; signs and instruments of Christ, 'visible and credible agents of His saving presence wherever they live and work'[24]. For the majority of young people this is a long road. As we travel with them on their adventure of faith, we must be prepared to travel with

humility, recognising that their adventure is unique in its nature, and different to our own, with a common goal of an intimate relationship with God our Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.

Goal D: Youth ministry sends young people out as prophetic witnesses of Christ calling the world and the Church to a renewal of faith, hope and love.

32. Good youth ministry undoubtedly benefits young people. It also has an effect on the wider community. Young people, who are part of our communities by right of their baptism[25], remind us of God's calling to each of us to grow constantly. With their rare qualities of passion, energy and clear-sightedness they counteract the natural tendencies we may have to a sedentary faith life. Together, with the wisdom and gifts which come from the older members of the community, we are encouraged to move forward in the exciting adventure of faith.

33. The presence of active and faithful young people in any community enlivens the present and gives hope for the future. A community that can invite and welcome young people, fostering within them a genuine sense of belonging, will be a welcoming place for all kinds of people. It will value difference for the variety that it brings, it will be outward looking and open to change, it will recognise the signs of the times and will be open to hearing authentic prophetic voices in its midst.

34. In our youth ministry we must be advocates with and for young people, so that their rights and responsibilities to contribute and participate in society and the Church are recognised and supported. In addition we need to provide the formation and opportunities for young people to link life and faith, through word, action and prayer, so that they may grow

in their prophetic witness to Christ. Possessing a keen sense of fairness, they are often attracted to justice and peace issues. They know what is happening in their own culture and if given the right tools and encouragement can make a real difference to the lives of people around them. Youth ministry that recognises young people as the experts of their own lives, giving them a sense of responsibility and valuing them as having something unique to offer, helps them to connect life and faith in a tangible manner. It provides a means for the justice of the Gospel to begin at home and for the often abstract notion of faith to be seen as relevant.

35. The notion of 'making a difference' is powerfully attractive to a generation that feels significantly disempowered and that freely admits putting off until the future their own efforts to improve the world.[26] Committed young people can see clear ways to live out their faith, while those more distanced from the Church can discover its relevance in today's world. Moreover, in discovering the difference that faith makes, for example the relevance of the Church's social teaching in daily life, or the value of offering to pray with a friend in need, young people often discover the true value of others and themselves. They enter into and deepen relationships based on love, and encounter a tangible faith. As a result young people are empowered to speak out in word and action, in small and large ways, as prophetic witnesses to the Gospel.

36. Living out our faith is also one of the ways in which young people can help foster links with other Faiths. The best practice in youth ministry includes ecumenical working. Through dialogue with those working with young people in other Christian denominations we seek to build understanding, encourage our young people to work together for the common good, to pray together and to share in friendship. Organisations such as Pax Christi have a long heritage of such partnership working, and we also seek to learn from their experiences.

37. The involvement in the practical mission of the Church to transform the world, says Pope Benedict, 'constitutes a school of life which offers them a formation in solidarity and in readiness to offer others not simply material aid but their very selves.' [27] This offering of self, is what the 'noble and authentic adventure' of the Gospel calls for. In continuing this journey of faith the young people become witnesses to the wider Church. The questions that young people ask themselves reflect on the whole community: Do the people around me look as if they care about their faith? Does it make a difference to their lives? Does this community put faith into action, whether overseas or closer to home? Am I welcome here? Young people, marked by a 'free and creative spirit'[28] become 'prophets of this new age' [29] calling the Church and the world forward in faith, in the spirit of adventure. As Pope Benedict said to the young people of the world, the Lord calls them to be 'messengers of His love, drawing people to the Father and building a future of hope for all humanity. The world needs this renewal! ...The Church also needs this renewal! She needs your faith, your idealism and your generosity, so that she can always be young in the Spirit.' [30]

As a result young people are empowered to speak out in word and action, in small and large ways, as prophetic witnesses to the Gospel.

