

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two hands, one larger and one smaller, passing a baton. The hands are silhouetted against a bright, cloudy sky. The larger hand is on the left, holding the baton, and the smaller hand is on the right, reaching to take it. The baton is a thin, light-colored object. The overall color palette is dominated by the green of the hands and the white and grey of the clouds.

Passing of the Baton in Catholic Youth Ministry

**A National Longitudinal Research Study
of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders**

*Sponsored by Ministry Training Source and
the National Federation for Catholic Youth
Ministry in Collaboration with Project YM*

Copyright © 2018

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Washington, D.C. and Ministry Training Source,
Metairie, Louisiana.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Photos from Shutterstock.

Table of Contents

About the Author and Researcher.	Page 5
Acknowledgments	Page 5
Introduction	Page 7
Section One How Was the Research Conducted?	Page 11
Section Two What Do We Know about the Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders in the Sample?	Page 16
Section Three How Do Youth Ministry Leaders Serve the Church?	Page 21
Section Four How Have Youth Ministry Leaders Been Formed and Educated for Ministry?	Page 33
Section Five How Were Youth Ministers Called to Ministry and What Are Their Plans for Future Service in Ministry?	Page 39
Section Six What Are the Elements Included in Youth Ministry Leaders Professional Relationship with the Church?	Page 43
Section Seven Conclusion—Findings and Recommendations	Page 51

Tables

1. Generation by Percentage of Sample	Page 9
2. Breakdown of How Survey Was Accessed by Sample	Page 12
3. Breakdown of Sample by Geographic Region	Page 13
4. Breakdown of Sample by Episcopal Region	Page 14
5. Vocational Status of Youth Ministry Leaders	Page 17
6. Years of Professional Experience of All Youth Ministry Leaders	Page 18
7. Participation in Catholic Programs by Generation	Page 19
8. Demographics of Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministers.	Page 20
9. How Significant Is the Lack of Understanding about Youth Ministry?	Page 22
10. Youth Ministry Roles	Page 23
11. How Significant Is Parental Involvement in Youth Ministry Programs?	Page 27
12. Percentage of Full-Time Parish Ministers Not Offering Parent Programs by Generation.	Page 27
13. Use of Text Messaging in Ministry by Youth Ministry Leaders	Page 28
14. Social Media Use by Youth Ministry Leaders	Page 28
15. How Significant Is the Pervasiveness of Digital and Social Media?	Page 29
16. How Significant Is an Insufficient Budget to Your Ministry Programs?	Page 31
17. The Significance of the Polarization Occurring in Our Church and Society	Page 31
18. My Work in Youth Ministry Is Fulfilling	Page 32
19. Youth Ministry, in My Parish, Is Effective	Page 32
20. Highest Level of Education Completed	Page 33
21. Percentage of Each Generation Obtaining Degrees in Ministry Related Area	Page 36
22. College/University/Seminary Programs of Study Directed towards Preparing Lay Youth Ministers for Service in the Church	Page 37
23. How Significant Is My Lack of Training for Some of My Duties?	Page 38
24. Reasons for Becoming a Youth Ministry Leader.	Page 40
25. Long-Term Commitment to Youth Ministry by Generation	Page 41

26. Future Intentions Reported by Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministers Regarding Their Plans to Work in a Formal Youth Ministry Position	Page 41
27. Description of the Most Likely Reasons that Would Influence Youth Ministers in Their Decision to Leave Youth Ministry Service	Page 42
28. Description of the Percentage of Full-Time Parish Youth Ministers Reporting that Selected Elements were Present in Their Formal Relationship with the Parish.	Page 44
29. Work-Related Beliefs of All Youth Ministry Leaders	Page 45
30. Mean Annual Salaries of Youth Ministers by Youth Ministry Employment Status . . .	Page 45
31. Salary by Gender Across the Three Studies	Page 47
32. Mean Salary for Full-Time Parish Youth Ministers by Highest Education Level Completed	Page 48
33. Importance of a Professional Journal for Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders	Page 50
34. Importance of National Certification for Youth Ministry Leaders.	Page 50

Chart

1. Breakdown of Sample by Geographic Region	Page 13
2. Breakdown of Percentage of Sample by Episcopal Region.	Page 15
3. Breakdown of Sample by Generation.	Page 19
4. Comparison of Percent of YMLs Completion of Ministry Formation Types	Page 37
5. Mean Salary by Geographic Region	Page 46
6. YML Salary Comparisons by Gender.	Page 47


About the Author and Researcher

Dr. Charlotte McCorquodale, originally from Lake Charles, Louisiana, completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at McNeese State University in 1985, majoring in psychology and minoring in sociology. In 1988, she completed her Master of Arts degree in religious education from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas. In 2001, she received her Doctor of Philosophy degree from the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development at Louisiana State University. The title of her dissertation is *The Emergence of Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministry as a Profession in the Roman Catholic Church* in the United States. She also has a national certificate in youth ministry studies from the Center for Ministry Development, a certificate in E-Learning, and is a nationally certified 4MAT Instructional Designer.

Her professional career in Catholic ministry began in 1981. For the past thirty years, she has worked in parish, school, and diocesan ministry settings in the dioceses of Los Angeles, Lake Charles, Galveston-Houston, and Mobile. She currently serves as an international consultant and trainer in the fields of youth ministry, lay ecclesial ministry, adult training, and online education. Charlotte is president and executive director, for Ministry Training Source (MTS), a non-profit organization committed to providing the church with customized ministry formation solutions for lay ecclesial ministry leaders. She has served on various national boards and committees, including the serving as Chair of the Board of Directors for the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) and as a consultant in various capacities to the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth. She has published various resources, research reports, and journal articles on Catholic youth ministry.

Acknowledgments

An endeavor such as a research study, especially one with a national focus, can be done only with the support and assistance of others. I would like to recognize and thank the board, staff, and membership of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry for their assistance and permission to gather data youth ministry leaders at the 2000, 2008, and the 2016 National Conference for Catholic Youth Ministry. Additionally, I would like to thank Project YM for their collaboration in data gathering through the Catholic Youth Ministry Facebook Group, as well as diocesan leaders who shared the survey through their networks. The willingness of so many to support national research on the field is truly a sign of their vision for and commitment to the continued growth of the field of Catholic youth ministry. Finally, I would like to especially thank the following of



group of colleagues who gathered in September 2017 to help analyze the data, as well as make recommendations for the additional areas of exploration. Thank you for your insights and your commitment to the field of Catholic youth and young adult ministry:

- Brigitte Burke, National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry
- Paul Jarzembowski, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Michael Marchand, Project YM
- Ted Miles, Catholic Relief Services
- Bob Rice, Steubenville University
- Tony Vasinda, Project YM
- Michael Theisen, National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry
- Nick Stein, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Young Adult Advisory Team
- Joan Weber, Center for Ministry Development

Also, I would like to thank Kathleen Carver, Ruby Freeman, and Ryan Bao, for their assistance in the development and editing of this research report.

Introduction

My journey in youth ministry began in 1979. As a senior in high school I became involved in my parish CYO through a personal invitation from my youth minister and mentor. This began my near forty-year journey in youth ministry that has seen three popes with a tremendous impact on ministry to young people, two guiding documents for the field,¹ three generations of youth from Gen X to Gen Z, and the evolution of the Internet and digital technologies that have changed our lives and ministry. The only constant has been change, except for the ever-present Holy Spirit that guides all ministries. It is through the lens of change that I will examine how youth ministry leadership has grown and evolved, and what changes might be needed to continue to support those who serve the young church.

This 2016-17 National Study of Youth Ministry Leaders is a follow-up to the first two national studies, conducted in 2000 and 2008 by Ministry Training Source, in collaboration with the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry and this year Project YM. The three studies all have examined the broad scope of the field of Catholic youth ministry leaders including volunteer, part-time, and full-time ministry leaders in a variety of ministry contexts such as parish, school, diocese, itinerant, and resource organizations.

Research Purpose

The purpose of these studies has been to assess and describe the profession of the lay ecclesial youth minister. This national study, as with the previous two studies in 2000 and 2008, sought to describe current youth ministry leaders—both paid and volunteer—including titles, responsibilities, salaries, and ministry formation, as well as key beliefs and attitudes. Additionally, the researcher hoped to better understand how the field of Catholic youth ministry has evolved and changed over the past sixteen years. The 2000 and 2008 survey instruments were utilized in this study with modifications and additional questions that reflected some current trends and developments.

A Longitudinal View

In 2000, with 18 years of working in paid youth ministry, I was writing my dissertation, which was the first of the three studies this report examines. I often joked it was my way of proving to my dad that I indeed had a real job. The reality of the field was reflected in the title, *The Emergence of Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministry as a Profession in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States*.² It explained how

I will examine how youth ministry leadership has grown and evolved, and what changes might be needed to continue to support those who serve the young church.

1. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* (1976) and *Renewing the Vision* (1995) both published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

2. Dr. Charlotte McCorquodale, *The Emergence of Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministry as a Profession in the Roman Catholic Church* (2001), Louisiana State University

serving as a lay youth ministry leader was both a profession and a vocation. The structure of the report focused on examining the field of Catholic youth ministry leadership considering the typical ways a profession is identified including education and credentials, role responsibilities, employment relationship, professional relationships, and professional resources. However, because this profession is in a ministry setting and context, and as described and expressed by many as a vocation to serve the church it was also important to examine the ministerial aspects beyond just the professional ones. The study found that there was a need for further role initiation and clarification in the field, which included continuing to structure and codify the relationship and responsibilities of this new emerging post-Vatican II ministries, of which youth ministry was one. The term lay ecclesial minister had not yet fully evolved, although preliminary thinking about this reality was beginning at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

In the second study, the USCCB had just published its seminal document on lay ecclesial ministry, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord (Co-Workers)*.³ The framework of *Co-Workers* became the paradigm for the second study articulating how lay ecclesial ministers were called, designated, formed, and authorized for leadership in a specific ministry. It was clear then that youth ministry leaders were continuing to develop and that from the bishops' description within *Co-Workers* there were lay ecclesial ministers serving in many youth ministry leadership roles. While the role had further developed, and education and salaries had increased, much more was needed from the church to support adults who minister to its young members. In place of increased clarity and consistency, diversity was beginning to occur in roles and the people who filled them.

In this third iteration of this longitudinal study of Catholic youth ministry leaders (YML), the lens of the different generations currently serving as youth ministry leaders will be used to examine the evolution of the field and those who serve in leadership. While generational breakdowns will not be the only factor examined, many researchers, such as the Pew Research Center explains "Generations provide the opportunity to look at Americans both by their place in the life cycle—whether a young adult, a middle-aged parent or a retiree—and by their membership in a cohort of individuals who were born at a similar time."⁴ As you see from Table 1. Millennials have gone from not being represented in the first study to being the largest group in this third study.

3. [*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*](#), is a document published by the USCCB providing resources and guidance about lay ecclesial ministry leaders serving the Church.

4. Michael Dimock, [*Defining generations: Where Millennials end and post-Millennials begin*](#), Pew Research Center.

Table 1. Generation by Percentage of Sample			
Generation	2000 Study	2008 Study	2016-17 Study
Millennials (1981-1996)	0	14%	38%
Generation X (1965-1980)	32%	36%	32%
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	62%	47%	29%
Silent Generation (1928-1945)	6%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

A Generational View

The first study primarily included: Baby Boomers (Boomers) by two-thirds followed by Generation X (Gen X) and the Silent Generation (Silents.) The second study of youth ministry leaders again saw Boomers as the majority at nearly fifty-percent followed again, Gen X with the early Millennials starting their service. As Boomers head towards retirement, this third study shows that Millennials have overtaken the Boomers as the largest group of youth ministry leaders serving, again with Gen X being next. Across the life of this study, Gen X youth ministry leaders, have consistently been about a third of the sample in each study, never rising to the top probably due to the size of the Boomer and Millennial generations.

