

FEAR—



Jn 16:33



LESS

**Group Leader Manual
2022**

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SECTION ONE: **BEFORE THE CONFERENCE**

ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER

INTERCESSION

What is an intercessor?

- An intercessor is anyone who prays for others. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “Intercession is: ‘...a form of prayer of petition on behalf of others. The prayer of intercession leads us to pray as Christ, our unique intercessor, prayed” (2634).
- Intercessors should pray with FAITH. The Catechism also says, “Since Abraham, intercession – asking on behalf of another – has been characteristic of a heart tuned to God’s mercy” (2635).
- Intercessors should pray with HOPE. God delights in answering the prayer of His trusting children, even more than loving earthly parents delight in giving good gifts to their children who ask (Mt. 7:11).
- Intercessors should pray with LOVE. Share the needs of your ministry with your intercessors. Let them know who it is they pray for, so they can really feel involved.
- Intercessors come in all varieties. Some will spend a long time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Others will be busy and offer their work to God on your behalf. The suffering can intercede by offering any form of pain in union with Christ on the Cross.

The effective intercessor will:

- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly
- Trust in the mercy of God
- Enlist the help of the saints (see **Devotion to the Saints** in **What Makes the Conference Catholic?**)
- Be aware of the needs of those being prayed for (those which can be legitimately shared), and pray specifically for these needs

Gathering Intercessors

Asking people to intercede for you and your ministry will reap a greater share in the harvest of God’s grace. This way they get to share in the blessings as well: “You must also help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessings granted us in answer to many prayers” (2 Cor. 1:11). Approach prayer groups, shut-ins, Rosary groups, and the general congregation. Be sure that the teens know that they are being prayed for and have them lift up their intercessors daily.

Some ways to gather intercessors include:

- Writing letters or sending emails to possible intercessors (especially religious orders), asking for prayer for specific areas of need; requesting a response often encourages commitment
- Keeping a list of those who responded to use for future prayer requests
- Asking pastors to give announcements at Masses, asking for prayer
- Thanking and informing the intercessors of the status of the ministry

- Forming a “discernment team” of a few serious, wise intercessors to meet with regularly in order to pray about all major decisions concerning the ministry (if you have a group of parishioners that contribute to teen events financially or through food donations, etc., this is a great group to start with)

HOW TO PREPARE TEENS FOR THE CONFERENCE

First, put your teens in God’s hands. He loves them so much more than you do. His love and plan for them are perfect. We need to, in prayer, present our youth to Christ and let Him do what He does best.

It is important to begin meeting regularly with the teens who will be attending the conference. Encourage everyone who signs up to come to your weekly youth group commitments to get more involved in your parish. Outside of that, we recommend at least 3 meetings. Plan a time for everyone, including parents, so that you can give them an overview of the conference. You will want to show the promo video and begin to give conference particulars. (See **Appendix** for sample schedules for these meetings.)

Pray with them and encourage openness. Schedule meetings to pray with your group and let them know about the different components that go into a conference (see **What Makes the Conference Catholic?**). The best person to give a teaching on the Catholic aspects of the conference would be a priest. If you cannot get a priest, secure someone who is knowledgeable on the teachings of the Church. Options for different meetings can include:

- Who is the Holy Spirit and how do I open myself to His presence?
- Teaching on expressive praise and worship, with a time of worship and prayer
- Bible study on the theme of the conference
- Teaching on Eucharistic Adoration, Mass, and Reconciliation (also giving an opportunity to receive the sacraments)

Note: Teachings may be best done at a separate meeting for new participants who have not yet attended a conference.

If possible, try to answer most of the “why” questions before going. This is a great time to introduce youth to the Catechism. By referring to the Catechism, we are reminding our youth that the conference is Catholic and that being Catholic is a blessing. The main topics that usually bring questions and concern are those regarding praise and worship music, praying with hands lifted, movements of the Holy Spirit (crying, laughing, resting in the Spirit, dancing with joy), altar calls, and procession and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This manual includes information on all of these topics.

- A **Sample Preparation Day for Youth** can be found in the **Appendix**.
- **No exaggerations.** Don’t overstate the experience they will have. Specifically, do not gear them up for the most emotionally charged weekend of their lives. Most teens are already overly emotional and many live behind a thin veneer that covers deep fears, doubts, and confusion. When Jesus entered the upper room after rising from the dead, His first gift was

His peace. Jesus' gift to many young people during the conference is peace and a deep sense that things are going to be all right.

- **Build community and unity.** Take time to build community. Although your adult ministry team will be there to help pray with them, the truth is that during adoration they will be seeking their friends for comfort and to pray with them. Someone who is new to the groups or feels like an outsider will not enjoy the richness of that experience. Help everyone feel they belong.
- **Signed, sealed, and delivered.** Use these meetings to take care of any clerical work. Collect release forms, medical forms, and payments. You may be able to accomplish everything in two meetings or you may need more. Be sure that you do some preparation before the conference.

Youth with Special Needs

- Many youth have experienced divorce, abuse, depression, and other traumatic events. If possible, try to learn as much as you can about your youth before coming to the conference. Remember – confidentiality is of the utmost importance.
- Make sure that those with special needs are placed with adults who have experience in youth ministry.
- Only share specifics with adults who are working with these teens. If possible try to sit down one-on-one with all new attendees to see where they are at going into this weekend and what their expectations are.
- You may want to introduce the youth to praise and worship music before coming to the conference. See the Scripture and Catechism references and expressive praise in the **Appendix**.

Note: We have found that teens who have been prepared have a much better experience during the weekend than those who have not been prepared.

RECRUITING, FORMING, AND TRAINING CHAPERONES

A Steubenville Youth Conference is a profound spiritual and sometimes emotional experience that leads young people to deeper conversion. Having adults who are properly trained to help facilitate and process the experience will be key to the outcome of your group's experience. This point cannot be emphasized enough. In addition, we are making every effort to provide the safest, more secure environment for the young people we serve. Therefore, we ask for your outmost diligence and discernment in the recruiting and training of adult chaperones. The following are some criteria and guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare your team of adults.

Recruiting Chaperones

- **Requirements**
 - o **Age:** Every adult chaperone has to be at least 21 years old.
 - o **Approval:** Your diocese must approve every chaperone that will be on your adult ministry team in accordance to the standards set forth by your diocese under the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People". Each diocese has guidelines

and training that need to be completed and followed. Adults who have not been approved by their diocese cannot participate as a chaperone. There will be a form in your registration packet that will need to be filled out, signed, and sealed before you come on site that declares all of your adults have been trained and approved to work with youth. There will be absolutely no exceptions to this policy. If you are unclear about your particular diocesan requirements, call your diocesan office and find out what the policy is right away.

