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“Going, Going, Gone:” Reflections on a Recent Study on Catholic Youth

By John DeLaPorte, Coordinator of Youth Ministry

This past January St. Mary Press, in collaboration with CARA, made available for purchase a unique and eye-opening study examining the “dynamics of disaffiliation in young Catholics.” The purpose of the study was to, “Understand more fully *why* young people leave the Catholic Church in particular.” National trends reveal that every mainline Christian denomination is experiencing a loss of youth and young adults. No denomination fares worse, however, than the Catholic Church.

While the study did include quantitative data on young Catholics, what makes “Going, Going, Gone” so unique is the *qualitative* data it revealed by asking young Catholics to tell their story. “Qualitative analysis yields textured and nuanced personal narratives or life stories that more fully reveal the dynamics of disaffiliation.” Thus, this study gives us raw, unvarnished responses from youth and young adults themselves responding to the question *why did you leave the Church?*

The narratives of these young people both affirm things we’ve known for some time, and reveal some new insights that challenge our commonly held assumptions about their experience. Youth don’t leave on a whim. Disaffiliation is largely “a thoughtful, conscious, intentional choice made by young people in a secularized society where faith and religious practice are seen as one option among many...An accumulation of unresolved discrepancies ultimately lead to the conclusion that “none of it makes sense” or “I just don’t buy it anymore” so “why stay?” Many disaffiliated youth and young adults report feeling “free” and “relieved” when they reach this point of opting out.” The

median age in which young people decide internally they are no longer Catholic is 13.

Many leave citing a lack of pastoral care during times when they felt most vulnerable. Many more leave because we’ve failed to address their complex questions, or help them reconcile Catholic belief with contemporary experience. And many others just “drift away” because they don’t feel included, important, or relevant. As one young woman states, “I felt defeated, crushed, alone, confused, mad and sad,” with the saddest moment being her sense that, “no one seemed to care that I left.”

There is much more from this study that could be reviewed here. What is most striking about these young narratives (and most essential for our purposes) are the questions they raise regarding evangelism and pastoral ministry to young people. *Do we know who they are? Have we listened to their stories? Will we miss them when they leave? Other questions for pastoral ministry include: What is the grace that the disaffiliated are bestowing on the Church? What is the Holy Spirit telling the Church through the stories of the disaffiliated? What does a Church that welcomes doubt, rejection and questioning look like? What would the Church need to look like in order to foster the return of the disaffiliated?*

I invite all of us who minister to young people to take some time this Lent and Easter season to ponder these questions deeply. [Read the executive summary.](#) [Order the study.](#) [Watch the video profiles.](#) Allow the implications of these stories to inform your ministry with the young people in your midst.



NFCYM Annual Membership Meeting

A word from the NFCYM:

From the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry:

"Thank you to all those who participated in the 2018 NFCYM Membership Meeting. Our experience in Coeur d'Alene was a great kickoff to our new operational model. The collaboration of so many members puts us boldly on the path to furthering the mission of the NFCYM. We look forward to the creation of new ministry networks and submission of new project proposals. Please note that issues raised during the Town Hall on Thursday evening will be part of the Board's agenda when they meet in May. Additional questions or issues for Board consideration may be submitted through the [meeting evaluation](#) or sent directly to the board at board@nfcym.org. We appreciate the dedication of those who served on the AMM project team and are grateful for their service to our membership."

"It is not enough to love the young. They must know they are loved."

-St. John Bosco

Upcoming Webinars

Webinars are a great way to get high quality formation in a convenient (and often free!) way. They typically last one hour and encourage interaction and discussion amongst participants. Here are webinar options coming up in November. I highly recommend you check them out!

