



ANNUAL REPORT

2017 - 2018



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LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



As we look back at the many accomplishments of the membership of NFCYM, we are excited by all the Holy Spirit has helped us accomplish. The partnerships in the National Dialogue and Encuentro process; the successful NCYC; another NDDI class; and more than a dozen webinars, trainings, and other offerings are evidence of the commitment and enthusiasm of our members. Together, we are boldly engaging the young Catholic Church.

We look forward to the continued growth of our organization in the coming year. We seek to increase our impact on the church and ministry to young people through new Project Teams and expanded Ministry Networks. We will support the church as it responds to the Vatican's *Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*. We look forward to all the new opportunities the Holy Spirit has in store for us.

Blessings,

CURRENT NFCYM BOARD

- REGION 1**
Claire M. McManus
Diocese of Fall River
- REGION 2**
Kathryn M. Goller
Diocese of Buffalo
- REGION 3**
Christie Smith
Diocese of Greensburg
- REGION 4**
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Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
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Diocese of Saginaw
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Chris Rogers
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TBA
- REGION 9**
TBA
- REGION 10**
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Archdiocese of Los Angeles
- REGION 12**
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- ASSOCIATE MEMBER REP**
Jamie Kohler
Archdiocese of Seattle
- ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBER REP**
Tom East
Center for Ministry Development

- AT-LARGE: ORGANIZATIONAL NEED**
Randy Raus
Life Teen
- M. Annette Turner**
Archdiocese of Louisville
- AT-LARGE: CULTURAL DIVERSITY**
Jesse V. Johnson
Diocese of Memphis
- Katherine Angulo**
McGrath Institute for Church Life,
University of Notre Dame

- EX OFFICIO**
Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop, Diocese of Bridgeport
- Christina Lamas**
Executive Director, NFCYM



A special thank you to all of our current and outgoing board members for your service and dedication to NFCYM and the young church.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Our priority is to create and maintain a solid and stable foundation, allowing NFCYM to advance the field of pastoral ministry with efficiency and excellence.

We have been busy renovating, expanding, growing, and cementing our structures, our brand, and our best resource—our members. As NFCYM evolves, our mission remains the same—to support and strengthen those who accompany young people as they encounter and follow Jesus Christ. It is through thoughtful and significant steps that we ensure those impacted by our mission receive the best that NFCYM has to offer. The vibrancy of our member engagement is palpable. With top-notch programming and the highest standards of excellence, we are excited to bring to fruition the opportunities that await us in the coming fiscal year.

For me personally, it is a great honor to serve NFCYM, and I appreciate your commitment in so many ways. Thank you for contributing to the liveliness of our mission. Your passionate spirit and investment in NFCYM make such a difference!

God Bless,

WE ARE NFCYM

Collectively, NFCYM membership, the board of directors, staff, donors, and the national community of men and women who serve the church as youth and young adult ministers, are the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. Together, we work to advance the field of pastoral ministry.

NFCYM supports and creates programs, events, projects, and ministry networks as the conduit to engage, form, equip and support not only those who accompany young people, but also those young people.

This year, NFCYM will grow its mission by participating in and hosting events and programs charged with the goal of invigorating ministry in the church. We invite you to join us on our journey, stop by and visit us when we are in town, be an advocate of our work, and pray for our ministry.

Here is a snapshot of what we are working on , participating in, and events we will be attending or hosting in the coming year.

MINISTRY NETWORKS

Ministry Networks are sponsored by NFCYM to support the development of the field of youth and young adult ministry through ongoing conversations focusing on current issues, struggles, strategies, and best practices. The moderators for each Ministry Network use online apps (Zoom, Facebook, Google Groups, etc...) to gather interested colleagues around pertinent topical areas to share, resource, discuss, and ask questions among others within the network.

