




Let's Talk!

Accompanying Youth in Faith and Life

Presented by Tom East, Director
Center for Ministry Development

1


adulthood:




verb

To do grown up things and hold responsibilities such as: a 9-5 job, a mortgage, a car payment or anything else that makes one think of grown-ups

2



Vision for Adulthood




3

You Could be Holy



4



What do you hope for youth and their faith?

5


Journey of Adolescence



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Parents have been told:


- ▶ Back off
- ▶ Let the culture and peers raise youth
- ▶ Turn your young people over to experts
- ▶ You have nothing in common with your adolescent child



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Adults who care about youth have been told:

- ▶ Youth don't like adults
- ▶ It's not natural for adults to spend time with youth
- ▶ It's unsafe to be a mentor




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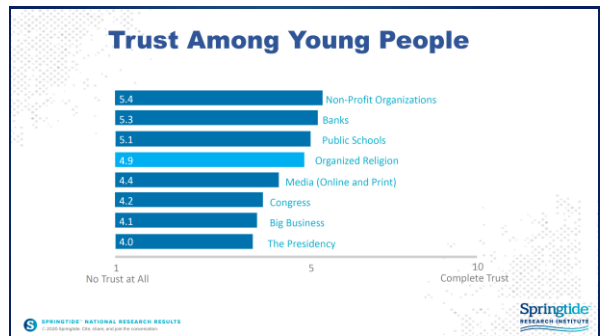
The Truth: Youth Need Guides

When youth are isolated, and without caring adults in their life, they are more vulnerable. Humans were created to guide each other. It's the nature of family and community.

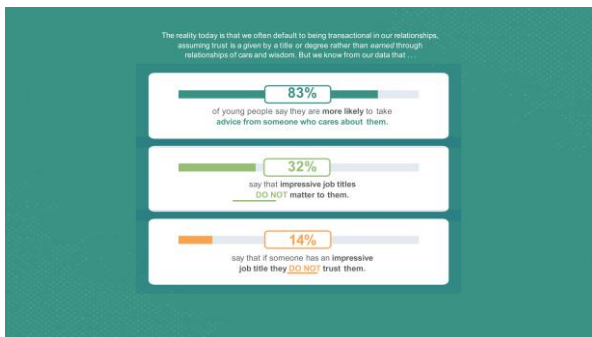
We can care about young people, allow them to grow as disciples, and keep them safe.



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Research about Youth and the Importance of Guides and Mentors



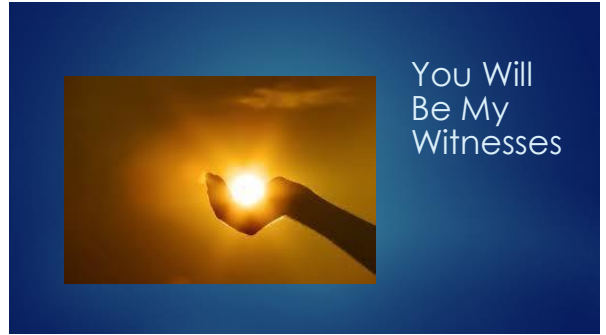
- ▶ The focus on Affiliation is the wrong conversation.
- ▶ There is a drastic reduction in institutional trust among young people.
- ▶ We need to measure effectiveness in ministry differently.
- ▶ We are striving to influence behaviors through caring relationships, not about having a certain number of young people in programs.

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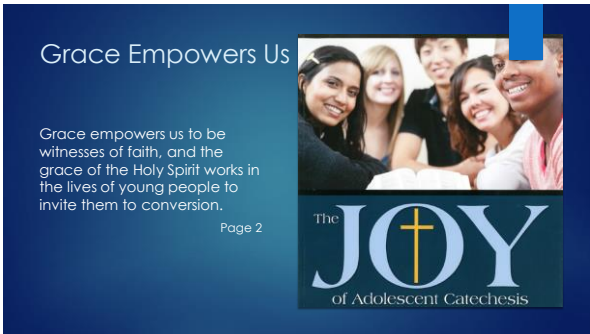
They
Need Us
more
than Ever

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You Will
Be My
Witnesses

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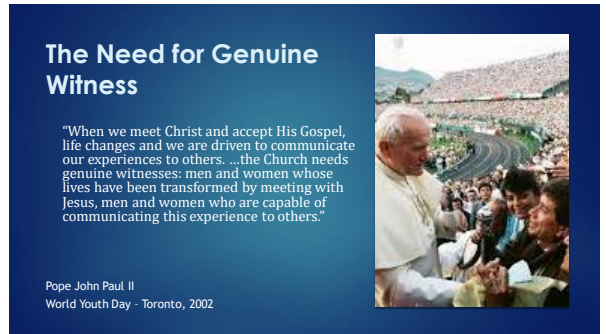
Grace Empowers Us

Grace empowers us to be witnesses of faith, and the grace of the Holy Spirit works in the lives of young people to invite them to conversion.