- **Forming Leaders For Ministry: 5 Essential Leadership Skills and Practices** March 13, 2018 2:00 PM EDT Presenters: Scott Boyle and Megan Shepherd
- **Easter: Missionary Discipleship Through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching - March 22, 2018 at 4:00 pm ET** - a focus on Solidarity and Care for God's Creation.
- **Partnership for Adolescents: Catechesis: Session 2: Preparing the Soil for a Plentiful Harvest** March 20, 2018 at 2:00 PM EDT Presented by: Greg "Dobie" Moser and Fr. John Serio

Pope Urges Youth To Go Online and Give the Church an Earful! By John Allen Jr.

ROME - In his noontime Angelus address on Sunday, Pope Francis essentially invited youth of the world to go online and give the Catholic Church an earful, as part of an upcoming March gathering of young Catholics ahead of a Synod of Bishops on youth in October.

"A month from now, March 19 to the 24, around 300 youth from the entire world will come to Rome for a preparatory meeting for the synod in October," the pope said.

"However, I strongly want all young people to be able to be protagonists of this preparation," he said, emphasizing the word "strongly" as he spoke.

"Therefore, they'll be able to take part online through linguistic groups moderated by other youth. The contribution of these 'groups of the web' will be joined to that of the Rome meeting," he said.

"Dear young people," Francis said, "you can find information on the web site of the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops. I thank you for your contribution to walking together!"

The pope's invitation is part of a campaign by synod officials to boost youth participation ahead of the October meeting, after what was considered a disappointing response to an initial online questionnaire posted in June 2017

[Read full article here](#)

Lead and Follow Workshop Series Success!

A sincere thanks to all the youth ministry leaders, catechists, DRE's, and volunteers for a wonderful series of workshops this past month. 34 youth ministers representing 22 parishes from all corners of our diocese participated in our second round of *Lead and Follow* workshops focused on effective ministry in the youth setting. Participants learned about reaching youth as learners and believers, planning strategies and practices, approaches to prayer, and the importance of pastoral care. More importantly, participants got to connect with other youth ministry leaders from across the diocese and grew in their mutual support for one another in this ministry we all share. Keep an eye out for the next round coming later in 2018!



Jefferson City Workshop



Columbia Workshop



Shelbina Workshop

Welcoming our New Bishop! Resources for Prayer and Catechesis

It is official! Bishop Shawn McKnight has been installed as the 4th Bishop of the Diocese of Jefferson City. Use this opportunity as a teachable moment with your youth in the months ahead. Our Catholic Schools Office as well as our Communications Department have developed some wonderful resources which include:

- Lesson plans for grades k-8 on topics related to the Bishop and the Diocese
- Photos and a map of the diocese
- Helpful handouts and supplements
- A novena for Bishop Elect McKnight to pray with students or families

In addition, more [YouTube instructional videos](#) have been added to the Diocesan YouTube channel. In particular you may wish to check out the following:

- The lesson on the Cathedral and its Symbolism would be appropriate for many age levels and Msgr. Kurwicki does a great job leading people on a tour of the Cathedral as he explains the symbols found there.
- The lesson on the Miter, Crosier, Pectoral Cross and Ring is presented by students in Ms. Kristen Bexten's Church History class at Tolton Catholic High School. It is done in the format of a news program and as such would be appropriate for younger students to view as well. They did a great job sharing about these symbols in an entertaining yet educational manner.



Bishop Shawn McKnight and Bishop Emeritus Gaydos pictured with the 2018 pilgrims for the March 4 Life.

[Click here to access the shared Google Drive Folder](#) (you may need to open this link in Chrome if your browser is having problems). This folder contains numerous resources to use in any catechetical setting.