CURRENT NFCYM MINISTRY NETWORKS

- High School Campus Ministers and Theology Teachers
- Catholic Youth Sports
- Diocesan Youth Ministry Directors and Leaders
- Multicultural Ministries
- Multi-Parish and Cluster Youth Ministry
- Catholic Scouting
- World Youth Day Leaders
- Young Adult Ministry
- Catholic Camping and Outdoor Ministry

SERVING THE NATION

- 
- V ENCUESTRO - DALLAS, SEPT. 2018
 - HOLY FIRE - CHICAGO, OCT. 2018
 - HOLY FIRE - NASHVILLE, DEC. 2018
 - NCCYM - TAMPA, DEC. 2018
 - AMM - COLORADO SPRINGS, FEB. 2019
 - NATIONAL DIALOGUE - LA, MARCH. 2019
 - NDDI - WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 2019
 - NCYC - INDIANAPOLIS, NOV. 2019

more at nfcym.org

ENERGIZING THE YOUNG CHURCH

THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

"...THE CHURCH WANTS AGAIN TO STATE HER DESIRE TO ENCOUNTER, ACCOMPANY, AND CARE FOR EVERY YOUNG PERSON, WITHOUT EXCEPTION." Synod Preparatory Document, Part II, Introduction

The National Dialogue is a three-phase project that creates a platform for open and honest conversations among the laity, national organizations, church leaders, youth, and young adults.

Designed to help the church in the United States have a macro-level conversation about pastoral ministries with youth and young adults, the National Dialogue intentionally intersects and includes the insights and processes of both the Synod and Encuentro. It is the intent of the Core Leadership Team and the network of nearly seventy-five organizations that make up the National Leadership Network of the National Dialogue, to help prepare the church to implement the insights and conclusions from both the XV Ordinary Synod and the V Encuentro through shared dialogue, resources, and commitments.

These many wonderful efforts are all part of a single movement in the life of the church: the accompaniment, engagement, and love of youth and young adults, heralded by Saint John Paul II and his successors, Benedict XVI and Francis; the bishops; and the countless pastoral leaders at work in the church today.



THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

FORMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

The vision of the National Dialogue is an energized and unified church committed to forming and engaging youth and young adults as missionary disciples. Work is well underway to realize this vision. The National Dialogue has just entered Phase Two. Three national meetings have already been completed and with ongoing task group work, the leadership team looks to enter into the final stage of this project by 2019.

"I've never been more convinced that the pastoral challenges we face today demand new ideas, creative energy, and a shared commitment between the laity and institutional church organizations to work together in ministry to our youth and young adults." Don Boucher, National Dialogue Chair, Diocese of Davenport.

Find out more and become involved in the National Dialogue at www.nationaldialogue.info.

THE THREE PHASES

1 UNIFY

To bring together the diverse voices of youth, young adults, parents, ministry leaders, religious, pastors, and bishops in a national conversation. A key focus of the National Dialogue is understanding that young people are also agents of ministry.

2 ENGAGE

To engage a diverse population of youth, young adults, parents, families, and ministry leaders in local or national conversations about the faith experience of young people and missionary discipleship.

3 MOBILIZE

To mobilize and prepare young adults, parents, and ministry leaders with training and resources for these ministries and to invite all those who have been involved in the National Dialogue to commit to pastoral actions that form youth and young adult Catholics for missionary discipleship.

CORE TEAM

LEADERSHIP

The National Dialogue Core Team helps plan, shape, and lead the National Dialogue, as well as oversee the implementation of its goals.

- **Episcopal Committee Liaison:**
Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport
- **Chair:** Don Boucher, Diocese of Davenport
- **NFCYM:** Christina Lamas, Executive Director
- **Catholic Campus Ministry Association :** Mike St. Pierre, Executive Director
- **LaRED:** Fr. Alejandro Lopez-Cardinale, President
- **USCCB:** Paul Jarzembowski, Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
- **USCCB National Advisory Team for Young Adult Ministry:**
Nicholas Stein, Bon Secours Young Adults
- **Consultant:** Alma Leon

TOM EAST ON NDDI



NFCYM: How long have you participated in or been a part of NDDI?