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The
JOY
of Adolescent Catechesis

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The Need for Genuine Witness

"When we meet Christ and accept His Gospel, life changes and we are driven to communicate our experiences to others. ...the Church needs genuine witnesses: men and women whose lives have been transformed by meeting with Jesus, men and women who are capable of communicating this experience to others."

Pope John Paul II
World Youth Day - Toronto, 2002

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Witnesses

Who is someone that has been a witness to you? How did they witness Christ to you?

Share with one or two people about the person who was your witness.

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Petitions

Response
Strengthen us, loving God.

18

Prayer



We have been touched and healed by Christ Who lives with us now and forever.

All: Fill us with grace, O God, strengthen us as witnesses, And lead each of us to a holy life.

Amen

19

Be Witnesses of Joy




20



"This is the essence of witnessing: simply sharing your personal experiences regarding the Lord. In a courtroom, a witness is not expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict. That is the job for attorneys. Witnesses simply report what has happened... You may not be a biblical scholar, but you are the authority of your life. And it's hard to argue with personal experience."

Rick Warren, A Purpose Driven Life, Zondervan Publishing: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002, 2011, 2012, page 268

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Be my witnesses

- ▶ Share the story of God in your life.
- ▶ Your life is your witness.
- ▶ Be true to your values.
- ▶ Sometimes our witness is subtle and sometimes we are called to be bold.

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Be a Faith Companion for Youth



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In such places...the **person-to-person contact indispensable for passing on the message can happen**, something whose place cannot be taken by any pastoral resource or strategy.

218- Christ is Alive – Christus Vivit
April 2, 2019



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How many meaningful interactions do you have on a typical day?



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Nearly 40% of young people report that they have no one to talk to and attending religious groups or gatherings does not have any effect. ...unless they have a relationship with an adult who cares.



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The presence of just one adult relationship in the life of a young person cuts severe isolation by 50%



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The Current Reality

- Many youth and young adults feel disconnected from their communities.
- Many families are disengaged from the parish and are not empowered to share faith at home.
- Many youth and young adults do not have anyone to talk to about faith and their lives.
- Many youth and young adults do not pray regularly; they are often distracted from integrating an experience of God.

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Companion

"the one who brings to you, or who is bread for you."



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A good accompanier

is a person who is balanced, a listener, a person of faith and prayer, who has the measure of his own weaknesses and frailties. Hence, he knows how to be accepting of the young people he accompanies, without moralizing and without false indulgence.

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 102



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Seeing

- ▶ Spend time with youth
- ▶ Listen to them
- ▶ Respond to their experience, their story
- ▶ Empathize



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We've been doing a lot of talking, telling and showing....

We need to do more listening.

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Theresa Wiseman's four attributes of empathy:

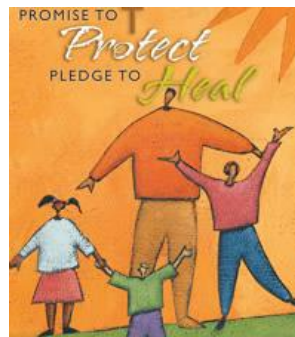
- ▶ *To be able to see the world as others see it*
- ▶ *To be nonjudgmental*
- ▶ *To understand another person's feelings*
- ▶ *To communicate your understanding of that person's feelings*

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Our crosses become bridges



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A safe place to walk

- ▶ "Public / Private Space"
- ▶ Walking in Pairs

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A Faith Companion

- Prays
- Connects
- Listens
- Empathizes
- Cares
- Witnesses
- Calls

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Prescribing Next Step

- Prays
- Connects
- Listens
- Empathizes
- Cares
- Witnesses
- Calls




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Faith Conversations

Recall a faith conversation you've had with a young person.

- ▶ What was hard?
- ▶ What was easy?
- ▶ What worked?
- ▶ What doesn't work?