[Click here to view the entire ordination ceremony on our diocesan YouTube channel.](#)

MARCH CONNECTIONS

Holidays to Connect Youth With This Month

- ◆ Feast of St. Katherine Drexel, March 3
- ◆ Feast of Perpetua and Felicity, March 7
- ◆ Girls Scout Sunday, March 12
- ◆ Memorial of St. Patrick, March 17
- ◆ Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19
- ◆ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21
- ◆ Holy Week, March 26-30
- ◆ Cesar Chavez Day, March 31

Holy People to Profile this Month

- ◆ St. Patrick
- ◆ St. Joseph
- ◆ Cesar Chavez
- ◆ Ss. Perpetua and Felicity
- ◆ St. Katherine Drexel

Preparing for Easter

March is a great time to start preparing youth for Easter on April 1. Here are a few great resources to start planning for a great Easter celebration now!

Catechetical

- [Fr. Mike's Easter Special \(Ascension Press\)](#) and the [Meaning of Suffering](#)
- [Empty is a Good Thing! \(biblical lesson on Easter\)](#)
- [Easter Youth Less \(Full lesson and script for a youth night on Easter\)](#)
- [Illustrated Infographic on the Triduum](#)

Activities

- [Long Live the King/Queen \(Youth group game\)](#)
- [Easter invite \(humorous youtube clip\)](#)

Prayerful

- [He is Here! \(youtube clip: inspirational\)](#)
- [Crucified \(youtube clip: meditation\)](#)

A little bit of everything!

- [AMAZING COMPILATION of Lenten and Easter resources to choose from!](#)



Girls Scout Sunday March 12

"Girl Scout Sunday takes place during Girl Scout Week. The week revolves around March 12, the birthday of Girl Scouting. Girl Scout Sunday is the first Sunday before March 12. The purpose of this special day is to emphasize that we take the Girl Scout Promise seriously -- "On my honor, I will try to serve God." It is a time for Girl Scouts to reflect upon the importance of the words, "to serve God."

[Check out this great packet of resources](#) containing prayers, activities, and ideas for celebrating girl scout Sunday. Page 4 contains a recipe for indoor s'mores! Just sayin'!



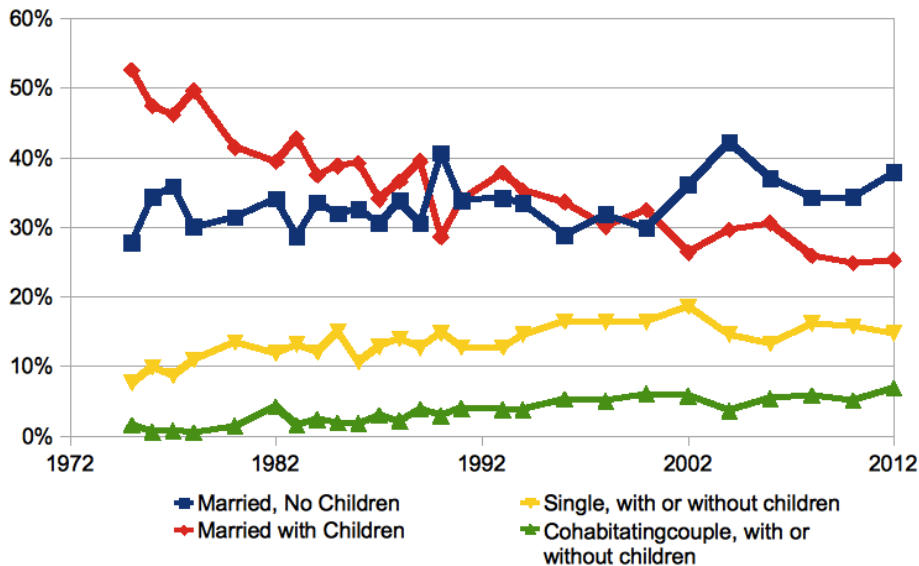
St. Patrick February 17

Ask young people about St. Patrick's day and you might hear about leprechauns, clovers, parades and maybe even Ireland. What you might not hear are stories of this amazing saint whose religious feast and lived accomplishments are overshadowed by the secular celebration of his life. Here are a few resources to help teach youth about the real St. Patrick this month:

- [Youth-friendly video clip on his life](#)
- [Fun youth group game to play with corresponding lesson](#)
- [Prayer to St. Patrick](#)



Types of American Catholic households



Graphic by Corner of Church & State, an RNS blog
Graphic is not offered for republication
Source: 1972-2012 General Social Surveys

What is Family-Based Youth Ministry?