TOM: I have been the chairperson for the project team and presenter for the past six years.

NFCYM: Why do you think NDDI is so important to new diocesan leaders?

TOM: NDDI is important because it provides that rare opportunity to really consider ministry, vision, and leadership as a way to lead in diocesan ministry. I consider it to be a “pull-to-the-side-of-the-road moment.” Sometimes when I am traveling, I am in a hurry and I will jump in a rental car and drive off without adjusting the seat or the mirrors. After some time of being cramped and straining my neck, I pull to the side of the road and set the seat back and make the mirrors right. Diocesan ministries can be like this. It is easy to get caught up in repeating programs and responding to emails and phone calls. NDDI provides the vision and practical skills for a ministry leader to engage and choose a way to make a difference and support ministries that bring youth and young adults to Christ. The networking with national leaders, teams, and peers is invaluable to creating a community of support for these crucial ministries.

Tom East, director of the Center for Ministry Development, and NFCYM board member.

NDDI FORMING LEADERS

As part of its mission to educate, train, and support diocesan leadership, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry sponsors, a New Diocesan Directors' Institute, (NDDI), an annual institute for new diocesan leaders in youth and young adult ministry. NDDI programming includes an introduction to national Catholic Church resources, training in management skills, insight into personal spiritual development, and ongoing visioning and planning.



NDDI CLASS OF 2018

NDDI WE ARE NOT ALONE

Carlos Bernard, youth ministry director from the Diocese of Orlando, Florida, talks about his experience at the New Diocesan Directors' Institute this past April.

NFCYM: What was your favorite part about NDDI?

CARLOS: My favorite part was the community building among peers. I felt we were in a comfortable space where we were able to share the challenges we were facing as ministers and talk candidly about them.

NFCYM: What was it like to be in community with other diocesan youth and young adult ministry leaders at NDDI, especially considering you were all starting a new journey in your work for the church?

CARLOS: For me, it was a moment to stop and say to myself, “You are not alone within the vineyard of the young church; that there is a team of support among your peers.”

NFCYM: Did you feel like NDDI was a good resource for you?

CARLOS: Yes, in a huge way. I came into this job without any



training. My background was in being a DRE, but NDDI really helped answer a big personal question, “Where do I start?”

NFCYM: What was one thing you walked away with that you were able to implement or use right away after being back at your diocese?

CARLOS: To have the confidence to go back and have a conversation with the bishop about his views of the young church. Plus, all the tools and resources given to me at NDDI has given me a better understanding of my job as a youth minister.

NFCYM: If you could describe NDDI in three words, what would they be?

CARLOS: Informative, accompaniment, and supportive. We are not alone!

SCHOLARSHIPS NCCYM

As the mission of NFCYM continues to extend its reach, the demand for scholarship assistance grows. This December adults who serve our church as pastoral ministers to young people will join their colleagues and faith community at the National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry (NCCYM) in Tampa, Florida. This conference helps to spiritually and professionally recharge, refill, and reinvigorate those who serve youth in our parishes, dioceses, and Catholic high schools. More than \$25,000 in scholarships is awarded to attendees every year, and still, there are those who need assistance.

We are grateful for those ministers who make the sacrifice to participate in NCCYM and thankful to those who have supported the scholarship fund that allows NFCYM to extend scholarships to those who serve the young church nationally. Here are the personal stories and testimonials from some of this year's scholarship awardees.

THE YOUNG CHURCH NEEDS YOU!

Youth, young adults, and youth ministers nationwide are excited to experience NCYC and NCCYM. With your support, the NFCYM Scholarship Fund can continue to extend the opportunity of these transformative events to the young church and those who accompany them. Make an impact today!