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Watch For

- Judgement
- Adulthood
- Coercion
- Lecturing

40




Create Space for Conversation

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- ▶ Create Safe Places
- ▶ Hold Questions as a Sacred Trust
- ▶ Use Only Love

"We must relinquish any means other than love to persuade young people to the truth of the Gospel and the inherent value of a life lived in service of Christ and neighbor."

Robert J. McCarty, *Faith Talk – Having Conversations that Matter with Youth*. Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 2018, page 42.



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Going, Going, Gone...

- ▶ The Injured
- ▶ The Drifters
- ▶ The Dissenters

Going, Going, Gone


The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics

A study by Saint Mary's Press of Minnesota, Inc. in collaboration with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA).

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The Injured


- ▶ Disruptions in family life
- ▶ Witnessing inauthentic or hypocritical expressions of faith
- ▶ Feeling forced to participate
- ▶ Unanswered prayer



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The Drifter


- ▶ Lack of connection between faith and life
- ▶ Lack of companions on the faith journey
- ▶ Families with marginal practice of faith
- ▶ Unable to answer "so what?"



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The Dissenter

- ▶ Active resistance to the faith, particularly around social issues like same-sex marriage, abortion, and birth control
- ▶ Disillusionment and frustration that questions were never answered or heard
- ▶ Difficulty in reconciling faith with science



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Going, Going, Gone...

- ▶ The Injured
- ▶ The Drifters
- ▶ The Dissenters

Going, Going, Gone

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Role Play

One person is the Parent / Adult Faith Companion

One person is the Youth

- ▶ "Sometimes I feel silly praying to God. I don't know that God is really there."
- ▶ "Mom and dad are fighting all the time now. I think it might be my fault. I don't know what to do."
- ▶ "I really don't like going to youth ministry, or religious education. I feel like I've already heard this stuff. I don't have anything in common with the other youth there."
- ▶ "God couldn't care about me now. Not after the things I've done."

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Reflection As the Parent / Adult Faith Companion

Think of a young person who may fit each sentence.
How would you engage in conversation?


- ▶ "Sometimes I feel silly praying to God. I don't know that God is really there."
- ▶ "Mom and dad are fighting all the time now. I think it might be my fault. I don't know what to do."
- ▶ "I really don't like going to youth ministry, or religious education. I feel like I've already heard this stuff. I don't have anything in common with the other youth there."
- ▶ "God couldn't care about me now. Not after the things I've done."

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Faith Conversations

From your role play:

- ▶ What was hard?
- ▶ What was easy?
- ▶ What worked?
- ▶ What doesn't work?

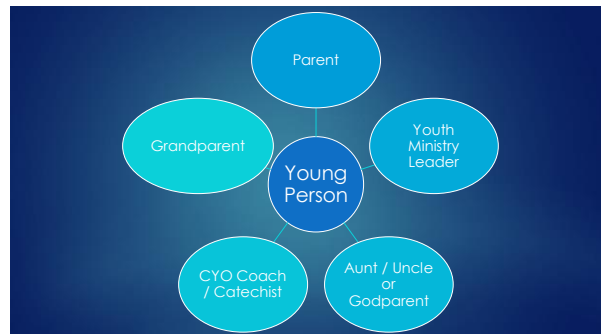


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A Community of Faith Contacts

- Parents / Aunts / Uncles / Grandparents
- Ministry Leaders / Catechists / Teachers / Coaches / Group leaders
- Sponsors / Godparents
- Peers

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Be on the Lookout for the Holy



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Parent and Faith Companion Toolkit

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What do you need next as a parent and/or as a faith companion?

- ▶ Get together with other parents and faith companions for networking and support.
- ▶ Have someone to talk to about companioning youth in faith.
- ▶ Resources for knowing how to answer tough faith questions and for understanding the adolescent faith journey. AND / OR
- ▶ Training for knowing how to answer tough faith questions and for understanding the adolescent faith journey
- ▶ Resources to help youth with pastoral care issues like anxiety, stress, and depression. AND / OR
- ▶ Training to help youth with pastoral care issues like anxiety, stress, and depression.
- ▶ Other?

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Praying for Youth



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A Faith Companion

- Prays
- Connects
- Listens
- Empathizes
- Cares
- Witnesses
- Calls

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Reflection for Faith Companions

Take a moment to think about a young person with whom you are a faith companion, (Or with whom you could be a faith companion.)

- ▶ What does she or he need at this moment?
- ▶ What is your next step as a faith companion?
- ▶ What is something you would pray for this young person?

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