Does this shift signal a passing of the baton in Catholic youth ministry? In examining the swing in leadership by generation, this premise becomes apparent. As lay people entered ministry and leadership in the church after Vatican II, the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers entered church ministry with Boomers quickly making up the majority of youth ministry leaders. Now, they are retiring (older Boomers) or planning soon to retire (younger Boomers.) Boomers in this study were found to serve in all types of youth ministry roles and it is interesting to note they make up 44% of those youth ministry leaders who indicated that they serve in roles with resource organizations or as itinerant ministers. Gen X follows this at 35% and Millennials at 21% serving in that role. It was found that Gen X, which followed the Boomers, are in positions of leadership in the church with 41% of them making up the majority of those serving in youth ministry diocesan leadership positions. In their roles they offer the church more education and experience.

The largest generation serving as Catholic youth ministry leaders are the Millennials who comprise the majority of full-time parish youth ministry leaders. Both Gen X and Millennials are products of Catholic youth ministry from the eighties and nineties, which has influenced their call to ministry. But as with each generation new gifts are offered; new challenges are also presented. In recent years, data from the Pew Research Center has documented the decline of religious affiliation which is highest among Millennials with 44% being

unaffiliated with a religion⁵ and the trend of disaffiliation continuing. This is both a present and future challenge for the current generation of youth ministry leaders.

The youngest of the next generation of youth ministry leaders, Generation Z (which some researchers are referring to as the post-Millennial generation) are beginning to enter the workforce. How are church leaders and current youth ministry leaders inviting this generation to consider youth ministry leadership as a profession and vocation? Being intentional about this invitation is especially critical today since we know that participation in youth ministry is one factor that contributes to service in youth ministry as an adult. However, the majority of Gen Z are in high school and college now with Generation Alpha (the name some researchers are giving the next generation) on their heels. Some members of Generation Alpha are still being born with the oldest in elementary schools.⁶

Change will continue, but what are the implications of these changes for those who serve the church as youth ministry leaders? In examining the longitudinal data and findings, there is no doubt “change” or maybe better said “evolution” is a key theme. Certainly, the pace of this evolution will continue to increase given the pace of change in our society. Regardless of your generation, where we have been is not as important as where we are going. This research report will look at the past but more importantly the present, and possible future to give insight to the evolution of the role of the Catholic youth ministry leader.



5. “Religious Landscape Study” from the Pew Research Center, [Generational Cohort](#)

6. Alex Williams, [Meet Alpha: The Next ‘Next Generation’](#), from *The New York Times*, Sept. 19, 2015.

Section One: How Was the Research Conducted?

Sample Identification

The challenge of studying Catholic youth ministry leaders is the diversity of the population, demonstrated by the difficulty in clearly defining youth ministry-related roles. The range of youth ministry leaders includes:

- Context (school, parish, diocese, national, international)
- Compensation (paid, full-time, part-time, stipend, or volunteer)
- Ministry type or focus (retreat, formational, athletic, music, etc.)

This range makes drawing a random sample of Catholic youth ministry leaders impossible. To draw a random sample, the researcher must be able to list the entire population that is being studied and draw a sample from it. For example, one could draw a random sample of all full-time Catholic high school teachers, because a common definition exists for that role and a list can be made of all the members of this population.

Accessible Population

Without the ability to draw a random sample, a survey was conducted during the most common professional conference or gathering of youth ministry leaders, the National Conference for Catholic Youth Ministry (NCCYM), sponsored by the NFCYM for the first two data collections. This resulted in the accessible population for the 2000 and 2008 YML studies being registered participants of the 2000 National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry, held in Birmingham, Alabama and 2008 NCCYM in Cleveland, Ohio who identified as lay ecclesial youth ministry leaders. The accessible population of the 2016-17 Study was larger than in the previous two studies. Data collection in this most recent study, included:

- Registered participants of the 2016 NCCYM in San Jose, California
- Youth ministry leaders contacted through the Project YM sponsored Catholic Youth Ministry Facebook Group, and
- Youth ministry leaders from dioceses throughout the country who were given access to the survey by diocesan leaders

Because of broadening the accessible population to include youth ministry leaders reached through social media platforms, as well as sharing of the survey via email by diocesan leaders, this makes the current sample broader and the results more generalizable than the previous two studies.

Research Methodology

Data was collected for this survey via an Internet link. An email with a link was sent to the registered participant list of the 2016 NCCYM. Three attempts at collecting data occurred prior to the conference, and two following the conference, as well as the option of completing the survey at the Ministry Training Source exhibit booth during the 2016 NCCYM. Additionally, the survey was shared twice in

Catholic youth ministry leaders have a diverse population, demonstrated by the difficulty in clearly defining youth ministry-related roles.

early 2017 with diocesan leaders via the NFCYM Connected E-Mail Bulletin. Also, the link to the survey was posted twice in the first quarter of 2017 on the Catholic Youth Ministry Facebook Group that had over 2000 members at the time. In September 2017, youth ministry colleagues gathered to review the preliminary data and draw conclusions, as well as make recommendations for areas of exploration.

Research Sample

A different sampling strategy was used in the 2016-17 Study versus the previous two studies that only included NCCYM registered participants. The 2016-17 Study also included youth ministry leaders from the Project YM Facebook Group, and youth ministry leaders from dioceses where the diocesan leader shared the survey. This resulted in a larger valid sample in the 2016-17 study of 1223, however the largest group represented in the sample is still NCCYM registered participants, at 55%. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the sample of the 2016 study by how the survey was accessed. A summary of the total samples from each study and response rates is provided below:

- Valid Sample 2000: 770 Total Sample (51% response rate of NCCYM Participants)
- Valid Sample 2008: 935 Total Sample (68% response rate of NCCYM Participants)
- Valid Sample 2016-17: 1223 Total Sample
 - o NCCYM: 587 (48% of total sample, 55% response rate of NCCYM Participants)
 - o Facebook Group: 213 (17% of total sample)
 - o Emailed Link: 423 (35% total of sample)

Table 2. Breakdown of How Survey Was Accessed by Sample			
		Frequency	Percent
Survey Access	I Got an Email as a Registered Participant of the NCCYM.	587	48.0
	Someone Sent Me the Link Via Email from NFCYM or in Diocesan Communication.	423	34.6
	I Found out About the Survey as a Member of the Facebook or Social Media Group Focused on Youth Ministry.	213	17.4
	Total	1223	100.0

Comparing Type of Survey Access by Generation

Due to the three distinct ways the survey could be accessed, a crosstabulation of the different types of access by the participant's

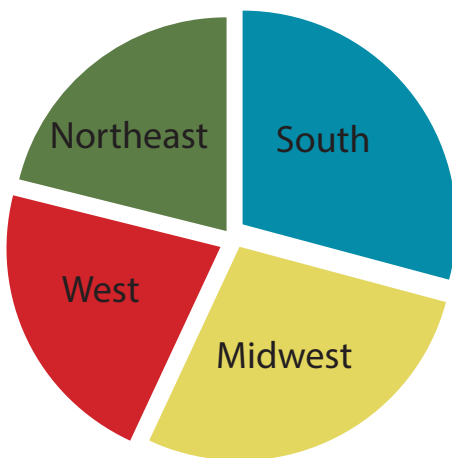
generation showed that Millennials were more likely than the other generations to have participated in the research via the Catholic Youth Ministry Facebook page with almost half (49%) of the Catholic Youth Ministry Facebook participants being Millennial followed by Generation X (27%) and Baby Boomers/Silent Generation (24%). Generation X was the generation that most commonly participated because of NCCYM participation (36%) followed by Baby Boomers/Silent Generation (33%) and then Millennials (31%).

Sample by Geographic Region

The representativeness of the sample can also be understood by examining the geographic regions from which the sample comes (see Chart 1). The Midwest region had the highest representation at 29% with the Northeast being the lowest at 21% (see Table 3).

Table 3. Breakdown of Sample by Geographic Region			
		Frequency	Percent
Region	Midwest	358	29.3
	South	341	27.9
	West	269	22.0
	Northeast	255	20.9
	Total	1223	100.0

Chart 1. Breakdown of Sample by Geographic Region



Sample by Diocese

There were 163 dioceses represented in the sample. Thirteen dioceses had 20 or more responses and forty-three dioceses with at least 10 or more responses. A full list of the dioceses that participated in the study can be found in Appendix I.

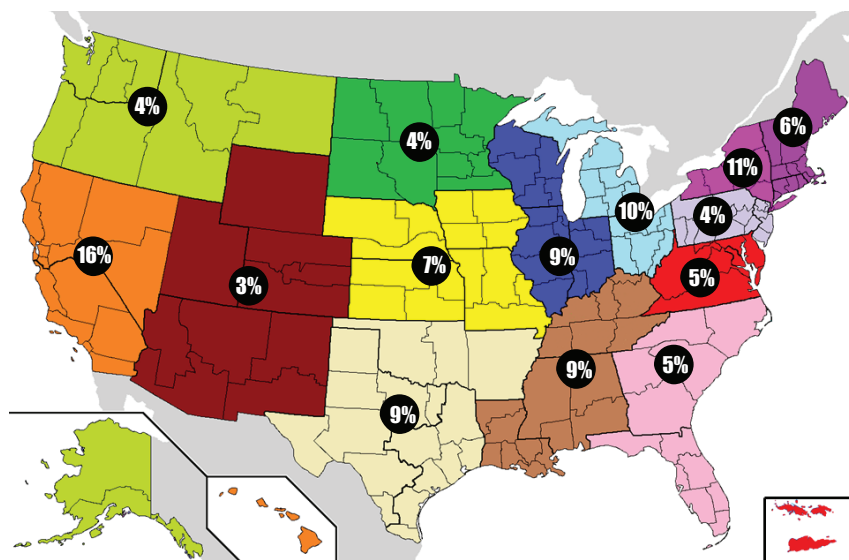
Sample by Episcopal Region

The sample can also be described by geographic and Episcopal Region. Chart 2 provides a graphic breakdown of the percentage of youth ministry leaders in the sample by episcopal region. Six episcopal regions have over 100 responses, eleven episcopal regions have over 50 responses, and only Region 13 has below 40 responses with a total at 34. Region 11 had the most responses at 192 and made up 16% of sample followed by Region 2 with 134 responses making up 11% of the sample (see Table 4.)

Table 4. Breakdown of Sample by Episcopal Region

		Frequency	Percent
Region	1	74	6.1
	2	134	11.0
	3	47	3.8
	4	65	5.3
	5	108	8.8
	6	117	9.6
	7	106	8.7
	8	45	3.7
	9	90	7.4
	10	104	8.5
	11	192	15.7
	12	43	3.5
	13	34	2.8
	14	64	5.2
	Total	1223	100.0

Chart 2. Breakdown of Percentage of Sample by Episcopal Region



Analysis of Sample

The strategy to broaden the sample by increasing availability to the survey via diocesan leaders' networks and social media networks was successful. The sample had all of the geographic regions represented with every region making up 21% to 29% of the sample. Additionally, each episcopal region was represented in the sample, but a better sampling strategy is needed to increase the participation by some regions. A variety of youth ministry leader roles were included, but again, a better sampling strategy is needed to include diocesan leaders and Catholic school personnel to increase representation by those groups. While the diversity of the sample has increased over time, the sample is underrepresented in its ethnic diversity. Future studies need to consider expanding the sampling strategy and offering at least a Spanish language option for completing the survey.