- **Young Children:** Although we strongly support Catholic family life, our staffing, facility constraints, and insurance regulations do not allow young children (infants to age 12) to be present at and/or attend the conference. In addition, the focus of the Group Leader/Adult Chaperone needs to be on the youth participants. If these adults bring their own young children, their focus will be split.
- **How to find the best chaperones and ministry leaders for your group:**
 - *First, take time in prayer and ask the Lord to reveal to you people He wants to be a part of your trip.* Do not forget for a moment the great love God has for you and the youth. He wants to help with every detail!
 - *Ask yourself, Do they love God?* Look for those who are active in their faith development and active in pursuing a relationship with Christ. Stay after daily Mass and look for those who are before the Lord on their knees. Holiness and faithfulness are most important!
 - *If these two qualities exist – love for God and love for youth – you have discovered a treasure.* Recruit that adult! With a little training, this person will make the difference between a good experience and a great experience for your youth.
- **Practicals on Recruiting Chaperones**
 - *You are not alone.* Enlist others to help in your search. These would include past chaperones, new chaperones, your pastor, friends, parents, etc.
 - *Ask the teens.* The best recruiters are the teens themselves. Ask the teens who they see as an example of holiness and a mentor. If there is someone in particular that they share, and you know they are faithful, extend a personal invitation letting them know that the teens asked for them!
 - *Network.* Use as many means as possible to communicate your needs (Church bulletin, bulletin boards, announcements at Mass, etc.)
 - *Who's already involved?* Approach your young adult group, if you have one.
 - *Get personal.* Ask people personally. Most people are waiting for a personal invitation.
 - *Be prepared.* Have a prepared outline of the commitment a chaperone would have to make. No one likes to find out that there is more to a commitment than originally outlined.
 - *Start early.* Recruiting does not happen overnight, so start early. Waiting until the last minute to find adult chaperones can result in the complete termination of your plans to attend the conference. At minimum, it can cause stress and anxiety.
 - *Boot camp isn't for everyone.* The conference weekend is rigorous, with little sleep and lots of activity; remember this when recruiting chaperones. There will be little downtime; chaperones are there for the teens, and need to be attentive to that role. Is your chaperone strong enough to be able to give in this way? (Remember, not everyone is cut out for this job!)

Chaperone to Youth Ratio Minimum Requirement: At least one male adult for every 8 male youth and one female adult for every 8 female youth. Groups are unable to share chaperones with other groups in order to meet the minimum requirement of one adult (Group Leader or Adult Chaperone) per 8 youth, per gender.

Forming Chaperones

- *Spiritual formation.* Adults are in need of spiritual renewal, catechesis, and spiritual formation. Take this opportunity to provide these things for your chaperones. Some suggestions for this include:
 - Bringing your chaperones together for a day of prayer, including praise and worship, Adoration, and teachings on the sacraments
 - Providing resources
 - Providing names of priests and others who can walk with them
 - Providing a list of any prayer meetings, retreats, or other adult gatherings that are held in your diocese
 - Encouraging your adults to have an accountability partner (someone they can connect with weekly and journey with through the spiritual life); it's important that adults have community in the faith as well. Examples: a weekly time to pray and share, weekly Scripture reflections, etc.

Practicals of Training Chaperones

- At least 3 hours should be set aside for training chaperones; this can be done by someone from your area who has attended the conference (preferably the Group Leader if he/she is comfortable with this)
- Share expectations of chaperones (see **Chaperone Expectations and Guidelines** in the **Appendix**)
- Make sure all paperwork is turned in early, and contact your diocese for clearance of all chaperones
- Once chaperones are in place and have gone through training, schedule a meeting of your chaperones and youth together; if at all possible, assign youth and chaperones to small groups before this meeting so they may have a chance to get to know each other
- It is important that chaperones be made aware of any special needs of the youth, including but not limited to physical health, emotional or spiritual needs, and any special situations (Examples: divorce, death in the family, etc.)
- A **Sample Chaperone Training Day** and information on how to lead Small Groups may be found in the **Appendix**

PREPARING PARENTS

“It is for this reason that the Christian community must give very special attention to parents. By means of personal contact, meetings, courses and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility – which is particularly delicate today – of educating their children in the faith” (General Directory for Catechesis, 227).

Parents are the primary teachers of their children, and therefore a vital part of your youth ministry program. The more they learn about what is happening, the more apt they are to get involved and help out. Be sure to give them as much information as you possibly can regarding this conference and other youth activities in your parish. Every parent meeting and encounter is an opportunity of grace to preach the Gospel and invite them into a personal relationship with Christ.

Ways to Reach Parents and Get Them Involved

- **Send a letter/email blasts** home throughout the year to all parents of teens in your parish, letting them know what you are offering for their children and why. Briefly describe what's going on and, if possible, include quotes from parents of past participants.
- **Give a visual.** Offer an informational promo night and show the Steubenville Youth Conference promotional video. Have parents whose teens have already attended a conference available to help answer questions.
- **What's your goal?** Clearly share the primary goal of the conference: to evangelize youth with the gospel message of Jesus Christ and to deal with the many challenging aspects of their lives according to the teachings of Holy Scripture and Church Tradition.
- **Mandatory meeting.** Have a mandatory meeting for teens attending the conference as well as their parents (see sample schedule in the **Appendix**).
 - o At this meeting set apart a time with the parents and share with them the beauty of this conference and the impact it has had on the lives of the teens.
 - o Ask a parent who is involved and who has experienced the Lord's grace in the lives of their teen to give a witness. Have them share specifically on preparing their teen for retreat, and welcoming them home and cultivating their faith when they come back.
 - o Share with parents that they are the primary teachers of their children, you are just here to assist them, and as great as this weekend is, what matters even more is how they are received by their families when they come home and how their parents fuel the flame of their faith (Example: Taking their teens to dinner as soon as they get back and making time and space for them to share about their weekend).
 - o Hand out resources for parents on Confession, Mass, Adoration, the Holy Spirit, etc.
 - o Encourage parents to prepare their children for the conference by attending Confession, Mass, and a time of Adoration or worship as a family if your parish offers that.
 - o Upon returning to your parish before teens go home, invite all teens and parents into your church and pray before the Lord. Invite the teens to give thanks to the Lord for the ways He moved them over the weekend. This can be very inspiring for the parents.
- **Invite them to intercede** for your group throughout the conference weekend. Offer signups for Holy Hours at your parent meeting. Give them a schedule of the weekend, so they know what is going on and when.
- **Invite them to any preparation nights** that you are doing for teens so that they can become more familiar with the conference as well as reunions or meetings after the conference.
- **Information to give parents includes:**

- The time you expect youth to be at the place of departure and the estimated time of departure
- Items youth need to bring
- Contact information for the entire weekend
- Specifics about the conference including the theme, schedule, and speakers
- Time of return
- **Clearly share your plan to keep their children safe.** Presenting the benefits of the conference and demonstrating your leadership abilities through responsible planning will go far to allay those concerns.

SMALL GROUPS

True Catholic evangelization takes place in community. A powerful weekend of praise, music, liturgy, and Adoration only finds its truest meaning within the community of young people who come to the conference.

Purpose

Entire books have been written about small group dynamics. But for the purposes of this manual we will focus on three main reasons why small group time is important to the conference experience:

1. They empower youth ministers
2. They help teens process the weekend
3. They create a bonding experience what will help your efforts to build community

Empowering you and the other adult ministers is important. People might think a speaker is cool or that the entertainment is funny, but the real “heroes” of the conference are you and the other adults. Long after we are gone you will be there to listen to, laugh with, cry with, and love the teens. That’s true ministry and evangelization. You have the opportunity to start that process (especially with new freshmen) during the conference. Although they might think the conference was awesome, what will stay with them is the love and encouragement they received from you during the weekend.