By Jim Burns

If someone knows a simple definition of family-based youth ministry, please send it right away. I've read (and enjoyed) most of the books written on the subject. In fact, I can still remember reading Mark DeVries' book *Family-Based Youth Ministry* the very week it was published. I said then and maintain today that this book presents one of the most important new paradigms for youth ministry in decades. However, I'm still looking for that simple definition and practical handle on family-based youth ministry.

Ray Whitson, a youth worker in Batavia, Ill., probably doesn't know it, but he's doing family-based youth ministry. Last month he received a horrible phone call; one of his students had killed himself. Ray immediately went to the distraught mother, father and two teenage brothers. That very night the family was robbed; and the father, an elder in the church, was shot four times. As I'm writing this, he's in critical condition. The two boys are living with Ray and his family, while the mother helps nurse their father back to health.

Thank God this type of situation is not a normal daily occurrence for most of us. However, most days in youth ministry, we're trying to help families succeed—whether we know it or not. Perhaps we've not been able to get a handle on family-based youth ministry because we're more involved in it than we realized.

Family Involvement

Several years ago, I conducted a poll of key youth workers around America and Canada and asked them, "What are you doing to help families succeed?" The answers were almost all identical. "I know working with families and parents is very important, and it's my top goal for next year." Most youth workers I know are still trying to get their hands and minds around this important but illusive part of youth ministry. We know families are vital to the spiritual growth and well being of our students, but we don't have enough time in our already over-committed schedules to add ministry to families and parents to what we already do for our teens.

[Read Full Article Here](#)

A Mom's Guide to Minimum Effort but Maximum Effects for Lent

By Tami Kiser

I find myself having the same conversation with myself every year when Lent begins.

It goes something like this:

"I'm just too busy this year to put a lot of effort into Lent."

"But I really feel Lent is important and want my family to get something out of it."

"Oh, well, there's always next year."

Can you relate?

With my oldest child almost 30, I've had this conversation many, many times. I've come to learn that next year will not be any different than this year. There will always be something that needs repair, someone who's in a sport or play, someone who is sick, or some other pressing tasks that need my attention.

Now is the time that God is giving us. Now is when he has given us Lent.

I've learned to give up grandiose plans, and settle for a few very simple, but effective ways to help my family observe Lent. These even may seem like "too much," for some of you, but trust me — if I can manage to pull some of this stuff together, so can you!

[Read Full Essay Here](#)

YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCES

Top 10 Most Helpful Links for Youth Ministry

1. [Office of Youth Ministry Diocese of Jeff City](#)
2. [USCCB Youth and Young Adults](#)
3. [Center for Ministry Development](#)
4. [National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry](#)
5. [CRS Education](#)
6. [Life Teen](#)
7. [Project YM](#)
8. [Fe y Vida](#)
9. [Busted Halo](#)
10. [Discipleship Focused Youth Ministry](#)

For a comprehensive list of helpful resources and links [Click Here!](#)

Top 3 YouTube Clips to use in youth group!

1. [Easter according to kids \(humorous retelling of the resurrection\)](#)
2. [Christ is Risen -Matt Maher \(Popular Contemporary Easter Song\)](#)
3. [Good Friday: The Meaning of the Cross - Fr. Mike Schmitz \(short catechetical reflection\)](#)

Activity of the Month: Dead Cows!

Lent is a season which ponders the mystery of death and resurrection. Here is a goofy take on those themes I came across that will certainly get your youth group laughing! A great game for squirrely middle-schoolers!