It is interesting to note that of the entire sample 46% had never attended an NCCYM, which makes the broadening of the sample beyond NCCYM an important evolution of this research. However, continuing to include NCCYM participants as members of the sample will be important because 36% of YMLs in the study had attended two or more NCCYM's, which can help provide continuity of research as well.

Section Two: What Do We Know about the Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders in the Sample?

Overview

In comparing the demographics of youth ministry leaders from the three studies (see Table 8), youth ministry leaders are now more diverse, but still do not reflect the current ethnic diversity in the church⁷ and have seen an increase in the number of men serving in the field. Youth ministry leaders are better educated (especially in comparison to the 2000 study), and better paid with more experience in youth ministry while also responsible for more ministry areas. Table 8 offers a compilation of demographic information across all three studies. Snapshots of the most common descriptors of YMLs are below and many of them are explored in more depth in other areas of this report.

Gender

Lay ecclesial ministers in the church are primarily female making up 80%.⁸ Like the broader church, female lay ecclesial youth ministry leaders make up the majority with two-thirds (67%) of YMLs being female. There has been an increase of men in the field by 10 percent since the first study in 2000. It appears that some of this increase maybe due to an influx of Millennials who make up 47% of all the males in the study, ahead of Gen X at 29%.

Race

Most are Caucasian (78%) with Hispanics and Latinos (15%) forming the second largest ethnic group followed by Asian and Pacific Islanders (5%) and African-Americans (2%).

Vocational Status

In this study, as well as the other two studies, the clear majority (97%) described their vocational status as lay, including religious sisters and brothers. This percentage has held steady over the life of the longitudinal study (see Table 5). At times this report will provide statistics on only those who are lay, taking out the ordained responses, but the most common data will include all the responses including ordained.

Youth ministry leaders are now more diverse, but still do not reflect the current ethnic diversity in the church.

7. [*Fact Sheet: Hispanic Catholics in the U.S.*](#) from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University.

8. CARA reports that 80% of LEMs are female. [*Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the United States*](#) (February 2015) from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University.

Table 5. Vocational Status of Youth Ministry Leaders				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Religious Sister or Brother	28	2.3	2.3
	Priest or Deacon	34	2.8	2.8
	Single Lay Person	416	34.0	34.2
	Married Lay Person	737	60.3	60.7
	Total	1215	99.3	100.0
Missing	System	8	.7	
	Total	1223	100.0	

Highest Level of Education

Forty-six have a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. A master's degree is the next highest level at 31%, an increase of 11% since 2000, but only a 2% increase in the last 8 years.

Age

The mean (mathematical average) and median age (50 percentile) is 42; meaning there is a normal distribution with half of the population being over 42 and have being under. Since the 2000 study the mean age has held constant only varying from 40 to 43 years old, over the 16 years of study. The age range in the 2016 study was from 20 years old to 82.

Generation of Youth Ministry Leaders

The sample can be described by generation⁹ since their age was asked. Chart 3 shows the breakdown of the sample by generation pointing to Millennials (38%) making up the largest part of the sample followed by Generation X (32%) and the combined group of Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation (30%).

Years of Experience

The mean number of years of youth ministry experience is 14, up from 12.5 years of experience in 2008, with only an increase of 4.5 years of experience since 2000. Fifty percent of youth ministers have been involved 11 years or more years in youth ministry, up from 7 years in 2000. The mean number of years of professional youth ministry experience is slightly lower at 11 years with 27% of youth ministry leaders having 3 years or less professional experience (see Table 6).

9. The breakdown of the ages of the different generations in 2016 was provided by Pew Research Center. Richard Fry, [Millennials projected to overtake Baby Boomers as America's largest generation](#) (March, 2018) from the Pew Research Center

Years of Experience by Role

Diocesan staff members are the most experienced group of YMLs with an average of 19 years of experience in youth ministry and 15 years of professional ministry. Full-time parish youth ministers have 13 years and 9 years of professional ministry experience, which is slightly less than those serving in full-time parish ministry with youth ministry as one responsibility, who have 15 years of youth ministry experience and 11 years of professional ministry experience.

Table 6. Years of Professional Experience of All YMLs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 to 3 years	271	22.2	27.1	27.1
	4 to 8 years	246	20.1	24.6	51.8
	9 to 14 years	250	20.4	25.0	76.8
	15 or more years	232	19.0	23.2	100.0
	Total	999	81.7	100.0	
Missing	Missing/ Left Blank	224	18.3		
	Total	1223	100.0		

Intent to Work in Youth Ministry in Future

Sixty-one percent intend to continue working in youth ministry for six years or more, with 37% of those planning to continue ten years or more (see Table 7).

Catholic Faith Engagement

Forty-seven percent attended a Catholic elementary school, 34% a Catholic High School, with 40% attending a Catholic College or University. Sixty-one percent participated in youth ministry as a young person. Nine percent have converted to Catholicism. When examining this by generation, it is evident that Millennial youth ministry leaders are products of the programs they participated in as an adolescent, with 55% of them having participated in youth leadership programs. Clearly, these programs, especially ones focused on leadership have been part of calling forth the next generation of youth ministry leaders.

Table 7. Participation in Catholic Programs by Generation			
Generation	Participation in Religious Education	Participation in Youth Ministry	Participation Youth Leadership Program
Millennials	44%	47%	55%
Gen X	32%	32%	30%
Boomers and Silents	24%	21%	15%
	100%	100%	100%

Itinerant Minister, Publisher, or Staff of a Resource Organization Role

Those serving the field in a role as Itinerant Minister, Publisher, or Staff of a Resource Organization are the most educated in the youth ministry field with 71% having a graduate degree, and more likely to be Baby Boomers.

Chart 3. Breakdown of Sample by Generation

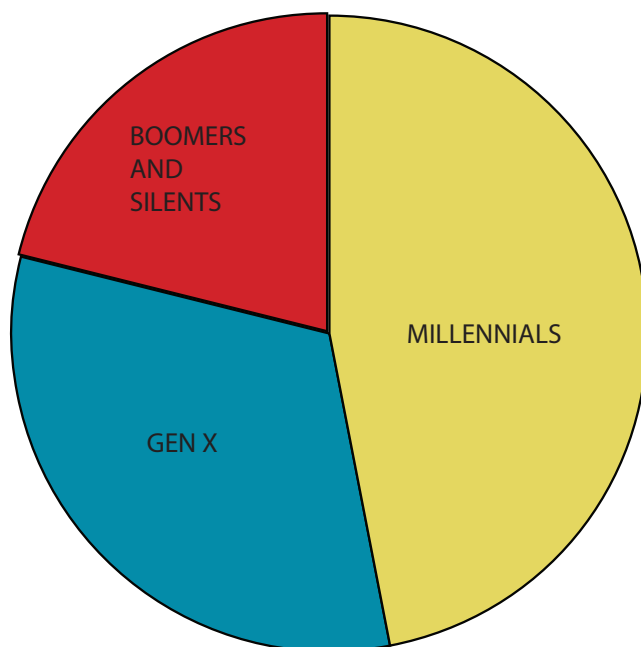


Table 8. Demographics of Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministers			
Gender	2000	2008	2016-17
Female	77%	70%	67%
Male	23%	30%	33%
Ethnicity	2000	2008	2016-17
Caucasian	90%	87%	78%
Hispanic, Latino, Mexican-American	5%	7%	12%
African-American	2%	2%	2%
Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Vietnamese	Less than 1%	2%	5%
Other ^a	3%	2%	3%
Highest Education Level Completed	2000	2008	2016-17
Bachelor's Degree	41%	41%	46%
Master's Degree	20%	29%	31%
High School Diploma	16%	13%	11%
Two Year Associate Degree	14%	11%	8%
Other ^b	8%	2%	2%
Doctoral Degree	Less than 1%	2%	2%
Age of Youth Ministers	Years Old	Years Old	Years Old
Mean Age of Youth Ministers	40	43	42
Median Age of Youth Ministers (50% percentile)	41	43	42
Years of Youth Ministry Experience	Years	Years	Years
Mean number of years of experience	9 ½	12 ½	14
Median number of years of experience (50% percentile)	7	10	11

Note. ^aRespondents who chose "other", Native-American, bi-racial or multi-ethnic group, and those who did not specify. ^bThose responding other included some college completed but no degree, national youth ministry certificate, diocesan certification, or chose not to respond to this question.

Section Three: How Do Youth Ministry Leaders Serve the Church?

Overview

There is a consensus on the purpose of youth ministry: discipleship making. There are also, common types of programs, activities, methods that are used by youth ministry leaders such as games, Eucharistic Adoration, retreats, service programs, mission trips, etc. However, depending on the context, those common activities may look very different; such as parish size, or what happens in a school or campus setting vs. the parish setting. Regardless of what they do, YMLs are positive about their ministry and its effectiveness. In assessing the titles, roles, and stated purpose of youth ministry, we begin to have a better picture of what youth ministry leaders are engaged in as part of their service to the church. In this section, we take a deeper look at what youth ministry leaders—serving in full-time and part-time roles—do on a regular basis and at what frequency. As we compare how youth ministry leaders are serving generationally, Millennials are now the largest group serving in parish youth ministry.

Youth Ministry Titles

Due to the breadth of service and leadership in the field of youth ministry, there has been an intentional shift toward use of the title “youth ministry leader” not to describe a specific position, but to describe all those serving in youth ministry, instead of a narrower approach, such as coordinator of youth ministry or youth minister. In previous studies, there was great diversity among these titles of YMLs. Titles in the 2016-17 Study revealed the same, if not more, diversity in titles present in the field. When coding the titles into common categories, most (54%) of the titles focus around the concept of coordinating or directing youth ministry. While there was no one set way of describing the title, Coordinator of Youth Ministry and Director of Youth Ministry were very common but often had another ministry added in it such as young adult or family. The next highest (24%) common title surfaced was simply of “youth minister.” Many of the titles included the ideas of faith formation, catechesis, and/or discipleship. Often titles included the audience served. Commonly mentioned in the titles were descriptors such as: “middle school” or “high school” or “youth” or “young adult” or “confirmation” or “campus.”

YMLs are positive about their ministry and its effectiveness.

Purpose of Youth Ministry

Youth ministry leaders were asked how they would define the purpose of their youth ministry. In examining the top responses, the most common was forming disciples (65%) followed by sharing the teachings of the church (11%). Getting youth involved in the church (10%) was the third most highest response followed by community

building (9%) and developing leaders (5%) and helping young people to understand their vocation (less than %1). In 2000, the ideas of comprehensive youth ministry and the three goals of *Renewing the Vision*¹⁰ were utilized. In 2008, the addition of the idea and language of “new evangelization” clearly permeated responses to questions like this one. Now another shift is seen with language that focuses on missionary discipleship, encounter, and accompaniment as common ways of describing youth ministry efforts. The next largest set of responses (29%) focused on engaging young people in the Catholic faith by forming them in the teachings of the church and on building community among young people and the Catholic faith community.

Lack of Understanding about Youth Ministry

While youth ministry leaders are clear about their purpose, there is concern regarding the lack of understanding about youth ministry (see Table 9). When youth ministry leaders were asked how significant the lack is of understanding about youth ministry to their ministry, one in five said this issue was very significant, while one in four said it was not significant at all. Every generation indicated this was a significant or very significant issue with Millennials being the highest at 48% but only a 4% difference from Boomers and Silents.

Table 9. How Significant Is the Lack of Understanding about Youth Ministry?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Significant	235	19	22	22
	Significant	261	21	24	46
	Somewhat Significant	302	25	28	75
	Not Significant at All	271	22	25	100.0
	Total	1069	87	100.0	
Missing	System	154	13		
Total		1223	100.0		

10. *Renewing the Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry*, published by the United Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has three primary goals. A summary of RTV is provided on the USCCB website.