WWW.NFCYM.ORG/DONATE



MELISSA HUND-CERNA
COORDINATOR OF FAITH FORMATION/YOUTH MINISTRY
ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
MOOREHEAD, MINNESOTA

I am so honored to be a recipient of a scholarship for NCCYM. The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry is something that I strongly believe in. When I was a new youth minister, I gained so much knowledge and built my personal youth ministry vision based on what I learned through resources found through NFCYM. When I went to my first NCCYM, I found a community of youth ministers that I still can go to when I have questions or needs.

The Catholic Church needs youth ministers who are educated in youth ministry trends and who are able to build youth ministry programs that are strategic and forward thinking. NFCYM advocates for me as a youth minister and also for the young church we serve, especially those who are on the margins. NCCYM helps me learn, get rejuvenated, and go back home with practical hands-on ideas but, mostly helps mold my heart to be a minister for all of God's children, even when it is NOT easy.



NCCYM WE ARE GRATEFUL

SR. ADELINA GARCIA, OSF
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS
DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO, TEXAS

I come from a rural mission diocese in West Texas. This year, we hired a third person in our office (we do the work of five offices). We could only afford to send one person to NCCYM.

We decided the new person should attend, only to learn that my committee expected me to go! So, I decided to ask for a scholarship....and got it! We are so very grateful for this opportunity. Thank you.

MATTHEW TOO HILL
YOUTH MINISTRY COORDINATOR, ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH
ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Being a youth minister is an exciting, tough, confusing, and rewarding ministry/job/life. I'm excited for NCCYM because I'm surrounded by people who affirm and challenge me to pray, pray, and pray.



STEWARDS OF THE MISSION

\$2,500 & UP

His Eminence Joseph William Cardinal Tobin

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Diocese of Buffalo Youth Department

Most Reverend Wilton Gregory

Most Reverend Louis Kihneman, III

Mr. and Mrs. William J. McCarron

Most Reverend William Medley

Mr. Chris Miller

Most Reverend Dennis Schnurr

\$500 - \$999

Most Reverend Martin Amos

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Jose H. Gomez

Mr. Eric Groth

Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer OFM

Mr. Paul Henderson

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz

Most Reverend Gregory L. Parkes

Most Reverend Dennis J. Sullivan D.D.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Versluys

\$250 - \$499

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Angrisano

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond

Ms. Louise Dussault

Mr. and Mrs. Brian Singer-Towns

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

\$100 - \$249

Mr. and Mrs. Ron Adrian

Matthew Alpaugh & Rebecca Dahl

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair

Javier Bustamante & Roselyn Rosal

Most Reverend Peter Byrne

Mr. and Mrs. John P. Campbell

Mr. George W. Casey

Peter Clifford

Mr. and Mrs. Patrick & Maureen Donovan

Mr. and Mrs. Joe B. Dorfmeister

Most Reverend John C. Dunne

Ms. Ann Marie Eckert

Colby Elbert

Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia

Antonia and Gabriel Garza

Mr. and Mrs. Chris Goller

Mr. Mark Graveline



Most Reverend Jose H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, at NCYC with a youth representative from Region 11.

Most Reverend Martin D. Holley

Mr. Michal T. Horace

Most Reverend Donald Kettler

Mr. and Mrs. James A. Knowles

Most Reverend John M. LeVoir

Ms. Natalie Lies

Rebecca Long

Mr. Jesse Manibusan

Michael Marchand

Fr. Joseph W. McQuaide, IV

Ms. Elzbieta M. Milewska

Linda Moses

Deirdre Murphy

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Ria Pereira

Most Reverend Michael D. Pfeifer OMI

Mr. and Mrs. Randy S. Raus

Ms. Victoria S. Shepp

Most Reverend John W. Yanta

UP TO \$99

Katherine Angulo

Susan Baldwin

James Barrette

Matthew Beck

Barbara Berg

Carlos Bernard, Jr.

