

ABIDE Narrative

Accessibility, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Empathy

NFCYM recognizes its work, grounded in Jesus Christ and in communion with the Catholic Church, must be in solidarity with the struggles and joys of the peripheral communities of society across the United States. As such, we are advancing language to better address those efforts, reflecting our Catholic identity and values, Scripture and Tradition, and the pastoral response to the varying needs of many different communities. NFCYM describes this as a faithful journey towards **Accessibility, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Empathy**, which can be shortened to the acronym **ABIDE**.

Rooted in the biblical passage, John 15:5, ABIDE is a way of signifying that the goals of NFCYM are to produce good fruits. John 15:5 reads (NRSV translation), “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who *abide* in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me, you can do nothing.” The leadership of NFCYM believes these words convey the spirit of the work and method of the ministry that we seek to promote cultural diversity, anti-racism, and inclusivity for marginalized communities, including those with differing abilities. ABIDE also evokes a harmony promoting the dignity and beauty of our human diversity, which finds its center and home (*abode*) in abiding with the Lord and the Lord in us. Specifically, these words can be understood in the following way:

Accessibility speaks to our efforts to make sure every individual has a place at NFCYM. As an organization, we have worked and will work more diligently to ensure everyone has not only a seat at the table, but access to the opportunities and resources of the organization, regardless of their role, physical, mental, or emotional ability, socioeconomic status, identity, or other factors.

Belonging speaks to a sense of creating a welcoming and hospitable space for all. In a time of growing isolation, loneliness, polarization, and the ongoing struggle to find authentic community, we seek to be an organization that ensures that every person knows they belong to Jesus Christ and by extension, the people of faith who serve in his name.

Inclusion is the active effort to make those who have not felt a part of the NFCYM community, or other faith communities or organizations, feel welcome and active as members and collaborators, contributing to advancing our mission and vision. To be inclusive is to ensure that all voices are heard, all perspectives are considered, and all people are valued as sons and daughters of God.

Diversity reflects the catholicity or universality of the Catholic Church, and by extension, NFCYM. In this, we recognize the many cultures, races, generations, and experiences that exist within NFCYM membership and those whom the Church serves. This element is also expressed in the [values of NFCYM](#) that showcase the many ways in which our organization carries out our mission.

Empathy speaks to the pastoral care in which NFCYM approaches all its efforts. It echoes the challenge of Pope Francis for the Church to be “a field hospital after battle” by emphasizing the need to not only speak about the struggles facing young people and those who accompany them but also to walk alongside them and tend wounds in the manner of Jesus Christ (cf. Lk 10:29-37; 15:1-7; 24:13-25).

The Journey Toward ABIDE

In the mid-2010s, NFCYM leadership recognized the need for growing our intentionality in serving culturally diverse communities. This was partly due to the demographic shifts in the Catholic church in the United States speaking to the need for prioritizing diversity. As this work developed, unmet needs were recognized for many communities outside of the ethnic cultural context as well as the growing needs of other communities. Leadership began to reflect on our role in supporting, collaborating, and advocating for these communities as a national organization. Initially, these efforts started with an organizational assessment and identifying priorities and goals led by the Director of Multicultural Ministry and an ad hoc committee of the board. This work took place from 2018 to 2019.

Based on the assessment, in February 2020, the NFCYM Board of Directors approved a three-year [“Diversity and Inclusion Plan”](#) that the Multicultural Ad Hoc Committee developed in collaboration with the NFCYM staff. The plan highlighted three goals that included revising and adding processes and procedures regarding diversity and inclusion, implementing a diversity and inclusion training for all levels of the organization, and developing a leadership formation initiative to identify young leaders from underrepresented communities within NFCYM.

Though the plans were altered by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as racial unrest in the United States, all goals were met by 2023. In that process, other areas beyond cultural and ethnic diversity were identified that needed to be addressed. This includes ministry with those with disabilities, socio-economic disparity, and pastoral concerns of those who identify as LGBTQ+. NFCYM also served as one of the lead collaborators with the “Journeying Together” process with the USCCB, in particular its Committees on Cultural Diversity in the Church, Catholic Education, Evangelization and Catechesis, and Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. This particular initiative took place from 2019 to 2022.

As NFCYM recognized the expansion of the work beyond cultural diversity toward other elements of diversity, the language that was used to describe these initiatives developed as well. This growth was reflected in a discernment of language to describe it, while also being connected to the mission, vision, and values of the organization, as well as remaining faithful to Christ and the Church.

Looking Ahead with ABIDE

As NFCYM continues to grow and develop its ABIDE efforts, the organization’s Board of Directors recognizes that the work will be the responsibility of all levels of leadership and membership of NFCYM. The staff will continue to lead these efforts in collaboration with the advisory council, project teams, and ongoing collaboration and partnerships with members and other organizations, including the USCCB. The board will continue to support these efforts through ongoing assessment of the organization’s direction. Members will be encouraged to actively participate in both current programs and trainings, as well as new opportunities as they develop. In more assertively and faithfully fostering Accessibility, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Empathy (ABIDE), we pray that NFCYM might better “journey together” as we are firmly rooted in the present, mindful of the past, and hopeful for the future so that we might “learn from history and heal old wounds...nourish our enthusiasm, cause dreams to emerge, and enable hope to blossom” within our organization, the Church, and our world (cf. Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 199).

**The NFCYM Board of Directors approved the ABIDE narrative at their January 2024 board meeting.*