Leadership Roles/Positions in Youth Ministry

In understanding how YMLs serve in a particular area of ministry, it is important to consider the context of their service (diocesan, parish, or school) and the parameters of their service (full-time, part-time, or volunteer.) As demonstrated in Table 10, the number of full-time Parish YMLs increased slightly to 36% of youth ministry leaders in the study; another 10% work full-time in multi-ministry roles, with one of the roles being youth ministry. To understand the full picture of parish full-time ministry, one must include those who work full-time in multi-ministry roles, with one of the roles being youth ministry since there has been a trend in parishes to create roles that oversee more than one ministry. This seems to be especially true in youth ministry where the expansion can easily happen on the spectrum of early adolescent to young adult.

Generally, the number of youth ministry leaders serving in parishes in a full-time capacity has held steady. In the 2000 Study, forty-nine percent of youth ministry leaders served in full-time roles. In 2016-17 Study, 46% served full-time when combining full-time youth ministry leaders and those who have youth ministry as one of many responsibilities. When comparing geographic regions, the Midwest has the highest percentage of full-time staff at 53%, followed by the South (50%), Northeast (41%), and West (40%). Millennials are serving in parish full-time ministry roles at higher percentage than any of the other generation. Generation X is the most common generation serving in a diocesan staff role.

The other important descriptor of full-time ministry roles is not only the move towards multi-ministry roles, but multi-parish or cluster parish roles as well. Eighteen percent reported serving in a multi-parish or cluster parish setting, which is down from 27% in 2008.

Table 10. Youth Ministry Roles			
Youth Ministry Role	2000 Study	2008 Study	2016-17 Study
Full-Time Parish Youth Ministry	49%	34%	36%
Full-Time in Parish in Multi-Ministry Roles Including Youth Ministry	n/a	11%	10%
Part-Time Parish Youth Ministry	15%	13%	15%
Volunteer Parish Youth Ministry	22%	18%	18%
Diocesan Youth Ministry Staff	9%	13%	10%
Campus Minister and/or Catholic School Teacher	1%	3%	6%
Itinerant Minister, Publisher or Staff of a Resource Organization, or Other	n/a	n/a	5%

Primary Populations Served

Youth ministry leaders serve a broad age span in their ministries, with full-time and part-time ministry leaders having responsibility for junior high through young adult ministry. Especially in examining titles, it is clear that more and more youth ministry leaders are actually “youth and young adult” ministry leaders.

- **Full-Time Parish Youth Ministry Leaders:** The vast majority (81%) of parish full-time ministers serve both junior high and high school with 38% also having responsibility for young adult ministry. Less than a third (28.5%) also have responsibility for confirmation as part of their job.
- **Full-Time Parish Youth Ministry Leaders with Youth Ministry as One of Their Ministry Areas:** Eighty-four percent of this group are responsible for both junior high and high school with 42% having responsibility for young adult ministry. A little over a third (34.5%) have responsibility for confirmation as part of their job. However, in addition to youth and young adult ministry these ministry leaders often had an additional area of responsibility such as family or faith formation.
- **Part-Time Youth Ministry Leaders:** Sixty-seven percent of part-time youth ministry leaders are responsible for both junior high and high school with only 23% being responsible for young adult ministry. Sixteen percent of part-time leaders also had confirmation under their leadership.

Parish Activities and Programs Offered

All youth ministry leaders tend to offer the same type of programs at certain intervals: weekly, monthly, or annually, regardless of employment status (full-time, part-time, or full-time with multiple ministries of which youth ministry is one). Those with a full-time focus on youth ministry are more likely than their counterparts to offer these programs with increased frequency, while those with less time or more areas of ministry do so less frequently.

Youth group, religious education, and confirmation classes are most frequently offered on a weekly basis, while overnight retreats, national conferences, and mission trips are offered most frequently on an annual basis. Regardless of the role, only 6% or less of these parish leaders do not offer youth group meetings as part of their service, which means youth group meetings are the most frequently offered program followed by religious education classes. Another common program offering regardless of role is participation in diocesan programs, with only 8% or less not offering that at all in their parish ministry.

Full-Time Parish Youth Ministry Leaders offer the following programs most often on a:

- Weekly Basis:
 - o 75% Youth Group Meeting
 - o 69% Religious Education
 - o 49% Confirmation Classes
 - o 23% Bible Study
- Monthly Basis:
 - o 52% Local Service Programs
 - o 37% Eucharistic Adoration
 - o 31% Youth Prayer Meetings
 - o 20% Youth-Focused Eucharistic Liturgy
- Annual Basis:
 - o 77% Overnight Retreat
 - o 74% National Conferences
 - o 68% Mission Trips
 - o 67% Diocesan Programs
 - o 47% Daylong Retreats
 - o 47% Youth Leadership Programs
 - o 47% Out of Town Social Trips
 - o 39% Parent Teen Programs
 - o 37% Adult Leadership Programs
 - o 32% Parent Education Programs

Full-Time Parish Youth Ministry Leaders with Youth Ministry as One of their Ministry Areas offer the following programs most often on a:

- Weekly Basis:
 - o 74% Religious Education
 - o 56% Confirmation Class
 - o 54.5% Youth Group Meeting
 - o 16% Bible Study
- Monthly Basis:
 - o 48% Local Service Programs
 - o 32% Eucharistic Adoration
 - o 31% Youth Prayer Meetings
 - o 24.5% Youth-Focused Eucharistic Liturgies
 - o 24.5% Youth Prayer Meetings
- Annual Basis:
 - o 77% Diocesan Programs
 - o 74% National Conferences
 - o 70% Daylong Retreats
 - o 64% Overnight Retreat
 - o 53% Mission Trips
 - o 41% Out of Town Social Trips
 - o 34% Adult Leadership Programs
 - o 33% Parent Teen Programs
 - o 31% Youth Leadership Programs
 - o 24% Parent Education Programs

Part-Time Youth Ministry Leaders offer the following programs most often on a:

- Weekly Basis:
 - o 63% Religious Education
 - o 57% Youth Group Meeting
 - o 45% Confirmation Class
- Monthly Basis:
 - o 47% Local Service Programs
 - o 38% Eucharistic Adoration
 - o 35% Youth Prayer Meetings
 - o 24.5% Youth-Focused Eucharistic Liturgies
 - o 18% Bible Study
- Annual Basis:
 - o 74% Diocesan Programs
 - o 54% National Conferences
 - o 77% Daylong Retreats
 - o 73% Overnight Retreat
 - o 42% Mission Trips
 - o 41% Out of Town Social Trips
 - o 31% Adult Leadership Programs
 - o 27% Parent Teen Programs
 - o 48% Youth Leadership Programs
 - o 26% Parent Education Programs

Parental Involvement

Parent education programs and parent-teen programs are offered by a third or less of most parishes even though there have been big pushes nationally to reach out to include parents and do intergenerational programming. However, it is important to note that thirty-nine percent of parishes with a full-time paid youth ministry leader offer parent-teen programs annually. When youth ministry leaders were asked how significant parental involvement in youth ministry would be over the next three years (see Table 11), two-thirds (66%) said it was significant (35%) or very significant (31%.) While parental involvement continues to be significant it seems that significance does not translate into parish youth ministry programming on a regular basis. Millennials were more likely than others to indicate it was very significant. This is consistent among those serving in a full-time youth ministry position in parishes. Additionally, Millennials (see Table 12) are the generation most likely not to include parent/teen programs (61%) and parent education programs (59%).



Table 11. How Significant Is Parental Involvement in Youth Ministry Programs?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Significant	337	27	31	31
	Significant	377	31	35	66
	Somewhat Significant	261	21	24	90
	Not Significant at All	103	8	10	100.0
	Total	1078	88	100.0	
Missing	System	145	12		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 12. Percentage of Full-Time Parish Ministers Not Offering Parent Programs by Generation		
Generation	Percentage That Does Not Offer Parent/Teen Programs	Percentage That Does Not Offer Parent Education Programs
Millennials	61%	59%
Gen X	36%	23%
Boomers and Silents	39%	17%
	100%	100%

Participation in National and International Events

Forty-one percent of youth ministry leaders in the study have taken youth to the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) with 31% participating in World Youth Day. Those who take youth to NCYC find the NFCYM to be a more valuable resource than those who do not.

Social Media and Communications

Predictably, the majority of all youth ministry leaders frequently use social media (59%) and text messaging (58%) in their ministry (see Tables 13 and 14.) When including those who responded occasionally, the percentages for both types of communication rise to at least 80% of all youth ministry leaders. Full-time parish youth ministers use text messaging (70%) and social media (68%) more frequently than other youth ministry leaders except for diocesan leaders who utilize social media the most at 74%. Millennials use both social media and text messaging slightly more than the other generations.

Although, youth ministers utilize social media in their ministry, when asked about how significant the pervasiveness of social media would be to their ministry (see Table 15) in the next 3 years 55% of youth ministry leaders it was significant or very significant with 22% saying very significant. Millennials overall did not find this to be as significant as the older generations.

Table 13. Use of Text Messaging in Ministry by Youth Ministry Leaders					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	654	54	58	58
	Occasionally	250	20	22	80
	Seldom	99	8	9	89
	Not at All	127	10	11	100.0
	Total	1130	92	100.0	
Missing	System	93	8		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 14. Social Media Use by Youth Ministry Leaders					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frequently	668	55	59	59
	Occasionally	251	20	22	81
	Seldom	106	9	9	90
	Not at All	108	9	10	100.0
	Total	1133	93	100.0	
Missing	System	90	7		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 15. How Significant Is the Pervasiveness of Digital and Social Media?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Significant	232	19	22	22
	Significant	361	29.5	34	56
	Somewhat Significant	332	27	31	87
	Not Significant at All	145	12	13	100.0
	Total	1070	87.5	100.0	
Missing	System	153	12.5		
Total		1223	100.0		



Issues Impacting Ministry

Youth ministry leaders were asked about the significance of various issues to their ministry in the next few years. Polarization in our church and society was the issue highlighted by most youth ministry leaders as significant with recruitment and the pervasiveness of social media both tied for second.

- **Budget.** Youth ministry leaders were asked how significant insufficient budget was to their ministry program (see Table 16.) Less than half (39% down from 49% in 2008) indicated it was significant or very significant. Thirty percent indicated it was not significant at all, and of those, Millennials were the largest group to respond this way. Diocesan staff members were more likely to indicate that an insufficient budget in this next three years would have a significant impact at 42.5% with 22% of those indicating it would be very significant.
- **Polarization.** Most (59%) youth ministry leaders believe that the polarization occurring in our church and society is significant (34%) or very significant (25%). Generation X and Millennials are almost ten percent more likely to think this issue is more significant than Boomers and Silents (see Table 17).
- **Recruiting Leaders.** Another issue impacting ministry for over half of all youth ministry leaders is the recruitment of volunteers, with 56% of youth ministers indicating that the finding of youth and adults to support ministry is a significant issue in the next three years. Millennials (46%) find this, more than other generations, to be a very significant issue.

Youth ministry leaders were asked to identify a main obstacle or barrier to their youth ministry efforts. Interestingly, almost a third said getting youth to participate and make youth ministry a priority. This was followed by a little over a quarter saying lack of support from parents, pastors, and the parish and almost one in five identifying a lack of resources such as budget to do their ministry.

- **31% Youth Participation:** This obstacle is mainly about youth participation where the youth minister struggles to bring youth from the pews into a ministry setting. Much of this problem was reported due to the fact that the youth had additional priority activities (i.e., sports practice, clubs) with youth ministry last on the list. Many of the participants in the survey thought that youth ministry was uninteresting to the youth.
- **27% Lack of Support:** This popular statement included lack of support from parents, the parish, and also the pastor. These three groups were strongly emphasized as proponents of little support.
- **18% Lack of Resources:** Many participants struggled with budget from the perspective of their youth ministry or their salary. In addition, many found that it was hard to find enough parent volunteers.

