

## Conversation # 1

# Introduction to Accompaniment – Leader Outline



By Tom East, Director of the Center for Ministry Development

*These resources are provided as part of the Accompaniment Project from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and the Center for Ministry Development.*

This conversation introduces a vision for accompaniment and invites teams to consider the resources in their community and the things that need to change to better accompany youth. This process should take 75 to 90 minutes and is intended to be used with planning teams, ministry teams who work with youth and families, other leadership teams in the parish, and groups of interested parish members.

### Prepare in Advance

- Set up a prayer space with a cloth, bible, candle and cross.
- Invite someone to be a reader for prayer. The gospel will be proclaimed in three parts. Part 1: Luke: 24:13-17, Part 2: Luke 24:27-31, Part 3: Luke 24: 32-35.
- Duplicate handouts, one per person.
- Select wall space for sticky note process. Create sticky notes with these titles:  
RESOURCES  
CHANGE
- Large sticky notes: [https://www.amazon.com/Early-Buy-Sticky-Bright-Self-Stick/dp/B07VKMVMMS9/ref=sr\\_1\\_2\\_sspa?dchild=1&keywords=Large+Post+It+Notes&qid=1614974764&sr=8-2-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUFaR1dFNepZWfU3RkcmZW5jcnlwdGVkSWQ9QTA0MjQ1ODY3QkdQV0tHNFhHRjkmZW5jcnlwdGVkQWRJZD1BMDU1NDUyMzNEN0ZBR1Q5Rk5TTkImd2lkZ2V0TmFtZT1zcF9hdGYmYWN0aW9uPWNsaWNrUmVkaXJlY3QmZG9Ob3RMb2dDbGljaz10cnVl](https://www.amazon.com/Early-Buy-Sticky-Bright-Self-Stick/dp/B07VKMVMMS9/ref=sr_1_2_sspa?dchild=1&keywords=Large+Post+It+Notes&qid=1614974764&sr=8-2-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUFaR1dFNepZWfU3RkcmZW5jcnlwdGVkSWQ9QTA0MjQ1ODY3QkdQV0tHNFhHRjkmZW5jcnlwdGVkQWRJZD1BMDU1NDUyMzNEN0ZBR1Q5Rk5TTkImd2lkZ2V0TmFtZT1zcF9hdGYmYWN0aW9uPWNsaWNrUmVkaXJlY3QmZG9Ob3RMb2dDbGljaz10cnVl)
- Sharpie markers, one per person.

## Introduction (5 minutes)

(Slide 1) Introduce yourself, welcome participants and distribute the handouts.

Introduce this conversation:

Youth today are making big decisions about their lives. They are deciding who to be friends with, where they are going, and how they will prepare for their future. They are also making decisions about their faith. Young people in our parishes need and want someone to accompany them; they need faith companions. As Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, faithful adults are needed to accompany youth, listen to their questions, witness faith, lead them to encounter Jesus, and empower them for mission.

In our conversation today we are going to learn more about the Church's vision for accompanying youth. We will also take time to talk about our community and begin planning for ways to walk with young disciples.

(Slide 2) Tell a story about companionship:

We are probably all familiar with the story of the young man who was walking with Jesus and looked back over his life. At one point he looked over his shoulder to see two different sets of footprints in the sand. Jesus explained that when there were two sets of prints, he was walking with him. The young man asked, "Why are there just one set of prints during the most difficult moments of my life." Jesus replied, "because, that's when I carried you."

I once saw a cartoon that continued the story further. The young man looked back and asked Jesus a second question, "What was happening when there was one set of footprints and two straight lines." Jesus explained: "That's when I dragged you, kicking and screaming."

Many of us can relate to Jesus walking with us and carrying us, especially during hard times. In providing accompaniment for youth, we are hoping that they experience Jesus as their companion for life. Let us continue in sharing and in prayer for these hopes.

## Opening Prayer and Faith Sharing (20 minutes)

(Slide 3) Continue with prayer:

All: We begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
Amen

Jesus, our Savior.

We are gathered in your name

And journeying together in faith.

Walk with us as you walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Hear our questions.

Tell us the Good News.

Open our eyes to see your works

And send us out as your witnesses.  
We ask this in Your Name.

All: Amen

Ask reader to proclaim the first part of the Gospel.

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.  
All: Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke 24:13-17

Provide an opportunity for faith sharing:

Jesus accompanied the disciples by listening to their questions.  
What faith questions do you think are on the minds and hearts of the young people in our community?

Allow four minutes for sharing in pairs, then gather sample responses in the group.)

(Slide 4) Reading, Part 2:

Luke 24:27-31

Jesus accompanied the disciples by explaining the scriptures and revealing himself in the breaking of the bread.

Provide a personal story about someone who accompanied you in faith.