38. Each young person's adventure in faith will be different, with their own specific starting points, milestones and points of challenge, struggle, joy and celebration. Accordingly there are many different practical expressions of youth ministry required for the various different contexts and circumstances in which we work, and for the different ages, situations, gifts, abilities and concerns of the young people themselves.

39. The vision we have set out unites all the various expressions of our youth ministry, yet recognising that there is no one single methodology for calling, engaging and forming our young people in faith. However, the principles and goals laid out here help us to see how our youth ministry should be exercised and allow us to develop some broad ideas of what our youth ministry should look like within our particular context. Hence, all those working with young people, at every level of our Catholic community in England and Wales – individuals, local communities, dioceses and nationally – should seek opportunities to reflect regularly on their ministry in light of the vision we have outlined.

40. Recognising the variety of approaches and strengths that individuals and communities bring, and the different needs and situations of young people themselves, there are various different pathways for our youth ministry. Some pathways we can readily identify, whilst others will emerge as contemporary culture shifts and the needs of young people and the Church develop.

41. First, there are pathways concerned with Pastoral Care, which remind us that the focus of youth ministry is on the whole person. These pathways are rooted in the Gospel, both reaching out to those on the edge, and showing all young people an alternative to secular values. Our church communities can be seen as places of affirmation: where

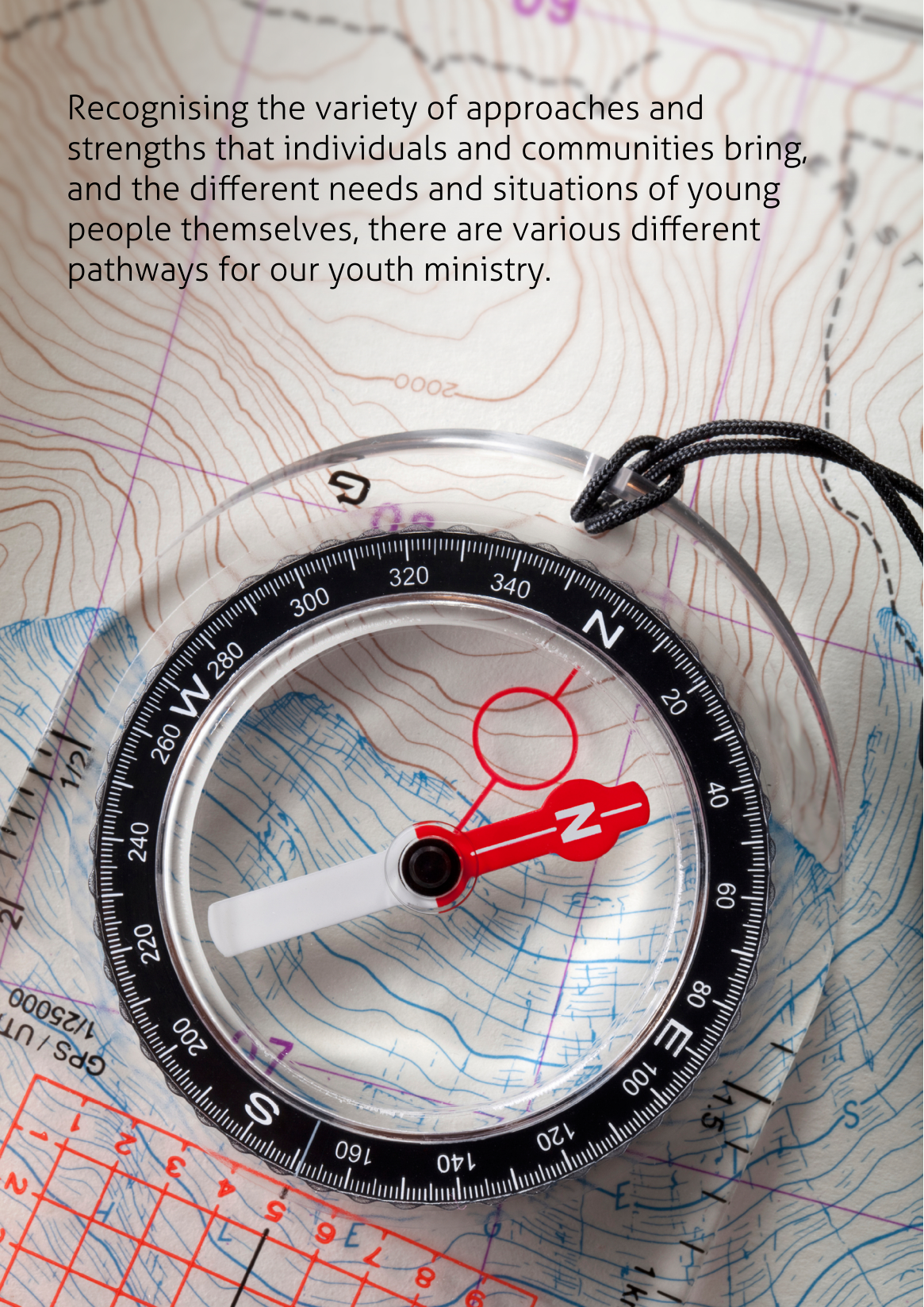
people are not judged on their appearance or belongings, but are valued as beloved of God; where it is safe to express vulnerability and doubt; where success means following God's desire for them, not meeting worldly expectation; where the suffering of the cross and the joy of the resurrection are true alternatives to individualism and blind, selfish ambition. We see these pathways in youth ministry expressed in projects reaching out to young people on the margins of society, or by those projects which pay particular attention to the needs of young people within the community.