Helping teens process the experience throughout the weekend is vital. Satan will immediately try to snatch the seeds of faith from their hearts as soon as Christ places them there. How does this happen? Young people have been told that feelings, more than anything, should direct and guide them. Many young people have a powerful experience of Jesus during the weekend; it is often very emotional. Unless we process the weekend with them and take it to the level of faith rather than feelings, many youth walk away from the weekend saying, “Wow, that was a great weekend!” but it doesn’t cause them to change their lives or grow deeper with Christ. It becomes just another good memory. It becomes just another “feeling” they have experienced. When this happens, Satan has successfully snatched away a seed of faith. We need to help young people cross over from being feelings-driven to being faith-driven and confirm the reality of God, who is the center of it all. This needs to happen during small group time.

A powerful spiritual experience will often create more questions than answers. Your team needs to be there to answer concerns, questions, and keep young people focused on Christ.

Finally, **community building** is accomplished through the sharing of experiences and lives. Small group time takes the shared experience and facilitates heart-to-heart communication between your youth and adults. It also presents youth with a new mode of relating. Many see for the first time that it is okay to open up and share yourself, and that there are people who will listen and care. It puts the necessary personal, human touch on what otherwise can be perceived as only an event.

Organizing Small Groups

There are many different opinions regarding how small groups should be organized. Do you have co-ed or separate men's and women's groups? Do you mix freshman with upperclassmen? Do you keep friends together or use small group as a tool of building new relationships?

For Steubenville Youth Conferences the recommended format for small groups would be men's and women's small groups. This gives freedom for issues to be addressed that might not come up in mixed company. You also do not have to deal with flirtatious behavior during your small groups. There are definitely benefits for mixing and not mixing younger and older students. Older students can often serve as role models for the younger students. However, the issues they are dealing with and their level of spiritual growth and maturity is often very different. For this reason, it is always best to place the youth where they personally will be best served.

The bottom line is, you know your own group and its particular needs. If you take this issue to prayer and use your discernment, things will work out.

Guidelines for Small Groups

When recruiting your adult ministry team, it is important that the people you work with can keep personal matters in confidence. Do not recruit someone who gossips. You need to provide a level of confidentiality to the youth.

One group's policy regarding confidentiality might be that unless a youth shares about some type of abuse or wanting to hurt themselves or others, what they share should remain completely confidential within the small group or between the adult and the youth. What about sexual behavior? Some would say that all pre-marital sexual behavior is destructive. In extreme cases of on-going reckless sexual behavior and the young person expressing no desire to change, then you may need to bring the parents into the situation. If a young person says he or she has had sex in the past and they want to change, then it is probably not necessary to contact the parents. These decisions remain for your discernment.

The ideal situation is to help foster communication between child and parent. If a sensitive situation presents itself, see if there is a way to help the young person trust their parents. Don't try to force this to happen. Often, we don't know the whole story, and if we push young people too hard we lose their trust.

If one of your adult ministry members has doubts about what to do, he or she should first contact you. The next appropriate step is to contact your pastor. He should decide if a young person needs help and how to make that happen.

More information may be found in the **Small Groups** section of the **Appendix**.

Note: Once again, these are suggested guidelines. You know your group members, your pastor's expectations, your parents' expectations, and you need to set your own confidentiality policy. This policy needs to be clearly communicated with the youth.

LOGISTICS

COMMUNICATING WITH THE CONFERENCE OFFICE

- If you ever have any questions about bringing a group to Steubenville Florida, please don't hesitate to contact us by email: info@steubenvilleflorida.com or by phone (text/voice): 561-797-4977
- You can also find more information on the Steubenville Florida website: <http://steubenvilleflorida.com/resources/> or <http://steubenvilleflorida.com/fags/>

PROMOTION

How do you sell it?

- The best witnesses are those who have already gone. Invite a teen who has already attended to share their experience.
- Ask teens who have already gone to personally invite others.
- Send a letter home to parents, inviting them to consider sending their youth to the conference, with a copy of **What Makes the Conference Catholic?** (If you don't have time for a letter, send an email, but letters are more personal.)

How do you promote it?

- Get permission from the pastor to promote the conference from the pulpit, in the bulletin, and through mailings.
- Create a flyer with the theme, date, location, speakers, required age of participants, local contact information, and deadline for deposit. You can utilize the editable promotional materials on our website: <http://steubenvilleflorida.com/resources/>
- Show the promo video before or after Masses and especially during youth meetings. You can access it through our website: <http://steubenvilleflorida.com/resources/>
- Make a list of all your needs (Examples: intercession, chaperones, transportation, funding, t-shirts, Bibles, rosaries, a place for a retreat or training). Publicize these needs in several ways and get as many people involved as possible.
- Contact your local Florida Catholic representative to see if you can run a press release about the conference and/or your youth group.

- Use your church or diocesan website, as well as email and social media, to promote your needs and other youth events.
- Form a promo team to visit different churches and functions in your area. Gather 10-12 youth from your Franciscan LEAD youth and/or youth who have previously attended a conference. Have them put together a presentation:
 1. Praise music
 2. Show the promo video
 3. Sharing from 3 of your youth
 4. A time for questions and answers
 5. A skit
 6. Worship music
 7. Closing prayer
- Contact local high schools about any Christian organizations that meet on campus. Send flyers to any of their meetings and/or post a flyer in the high schools.
- It is important that the community remain updated about the plans, needs, and events pertaining to the conference. Some ways to do this include: putting pictures on your parish's social media/website, making a huge poster with pictures from last year's event to put in the back of the church, and having teens speak before and after Masses.
- Above all, publicize your needs to everyone. Make sure that all Catholic organizations in your area receive a letter about your plans and that you ask for help with scholarship funds and other fundraisers.

How do you get your pastor, parish staff, and others on board?

- If your pastor or staff is not aware of the Steubenville Conferences, send them the information on **What Makes the Conference Catholic?** found in this manual.
- Put together some direct quotes from the website or from people who have attended and share these with your pastor or staff. (You could also email this out to parents so they can hear about the experience teens are having on this conference.)

FUNDRAISING

- The best ideas come from other youth leaders. You can dialogue with them on this.
- This is an excellent time to teach your youth about good stewardship. It is important that the Group Leader tell the youth about the many people who have given generously so that the youth could experience all that God has for them. They should also be encouraged to make the most of every moment at the conference.
- Thank you notes and bulletin messages may be appropriate to thank all who donated time or money.
- Get parents involved in fundraising.
- On every registration form for a conference or youth retreat, put a line that says, "I am willing to make a donation to help support a teen who cannot afford to attend this retreat/conference." Ask your finance office if this would be okay, to set up an account for teens in need who cannot afford to attend without financial assistance.

Fundraising Ideas

- Work for people in the parish (babysitting, washing cars, mowing lawns, running errands, washing pets, etc.)
- Give some type of performance for the public and charge admission
- Sell items such as candy, calendars, etc.
- Have a day camp for junior high- and elementary-aged youth and charge a fee per child (check on Safe Environment policies in your diocese for this)
- Have a parish garage sale with donated items
- Cook a meal (or ask the Knights of Columbus to cook and donate) and your youth can sell plates and serve
- Have a raffle of one or more items; you may have parents who can donate things to raffle
- Have a bake sale
- Get 100 empty white envelopes and number them from 1 – 100. Ask permission to place them in the church to be picked up after Mass. Each donor picks up the envelope with the number of dollars they can give (pick up envelope #5 and return it with \$5 inside, etc.). If all 100 envelopes are picked up and returned, the total is \$5,000. Include info on where to return the envelopes with the money.
- Ask families in the parish to donate any amount to help support teens going to Steubenville Florida. Let them know who they are sponsoring. Let the teen know who donates and have the teen be responsible for writing a letter of thanks before and after the trip.