Invite participants to share with a partner:

Who is someone who has accompanied you in faith?

Allow four to five minutes for sharing in pairs. Ask participants to share:

You heard my story, you shared about someone who accompanied you and you listened to your partner's story. What similarities did you notice about people who accompany?

Reading, Part 3:

Luke 24: 32-35

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

(Slide 5) Continue by sharing this quotation:

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis recalls this story and connects it to our journey with young people:

Jesus walks with two disciples...He asks them questions and listens patiently to their version of events, and in this way, he helps them recognize what they were experiencing. Then, with affection and power, he proclaims the word to them, leading them to interpret the events they had experienced in the light of the Scriptures.

(Slide 6)

He accepts their invitation to stay with them as evening falls; he enters into their night. As they listen to him speak, their hearts burn within them and their minds are opened; they then recognize him in the breaking of the bread. They themselves choose to resume their journey at once in the opposite direction, to return to the community and to share the experience of their encounter with the risen Lord.

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, # 237

(Slide 7)

Let us pray for the youth in our community and for their families:

We pray that young people experience our community accompanying them in faith as Jesus accompanied the disciples. We ask that you give them courage to ask their questions, listen to your Good News, open their eyes and to witness their faith. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer

We pray for the young person and the family in our community who feels the furthest from your love. Help us to know the obstacles in their way and to compassionately lead them back to your table. We pray to the Lord.

We pray for parents, Confirmation sponsors, godparents, family members, catechists, ministry leaders, coaches, teachers, and for all who accompany youth in faith. We pray that these companions will be strengthened for their role, and will allow you to work through them in loving young people. We pray to the Lord.

For what else shall we pray?

Invite the community to share petitions. Guide the community to respond, Lord hear our prayer.

Conclude the opening prayer:

Loving God, you know our hearts. Bless our meeting and give us what we need to serve you faithfully. We ask all these things in Jesus' name.

All: Amen

## Presentation about Accompaniment (20 minutes)

(Slide 8) Provide an explanation of accompaniment. Ask someone to read this quotation.

In this quote from *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis describes the art of accompaniment and guides us to be humble, and honor the person we accompany.

(Slide 9) Continue with your presentation about accompaniment.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis describes the person-to-person contact of accompaniment as indispensable for passing on the message of faith.

(Slide 10)

The preliminary document for the upcoming Synod provides a beautiful, but challenging vision of Accompaniment. We are told to:

Go beyond a preconceived framework

Encounter young people where they are, adapt to their times and pace of life and

Take them seriously.

These words are intended to wake us up, to challenge us, to help us go beyond the "same old, same old" way of ministry and envision something new.

(Slide 11)

To accompany, we imitate Christ, and we listen with empathy.

(Slide 12)

What does it mean to accompany?

Just looking at that word – *a comp pan*, we see the "with bread" – this is a Eucharistic vision for ministry.

We share bread with those we accompany

We do not judge.

We walk along side (not pulling or pushing)

This reminds me of a keynote address I once heard at a conference. The speaker reminded us that if some of us are at point "C" and others are at point "B" or "A" in

our journey of discipleship, that where we are in the journey is probably not very important to our loving God who knows we need to get to point "Z".

We walk with those we are entrusted to care for.

We listen to their questions.

We recognize where God is working in their lives and then align ourselves to that truth. When we accompany, we help those with whom we are companions to see the holy all around us.

(Slide 13)

Accompaniment then is not a specific program; it is a perspective we bring to all of our ministries.

We can do things on purpose –we can develop strategies and programs that help strengthen relationships of accompaniment.

It is about "Immanuelization" which is a term used by Frank Mercadante.

This is a way to think about evangelization – Immanuel means God with us. We know that Jesus promised that when two or more are gathered, he is in our midst. To "Immanuelize" is to allow Christ's presence to be revealed in our relationships. This is at the heart of accompaniment.

(Slide 14)

The documents on accompaniment remind us to go where youth are. In the past, we have been a "come" ministry believing young people must come to us. Now, we are being challenged to truly become a "Go" ministry. We are being asked to "Go" beyond our usual way of doing things and to really engage young people in creative, personal ways so that they will make a choice for faith.

(Slide 15)

Going out means avoiding everything that makes the Church feel outdated or feel dissatisfied. It means being good news to youth and being there as they face challenges. Accompaniment requires the church to go where youth are including meeting them through technology, sports, and other typically nonchurch environments. We go to the places where youth are, and then we faithfully walk with them.

(Slide 16)

To be with another, is also to be with them in their call to discipleship. We join in echoing God's call by awakening youth. We ask questions without pre-determining the answers.

(Slide 17)

Question? Which young people do we accompany? – Here is where it gets especially challenging.