Mr. Donald Boucher

David Briscoe

Brigitte Burke

Ms. Cynthia M. Case

Linda Centeno

Frances Clifford

Christina Davis

Andrea De la Roca

Karl Dolson

Ms. Cristela Duran

Ms. Christine G. Edmonds

Amy Elkins

Robert Feduccia

Father Abraham Feliciano

Kevin Feyen

David Fields

Mr. Robert A. Fisher

Diane Flanagan

Mr. James Flanagan

Ms. Joyce Francois

Sr. Adelina Garcia

Kathryn Goller

Ms. Lisa Gomes

Craig Gould

Daniel Green

James Gross

Charles Hardesty

Ms. Jill Heink

Mary Hernandez

Ms. Melissa Hund-Cerna

Ms. Patricia Kane

Paul Kotlowski

Rachel Kuboushek

Christina Lamas

Ms. Jennifer Ledonne

Kathleen Lee

Ms. Kathleen Loney

Paul Mach

Michelle Maher-Lyons

Mark Mann

Kelly McLoughlin

Claire McManus

Lynn Melendez

Ms. Catherine Mensi

Mr. Theodore J. Miles

Jay Mohney

Mr. and Mrs. Mark T. Moitoza

Nicole Moore

Stephen Morris

Mr. Joseph Perdreauxville

Most Reverend Lee Anthony Piche

Gary Pokorny

Victoria Radleigh Smith

Sean Robinson

Theresa Scargill

Karen Schillings

Kent Schmitz

Ms. Anastasia Schulten

Megan Shepherd

Ms. Robin L. Shipley

Ms. Christie Smith

Jessica Smith

David Stagliano

Ms. Kelly Sweet

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Theisen

Ms. Milissa Thibodeaux

Doug Tooke

Mrs. Bonnie Waltz

Ms. Joan Weber

Ms. Cynthia P. White

Deacon Gerard White

Joelle Williams

Scott Williams

Kristen Wise

Kristin Witte

Ms. Tiera Yarbough

Ms. Katie Zeigler

Donations reflect gifts given to NFCYM between November 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018.

WAYS TO GIVE

INVEST IN THE YOUNG CHURCH



JOIN THE SHEPHERDS' CIRCLE

The Shepherds' Circle is a monthly online giving community that supports NFCYM's Annual Giving Campaign. Members of the Shepherds' Circle have a deep dedication to the mission of NFCYM. Learn more at www.nfcym.org/donate.



THE NFCYM SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Help make the NCYC or NCCYM experience a reality for the youth and adults who need aid in attending one of these life-giving and life-changing events.