HOUSING

- Housing is not included in the registration fee.
- We offer a discounted housing rate at the host hotel.
- The Group Leader is responsible for communicating with the host hotel directly in regards to reservations, payments, and housing assignments.

TRANSPORTATION

- The method of transportation that you use is strictly up to you. It is recommended that you use buses or vans for safety, and to provide the opportunity for youth to be together on the trip. Whatever you do, make sure it is fully insured and in line with your home Diocesan Policies.
- Cost is definitely an issue when planning a long trip. But in addition to the cost factor, consider travel distance, the size of your group, special needs of any members of your group, and use of travel time when making your decision.
- If your group is 30+ in size, consider a bus. Having everyone together in one vehicle builds community, is easier to manage, and gives you many trip programming options.
- Make your transportation needs known to the people of your parish, who may be able to help get better deals on van or bus rentals.
- For the trip, organize a phone tree. Call when you arrive safely at the conference. On the return trip home, call when you're an hour away from home, with the time the teens will

be back. This will keep you from waiting an hour for the last person to be picked up. The phone tree can also be used in the event of a breakdown or other delay. You can also utilize the app Remind to keep parents informed.

- Some ideas for travel time include:
 - **Have your group meet together at least 1 hour before you leave** so you can have extra time to pray and have the teens share about what they hope to receive from the conference. If possible, have a priest give a blessing. Also make a handout for the adult chaperones so they can know what to do on the trip.
 - On the trip there, **direct the use of time, but not all of it.** Youth need down time and hangout time with friends. You should try to keep things relatively light. Many youth will be pumped about the conference and not too focused, while others may be nervous and scared and do not need the added pressure of deep conversation or probing questions.
 - If you sense the group is open, **have them share with their small groups about expectations, fears, and desires for the conference:** *What would you like God to do for you? In you?* Take time to personally talk to each person. Encourage your chaperones to check in on their small group members.
 - Travel time to and from the conference can be incredibly valuable for ministry and community building. Suggestions for the trip home will be included later in the manual.

Tip: One suggestion is a ban on all personal electronics during your trip. There is nothing more detrimental to community building than everyone strapping on headphones and slipping into isolation mode.



SECTION TWO: **DURING THE CONFERENCE**

WHAT MAKES THE CONFERENCE CATHOLIC?

DAILY MASS

“At the Last Supper ... our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. This He did in order ... to entrust to His beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection ... a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future is given to us” (CCC 1323).

CONFESSION

- There are three ways in which sins are forgiven: baptism, prayer, and in the greater humility of penance [Confession] (Sermon on Catechumens on the Creed 7:15, 8:16).
- Minor or venial sins can be confessed directly to God, but grave or mortal sins must be confessed, with sacramental absolution obtained (see CC 1457, 1458)
- After His resurrection, Jesus passed on His mission to forgive sins to His ministers [priests], telling them, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you ... If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn. 20:21-23).
- In the confessional the sinner will encounter Jesus Himself in the guise of a priest. That priest has been taught by the Church to encourage those who are ashamed of their sin, and to help those who uncover their weakness to repent. The priest will never tell anyone what is shared in Confession. (see CCC 1467)

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

This is adoration of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist (introduced in the 13th century under the influence of the newly established feast of Corpus Christi). In the ceremony, a priest or deacon removes the Sacred Host from the tabernacle and places it in the lunette of the of the monstrance and then onto the altar (taken from *The Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, Doubleday).

FIDELITY TO THE HOLY FATHER

- The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful” (Lumen Gentium, 22).
- “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.” (CC 882).

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

- “What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ” (CCC 487).

- “The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that ‘with God nothing will be impossible’ and so giving her assent: ‘Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word’” (CCC 148).
- “Elizabeth greeted her: ‘Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.’ It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed. Throughout her life and until her last ordeal when Jesus her son died on the cross, Mary’s faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God’s word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith” (CCC 149).

DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS

- Asking for the intercession of the saints is the same as asking a Christian brother or sister to pray for you. The difference is that the person praying for you or your situation has been perfected in holiness and grace and is in the presence of God. Their prayers are perfect and powerful. The saints are canonized, officially recognized by the Church, because of the evidence, including miracles, of their sainthood or presence with God.
- “By canonizing some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God’s grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors. (Cf. Lumen Gentium 40; 48-51) ‘The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church’s history’ (John Paul II, Christifideles laici (16,3)” (CC 828).

ENCOURAGING THE DISCERNMENT OF VOCATIONS

- “They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation” (CCC 1656).
- Though the above paragraph speaks about the family, this conference agrees with the Magisterium that there is a vocation that is proper to each, and we seek to provide an atmosphere that encourages each youth to at least consider with an open heart which of the four vocations God may be calling them to. We invite them to pray about their future and perhaps speak with adults in trusted positions about their feelings.
- Discernment is the process of prayerfully seeking God’s will regarding any given situation. It is aided by the wise counsel of holy persons of spiritual authority and patient attention to signs of divine confirmation.
- At the conference there is a time of recognition, affirmation, and a special prayer for each vocation (single, married, priesthood, and religious).

Note: All seven sacraments are listed and explained in paragraph 1113 and following of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

SPIRITUALITY OF A STEUBENVILLE FLORIDA CONFERENCE

EXPRESSIVE PRAISE

Throughout the weekend, we invite young people to open their heart to the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit will teach all truth. Through expressive praise and worship, youth experience the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and gave birth to the Church, the same Holy Spirit that was poured into their hearts at Baptism. Many great movements both within the Church and in Protestant churches are growing on a powerful experience of the presence of God through expressive praise and worship.

Prayer is a conversation with God. There are many different types of prayer, such as:

- **Petition Prayer:** asking God to help us
- **Intercessory Prayer:** asking God to help others
- **Scriptural Prayer:** meditating on Scripture
- **Contemplative Prayer:** Meditating quietly, focusing on the Lord
- **Repentance Prayer:** asking God for forgiveness
- **Rosary Prayer:** praying and meditating on the Rosary
- **Liturgical Prayer:** praying the prayers of the Church
- **Thanksgiving Prayer:** giving thanks to the Lord
- **Expressive Prayer:** praising and worshipping God with our whole being

We spend time focusing on expressive praise and worship during the conference because it is a very powerful, very scriptural way of drawing young people into the presence of God. Young people are looking to give themselves completely to God. Expressive praise and worship is an act that involves their souls, their emotions, their intellects, and their bodies; it puts God in His proper place. He is the Creator and our God and are His creations and the family who adores Him. We challenge young people to show more devotion to God than they would to their favorite rock star if they were at a concert.