- **11% Cultural:** This obstacle included a difficulty in understanding different languages as well as pop culture and technology as a barrier to attendance. Many reported a disconnect to the relevance of youth ministry and the lives of the youth and a weak or opposing parish culture.
- **8% Lack of Time:** Many entries were simply stated that “time” was an issue. More specifically, time that they had to spend with the youth and plan for their events was limited.
- **5% Other:** A variety of other responses not related to the issues identified above.

Positive about Ministry

Ninety-four percent of YMLs indicated that their work in ministry was fulfilling (see Table 18). Additionally, regardless of what youth ministry leaders are doing as part of their ministry, they are positive about the effectiveness of the youth ministry program (see Table 19). Seventy percent of youth ministry leaders said it was true or very true, that youth ministry in their parish was effective. Only four percent said that the statement was not true at all.

Table 16. How Significant Is an Insufficient Budget to Your Ministry Programs?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Significant	198	16	18	18
	Significant	220	18	21	39
	Somewhat Significant	340	28	31	70
	Not Significant at All	326	27	30	100.0
	Total	1084	89	100.0	
Missing	System	139	11		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 17. The Significance of the Polarization Occurring in Our Church and Society					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Significant	269	22.0	25.2	25.2
	Significant	363	29.7	34.0	59.2
	Somewhat Significant	323	26.4	30.2	89.4
	Not Significant at All	113	9.2	10.6	100.0
	Total	1068	87.3	100.0	
Missing	System	155	12.7		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 18. My Work in Youth Ministry Is Fulfilling.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very True	717	59	66.0	66.0
	True	304	25	28.0	94.0
	Slightly True	62	5.1	5.7	99.7
	Not at All True	3	.2	.3	100.0
	Total	1086	88.8	100.0	
	Missing	137	11.2		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 19. Youth Ministry, in My Parish, Is Effective.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very True	222	18	22	22
	True	475	39	48	70
	Slightly True	253	21	26	96
	Not at All True	43	3	4	100.0
	Total	993	81	100.0	
Missing	N/A-Not Applicable	230	19		
Total		1223	100.0		



Section Four: How Have Youth Ministry Leaders Been Formed and Educated for Ministry?

Overview

In each iteration of this longitudinal study, youth ministry leaders have become slightly more educated. The growth in the percentage of who has a master's degree in a ministry related field rose from 12% in 2000 to 20% in this most recent study. Additionally, there was a reduction in the number of youth ministry leaders that indicated they had not completed any formal program of formation from 48% to 37%. However, there is still a concern that over a third of people working with our youth have had no ministry formation. One could conclude that the increased access to education online has contributed to the increase in the number of those who have completed degrees or that are currently studying. Millennials are currently studying the most of any generation and more of them have a bachelor's degree in a ministry related area than any other generation, again pointing to more programs and better access. While this study has consistently found that higher levels of education do equal a higher salary, salary is likely not the only contributing factor to the increases. More likely increasingly those serving in professional ministry roles have professional degrees. This is an area that needs more study to understand how to best support and encourage ministry leaders to pursue education and formation.

Education Levels of YMLs

Generally, YMLs have increased their completion of formal education and formation since the first study. A bachelor's degree (46%) was the most commonly cited highest level of education obtained by youth ministry leaders. The next highest is a graduate degree, with 31% having a master's degree, and 2% having a doctorate as their highest level of education completed (see Table 20). Three-quarters (74%) of all youth ministry leaders think that it is important to have Catholic colleges and universities offering programs for lay people.

... there is still a concern that over a third of people working with our youth have had no ministry formation.

Table 20. Highest Level of Education Completed			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Other	21	2
	High School Diploma	132	11
	Two-Year Associate Degree	104	8
	Bachelor's Degree	559	46
	Master's Degree	383	31
	Doctoral Degree	24	2
	Total	1223	100.0

Graduate Degrees

When it comes to graduate degrees, diocesan staff (59%) were the most likely to have completed a graduate degree compared to 24.5% of full-time parish youth ministry leaders, and 38% of those serving in full-time parish ministry with youth ministry as one responsibility. The majority (59.5%) of full-time parish youth ministry leaders have a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education.

Education Level by Generation

When examining education levels by generation, the older generations are more likely than the younger ones to have a graduate degree with Baby Boomers and Silents (37%), Generation X (35%), and Millennials (27%). Generational distinctions by education and ministry formation include (see Table 21):

- Of the twenty percent of youth ministry leaders who have a bachelor's degree in Pastoral Ministry/Studies, Religious Studies, or Theology, Millennials make up the largest percentage (63%) of them
- Of the twenty-one percent of youth ministry leaders with a master's degree in Pastoral Ministry/Studies, Religious Studies, or Theology, Millennials only make up 28% of that group compared to 38% of Generation X and 34% of Baby Boomers and Silents
- Baby Boomers and Silents having the highest percentage of people who have completed a doctorate in a ministry related area at 69%

Continuing Education

The Millennials are the generation that is currently studying the most, towards either a bachelors in a ministry related area or a master's degree in a ministry related area. For example, of the eight percent of youth ministry leaders currently studying for a master's degree in a ministry related area, the majority of those are Millennials (60%). Slightly less than half (49%) of full-time parish ministry leaders receive continuing education as a benefit of their employment with the parish. Fifty percent of those who are studying for a doctorate degree are Gen Xers. Almost three-quarters (74%) of YMLs stated that college/university/seminary programs of study directed towards preparing lay youth ministers for service in the church are important (see Table 22).

Ministry Formation

Diocesan ministry formation continues to be the most common formation across all three studies with almost a third of youth ministry leaders having completed it. Consistently, this study has found that the most common national certificate program forming youth ministry leaders is sponsored by the Center for Ministry Development with almost one-fifth of all ministry leaders having the certificate. Older generations of youth ministry leaders are more likely to have this certificate than the younger ones.

Of those who have completed some type of ministry formation, the following is true about that formation (see Chart 4):

- 34% have completed a diocesan ministry formation program, slightly up from 32% in 2008
- 17% hold a Certificate in Youth Ministry, slightly down from 19% in 2008
- 20% have a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry, religious education, or theology, up from 11% in 2008
- 20% have a master's degree in pastoral ministry, religious education, or theology, slightly up from 18% in 2008
- 8% are currently working on their master's degree slightly down from 10.5% in 2008
- 2% hold a doctoral degree in ministry, philosophy, theology, or education

No Ministry Formation

A little of over a third (37%) of all youth ministry leaders have not completed a ministry formation program, which can range from a certificate program to a university degree. Of those who have not completed a ministry formation program, 41% are Millennials compared to Generation X at 30%, and Baby Boomers/Silent Generation at 29%. Surprisingly full-time youth ministry parish staff members are the most likely not to have any ministry formation at 33%, with volunteers following closely at 29%, and part-time parish at 16%. However, while 33% of full-time youth ministry leaders do not have any ministry formation, only 10% of those serving full-time in a parish with youth ministry as one of multiple ministries have not completed ministry formation.

Lack of Training

Even though 37 % do not have ministry formation, only 18% indicated that their lack of training would be significant or very significant in the next 3 years, with the majority (46%) saying it would not be a significant issue at all. Sixty-percent of Millennials said that lack of training was at least somewhat significant compared to 52% of Gen Xers and 47% of Baby Boomers and Silents (see Table 23).

Table 21. Percentage of Each Generation Obtaining Degrees in Ministry Related Area

	Bachelors Degree in a Ministry-Related Area	Masters Degree in Ministry-Related Area	Currently studying for a Bachelors Degree in Ministry-Related Area	Currently studying for a Masters Degree in Ministry-Related Area
Of All Youth Ministry Leaders	20%	21%	3%	8%
Percentage of each generation that are in each category of formation	Of the 20% of YMLs who said they have a bachelors degree in ministry-related area	Of the 21% of YML who have a masters degree in ministry-related area	Of the 3% of YMLs currently studying for a bachelors degree in ministry-related area	Of the 8% of YMLs currently studying for masters degree in ministry-related area
Millennials	63%	28%	71%	60%
Generation X	24%	38%	26%	23%
Baby Boomers and Silents	14%	34%	3%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%



Table 22. College/University/Seminary Programs of Study Directed Towards Preparing Lay Youth Ministers for Service in the Church					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Important	416	34.0	38.2	38.2
	Important	386	31.6	35.5	73.7
	Somewhat Important	232	19.0	21.3	95.0
	Not Important	54	4.4	5.0	100.0
	Total	1088	89.0	100.0	
Missing	System	135	11.0		
Total		1223	100.0		

Chart 4. Comparison of Percent of YMLs Completion of Ministry Formation Types

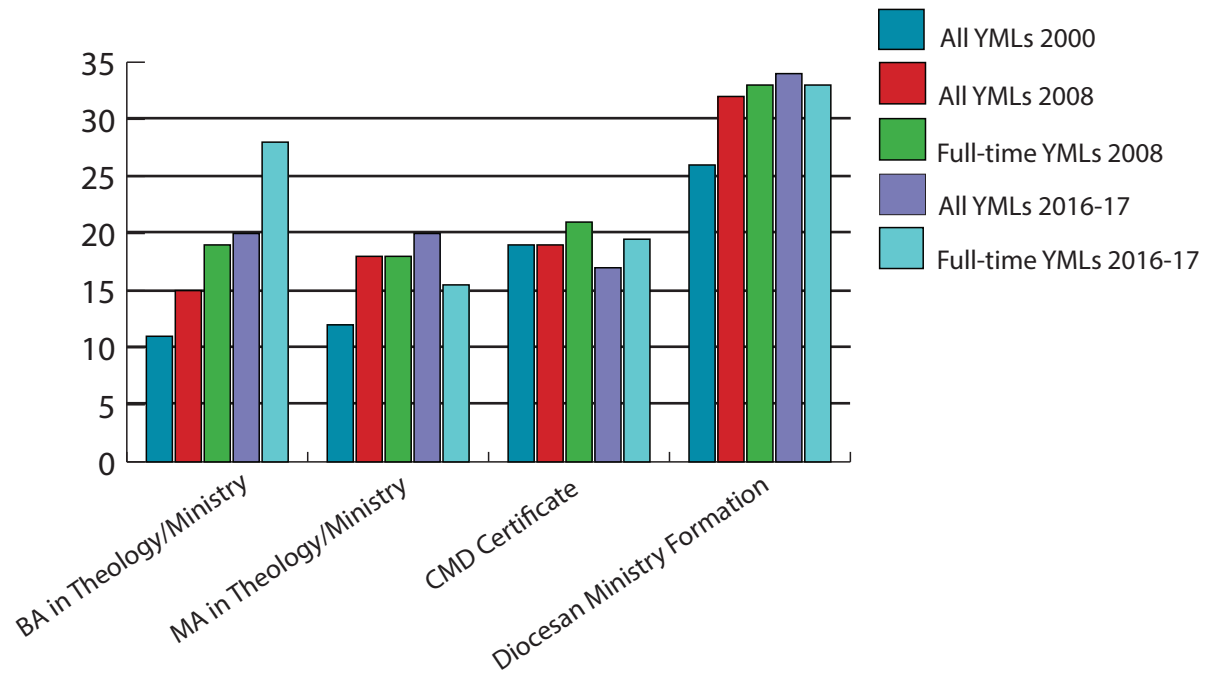


Table 23. How Significant Is My Lack of Training for Some of My Duties?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Significant	59	4.8	6	6
	Significant	131	10.7	12	18
	Somewhat Significant	389	31.8	36	54
	Not Significant	499	40.8	46	100.0
	Total	1078	88.1	100.0	
Missing	System	145	11.9		
Total		1223	100.0		



Section Five: How Were Youth Ministers Called to Ministry and What Are Their Plans for Future Service in Ministry?