42. Secondly, other pathways in youth ministry focus on the process of faith formation: from outreach and proclaiming the good news to growing in faith. There is particular emphasis to ensure young people are invited and made welcome, so that, if necessary, they may hear the initial call to come into relationship with Christ. Formation in faith aims to draw young people into an ever deeper communion and intimacy with Him, most particularly in sacramental participation and a prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture. It is a shared adventure of discovery and conversation, which brings benefits to all involved. These pathways are lived out in initiatives designed to attract young people into the Church, as well as our catechetical programmes, and more specific faith development programmes, retreats and pilgrimages. Clear examples are pilgrimages to Lourdes and to World Youth Day, backed by strong preparation and support for young people throughout the pilgrimage.

There are many different practical expressions of youth ministry required for the various different contexts and circumstances in which we work.

43. Thirdly, some pathways in youth ministry look at the fruits of faith in young people's lives and at providing enrichment for the adventure. In particular these include justice and service, prayer and liturgy, and youth leadership. In the practice of

Recognising the variety of approaches and strengths that individuals and communities bring, and the different needs and situations of young people themselves, there are various different pathways for our youth ministry.



Christian action, young people are encouraged to reflect and respond to situations in their lives and the world. Prayer and liturgy, well prepared and celebrated, help young people to deepen their relationship with Christ, and through Christ their relationship with the Father. This includes helping young people to discover and grow in their desire to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to increase in their love for the Eucharist, including Eucharistic Adoration. Time set aside for feeding young people's spirituality will develop and nurture an awareness of the Spirit of God at work in the young people's lives. Some young people will have a particular leadership role within the Church community. All young people are called to leadership in the way they lead their lives in the world. Whether it be in the Church or the world, calling young people forward in responsibility will help them also grow in faith, as is admirably demonstrated by Catholic Scout and Guide groups. Legitimate pathways in youth ministry therefore rightly focus in leadership formation, alongside justice and peace and social action programmes, and excellent initiatives to engage young people in the prayer and liturgical traditions of our faith.

44. Within these pathways, which are by no means an exhaustive list of ways of doing youth ministry, there are several key characteristics that should be present, whichever the specific focus of our work. Derived from the four goals of Youth Ministry, and found within the ministry of Jesus in the gospels, these characteristics can be described as; accompanying young people, calling them onwards in their Christian journey, forming them in faith for their vocation, and sending them out into the world as prophetic witnesses of the Gospel. Our entire Youth Ministry, whether it is a youth club in a parish hall, a young adult prayer group, or a pilgrimage to Lourdes, should therefore hold these characteristics at the centre.