Sacred Scripture teaches us these things about expressive praise and worship:

- **Our praise brings joy to God's heart:** "Those who offer praise as a sacrifice honor me" (Ps. 50:23).
- **Praise includes worshipping God with our entire being:** "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength" (Mk. 12:30).
- **Clapping your hands:** "All you peoples, clap your hands; shout to God with joyful cries" (Ps. 47:2).
- **Lifting your arms toward heaven:** "It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument" (1 Tim. 2:8); "Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary, and bless the Lord" (Ps. 134:2).
- **Dancing before the Lord:** "Let them praise His name in festive dance..." (Ps. 149:3); "Give praise with tambourines and dance..." (Ps. 150:4); "Then David, girt with a linen apron, came dancing before the Lord with abandon..." (2 Sam 6:14).

- **Praising Him with expressive music:** “Give praise with blasts upon the horn, praise him with harp and lyre...” (Ps. 150:3).
- **Glorifying the Lord with a loud voice:** “Sing to God a new song; skillfully play with joyful chant” (Ps. 33:3); “All you peoples...shout to God with joyful cries...” (Ps 47:2).
- **God is deserving of our praise:** “Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to be and were created” (Rev. 4:11); “How good to celebrate our God in song; how sweet to give fitting praise” (Ps. 147:1).

Catechism of the Catholic Church References on Expressive Praise:

- “Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: ‘Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls’ (St. John Chrysostom)” (CCC 2700).
- “Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master’s silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani (Mt. 11:25-26, Mk. 14:36)” (CCC 2701).
- “The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication” (CCC 2702).
- “This need also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders him that perfect homage which is his due” (CCC 2703).
- “Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups. Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer. Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him ‘to whom we speak’ (St. Teresa of Jesus, The Way of Perfection). Thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer” (CCC 2704).

Walking into a room with thousands of Catholic youth singing their hearts out to God and lifting their hands up in praise is a beautiful thing. However, the expressive praise and worship at a Steubenville Florida Conference can be confusing at first to those who have never experienced it.

Preparing Youth Who Are New to Expressive Worship:

1. Give them an overview of what expressive praise is and what they will experience at the conference.
2. Assure them that this is not weird or bizarre, but rather a sincere outward demonstration of what God is doing in the hearts of young people.

3. Do not be afraid to join in and model this form of prayer while at the conference and afterwards.

Expressive praise and worship was revitalized in the Church through the Charismatic Renewal over 30 years ago. It sprang forth from what is known as Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the Holy Spirit refers to prayer for a fuller release of the Holy Spirit. It leads to more fervent and effective Christian living and allows the grace of Baptism and Confirmation to operate more fully within us. As Leo Cardinal Suenens said, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the experiential manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, given in the sacraments of Christian Initiation but hitherto un-experienced.”

SPIRITUAL CONCERNS

It is important to emphasize that both Scripture and Church teaching support manifestations of the Holy Spirit. It is not unorthodox; it’s simply a stirring-up of the gift of the Holy Spirit we all received in the Sacraments of Initiation. During the conference God often pours out the Holy Spirit in power during praise. He gives peace and tears. He gives strength and encouragement. He gives the gift of tongues. All these things are given as gifts to those who will receive them. God does not force these things upon people. At all times we are free to accept or reject the gifts He wants to give. Adoration is also an anointed time for the conference when thousands of teens kneel before the God of the universe; He is there in power.

Emotions may come up at this time. It may be laughter or it may be tears. Sometimes the effect of the Spirit is overwhelming. Young people may experience resting in the Spirit, during which they usually lie down.

In very rare cases there are negative spiritual manifestations. Sometimes youth will claim they are possessed when confronted with the Gospel. This is simply a way to shift the blame in an external force and not have to take responsibility for their lives or actions. Sometimes emotions that are intense can be mistaken for a demonic presence. If you have doubts, call upon a priest or prayer ministers – those volunteers on the conference staff who have received special training – to assist you.

For some people, these actions of the Holy Spirit may seem foreign or unorthodox. However, expressive praise and worship and other manifestations are a genuine work of the Holy Spirit supported by Sacred Scripture and Church teaching. Allow your heart and mind to be open to the Holy Spirit’s work.

Sacred Scripture teaches us these things about the gifts, charisms and manifestations of the Holy Spirit:

- “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing

by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:7-10). (1 Cor. 12-14 give even more examples.)

- “So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues” (1 Cor. 14:39).
- “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

PRAYING WITH YOUTH

Another powerful aspect we incorporate into the weekend is giving leaders time to pray with their young people. Taking the time and effort to bring youth into the presence of God is a very powerful and moving experience. There is also no way to downplay the power of your prayer with them during this time. As Catholics we are more comfortable with traditional group prayer. Spontaneous one-on-one prayer can be intimidating. To help prepare your adults for this powerful ministry, we have included a page in the **Appendix** outlining praying with youth. Be sure to review this page at one of your training sessions.

ADORATION

We are living in grace-filled times. Even as we witness the painful purification of our Church and weather attack after attack by forces opposed to the Church, God cannot be stopped. Across this county we are witnessing the renewal of Eucharistic Adoration and lives are being changed. It is a simple, yet profoundly powerful devotion.

“Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration. To visit the Blessed Sacrament is ... a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord” (CCC 1418).

During the weekend, we invite the young people to enter into Eucharistic Adoration, to put themselves into the presence of Christ. For many of the youth, despite regular reception of the Eucharist, this is their first “breakthrough” encounter with Christ. Our priests and hosts do all they can from a pastoral perspective to prepare the young people. Helping them in that moment of encounter also falls upon you and your adult chaperones’ shoulders.

Adoration in Christ-centered, not youth centered. You should not allow an overly emotional display from any of your youth to distract others from Christ. If this happens, you should remove the youth from the main room until they are back under control. You should also avoid group hugs and other displays that are not focusing on Jesus. There is plenty of time after the Holy Hour for group bonding. Please assist in making the Adoration as reverent and Christ-centered as possible.

EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS DURING THE CONFERENCE

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Emotions can be a powerful force for good or bad. It's important to understand what emotions are and how to deal with them. While most youth would report that they are generally happy, over 50 percent will have experienced a major depressive episode before they graduate from college. Many cases are chemically based, others are simply the result of years of emotional distress. The world is a stressful place for teens. Many youth are constantly in an elevated or depressed emotional state. We need to be prepared to embrace these young people in a loving, accepting way.

When God is working in their lives, teens are willing to be more open about their hurts and emotions. Sometimes things they haven't confronted in years come to the surface in a powerful emotional release.

Helping young people learn to master their emotions and put them in perspective is a challenge we must not be afraid to take on. Emotional release can be very good for young people, but we want to be sure that it is the Holy Spirit that leads them and not just emotion. If you see a young person using emotions to manipulate others and gain attention, deal directly with that youth. There is no need to let an overly emotional youth monopolize your group's time and attention. As powerful as emotions are, the power of the intellect and the will are much more powerful. Most young people have not been trained to master their emotions. Many others simply have weak wills and need grace. Many youth are falsely led to believe that emotions need to be allowed to run freely. Christ encourages us to be controlled by the Spirit, not emotions.

Tip: If a young person becomes a distraction during Eucharistic Adoration, it is wise to have an adult team member take him or her outside of the main room for prayer. Inviting the Holy Spirit into the situation will bring the peace and knowledge necessary to effectively deal with the present need.