1. Choose 1 person from the group to be the farmer. Everyone else spreads out and lies on their backs on the floor. These are the “dead cows.”
2. The Farmer’s job is to go around to each cow and get them to laugh. The cow’s job is to resist with all their might!
3. When the farmer successfully gets a cow to laugh, the cow becomes a farmer and joins the farmer in their quest to make the other cows laugh.
4. The cow that resists the longest is the winner and becomes the farmer for the next round.



A few tips

- This is a game that works best with groups that are already familiar with one another. It may not go over well if your group is not comfortable being goofy!
- The first farmer should be the “class clown” of the group. It should be a kid that is not afraid to make others laugh.
- Consider connecting this goofy game to the joy of the resurrection!

[For a great video tutorial click here!](#)

Tech Connections

Catholic Words and Games

Instilling a love and reverence for the faith should begin at an early age. What better way than with the *Catholic Words and Games* app—a collection of fun and educational learning tools and games that will increase Catholic vocabulary in kids and adults! *Catholic Words and Games* will provide parents, grandparents, teachers, homeschoolers, catechists and youth ministers a fun way to help teach Catholic vocabulary words. Watch your little one’s excitement at Mass when they recognize the vessels, objects and vestments used in the liturgy. Introducing these words will help prepare them to receive the Sacraments and inaugurate a lifelong journey of learning about the wonders of their Catholic faith.



[Click here to learn more.](#)

On the LifeTeen Blog

“Hope in the Shock of Parkland” by Leah Murphy, LifeTeen

Vegas. Sutherland Springs. And now, Parkland, FL.

Do we have a reason to believe that these tragedies will come to an end? Is it silly to have hope when evil like this continues to rear its ugly face at us? Are we just making ourselves feel better by telling ourselves that God exists and that He cares? If He really did, why wouldn’t He do something about all this? Why does it keep happening?

It’s Ash Wednesday, it’s Valentine’s Day, and on a day when, even the secular world is celebrating love, we all watched our Twitter feeds fill up with updates on an active shooter who violently took the lives of children at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

[Read full blog here](#)



YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCES

Resources for Social and Moral Formation

VCat Video Catechism: Morality

The VCat project was launched to provide relevant and engaging video content for Catholic catechists to use in their lessons with youth. Videos are categorized into Creed, Sacrament, Morality and Prayer. I find the videos on Morality to be some of the most engaging and helpful out there as it relates to moral faith formation.

Video clips cover a wide range of topics both theoretical and practical. Truth, love, freedom, dignity, and choice are explored through thoughtful and artistic clips. Topics related to the 7 deadly sins, sexuality, and human relationships are also covered through a variety of genres and formats. Clips are usually short and are meant to be integrated into a broader

lesson or topic on a given subject. The production quality is high and many videos often feature professional actors or well-known voices in Catholic youth ministry.

Engaging young people on issues of personal morality is hard. The VCat Morality compilation makes it easier. All videos are free to download. To sweeten the deal many of the videos come with a downloadable discussion guide complete with scripture references and connections to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Visit <http://vcat.org/morality> to start.



Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are an Easter people and Hallelujah is our song!”

-St. John Paul II

Website of the Month

Parent and Family Resources from the NFCYM

In the on-going search for resources to help support parent and family catechesis, the NFCYM has developed a wonderfully curated list of helpful items to this end. These resources stem from the Strong Catholic Families, Strong Catholic Youth Initiative. Many of the leader materials from this program are available here.

In addition, there are also fantastic video clips, book resources, and web-based materials to aid parents in passing on the faith to their children. There are also links to a small selection of Catholic blogs devoted to family faith formation.

As youth ministry leaders we are called to help support parents to be the primary catechists of their children. This list of resources is sure to be one of your “go-to” sites for helpful, relevant, and simple information to partner with parents in forming their young people.

Visit <http://www.nfcym.org/resources> to check it out!



ADULT FORMATION

OYM Mission

The Office of Youth Ministry strives to empower young people and those who minister to them to live as disciples of Jesus in the Church and world.