In the 2000 research study, it was recommended that the field develop and identify a career path for those called to youth ministry by creating entry points into youth ministry and easy transitions to other ministry areas. This issue seems to be even more important now due to the aging population of leaders with Baby Boomers and Silents who were the largest generational group serving in youth ministry in the first two studies, have now been replaced by Millennials as the largest. While there is great hope with a surge of Millennials entering the field, their concerns about salary and benefits may prevent them from choosing ministry as a lifelong endeavor.

The field of youth ministry seems to be replenishing itself based upon the levels of youth ministry involvement by the leaders in this study, especially for Gen Xers and Millennials. Those who were involved in youth ministry as young people cited their own involvement in youth leadership programs, and/or the attendance of Catholic schools or universities as a reason for what they do. However, the church must implement an intentional strategy for inviting young people who are currently leaders and participants in youth ministry to consider this vocational service to the church.

Call to Ministry

The influences of what causes someone to serve as a youth ministry leader demonstrate this reality, with personal call (73%) and needs of youth (65%) being the strongest influences. However, all the potential influence factors had at least a 20% response of very much. Seventy-eight percent of Millennials said that their own experience of youth ministry impacted their call to ministry at least moderately with 60% saying that it was very much of an influence.

Fifty-nine percent of YMLs indicated from numerous factors that the “request of the pastor” influenced at least slightly their decision to serve as a youth ministry leader, with 17% saying moderately, and 24% saying very much (see Table 24).

Youth Leadership and Youth Ministry Participation

For youth ministry leaders, participation in youth ministry programs (60% did so as teens) and youth leadership programs are often the first step on the path toward ministry. At least one in three YMLs in this study (36.5%) began preparation for leadership in the church as teenagers through participation in youth leadership programs sponsored by the church. Sixty percent of youth ministry leaders in the study indicated that their own participation in youth ministry as a young person moderately (16%) or very much (46%) influenced their call to ministry.

“Seventy-eight percent of Millennials said that their own experience of youth ministry impacted their call to ministry at least moderately . . .”

Table 24. Reasons for Becoming a Youth Ministry Leader				
Influential Factor	2016-17 Very Much	2016-17 Not at All	2008 Very Much	2008 Not at All
Personal Call	73%	3%	70%	4%
Experience of Youth Ministry as a Young Person	45%	28%	38%	34%
Being a Parent	23%	60%	27%	55%
Needs of Youth	65%	4%	63%	4%
Request of Pastor	24%	46%	20%	51%

Supporting Ministry Leaders

Generally, youth ministers are happy about their service in the church. The clear majority (94%) of youth ministry leaders said that it is true or very true that “my work in youth ministry is fulfilling” with less than one percent saying that it is not true at all (see Table 18).

Diocesan offices are seen as a valuable resource for youth ministers (see Table 28). Sixty-four percent of youth ministry leaders say it is true that the NFCYM is a valuable resource. This statement is higher among those who taken youth to NCYC or by those who attended at least one National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry (NCCYM) to 71%.

Future Plans for Youth Ministry Service

As in 2000 and 2008, most youth ministry leaders see their service in youth ministry as a long-term commitment. Of youth ministry leaders in this study, 37% intend to serve in the field for 10 years or more up from 28% in 2008. This number increases to 61% when including those planning to serve at least six to ten more years (see Table 25). However, when examining how each generation responded to the question, we see less certainty in the Millennials regarding their long-term commitment with 43% saying they intended to work in the ministry 5 years or less and only 40% saying more than 10 years (see Table 26).

Table 25. Long-Term Commitment to Youth Ministry by Generation					
	More Than 10 Years	Between 6 and 10 Years	Between 1 and 5 Years	Less Than 12 Months	Total
Millennials	40%	17%	37%	6%	100%
Generation X	50%	27%	19%	4%	100%
Baby Boomers and Silent's	16%	32%	46%	5%	100%
Response by All Participants	37%	24%	34%	5.0%	100%

Table 26. Future Intentions Reported by Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministers Regarding Their Plans to Work in a Formal Youth Ministry Position			
Future Plans to Work in Professional Youth Ministry	2000	2008	2016-17
More Than Ten Years from Now	26.1%	28.4%	26.5%
Between Six and Ten Years	24.8%	27.2%	17.6%
Between One and Five Years	22.2%	19%	24.5%
Less Than One Year	1.5%	2.6%	3.6%
I Do Not Work in Paid Youth Ministry	22.6%	17.5%	16.4%
Did Not Respond	2.8%	5.3%	11.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Reasons for Leaving Youth Ministry Service

Youth ministers were asked to select the most likely reason they would leave formal ministry from a list of eight reasons (see Table 27). "Retirement" (22%) was the top reasons selected by respondents followed by "to engage in another form of ministry" (18%). However, the top reason given by each generation was different.

- For Millennials, the top reason was inadequate pay and benefits (27%) followed by to do another form of ministry (21%) and then amount of time required to do the job (16%)
- For Generation X, the top reason was to do another form of ministry followed by retirement and inadequate pay and benefits both at 17%
- For Baby Boomers and Silents, the top reason was retirement (50%) followed by wanting to do another form of ministry (13%) and then the lack of support from pastor and parish leadership (11%)

Of the 17% of those in this study who said inadequate pay and benefits was the most likely reason, 61% were Millennials. Baby Boomers and Silents made up 66% of those who responded retirement as the most likely reason for leaving.

Table 27. Description of the Most Likely Reasons that Would Influence Youth Ministers in Their Decision to Leave Youth Ministry Service

Reasons for Leaving	2000	2008	2016-17
Retirement	13.9%	21.8%	21.9%
Another Form of Ministry	21.9%	22.2%	17.8%
Inadequate Pay and Benefits	14.1%	15.5%	16.8%
Other Reasons	17.7%	16%	14.9%
Amount of Time Required	17.2%	11.1%	12.7%
Lack of Pastor Support	12.2%	9.2%	9.6%
Lack of Support by Parents	2.2%	2.8%	4.1%
Lack of Appreciation by Youth	0.8%	1.4%	2.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Section Six: What Are the Elements Included in Youth Ministry Leaders Professional Relationship with the Church?

Overview

Ministry leaders relate to the church in many layers and roles, as a leader within the faith community, maybe as an employee to employer, maybe as collaborators with other ministry leaders. The challenges youth ministry leaders have faced over the longitudinal study focus on continuing to find ways to formalize the relationship with the church as employer especially in the areas of contracts, job descriptions, and performance reviews. Alarming, another one of the challenges has been equal pay for female youth ministry leaders since in each of the three studies, there has been a statistical difference between what male youth ministry leaders make compared to their female counterparts holding for years' experience and education level.

Youth Ministry Leaders Formal Relationship with the Church as Employer

The good news is that 80% of full-time ministry leaders receive health insurance as part of their employment and 70% have a retirement plan. It is important, however to note what is missing from the full-time YMLs formal relationship with the parish:

- 68% do not have an employment contract
- 68% do not have a paid annual retreat
- 49% do not have at least an annual performance review of their work
- 47% do not have paid life insurance
- 30% do not have a retirement plan
- 28% do not have a written job description
- 20% do not have health care benefits

The lack of these elements as an established part of the workplace relationship between the parish and the full-time YML is a sign the church still needs development as an employer especially in the areas of formalizing the relationship with written job description, contract, and performance review. Additionally, only 37% have secretarial support, which is a 13% drop from 2000, meaning the trend of more time attending to administrative responsibilities instead of ministry is occurring (see Table 28).

Work-Related Beliefs of YMLs

Examining extreme responses to questions can often reveal more in situations where there is general agreement, such as the case with youth ministry leaders who remain positive in their service and work in the church (see Table 29). Although, everything remains positive and 2008 had the most positive responses over the course of the three studies, in 2016-17 there was a drop off in every statement measured

Continued ways to formalize the relationship with the church as employer especially in the areas of contracts, job descriptions, and performance reviews are needed.

in the “very true” responses. In examining responses by generations there were no noticeable differences indicating that these shifts are happening across the field and not in just one group.

Generally, youth ministers are positive about the support that youth ministry receives from pastors and bishops. Regarding pastors, 81% said it was true (34%) or very true (47%) that their pastor is supportive and with bishops 84% saying it was true (39%) or very true (45%) that their bishop is supportive. In both cases, the percent indicating that it was very true decreased; pastors went from 63% to 47% and bishops went from 56% to 45%.

YMLs continue to believe that their diocesan office is a valuable resource, with two-thirds (68%) responding true (26%) or very true (41%), and a little more than one in ten (11%) saying not at all true.

Table 28. Description of the Percentage of Full-Time Parish Youth Ministers Reporting that Selected Elements were Present in Their Formal Relationship with the Parish

Element Present in Relationship	2000 Positive Responses	2008 Positive Responses	2016-17 Positive Responses
Participation in Parish Staff Meetings	92%	87%	90%
Health Care Benefits	76%	75%	80%
Paid Annual Vacation	84%	75%	77%
Written Job Description	75%	69%	72%
Retirement Plan	72%	67%	70%
Life Insurance	60%	48%	53%
Paid Continuing Education	83%	61%	51%
Annual Performance Review	55%	52%	51%
Secretarial Support	50%	45%	37%
Paid Annual Retreat	47%	43%	32%
Employment Contract	61%	42%	32%
Participation in Parish Council Meetings	53%	38%	31%

Note: The percentages in this table are just full-time youth ministers and do not include those working full-time with youth ministry as one of many responsibilities so that comparison across the three studies could occur.

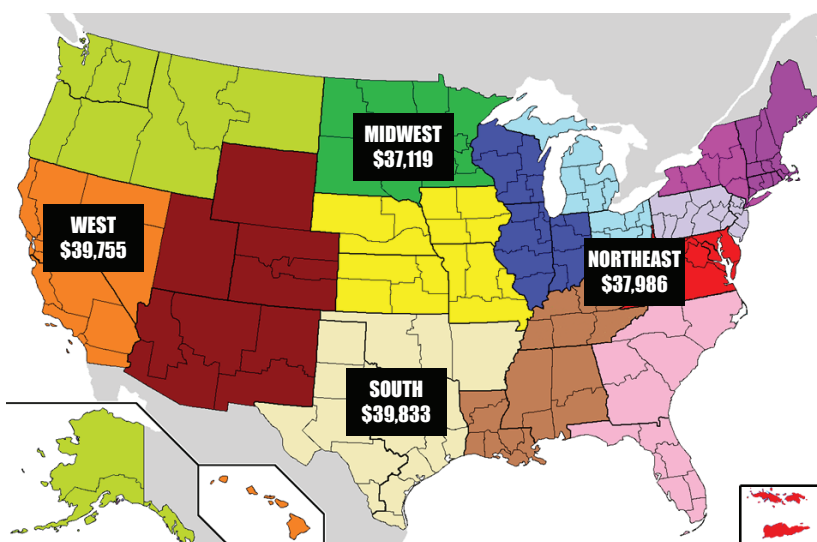
Table 29. Work-Related Beliefs of All Youth Ministry Leaders						
Belief Statement	2000 Not at all true	2000 Very True	2008 Not at all True	2008 Very True	2016-17 Not at all True	2016-17 Very True
My Ministry Is Fulfilling	0%	78%	0.4%	85%	0.3%	66%
Youth Ministry, in My Parish, Is Effective	0.3%	33%	3%	39%	4%	22%
My Pastor Is Supportive of Youth Ministry	1.8%	58%	1%	63%	3%	47%
My Bishop Is Supportive of Youth Ministry	2.8%	55%	3%	56%	3%	45%
The Diocesan Office of Youth Ministry Is a Valuable Resource	8.4%	57.5%	9%	57%	11%	41%

YML Salary Considerations

The average youth ministry leader salary has increased in all categories of employment status, with diocesan YML staff experiencing the largest amount of increase over the course of the three studies at almost \$22,000 since 2000 (see Table 30). As found in the other two studies, increased completion of formal education continues to contribute to higher salaries for (see Table 31). The region that has the highest mean salary is the south at \$39,833 (see Chart 5). Men continue to make significantly more money than women.