Sometimes powerful emotions are a result of a painful or sinful experience in the young person's past. If a situation comes up such as suicidal ideation or a pregnant teen, it is probably best dealt with after the weekend, with professional assistance. Spiritual battle is real. Jesus wants to give young people full lives. Satan wants to steal, kill, and destroy. If a young person is under spiritual attack and verbalizing self-destructive thoughts, you will want to bring priests and/or prayer ministers into the situation. Together you can pray and decide the best course of action.

If someone expresses suicidal thoughts, do not leave them alone. You want to be sure someone is there to talk through any emotionally-charged episodes they might have. We highly suggest the youth's parents be informed and the youth receives professional help.

Tip: We have three very important tools to help you deal with these issues.

1. **Prayer:** We have the God of the Universe on our side. He loves the youth and cares for them more deeply than we ever could. Do not underestimate the value of interceding on behalf of teens.
2. **Prayer ministers:** The conference has a trained prayer ministry team that is there to pray and assist you in your pastoral care of the youth.
3. **Outside help:** You can help the young person by getting them into long-term, professional care. It is always important to remember that you are not the Savior. We shouldn't feel like we have to solve every problem. Use all the resources at your disposal.

PHYSICAL NEEDS

- One of the Group Leader's biggest responsibilities is to see that each participant in the group is receiving adequate amounts of water, food, and any medication necessary for their health. Many problems can be prevented by drinking enough water.
- A First Aid station is provided throughout the weekend to provide medical care for routine injuries and needs.
- We encourage each individual to know the name of his/her group and Group Leader in order to assist the First Aid personnel in providing treatment. Group Leaders need to keep a copy of their group's liability forms (digital or printed) with them throughout the weekend in case of emergency.
- If emergency transportation to a local hospital is necessary, a chaperone must accompany the youth, and assist in notifying the parents/legal guardians.

Any special accommodations necessary to assist a youth with a handicap need to be made known to the conference office prior to arrival at the conference site.



SECTION THREE: **AFTER THE CONFERENCE**

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Your young people came to the conference just as you prayed they would. They encountered Christ in a powerful way just like you prayed they would. They are on fire for God and want to go deeper just like you prayed they would be. God did His job. Now it is time for you to do yours. That job is good follow-up.

Follow-up to your conference experience should begin as soon as you leave the parking lot. As stated earlier in this manual, Satan will not give up trying to ruin teens' lives once they have found Christ. In fact, he often attacks in more powerful and subtle ways at this time. He desires their spiritual death and will work overtime to steal the seed of faith that God has planted. Leaving them to find their way on their own can set them up for defeat.

What should your follow-up plan include? There are many different "programs" you could implement that could help strengthen your teens' faith walk. Many are very important and fruitful. But the most important aspect to focus on is personal relationships. Nothing can substitute personal mentoring, personal attention, and personal acts of love and kindness. We need to be Christ's hands, feet, and voice for the young people we serve.

Your follow-up plan must be made at least one month before the conference and you should be prepared to begin as soon as you return from the conference. Publicize your summer activities/events before you leave for the conference.

THE TRIP HOME

The main things going on in the young people on the way home are excitement and exhaustion. Try to focus on the excitement first. Ask questions.

- **Examples of questions include:**
 - o What was the best thing that happened to you this weekend?
 - o What questions are you leaving this conference with?
 - o What are some things that we can do to continue this? (It may be a good idea to have someone write down every idea.)
- **Have time of journaling.** Encourage the youth to write their thoughts and feelings about the past few days and to include in this some thoughts about changes they want to make in their own lives. This is their journal and they should be encouraged to write in it daily. (Hint: You may want to purchase some small notebooks and pens for them.)
- **Ask them to share their feelings about the conference,** give testimonies, and process their experiences on the way home.
- **Have them write letters to their pastors.** The letter might include thanking the priest for the opportunity to attend, giving a brief sharing of the experience, and sharing ways that the church can better provide for their needs.
- **Have them write a letter to themselves.** Encourage them to share in this letter what they want to be reminded of next month, next year, even ten years from now. You can collect these and then mail them to all the teens sometime in the future.

- **Assign prayer buddies** before the weekend that are unknown until after the trip. Ask them to get a small gift for their prayer buddy. On the way back ask each of them to give a brief reflection on what the weekend meant to them and then reveal and give their gift to their prayer buddy.
- Make sure that the adult chaperones have the contact information of the people from their groups, and **encourage them to touch base with them weekly**, whether by phone, e-mail, a small group gathering, or large group gathering. This should be done throughout the summer so that the young person does not feel alone in his/her journey. Give everyone in the group a list of the phone numbers and email addresses of everyone else in the group to encourage them to remain connected throughout the year.

CONNECTING WITH PARISH AND FAMILIES

Have the teens go straight from the vehicles into your church for a closing prayer and thanksgiving. Invite parents to join you. Pray for the grace for teens to recognize the same Jesus present right in their home parish, and then encourage them to give prayers of thanksgiving out loud to the Lord for the weekend.

Do not just let the teens grab their luggage and leave. Prepare parents beforehand that there will be a welcome home sharing/prayer for them in the social hall. Teens should text their parents to confirm the time of arrival, and as soon as they return they should go into the hall and be greeted by their parents. Have time to thank the parents and talk to them about the weekend and invite teens to share.

KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE

Suggestions:

- Prayer is the key to everyone's spiritual life – start a Eucharistic prayer group or some form of weekly prayer together
- Have a youth night on the theme of the conference
- Begin a discipleship group/Bible study for those wanting to go deeper the week you get back from the conference
- If you have teens write letters to themselves about their weekend, mail it to them within 6 months of the conference so they receive a reminder of what the Lord has done
- Private Adoration at a local chapel and/or invite youth and chaperones to public adoration
- Group service projects
- Form a retreat team with teens who have attended the conference for more than two years
- Prepare a letter that gives youth ways to sustain their relationship with God. Have someone mail these letters on the day you leave for the conference so that the young people will have them when they get home.
 - o **Possible things to include in the letter:**
 - Affirmation

- Ideas for daily prayer time (i.e. reading Scripture, devotional books, lives of the saints)
- Encouragement to attend daily Mass
- Information about Eucharistic Adoration in your area
- The date, time, and place of your follow-up meeting
- The contact information for the Group Leader and for the chaperone of their small group



APPENDIX

SAMPLE PARENT AND TEEN MEETING

3:00 PM – Check-In

All parents and teens sign in and pick up a name tag. Have upbeat worship music playing in the background, as well as a slideshow going of last year's pictures from the retreat weekend.

3:15 PM – Opening prayer, welcome, and intros

Start with an ice breaker, and introduce chaperones

Sample Ice Breaker:

Question Game: Play music in the background, and have everyone walk around. When the music stops they pair up in twos or threes and answer a random question that you announce. They can be funny questions, or more get to know you questions (i.e. *What's your favorite sport? What's the coolest place you've ever been to? Why are you here and signed up for the youth conference? What's your current favorite song?*). It's important to encourage the parents to participate as well.

3:30 PM – Group Leader gives overview of the conference

- Start with promo video
- Introduce theme
- Share why you are going and your experience of the weekend
- Share about the Holy Spirit and what can be expected of the weekend
- Your role as the Group Leader and the role of chaperones
- Ways the teens and parents can prepare for this weekend
- Hand out packing list, time of departure and return information, emergency contact information, and any paperwork that still needs to be filled out, etc. For your own sanity, have the parents fill out and sign all paperwork at this meeting. Set up an iPad or a laptop for parents to complete the online registration (you may want to provide coffee and snacks and let them know that all paperwork is due before they leave; this will save you time!)