UNDERWRITE A PROGRAM

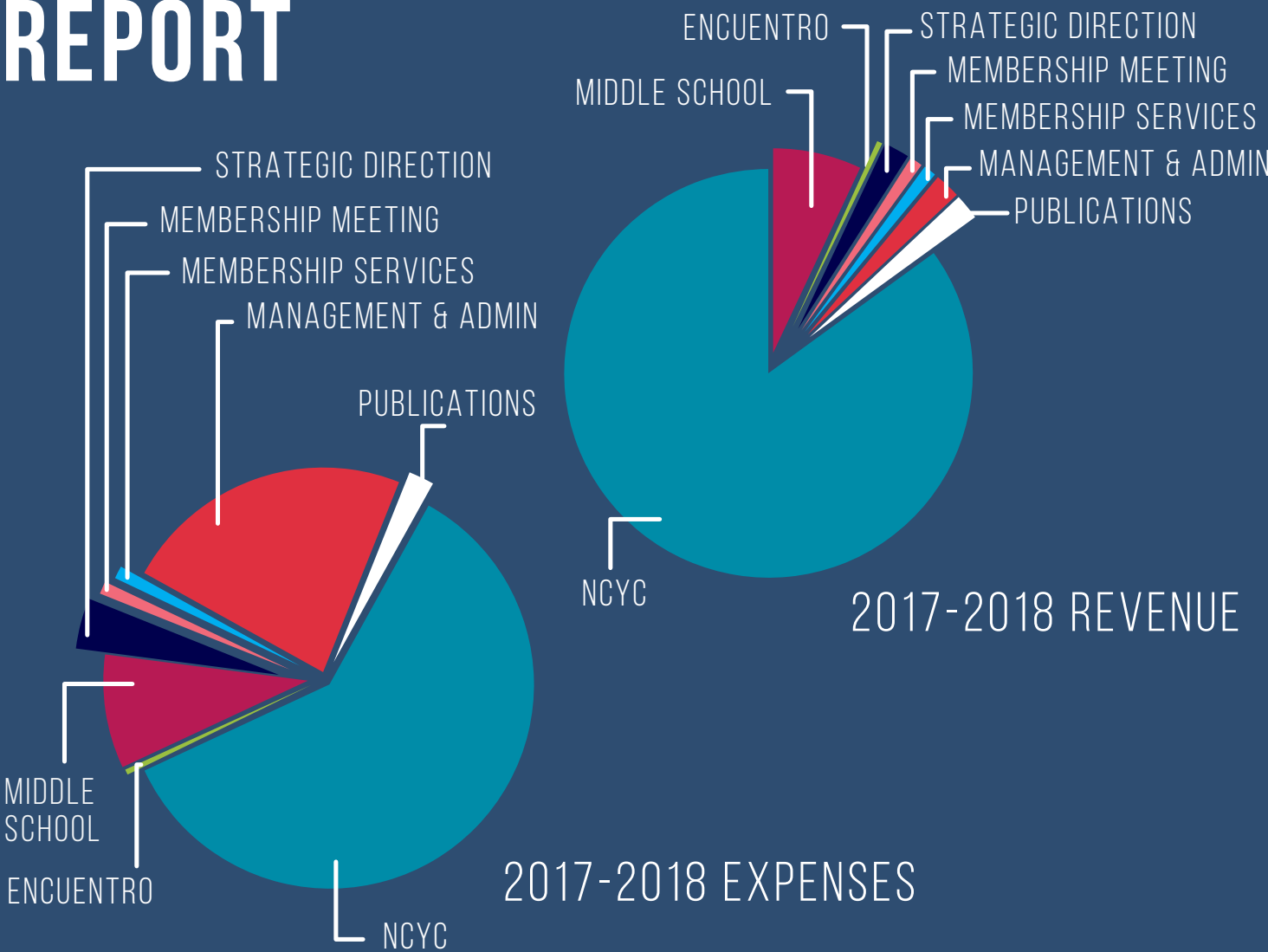
NFCYM has a long tradition of impactful programming. Whether it be one of our events, conferences, or national initiatives, helping underwrite a portion or even all of a program is a significant investment in the advancement of pastoral ministry.

FINANCIAL REPORT

2017-2018

As we find ourselves exiting the 2017-18 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018), and beginning a new one, it is exciting to share how strong NFCYM is.

Financially, we are in a much-improved position. This reflects the dedication and commitment of the board of directors and staff who are fully invested in the mission and longevity of NFCYM. Louise “Duce” Dussault, chair of the Board's Finance Advisory Committee, captured it well: “It seems apparent that the staff and many volunteers and board members have worked diligently and have been able to achieve a significantly more positive outcome for the 2017-18 fiscal year.”



INCOME STATEMENT FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018

REVENUE	YTD ACTUAL	BUDGET
Membership Services	\$46,280.59	\$120,000.00
Management and Administration	\$104,304.78	\$228,000.00
Publications	\$111,584.15	\$105,500.00
NCYC	\$5,080,767.31	\$5,342,522.00
NCCYM	-	-
Middle School	\$441,065.66	\$378,114.00
Strategic Direction	\$334,043.59	\$285,000.00
Membership Meeting	\$56,638.39	\$54,345.00
Encuentro	\$12,500.00	-
TOTAL REVENUE	\$6,187,184.47	\$6,513,481.00
EXPENSES	YTD ACTUAL	BUDGET
Membership Services	\$41,497.30	\$60,243.00
Management and Administration	\$1,022,833.05	\$1,174,887.25
Publications	\$70,984.78	\$47,018.00
NCYC	\$2,662,172.55	\$3,233,094.00
NCCYM	-	\$79,787.00
Middle School	\$401,136.20	\$377,553.00
Strategic Direction	\$151,515.49	\$285,700.00
Membership Meeting	\$61,175.88	\$95,483.15
Encuentro	\$10,084.36	-
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$4,421,399.61	\$5,353,765.40
NET INCOME	\$1,765,784.86	\$1,159,715.60