Table 30. Mean Annual Salaries of Youth Ministers by Youth Ministry Employment Status			
Youth Ministry Employment Status	2000 Mean Annual Salary (dollars)	2008 Mean Annual Salary (dollars)	2016-17 Mean Annual Salary (dollars)
Parish Staff: Paid Full-Time	25,683	33,817	38,586
Parish Staff: Part-Time	9,715	11,948	14,324
Diocesan Staff	30,110	44, 829	51,724

Chart 5. Mean Salary by Geographic Region.



Salary and Gender

In 2000, a comparison of the mean salary of all lay youth ministers by gender showed that male youth ministry leaders had a higher average salary, \$26,705 than female youth ministry leaders, \$21,628, for a difference of \$5,077 (see Chart 6). This trend toward higher salaries by male YMLs continues throughout the three studies, with the largest gap being comparing all male and all female youth ministry leaders, with males earning an average salary of \$41,469 and females an average salary of \$34,313 (see Table 31) with a statistically significant difference of \$7,156.¹¹ The gap decreases to \$3,961 when comparing male and females in full-time parish ministry including those for whom youth ministry is one of multiple ministries they are responsible, but the difference again is statistically significant.¹²

11. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the salaries of male and female youth ministry leaders. There was a significant difference in the salaries of males ($M=\$41,468.67$, $SD=\$18,561.30$) and females ($M=\$34,313.24$, $SD=\$16,485.17$) conditions; $t(542.508)=5.572$, $p=.000$.

12. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the salaries of male and female of full-time parish youth ministry leaders. There was a significant difference in the salaries of males ($M=\$41,060.43$, $SD=\$11,680.99$) and females ($M=\$37,099.58$, $SD=\$12,027.79$) conditions; $t(496)=3.486$, $p=.001$.

Chart 6. YML Salary Comparisons by Gender

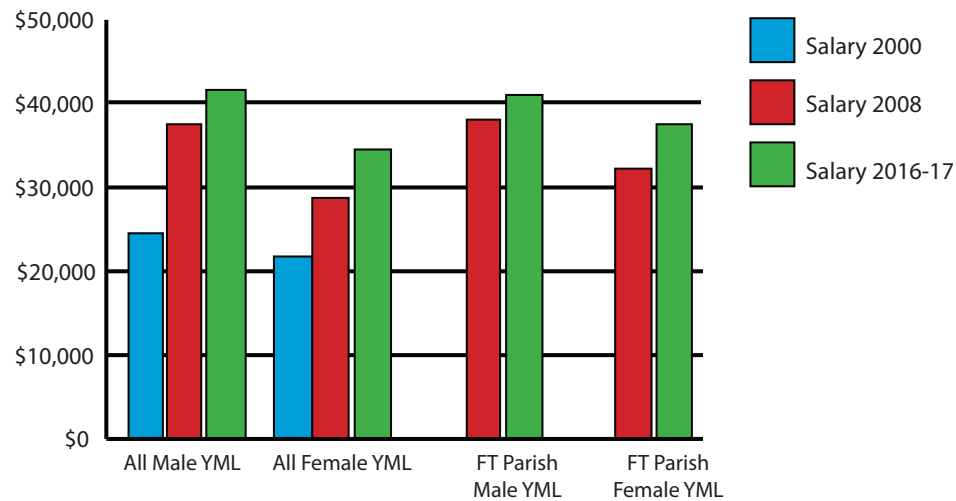


Table 31. Salary by Gender Across the Three Studies

	Salary 2000	Salary 2008	Salary 2016-17
All Male YML	26,705	37,672	41,469
All Female YML	21,628	28,528	34,313
Full-Time Parish Male YML	--	37,738	40,854
Full-Time Parish Female YML	--	32,172	37,477
Full-Time Parish Male YML with YM One of Multiple Responsibilities	--	--	41,060
Full-Time Parish Female YML with YM One of Multiple Responsibilities	--	--	37,100

Salary and Education

Higher levels of education including receiving a bachelor's or master's degree have consistently resulted in higher pay for youth ministry leaders across all three studies. Often, there is a question among ministry leaders is it worth getting a master's degree. This research shows that the mean salary for all youth ministry leaders with a bachelor's degree is \$34,534 compared to those with a graduate (masters or doctorate) degree \$44,666 a statistically significant difference of \$10,132.¹³ When examining the same question but looking at only full-time parish YMLs, again you see those with a graduate degree making more at \$42,446 and those with a bachelors \$37,568 with a statistically significant difference of \$4,879¹⁴ (see Table 32). The same is true for those with a certificate of youth ministry had an average salary of \$41,422 compared to those without \$35,656.¹⁵

Table 32. Mean Salary for Full-Time Parish Youth Ministers by Highest Education Level Completed			
Highest Education Level Completed	2000 Mean Annual Salary (dollars)	2008 Mean Annual Salary (dollars)	2016-17 Mean Annual Salary (dollars)
High School Diploma	23,945	22,046	33,865
Associate Degree	24,273	26,937	36,430
Bachelor's Degree	25,142	29,720	37,568
Master's Degree	29,386	37,493	42,282
Doctorate Degree	53,000	50,222	50,500

13. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the salaries of all parish youth ministry leaders with a bachelor's degree versus those with a graduate degree. There was a significant difference in the salaries of those with a graduate degree ($M=\$44,665.68$, $SD=\$18,961.51$) and those with a bachelor's degree ($M=\$34,533.66$, $SD=\$13,873.55$) conditions; $t(727)=-8.327$, $p = .000$.

14. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the salaries of those of full-time parish youth ministry leaders with a bachelor's degree versus those with a graduate degree. There was a significant difference in the salaries of those with a graduate degree ($M=\$42,446.35$, $SD=\$12,017.64$) and those with a bachelor's degree ($M=\$37,657.82$, $SD=\$9037.60$) conditions; $t(146.252)= 3.663$, $p = .000$.

15. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the salaries of all parish youth ministry leaders with a certificate in youth ministry versus those who do not have one. There was a significant difference in the salaries of those with a certificate ($M=\$41,422.78$, $SD=\$17,236.45$) and those without a certificate ($M=\$35,656.79$, $SD=\$17,481.48$) conditions; $t(263.359)=-3.906$, $p = .000$.

Professional Ministerial Associations

There has been fluctuation in participation in professional associations or organizations over the course of the three studies. In the 2016 study 37% are members of a professional association, which is down 11% from 2008 study (48%), but overall up from 2000, which reported 20% membership in professional associations or organizations. The two highest associations that youth ministry leaders reported being a member of was the National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders (NACYML)¹⁶ (16%) and diocesan ministerial associations (16%). The second highest national ministerial association that youth ministry leaders were a part of was the National Conference of Catechetical Leaders.

The 2000 YML study recommended the establishment of diocesan and national level ministerial organizations so that lay ecclesial youth ministers could engage in professional activities, as well as receive support from and contribute to the field. In response to this call the NFCYM established the National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders in 2006. In 2017 the NFCYM added a new level of membership, Associate Membership, for local youth ministry leaders to replace NACYML. It will be interesting to see what the future holds for participation in professional ministry associations especially with the reported trend that Millennials are not as interested in joining these types of groups.¹⁷

Professional Journal and National Certification

Besides professional associations, two other aspects of a profession include having designated literature or a journal and some type of commonly accepted certification or licensure. Less than fifty of youth ministry leaders in this study thought that it was important for the field to have a journal (see Table 33). This percentage has decreased over the life of the study, possibly due to the advent of the Internet as a continual resource for sharing information. When it comes to national certification, there is high support for national certification at 89% saying it is at least somewhat important (see Table 34). Currently, the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry through the Alliance for Certification for Lay Ecclesial Youth Ministry Leaders offer a national certification for youth ministry leaders.¹⁸

16. The National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders (NACYML) was a membership organization sponsored by the NFCYM but it has been replaced by a new [NFCYM Associate Membership](#) option.

17. According to this article by Linked In <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-millennials-dont-join-associations-gabrielle-bosch%C3%A9>

18. For more information on [National Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Leaders](#) from the Alliance for Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Leaders.

Table 33. Importance of a Professional Journal for Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Important	147	12.0	13.5	13.5
	Important	337	27.6	31.1	44.6
	Somewhat Important	432	35.3	39.8	84.4
	Not Important	169	13.8	15.6	100.0
	Total	1085	88.7	100.0	
Missing	System	138	11.3		
Total		1223	100.0		

Table 34. Importance of National Certification for Youth Ministry Leaders					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Important	256	20.9	23.5	23.5
	Important	373	30.5	34.3	57.8
	Somewhat Important	338	27.6	31.0	88.8
	Not Important	122	10.0	11.2	100.0
	Total	1089	89.0	100.0	
Missing	System	134	11.0		
Total		1223	100.0		



Section Seven: Conclusion—Findings and Recommendations

Part One: What Does this Study Tell Us About Researching Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leaders?

Multiple Roles and Responsibilities. The value of research to help understand our current realities cannot be understated. However, there are limits to any research, especially during the initial stages of evolving realities, such as the post-Vatican II movement towards integrating more lay people into ministerial leadership roles. This is especially important since the majority of youth ministry leaders are lay. Only as the church continues to codify what the term lay ecclesial ministry (LEM) means or provides some consistent ministerial roles, positions, or titles, will researchers be able to refine its investigation of the field. This research points to a move in the opposite direction, with more and more integration of various roles and responsibilities into one broad position of leadership. A clear example of this pattern is seen in the number of youth ministry leaders who also have responsibility for young adults and/or the preparation for the sacrament of confirmation. It may be that budget constraints or changing needs are causing this trend, but that does not lessen the concern that ministry leaders feel stretched by this trend to do more with less, diminishing their ability to focus and be effective. Additionally, the lack of administrative support means that these ministry leaders are responsible for the broad scope of tasks that include administrative, marketing, volunteer coordination, finances, and implementation of various programs.

Future Research on Youth Ministry Leaders. This movement towards broader roles versus specific ones will continue to make it more difficult to draw a random sample of this population. This research demonstrates that expanding the sample beyond NCCYM participants helps to understand the breadth of this field, especially by using social media and diocesan e-mail networks to access respondents. In establishing future research on this population of ministers, it is recommended that a more systematic attempt take place to engage diocesan leaders in the research to expand the reach—and as such generalizability—of the research. Future research needs to intentionally include young adult ministry leaders due to the common overlap in responsibilities. Additionally, this research has been on eight-year intervals. Due to the rapid pace of change, increasing the frequency of this type of study to at least every three to five years would be more beneficial to the field and church. One strategy for researching this field may be to have the NFCYM establish a national database on the field of Catholic youth and young adult ministry.

The value of research to help understand our current realities cannot be understated.

Part Two: What Do We Know about Youth Ministry Leaders Serving in Today's Church?

Demographics. This most recent study found that youth ministry leaders are predominantly lay, female, Caucasian, and Millennial. Many demographics have remained consistent over the course of the longitudinal study, although YMLs are becoming more diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity. However more needs to be done to foster youth ministry leaders that represent the church served and to assure the research conducted reaches all youth ministry leaders.