4:00 PM – Separate parents and teenagers

- **Teenagers:** Prepare your chaperones to meet with the teenagers. Have them do another icebreaker (possibly Two Truths and Lie), and then have them break up into small groups to get to know one another.
- **Parents:** Meet with Group Leader
 - o Invite a parent to share about their experience with a teenager going to a Steubenville Youth Conference or a retreat if this is your first Steubenville Youth Conference (you want this to be a parent who understands their role to help fuel the faith in their child's life after they come home).
 - o Discuss parents' role as the primary catechists of their children and your role to assist them.
 - o Go online and read about the Steubenville Florida Conference – see handouts for a detailed explanation about what's going on during the weekend.

- How will you help cultivate this experience as they come home?
 - Encourage daily Mass (share examples)
 - Confession (as a family)
 - Youth group and weekly faith activities offered at your parish
 - Resources and retreats for parents and adults
- Questions

4:30 PM – Closing prayer

Combine teenagers and parents for the closing prayer and complete any missing paperwork.

SAMPLE PREPERATION DAY FOR YOUTH

This can be done in a day, over a weekend, or weekly for an hour and half at a time. The important thing is that you cover all the topics listed below.

10:00 AM – Prayer

- Gathering music and icebreakers – 10 minutes
- Praise and worship music – 15 minutes
- Teaching on praise and worship (Church teachings, quotes from the Holy Father, a young person’s viewpoint, a quote from a praise and worship leader) – 20 minutes

10:45 AM – Mass, with teachings about the Mass by a priest beforehand

12:00 PM - Lunch

1:00 PM – Talk: Sexuality and the Teachings of the Church

Explain why there will be men’s and women’s sessions at the conference and what they may expect to see there. The men’s and women’s sessions focus on chastity, as well as other aspects of being male or female (for example: self-esteem issues). The whole idea is to challenge them to be men and women of God.

1:30 PM – Small groups

Answer questions about praise and worship, and discuss the sexuality teaching. Have some questions prepared ahead of time so that there is an order to the group discussion. See **Small Groups** section in this **Appendix**.

2:15 PM – Break with snacks

2:45 PM – Talk: The Sacrament of Confession

3:30 PM – Talk: The Holy Spirit

Give a short teaching about the Holy Spirit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Discuss how the Spirit reveals Himself in and among us at different times. Explain that when there is such a large group praying, like at the conference, many people will have varied experiences. No person should ever judge the level of his or her spirituality or another person’s in terms of the experience that he or she may have during the weekend. God knows us and has known us from the beginning. He will give us what we need and it is not important that we feel or see anything. We must trust and believe that His word is true and that He is faithful.

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

“And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6)

4:00 PM – Small groups

See **Small Groups** section in this **Appendix**.

4:30 PM – Free time

5:30 PM – Dinner

6:30 PM – Talk: What is Eucharistic Adoration? Why do we do it? What happens?

7:00 PM – Eucharistic procession, Adoration, and Benediction

7:30 PM – Small groups ministry time

This gives the young person a chance to express his or her thoughts and/or experiences during the Adoration time.

7:45 PM – Confession available, and time of ministry continues

Very often, we want to fix the problems that may come up within a young person during Eucharistic Adoration. More often than not, the Sacrament of Confession brings the healing and freedom that is needed.

9:00 PM - Dismissal

BASIC EXPECTATION AND REQUIREMENTS OF CHAPERONES

- The first responsibility of the chaperone is to direct the young people to Jesus by their words, actions, and responses.
- It is highly recommended that chaperones be Catholic.
- Chaperones will be 21 years or older at the time of the conference.
- Chaperones must be approved by his or her home diocesan office stating that he or she is in accordance to the standards set forth by his or her diocese under the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”.
- Chaperones are unable to bring infants and/or young children to the conference, as their focus will be split.
- Chaperones must be totally committed to following all of the conference policies and procedures. The conference staff depends on the chaperones to help facilitate order and serve as a network of support for the young people. Chaperones should be an example of obedience and cooperation with conference policies as well as staff volunteers.
- Chaperones will monitor sleeping areas and preserve a safe environment at the conference.
- Chaperones will be small group facilitators.
- Chaperones should pray for and with the youth, especially during Adoration.
- Chaperones will maintain order at the conference.
- Chaperones must accompany his or her group to every session of the conference and be willing to converse with youth throughout the weekend and help them deal with any confusion that may arise. Chaperones should constantly assess the youth in their group as well as be available to pray with them.
- Chaperones must be available during travel, sessions, and sleeping hours.
- It is very important that chaperones be made aware of any special needs of the youth in his or her group. This includes health problems, family problems, and anything else that may help the chaperones to minister more effectively. In addition, the chaperone needs to keep this information confidential.

SAMPLE CHAPERONE TRAINING DAY

- Praise and worship at times throughout the day
- Scheduled breaks throughout the day to allow chaperones to discuss what they hear, ask each other questions, etc. Topics for talks may include:
 - Why bring youth to Steubenville Florida?
 - How to prepare and follow up with youth
 - Music: praise and worship, how teens relate to music, etc. (promo video may help)
 - A time for questions and answers
 - The spirituality of the chaperone – “You can’t give what you don’t have.”
 - Priests can give teachings on Mass and the sacraments
 - Gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Scripture and Catechism references on the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in this manual)
 - Praying with and ministering to teens during and after the conference (see **Praying with Teens** section in this **Appendix**)
 - Recognizing the need for counseling and the role of the counselor plays during the conference
 - Preparing parents for the conference
 - Have teens give personal testimonies to provide insight on what young people are struggling with and what they need from chaperones and/or other adult leaders
 - Allow time of empowerment (empowerment is prayer for an increase and release of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were received at Baptism)
- Review the conference theme small group questions found on our website: <http://steubenvilleflorida.com/resources/>

SMALL GROUPS

Have adults who attended a conference and led a small group in the past share their experiences. You may wish to do the same. Facilitation by the Group Leaders is greatly fueled by the numerous issues that will be raised in the youth throughout the weekend. Tell them that it is important to remember that God will actively work in each youth. Questions for each small group time at the conference are available prior to conference on our website:

<http://steubenvilleflorida.com/resources/> . (If you have LEAD participants, divide them evenly among small groups and give them more of a leadership role.)

Practical Skills for Small Group Leaders Training:

- The most important thing the small group leader must learn is how to actively listen to the person who is sharing. This means to give the person your undivided attention by making eye contact and appropriate facial expressions.
- The small group leader does not have to agree or disagree with the person sharing. He or she must simply validate the feelings and thoughts of the person sharing.
- Teach the young people to depend on and trust God in situations. Don't try to "fix" their problems.