45. The Second Vatican Council says clearly that 'the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and

hoping'.[31] It is a priority therefore, that, for the sake of our young people, there should be a substantial commitment of support and training for those in youth ministry. We invite the development of resources to explore the different pathways of working with young people, appropriate to today and taking into account the signs of the times. Things move quickly. How do we respond to the changes in young people's lives, influences and developing culture? Hand in hand with these resources we anticipate supporting materials and training provided through dioceses, religious communities, and organisations working together within CYMFed. This much needed work will help to ensure that the vision for youth ministry we have set out here is always fresh and current with the needs of young people and relevant to the many different contexts in which we apply the vision today; in parishes, movements and communities, schools, or more informal settings.

46. Pope John Paul II, whilst in Damascus, told the young people that this was the time in their lives when they must choose how to follow the courageous path of witnessing to 'values worth living for and worth giving [their] lives for: values such as truth, faith, human dignity, unity, peace and love'[32]. A comprehensive youth ministry, which is attentive to all aspects of young people's lives, will help them on their adventure of faith to grow as 'men and women who are free and responsible for their own lives, actively involved in the life of their Church, in strengthening relationships between their religious and social communities, and in building an ever more just and fraternal society'[33]. This is the task of all those engaged in youth ministry in England and Wales today. It is both a privileged and vital task for the current life and future needs of the Church. To all youth ministers, Lay, Religious and Ordained, we extend our thanks, encouragement and prayer.

Endnotes

[1] Pope John Paul II, World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 1995

[2] Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day welcoming ceremony, Sydney, July 2008

[3] Pope John Paul II, to the youth of New Zealand, 1986

[4] Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day Mass at Randwick, July 2008

[5] *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 43

[6] Fr Roger Dawson, S.J., Education and Young People Conference, Heythrop College, 3rd June 2009

[7] Bjorkland, David F, *Why youth is not wasted on the young*, Blackwell, 2007. p.55

[8] cf *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), 28, 31

[9] cf *National Occupational Standards for Youth Work*: '"The key purpose of youth work is to... enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential." This statement refers to the holistic development of young people, recognising that personal, social and educational development can also include, for example, physical, political and spiritual development.' (From the *National Occupational Standards for Youth Work*, Life Long Learning UK, 2008.)

[10] Pope John Paul II, to Youth in Brazil, 10th May 2007

[11] 1 Samuel 16:1-13

[12] Jeremiah 31:33

[13] Luke 1:38

[14] cf *Mapping the Terrain*, *Discovering the Reality of Young Catholics*, 2010, CYMFed Publication, available online from www.cymfed.org/publications. See also the accompanying document *Detailed Typology*, which goes into more detail about the different approaches to faith among young Catholics and helps put this into a practical context for youth ministry. It is available to purchase from the same source.

[15] See *Detailed Typology*, 2010, CYMFed Publication, www.cymfed.org/publications.

[16] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 2001

[17] cf *Mapping the Terrain, Discovering the Reality of Young Catholics*, 2010, CYMFed Publication, p.5

[18] *Christifidelis Laici* (Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II), 46

[19] *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), 12

[20] cf Gaudium et Spes, 31

[21] *General Directory of Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy) 2nd edition 1997, 184-5

[22] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14

[23] *General Directory of Catechesis*, 182-3

[24] Pope John Paul II to the young people of Damascus, 2001

[25] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, revised 1997, art. 1267

[26] cf *Mapping the Terrain, Discovering the Reality of Young Catholics*, 2010, CYMFed Publication, p.6

[27] Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 30b

[28] Pope John Paul II to the young people of Damascus, 2001

[29] Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day, Sydney, 2008

[30] Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day, Sydney, 2008

[31] cf Gaudium et Spes, 31

[32] Pope John Paul II, Damascus, 2001

[33] Pope John Paul II, Damascus, 2001

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Pope Benedict XVI blessed the National Symbol for Youth Ministry at Westminster Cathedral on 18th September 2010



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