OYM Philosophy

Our approach is comprehensive, understanding that youth ministry works best when the entire parish is involved. Using the principles outlined in *Renewing the Vision*, the Office of Youth Ministry collaborates with parish leaders to draw youth into a deeper relationship with Jesus, and fuller participation in the life, mission, and ministry of the Church. By supporting parishes in the ministry of welcoming, engaging, and forming youth, and by providing effective resources to adult Youth Leaders, we hope to create communities where needs are met, people are supported, families are strengthened, and Christ is served.

Contact Us

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[Connect with OYM on Facebook!](#)

facebook

We ALWAYS want to hear from you! *Stayin Connected* is here for your benefit!

- ◆ Share a success story
- ◆ Write an article
- ◆ Recommend resources
- ◆ Spotlight your program
- ◆ Promote your event

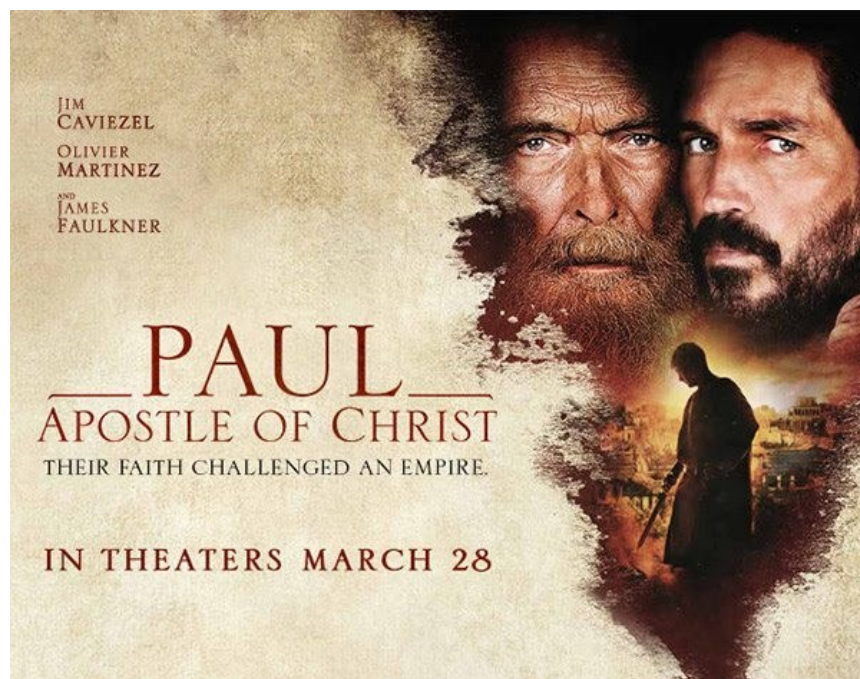
[Click here for upcoming trainings](#)



CALENDAR OF ADULT FORMATION

Event	Who	When	Where	Cost
Pastoral Juvenil Gathering	Hispanic Youth Ministers	January	St. Patrick Sedalia	Free
Lead and Follow Workshop	Youth Ministers Catechists	Feb 3	Newman Center Columbia	Free
Lead and Follow Workshop	Youth Ministers Catechists	Feb 17	St. Mary Shelbina	Free
Annual Seminar	Youth Ministers Catechists	April 14 April 15	Eldon Monroe City	\$10
Pastoral Juvenil Gathering	Hispanic Youth Ministers	May	TBD	Free
Pastoral Juvenil Gathering	Hispanic Youth Ministers	Sept	TBD	Free
Annual Retreat	Youth Ministers Catechists	October 27	Covt. Point Holts Summit	TBD
Lead and Follow Workshop	Youth Ministers Catechists	Nov-Dec	TBD	TBD
NCCYM	Youth Ministers Catechists	Dec 6-8	Tampa, FL	Travel, Registration, Hotel, etc!