Role of the Small Group Leader:

- Be a role model/Christian example through personal sharing and positive speech
- Learn and use the names of the youth in your small group
- Maintain God's love with young people
- Guide the youth through discussion in order to aid them in relating and applying the talks to their own lives
- Allow the youth to express their opinions
- Share your personal faith
- Pray with the youth

Setting/Environment for a Small Group:

- Find an area with minimal distractions
- Sit where everyone can be at the same level

Leading Discussion:

- Begin and end with a prayer
- Pose an open-ended question, and then allow the youth to respond
- Don't be afraid of silence
- Be patient
- Keep speech positive. Do not allow cut-downs, negative humor, or foul language
- Do not allow one person to monopolize the discussion
- Prevent disruptions
- Deal with a difficult youth in private, if possible, and/or take the difficult youth to the group leader if he or she persists in his or her problematic behavior

Attitude Tips:

- Realize the significance of your role

- Yield to God’s guidance and allow Him to lead the sharing
- Trust that the youth have been “divinely appointed” to your group. It is no accident that these specific teens were put in your group to journey with.
- Make the most of each small group meeting. Take notes during the talk that you can refer to once you get in small group; have LEAD participants do the same. Assure that everyone in your small group knows right from the outset that this is very important time. Be keenly aware of participants who seem disengaged and encourage them gently when not in small group. Have a list of questions based on the previous session that you can use as open-ended questions to keep things going.

Guidelines for Developing Small Groups for Youth:

- **Goals and Purposes of the Small Group:**
 - o To help the young people relate to what is being said, and to help them apply it to their lives
 - o To give an opportunity for youth to share with and learn from one another
- **Important Factors within Small Groups:**
 - o Separate small groups for young men and women are most effective for the following reasons:
 - Distraction may be caused by mixing males and females
 - It is awkward to discuss sexuality with members of the opposite sex
 - Needs and maturity levels of adolescent males and females differ greatly
 - o Ideal size of a small group is 5 to 8 youth with 1 group leader or 2 co-leaders; groups with more than 8 may become too large for personal sharing
 - o Not assigning friends of cliques to the same small group facilitates more freedom for the youth to be himself or herself, as well as create the opportunity for new friendship; maintain these small groups throughout the year for continued growth and fellowship for the youth, if possible

POSSIBLE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Feel free to use these questions in the way that will best serve your group. It is a good idea to begin and end all small groups with prayer. Look at the schedule for the current year and adapt the order of small group sessions. **Don’t forget the Steubenville Florida Conference Office has the current conference theme Small Group Questions posted on our website:** <http://steubenvilleflorida.com/resources/>. Below are generic questions that can be used year after year.

Friday Evening:

- Was there anything from the talk tonight that impacted you?
- What are some of your initial reactions to the conference after the first session?
- What are your expectations for the weekend?

Saturday Lunch:

- **Men:**

- How can a young man keep his way pure?
- In what ways do you struggle to live for God?
- How can you stand up and be a good witness for God among your peers?
- What is the most encouraging thing you heard in this morning's men's session?
- **Women:**
 - What do you think is most difficult about being chaste?
 - How can you maintain chastity in a relationship?
 - How can you stand up and be a good witness for God among your peers?
 - What is the most encouraging thing you heard in this morning's women's session?

Saturday Dinner:

- What break-out session did you attend this afternoon?
- Have the youth summarize what was presented at the session they attended.
- Tailor questions to specific young people from what they shared about the session they attended.
- How is your experience of the weekend so far?
- What are you expecting for tonight's session?

Saturday Evening:

- What reaction did you have to the speaker's talk?
- What are the benefits of living a life according to God's will?
- What was the most helpful thing you learned from the talk?
- Do you think God worked in your life tonight? How did He work?
- Have you had any experiences like this before that got you really excited about your faith?
- What can you do to keep this experience alive in your life?
- What support can you seek when you get home?

Sunday Afternoon:

- Do you have any fears or hesitations about going home?
- What are some goals you would like to accomplish when you get home?
- Did anything change in your life this weekend?
- What things do you need to do when you get home to keep this experience alive in your life?
- Are there any people you can look up to for support when you get home?
- What kinds of things can we do to support one another?

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES

- *Learn from Jesus Himself:* Mt. 11:29-30
- *A relationship with Him is daily:* Lk. 9:23-26
- *Jesus teaches us:* Mt. 5-7
- *How to live a life worthy of our calling:* Eph. 4-5, Pet. 1

HOW TO PRAY WITH TEENS

Nothing is more powerful than prayer. Through our prayer we can move mountains, we can move the very heart of God. Perhaps this is why prayers can seem so intimidating. This can be especially true when we are praying for and with teens. Keep in mind that God wants you to pray for and with one another. Intercessory prayer literally means “standing in the gap.” When you pray with your teens, you are going with them into the very presence of God and asking Him to bless them.

You will have many opportunities throughout the conference weekend to pray with the teens. How do you initiate prayer? First, you should prepare the youth for the experience before the weekend. You should take time to pray with each teen during conference prep meetings. Give them something to reflect upon such as, “What do you want God to do in your life during the conference?” Let them take time to reflect on the question. Then pray with each person.

Follow these simple steps:

- 1. Ask first.** If the teen has never been prayed with before, take time to ask them how they are doing and assure them that you care for them. Some appropriate questions might be:
 - How are you feeling?
 - Have you ever done anything like this before? (If yes, what was it like?)
 - Do you have any questions?
- 2. Hands on.** If they are ready to begin, ask permission to simply put your hand on the person’s shoulder and ask the Holy Spirit to come and bless this time. The “laying on of hands” is a Biblical directive for prayer (see Mk. 10:16, 2 Tim. 1:6-7, Acts 8:18, 8:17-18). An example might be, “Father, we come before you now. I lift up _____ to you. Please pour out Your Holy Spirit on us as we come before you.”
- 3. Shhh...** Take some time to sit in silence before the Lord and let the Holy Spirit do His work.
- 4. What do they want or need?** Ask the person you are praying over what they want to get out of the conference. You might be led to ask other clarifying questions or even probing questions to get beneath the surface of their answers. Your goal is simply to be able to pray in the best possible way for the young person you are with. For example, if they say something like, “I want to grow closer to God,” you might ask, “What do you think is holding you back from knowing God right now?” A question like that might reveal the need to pray for deeper faith or strength to turn from sin. Once you have a clear direction you can begin interceding. You might start with, “Lord, we just continue to come before you. I lift up _____ and their desire to grow closer to you. I ask that you give them deeper faith and the strength to resist those things that take him or her away from you.”
- 5. Shhh... (again).** Allow more silent time for the Lord to work. You can be praying silently for the person repeating, “Come Holy Spirit” in the silence of your own heart.

6. **Thoughts of the teen.** Ask the person you are praying with if God is saying anything to them or showing them anything. Ask them if there is anything else they would like to pray for. If there is, intercede for those particular intentions.
7. **They can pray, too.** Encourage the youth to say a prayer asking God to help them grow closer to Him.
8. **Old Faithful.** Close the prayer time with an Our Father or a Hail Mary.

This is one simple method of praying over another person. You can adapt this in any way that you need to. The important thing to remember is that God does the work in hearts. We cannot, on our own, work miracles, change hearts, or forgive sins. It's all about God. Avoid counseling during prayer. Keep the focus on Jesus.

During the conference, any number of issues may come up that will need to be prayed through: divorce, family problems, addictions, sexual issues, abuse, neglect, broken hearts, serious sins, death, grief, depression, suicide, self-mutilation, just to name a few. Be prepared just to accept the youth and pray through these issues if they come up. Be confident that nothing will come up that God won't give you the compassion, wisdom, and grace to deal with.