DOLLARS & CENTS BEYOND THE SPREADSHEET



This year's hard work has yielded more than \$600,000 in additional revenue from a combination of belt-tightening and higher-than-projected revenue. In addition, NFCYM community is approaching to its goal of \$37,000 raised for the 37th Anniversary Campaign that will be applied directly toward NCYC and NCCYM scholarships.

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$3,798.50
Credit Card Payable	1,006.68
State and Federal Tax Withholding	\$7,754.44
Deferred Revenue Middle School	\$149,185.00
Deferred Affiliation Dues	\$15,450.00
Deferred NCCYM Registration	\$27,956.62
Deferred Encuentro	\$18,876.47
Deferred 37th Anniversary	\$20,209.21
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$244,236.92

CAPITAL

Beginning Balance Equity	\$957,337.21
Unrestricted Fund Balance	(\$257,156.18)
Restricted Fund Balance	\$60,000.00
Donor Restricted - Porticus	\$210,000.00
Net Income	\$1,765,784.86
TOTAL CAPITAL	\$2,735,965.89
TOTAL LIABILITIES & CAPITAL	\$2,980,202.81

ENGAGEMENT HOLY FIRE

Holy Fire is a national Catholic one-day faith experience for middle school youth, developed in collaboration with a host diocese. Its mission is to set young people ablaze with the love of Christ and to inspire them to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world.

Tweets from Holy Fire-Chicago

#the best Catholic event ever! This got me closer to God

#love God and everyone in this world

#this was real good

#i had an amazing time celebrating my lord and savior Jesus at Holy Fire

#everyone felt blessed

#holy fire is good for you it was meaningful

#amazingandsobeautiful

#it gave me some time to recognize that Jesus is the only path for us.

#hope you all get to experience it.

HOLY FIRE WITNESSING CHRIST

Holy Fire has been impacting middle school students from parish religious education, youth ministry programs, and Catholic schools across the country. Partnering with dioceses and archdiocese such as Chicago in 2017 and again in 2018 and Nashville in 2018, has allowed NFCYM to build a foundation for the event and create momentum for future growth.



HERE IS WHAT THE YOUTH ARE SAYING ABOUT HOLY FIRE

86% responded that they felt closer to God as a result of attending Holy Fire.

Question: *What will you do differently after experiencing this event?*

Fifty percent or more of young people responded accordingly:

I am inspired to pray more.

I want to thank my parents for everything they do for me.

I want to help people who are hurting/in trouble/hungry/thirsty.

I want to attend this event again next year.

I feel inspired to participate more at Mass.

I want to get confirmed.

I want to tell others how much God loves them.



"Holy Fire fills an immediate need to engage middle school youth in their faith. Studies show the average age that youth disaffiliate from the church is thirteen. At this critical and formative time in a young person's life, the church needs a program like Holy Fire to give an opportunity to our middle school youth, to witness their faith, and be set ablaze with the love of Christ and live as disciples."

MOST REVEREND FRANK J. CAGGIANO
BISHOP OF BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT
EPISCOPAL ADVISOR, NFCYM



“During the visit of Pope Benedict to the United States in 2008, one of the bishops asked the Holy Father how to increase vocations among the youth. Pope Benedict’s response was simple, “Teach them to pray.” Christian prayer provides a horizon to a young person that is unimaginable otherwise. The encounter with Jesus in prayer opens the door to “taste and see the goodness of the Lord.” (Ps. 34.9)

NFCYM helps young men and women to discover this horizon of grace together. They begin to see the light of Christ dawning in one another as they rise to the joyful voice of the Good Shepherd.”