(animation transition) We accompany “all young people without exception”

(animation transition) Youth who are baptized have already “joined.” Beyond that, we recognize that as Catholics, our parishes are not congregational, they are geographic. That means we are not just responsible for those who join, who get envelopes, or who show up. The pastor (and by extension the community) have a responsibility for the souls within the territory of their parish. This really calls us to Go Out! We have a special call to reach marginalized youth, those youth who, for whatever reason, have been pushed to the margins, and who someone because of their needs, their situations, their backgrounds, have not felt welcome.

(Slide 18)

This seems like a daunting task. How could any one of us hope to accompany all young people? It is about being a responsible community. This includes the family and people who are described as “Shepherds of souls – pastors, bishops, and vocation ministers. Teachers and all adults who work with youth. It will take the “whole” church.

(Slide 19)

It is time to reimagine our roles and to see young people in new ways. It is time to be intentional about accompaniment.

(Slide 20)

How is this different? It is all about stance. Let’s examine a typical story of a youth minister. I have an experience of faith which leads me to becoming a youth minister. I work to create programs where young people can experience faith and I try to get as many youth as possible to join in those programs. This process relies upon the personality of the ministry leader and the convergence between young people’s interests and the programs that are created. In this model, we must initiate a relationship with a young person, help them trust us, and sell them on joining a program. Unfortunately, we lose a lot of youth in the process, not necessarily because youth aren’t interested in faith or God, but maybe they don’t relate to our faith journey and the programs we have created.

The direction for ministry in *Christus Vivit* and the Bishops Synod is different. It is telling us that accompaniment is our model for ministry with youth and their families which means **we need to start by paying attention to the conversation that God initiated with a young person.**

We remember that God has been dreaming of this young person and longing for them from the moment of their conception. God has been constantly telling this young person how much they are loved. God is engaged in constant conversation, even if at times, it is a monologue. So, our job is to align ourselves with this conversation.

We help young people notice what God is doing and notice their choices to see the possibilities for their life and for their life in Christ.

It all starts with listening. Because we love young people and we long for them to experience the embrace of Christ as disciples, we focus our attention on helping youth listen to God with their “inner self.”

(Slide 21)

This is the big picture of accompaniment.

- God is calling each young person to the fullness of life.
- God has been dreaming of each young person.
- God began a conversation with each young person.
- Our job is to align ourselves with this conversation.
- We do this by accompanying all young people.

(Slide 22)

Imagine the possibilities for growing in faith when a prepared, and faith-filled companion is walking with a young disciple.

Imagine your community, your parish, your school, filled with faith companions who are walking with each young person.

## Reflections and Discussion (40 minutes)

(Slide 23)

What are you hearing and what are you thinking?

Let’s take this chance to consider the implication of accompaniment. Turn to page \_\_\_ in your handouts and take a few minutes to reflect.

(Slide 24)

Some of these reflections lead us to think about how we can change and grow. Consider these important questions:

*How can we share vision?*

*How can we build structures that serve accompaniment?*

*How to we develop the practices of accompanying?*

(Slide 25)

To become a community who accompanies, we begin to take steps in this direction. These are three important steps to help our parish grow:

- Empowering the parish to accompany young disciples
- Equipping Parents and Faith Companions
- Transforming ministry to provide accompaniment



(Slide 26)

Now let's begin to think strategically about our parish. Please turn to page \_\_\_ in your handouts and consider these two questions:

**Resources:**

What are the resources of our parish for accompanying youth in faith?

Think of the people, the communities, the traditions, practices, patterns, and possibilities for youth involvement.

**Change:**

What needs to change in our parish to accompany youth in faith?

Think about the policies, the communities, the practices, the challenges, and tensions.

Reflect on these questions and then work in pairs and write your ideas on the large sticky notes, then post them here on the wall.

Provide time for individual reflection and sharing in prayers. After several minutes, invite participants to post their resources and areas to change on the wall. Ask group members to come and read the posts. After everyone has read the posts, engage in large group discussion:

- In looking at the resources of our parish, what do you notice? What strikes you?
- In looking at the areas to change, what do you notice? What strikes you?
- What does this conversation tell you about what our community needs to do to accompany youth?

## Conclusion and Prayer (10 minutes)

(Slide 27)

Share with the group some practical next steps for this process in your community, which could include ways to become involve or dates for future meetings and conversations.

(Slide 28)

Share this quotation.

We are called to be new!

The task of being new and creative means to allow for something new to happen and not stifling it by trying to force fit the ideas into a "preconceived framework."

Thank the participants and invite the community to close in prayer.

Loving God, you call us to be new in the ways that we walk with youth in faith.  
Strengthen us as a community. Open our ears to hear your voice. Open our eyes to  
see you. Open our hearts to follow your call and love young people in your name.  
We ask this in Jesus name.

All: Amen