[Click Here to Learn More and Register Online](#)



[Click here for tickets, show times, locations in our diocese](#)

[Click here for a great discussion guide from LifeTeen](#)

2018 ANNUAL SEMINAR

YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE RURAL PARISH

1 SEMINAR 2 LOCATIONS YOU CHOSE!



SATURDAY, APRIL 14 FROM 9AM-3PM

SACRED HEART CHURCH, ELDON

SUNDAY, APRIL 15 FROM 9AM-3PM

HOLY ROSARY CHURCH, MONROE CITY



Ministry to youth and families in a small rural parish poses an unique set of challenges. Scarce resources, limited personnel, shrinking communities, and long travel distances are just a few of the obstacles that youth ministry leaders face. But the rural parish also offers ample gifts and opportunities that can be leveraged to meet these challenges and effectively evangelize youth today. This seminar will explore strategies to unlock the potential within the rural parish and build a strong, vibrant youth program.



Doug Tooke is the Director of Partnership Outreach with ODB films and an adjunct staff member with LifeTeen International. With a BA in Philosophy and Theology and a MA in Pastoral Ministry he has over 20 years of professional ministry experience with a strong focus on rural youth ministry outreach. Doug has traveled to over 100 Dioceses in the past 15 years teaching, keynoting, and training youth ministers. He has spoken at World Youth Day, NCYC, NCCYM, Los Angeles RE Congress and continues to serve as a leader in the field. Doug is a recipient of the National Catholic Youth Ministry Award from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

\$10 PER PERSON

INCLUDES MATERIALS, LUNCH AND REFRESHMENTS.
OPEN TO ALL YOUTH MINISTRY LEADERS, DRE'S, CATECHISTS.
PAY IN ADVANCE OR AT THE DOOR.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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2018 YOUTH EVENTS

Visit www.oymdiojeffcity.org for information and registration on all our events!

Event	Who	When	Where	Cost
<u>Reignite</u>	High School Youth	January 6-7 2018	Tolton HS, Columbia	\$10
<u>Teens Encounter Christ</u>	Juniors and older	January 13-15	Im. Conception, Jeffer- son City	\$40
<u>March for Life</u>	Junior High and High School	January 17-20	Washington D.C.	\$150
NET Ministries Parish Retreats	Junior High and High School	Feb 10-27	Participating parishes	Varies
<u>Teens Encounter Christ</u>	Juniors and older	FEB TEC CANCELLED		
Vocation Reflection Days	Confirmandi, Parents and Sponsors	Feb 25, Mar 4, March 11	Cathedral Jefferson City	Free
<u>Encounter Weekend</u>	Junior Boys and older	April 14-16	Conception Abbey	Free
6th Grade Vocations Day	All 6th Graders	May 2, 2018	Cathedral of St. Joseph	\$5
Totus Tuus	All ages	June 2-July 20	Participating Parishes	\$1500/parish
Nun Run - Convent Hop	Open to all	TBD	St. Louis Area	\$TBD
<u>Teens Encounter Christ</u>	Juniors and older	June 23-28	St. Pius X Moberly	\$40
<u>Camp Maccabee I</u>	High School Boys	June 24-29	St. Robert, MO	\$150
CHRISTpower	Sophomore recently grad.	July 8-14	Helias Catholic High School	\$125
<u>Camp Siena</u>	High School Girls	July 22-26	St Patrick Laurie, MO	\$150
<u>Camp Maccabee II</u>	High School Boys	July 22-27	St. Robert, MO	\$150
Young Disciples in Ac- tion Mission Trip	Rising Juniors and Seniors	July 24-Aug 1	El Paso, TX	TBD
<u>Camp Maccabee III</u>	High School Boys	July 29-Aug 3	St. Robert, MO	\$150
2018 Youth Rally	High School Youth	Sept 8	Helias Catholic High School	TBD