MOST REVEREND JAIME SOTO
BISHOP OF SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

NCYC IMPACTING LIVES

The National Catholic Youth Conference is a profound experience. It is hard to articulate the lasting impact and power that this three-day event has on the youth who attend. Here is the personal NCYC story of Schola Eburuoh, now an NCYC alum and excited young Catholic.

Hello,

I truly loved NCYC and can attest to the transformative love that thousands of young people experienced and witnessed throughout the conference. I am so honored and excited to share my story with you!

I was chosen by an anonymous administrator at my high school to attend NCYC as a sophomore. I was a very shy and timid student, so this surprised me. I was barely acquainted with the others who were chosen, but they each already knew each other pretty well, so I thought to myself, “will I be lonely on this trip?” The expenses for the bus from my home state of Pennsylvania to Indiana, the housing costs, and the conference itself were all covered by the school. I was told that I would truly experience God’s love in a radical way, but thought, “can’t I do this from the comfort of my home?” I was so hesitant and caught up in my preconceptions of being “alone.” To make matters worse, I was also volunteered to be an ambassador during the conference—at this time, I labeled myself as “not the type to lead” and I also learned that I would be on a twelve-hour bus ride on my birthday, which was the last day of the conference. To say the least, I was not excited, nor did I appreciate the opportunity to go to NCYC at all.

The bus ride there started to bring me out of my shell as we played games to get to know each other, but upon our arrival, I told myself that all I had to do was get through this weekend, and it’d all be fine. Boy, was I in for it. My group walked into Lucas Oil Stadium in awe as we saw a packed stadium of people our age jamming to a praise and worship band. I had never heard of a Christian concert, so it was breathtaking to see the number of people in the stadium dancing and singing along. Students in my group wanted to get closer, so we linked arms and made our way to the stage. It was so much fun. After the concert, we prayed together and were introduced to the keynote speakers. I remember on that first day hearing the phrase “open your heart to Jesus” multiple times, and the theme of the conference, “Here I am Lord,” really stuck with me throughout the weekend. As the week continued, we heard a myriad of inspiring stories, cheesy jokes, and I even learned the “Catholic Dance,” which I still try to teach my friends today. I introduced speakers, prayed in small groups with complete strangers, and felt close to them, as if we were family. Even walking and talking to people outside of the convention center was radical to me. Everyone was so kind and had a faith which radiated when they greeted me or listened intently to what I had to say. I truly encountered people throughout the weekend of NCYC and spoke my own “Here I am Lord” in my heart to Him and to all those I met. I was even brought to tears before it was all over.

The last day, as I mentioned before, was my birthday. I remember being handed a swimming pool floatie (very random, but there were many of them at NCYC) with the signature of each person on my bus—this was my birthday gift. To be completely honest, I recognized the entire weekend at NCYC as my birthday gift and the 12-hour bus ride home as the best birthday party I had ever had with my new friends. (A month later, I had another birthday gift—I invited all of these people to my house for an NCYC reunion, and it was really wonderful)

I remember those days and realize that Christ had spoken to my heart from that very first day, and throughout the rest of the conference. God’s intervening hand completely broke my shell and pushed me to see the love that I was missing before that weekend—the love of encounterment, of friendships, and of community.

Today, I seek out how I can be brought back to NCYC, whether physically or mentally (and, of course, spiritual!). I currently attend the Catholic University of America and continually try to encounter people with genuine love. I have also met friends who have shared my NCYC experience. They were there from November 18-22 and shared this blessing with me. Regardless of whether we actually saw each other or not, the feeling of community founded upon Christ’s immense mercy and love is there and continues to be such a blessing in my friendships. Thank you for this opportunity to share.

God bless,

Schola Eburuoh, COHS ‘17, CUA ‘21
(Top right photo left, Schola Eduruoh)





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