

Why does youth ministry matter?

Hiring a youth minister is one of the most significant investments a parish can make to initiate or support its youth ministry. Supporting youth ministry is important because:

Young people need adult mentors-in-faith.

Research on today's young people shows that many of "our own" Catholic young people have disaffiliated from the Church, and even those who remain in the Church do not always attend Mass, live out Catholic values, or trust the institutional Church they claim to be a part of. What is needed is "a data-driven framework for building relationships with lasting influence that responds to the complexities of the current state of religion and young people."¹ *Quality youth ministry provides that framework.*

Our parish communities value young people.

Research regularly shows that engaging young people is a high priority for parishes and parishioners in the Diocese of St. Petersburg.² A well-resourced youth ministry is a real expression of a parish caring for its young people. Effective youth ministry communicates the love of Christ for young people in ways that they can understand and respond to.

The Church needs the contribution of young Catholics.

Pope Francis has said that "the entire (adult) community has to be involved in evangelizing" young people, and he named "the urgent requirement that (young people) take on a greater role in pastoral outreach."³ Youth ministry which empowers young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ will not occur in a vacuum, but will see young people becoming active participants in parish life: "If parishes are to be worthy of the loyalty and active participation of youth, they will need to become 'youth-friendly' communities in which youth have a conspicuous presence in parish life."⁴ Our parishes need the creative energy, vibrancy, and many other gifts and talents of youth!

1. *The State of Religion and Young People 2020: Relational Authority*. 2020, Springtide Research Institute. www.springtideresearch.org.

2. The people of the Diocese of St. Petersburg clearly named youth and young adults as a high priority in 2017. Our resulting mutually shared Vision is available at <https://www.dosp.org/courageouslyliving/>.

3. Pope Francis. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 2019, no. 202.

4. *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. USCCB, 1997, p 13.