

Signs of the Times for Youth Ministry

Based on new research and statistics from Fe y Vida Research and Resource Center, www.feyvida.org.

According to recent research...

- There are 5.8 million Catholic youth (ages 13-17) in the United States, 45.5% of them are Hispanic. Of the 45.5%, 9.5% are foreign born, 22% are second generation (born of immigrant parents), and 14% are third generation or greater.
- Latino/a children are about half of all Catholics under the age of 18 in the United States. Latinos are projected to become the vast majority of all Catholics in the next 40 years.
- Despite the fact that they participate in more personal and family-based spiritual practices, and their parents demonstrate greater commitment to their faith than do Euro-American Catholic parents, Latino teens are more religiously disengaged at church than other Catholic teens.

Reality:

- ❖ "There are significant social barriers to the integration of *all* Catholic teens—Hispanic, white, and of other races or culture—in a single youth ministry setting."—Ken Johnson Mondragon, www.feyvida.org
- ❖ For Hispanic teens...the economic, cultural, educational, geographic, and linguistic differences factor as reasons to why they do not participate in mainstream youth ministry.

Challenge for Coordinators of Youth Ministers:

- Intentionality in connecting, identifying, and empowering leaders that are bilingual and bicultural to step up and be on your leadership team. The idea should be to help engage Hispanic youth.

- Embrace the possibility that a “Hispanic youth group”, when connected to the larger youth community as a whole (both adult leaders and teens), helps uphold what it means to have a multi-cultural and comprehensive youth ministry program. (RTV 22)
- Reach out and educate Hispanic families and leaders on youth ministry through the help of a bilingual volunteer. Often parents do not know about the activities and experiences your ministry can offer to their teenagers.

A Hispanic youth group is “sound” when:

- The goal is to create a welcoming environment for Hispanic teens that is conducive to their evangelization.
- The adult leader/s of the group is in compliance with STAND requirements and is in constant contact with and works in collaboration with the parish Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM).
- The adult leader/s shares the vision of youth ministry with the CYM, and like all other volunteers, is expected to attend youth ministry formation starting with “Seminars in Youth Ministry.”
- Hispanic youth have the opportunity to gather with the non-Hispanic youth ministry community in events (such as retreats, work camps, overnights, Archdiocesan Pilgrimage, etc.) and peer leader formation (e.g. Cornerstone, Micah 6:8, High-LI, Justice Action Week).