



## The Parish Priest and Youth Ministry

by Fr. Michael Taylor

*“Oh! How great is the priest. The priest will only be understood in heaven. Were he understood on earth, people would die, not of fear, but of love.”*

- St. John Marie Vianney

The Director of Youth Ministry (DYM) in a parish has a unique opportunity to touch our two great families: our human family and the family of the Church. The DYM cooperates with parents who have given life to their child and brought them into God’s family through baptism, and with priests who, cooperating with the bishop, are asked (along with the parents) to guide the youth to eternal life. Working with priests, the dispensers of our great sacramental means to salvation, should be an essential goal for the DYM. ***The following are some suggestions on how to better involve your parish priest(s):***

**Invite** your priest to all of your events.

- *Ask your priest to take part in your meeting. He could be involved by:*
  - o *Giving talks* on a variety of subjects: saints, sacraments, a tour of the church, the history of a particular devotion (this can be greatly aided by visual images and holy cards), etc.--just open up your *Catechism of the Catholic Church* if you ever run out of ideas!
- Providing responses to young people’s questions in a *Q & A* session (you could give students a chance to ask questions out loud or write down questions anonymously and hand them in). *Continue* to invite even if your priest cannot attend for a while (priests really do like skiing, paintball, pizza and Nationals’ games!)
- Extend your invitation to *different priests in the parish*
- *Be specific* in your invitation, i.e. not just “when you get a chance” but inviting “for this event at this time” will bring about better results
- *Introduce and welcome* the priest to your meeting/event

**Plan** your calendar and then *review* it with your parish priest(s).

- This will give you an opportunity *to know* your parish priest better and for him to be involved directly in the youth groupings
- He may have *other ideas* such as Advent/Lenten days of prayer or confession services; a spiritual beginning such as a Mass or blessing before an outing; ideas to involve youth in praying for one another, their families, parish and world; Exposition & Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; a pilgrimage to a church with particular historical meaning or beauty; ideas for a guest speaker, etc.
- *Give a final copy* of the schedule to all of your priests

**Ask** your priest to pray for specific teens in your program who may particularly need prayers.

This also may foster an opportunity for the priest to reach out to these teens who may be particularly in need of attention or encouragement.

*Fr. Michael Taylor is a graduate of Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. He serves as Pastor at Corpus Christi Church in Aldie, VA.*