Millennials Rising. Millennials now comprise the majority of YMLs serving the church. In this study, there are many points where Millennials stand out or differ from the other generations serving in youth ministry. It is critical that the church deepen its knowledge and understanding of this generation of ministry leaders; especially the unique gifts they bring to ministry and the challenges they experience.

Diversity Needed. Youth ministry leaders do not reflect the larger church and the population they serve when it comes to cultural diversity. Currently, Center for Research in the Apostolate (CARA) estimates that 38% of adult Catholics are Hispanic and approximately 10% of all Lay Ecclesial Ministers self-identify as Hispanic.¹⁹ While, the percentage of Hispanic YMLs is underrepresented in this study, it is evident that more needs to be done to cultivate leadership that is more diverse and reflective of the broader culture and church.

Part Three: How Do Youth Ministry Leaders Serve the Church?

Youth Ministry Programs. Many aspects of the field have evolved since 2000, but over the life of the study the most commonly offered programs at a parish level consist of religious education (including confirmation) and youth group meetings. It is interesting to note that while the understanding of youth ministry has progressed, the primary delivery models of ministry (or at least the way we describe our programs) has not evolved. As youth ministry has advanced over the decades, there has been a call by the bishops to move to a comprehensive approach to youth ministry through the dissemination of two vision documents, the *Vision of Youth Ministry* (1976) and *Renewing the Vision* (1995). The comprehensive nature of youth ministry that includes various components is evident in the various program offerings that youth ministry leaders document in this research. The goals of comprehensive youth ministry from the vision documents are connected to what YMLs indicated was the primary purpose of youth ministry: discipleship-making. It seems there may be a need for our language and maybe our programs, to catch up to our current program offerings.

19. [*Fact Sheet: Hispanic Catholics in the U.S.*](#) from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University.

Multiple Ministries. The trend in ministry responsibilities has been the combining of multiple ministries into one position at both the parish and diocesan levels. This trend towards more and more being done in one position is of concern for multiple reasons. Skill and expertise across such a wide ministerial audience is of concern, since many youth ministry leaders are responsible for ministering to those who range in age from 13 to 29. There is a significant difference between programing for a middle school or high school youth versus a young adult. Yet, more and more youth ministry positions are adding younger and older age groups to the scope of youth ministry positions—with little preparation or training—and no additional compensation. This research assessment demonstrates that salaries do not increase with additional responsibilities. At some point this practice risks limiting the overall effectiveness of the ministry, by trying to attend to the wide-ranging needs of youth and young adults. However, due to this change, an examination of titles and positions that include the spectrum, especially young adult ministry, should be identified to help parishes and dioceses navigate the changing roles.

Titles. Often professional titles are one way to denote what a profession encompasses. The shift to multiple responsibilities however, has resulted ministry titles becoming less consistent and less universal. The field of Catholic youth ministry has clearly experienced this reality, and over the course of this study it has become increasingly difficult to provide a set of specific and distinct titles. Common titles and responsibilities are very important in researching the field and in making salary and compensation comparisons.

Issues Impacting Ministry. Generally, across the life of this study YMLs have been positive about their ministry effectiveness and how fulfilled they are in the work. However, there are challenges or issues that significantly impact their ministry. At the top of their list is parental involvement in youth ministry; this area seems to be of particular concern and a challenge for Millennial YMLs. The other issues challenging youth ministry leaders the most are: polarization in our church and society, recruitment of youth and adult leaders, and the pervasiveness of social media. With over half of all YMLs indicating these matters are a struggle, finding ways to support youth ministry leaders in these areas should be a priority for the field.

The Millennial and Female Majority. The fact that the majority of the field is female, and Millennial is important because in analyzing the pay of youth ministry leaders, statistically, females make significantly less than males. Millennials make less money than other youth ministry leaders, but this may be due to education and number of years' experience. Given the findings that Millennials are making

less in many professions it will be important to monitor this to see if it is a trend that continues.²⁰

Part Four: How Have Youth Ministry Leaders Been Formed and Educated for Ministry?

Ministry Formation. The good news is that two-thirds of YMLs report having completed some ministry formation, which includes a variety of programs from diocesan to university. The most common ministry formation program completed by YMLs are diocesan formation programs at 34%. Twenty percent have a bachelor's in ministry related fields and 21% have a master's degree. The next most common program that has been completed by 17% of YMLs is a certificate from the Center for Ministry Development, making it one of the most common credentials nationally.

Graduate Degrees. A common credential for lay ecclesial ministers is a master's degree; CARA reports that 46% of LEMs have a graduate degree.²¹ However, only a third of youth ministry leaders have a graduate degree, and only one in five report that the degree is in a ministry related area. This is significant because it impacts young people and the church as a whole—both now and in the future—since youth ministry leaders indicate that one of the reasons they would leave youth ministry is to do another form of ministry. Continuing access to and support for completion of graduate degrees needs to be a priority for those who are interested in the church's ministry with youth and young adults or who seek to transition to another form of ministry.

Supporting the Continuing Education of Millennials. As the largest group of YMLs, Millennials have the least amount of education, which might be a matter of age, but as the largest group it is still a concern for the field. As Boomers and Gen Xers retire it is important to replace them with educated ministry leaders. Millennials are however, the generation currently studying the most and yet, making the least when it comes to annual salary, so they have the burden of both a lower salary and expenses for education. This group also indicated more than the other generations, that they felt their lack of training was a significant issue in their ministry. Advocating for financial support for education of ministry leaders would be a good investment for the future of ministry with youth and young adults. It is a concrete way to support Millennial youth ministry leaders, as this changing of the guard takes place and these youth ministry leaders begin in the next 10 years to take on greater leadership in the church both in youth ministry and beyond.

20. [*Millennials earn 20% less than Boomers did at same stage of life*](#), (January 13, 2017) article published in *USA Today*.

21. [*Research Review: Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the United States*](#) (February 2015) from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University.

Part Five: How Were Youth Ministers Called to Ministry and What Are their Plans for Future Service in Ministry?

Future Service in Youth Ministry. In the first two studies, when asked why the YML might leave youth ministry service, the most common response was, “the desire to do another form of ministry” but retirement now has become the most common reason. It is clear from these responses that the aging of the youth ministry leadership population and their pending retirement is a factor the church must consider as it plans for the future of leadership in this ministry. Based upon this research, millennials appear to be less committed than the earlier generations to long-term service in the field with 46% indicating they will be working in youth ministry for 5 or less years. While there is great hope with a surge of Millennials entering the field, their concerns about salary and benefits may prevent them from choosing ministry as a lifelong endeavor.

The Next Generation of Leaders. While the average age of YMLs has remained in the low forties over the three studies, Baby Boomers and Silents are no longer the largest group serving as YMLs, and many have retired. This poses the issue of how the field will continue to call forth the next generation of youth ministry leaders. Clearly, participation in youth ministry is an important part of that strategy since this study has documented the influence that participation and experience in youth ministry has had on Millennials call to ministry. Another important factor to consider, in calling forth the next generation of YMLs is cultural diversity. While the field has become slightly more culturally diverse, it still does not represent the current cultural diversity of the church. Diocesan and national leaders need to take up the challenge of ensuring that there are future youth ministry leaders serving the church; that they are diverse, properly formed for ministry, and fairly compensated and supported.

Part Six: What Are the Elements Included in Youth Ministry Leaders Professional Relationship with the Church?

Formalizing the Relationship with the Church. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (p. 61) notes, “. . . in the ministerial workplace, one finds the special challenge of establishing policies and practices that integrate Gospel values and best organizational practices.”²² This challenge is certainly evident in the ministerial workplaces of YMLs. Going back to 1985, the literature on the field of Catholic youth ministry had named these challenges as the “process of role initiation.”²³ As noted in earlier studies, this process is ongoing, not

22. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, is a document published by the USCCB providing resources and guidance about lay ecclesial ministry leaders serving the church.

23. The issue of role initiation was identified by John Roberto in (1985) in the proceeding *Faith Maturing: A Personal and Communal Task. Proceedings of the Second National Symposium on Catholic Youth Ministry* published by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry.

just for youth ministry leaders, but all lay ecclesial ministers who serve the church. To further initiate and integrate the role of the youth ministry leader in the life of the church, several factors need to be considered. The majority of full-time YMLs do not have some of the basic elements involved in an employment relationship, such as an employment contract or an annual performance review of their work. And, almost a third do not have a written job description and one in five do not have health care benefits. Only thirty-two percent have a paid annual retreat, even though they are ministry leaders, whose own spirituality needs to be nurtured so that they can nurture others. The lack of these elements as an established part of the workplace relationship between the parish and the full-time YML is a sign the church still needs development as an employer, especially in the areas of formalizing the relationship with written job description, contract, and performance review.

Salary Research and Information. The most inquired aspect of this research over the life of the three studies has been salary and compensation information. As youth ministry leaders advocate for adequate pay, they need information about how others with similar responsibilities, education, and experience are compensated. It is beyond time for an annual national survey on salaries and benefits of youth and young adult ministry leaders and lay ecclesial ministers as a group so that advocacy can happen based upon solid data. Following up on an earlier point, the creation of a national database of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leaders would enable research such as this to take place. This research will be challenging to do given the multiple responsibilities and lack of consistent titles of these ministers, but it is an important first step towards the process of advocating for just compensation, especially with the disparity in salaries among the different generations and men and women.

Compensation of Female Youth Ministry Leaders. Consistently, over the life of this study, there has been a statistically significant difference in the amount of money male and female youth ministry leaders are being paid for their full-time service. Sadly, seventeen years after the initial study, there is still a strong need to address the continued lack of parity in the annual salary of female youth ministry leaders compared to their male counterparts. The difference in the compensation for men and women is not just unique to youth ministry; recent analysis by the Center for Research in the Apostolate identified the same reality.²⁴ This issue of the gender compensation gap needs to be addressed by church leaders at all levels. This is another instance where advocacy and change would be supported by ongoing salary research.

24. [*Gender Pay Gap in the Church Smaller than in the White House*](#) published in the 1964 Research Blog from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University

Conclusion. The old idiom, “the more things change, the more they stay the same” might be one way to understand the longitudinal view that this research provides into the ministry and experience of youth ministry leaders. While in the past seventeen years of this research, many things have changed in the world and the church such as the advent of social media and the Internet, or the papacies of St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. But when it comes to youth ministry leaders and their service in the church, many things have remained the same.

These ministry leaders have been consistently fulfilled in their ministry and see it as a long-term commitment and vocation, so much so that they have been willing to invest their time and money in ministry education and formation. They offer similar types of programs such as youth group meetings, confirmation, social justice, and retreats. However, many issues although improved slightly, continue to challenge the church and youth ministry leaders such as: the lack of structure around the formal relationship to the church, the need for more YMLs to be educated with graduate degrees and be formed for ministry, and the inequity of pay of female youth ministry leaders compared to their male counterparts with equal experience and education.

An important change occurring inside and outside the church that is affecting youth and young adult ministry, is the rise of the unaffiliated by young people and young adults. Currently, thirty-six percent of young people in the U.S. describe themselves as unaffiliated with any religion.²⁵ There is an urgent challenge ahead to turn the tide of this reality and refocus our efforts as youth ministry leaders on evangelizing Millennial adults and Gen Zers. This will take a dedicated and formed group of ministry leaders. Another issue impacting youth and young adult ministry is the ongoing clergy abuse. As the church faces the repercussions of the next wave of clergy abuse and clericalism coming to light it is critical that a formed group of ministry leaders help navigate the implications this reality with young people, especially those who have lost faith in the church because of it.²⁶ This crisis has impacted youth ministry when you look at the number of youth ministry positions, as well as other ministries eliminated at the diocesan level due to the lawsuits stemming from clergy abuse and the added work of overseeing safe environment programs.

One of the biggest variations occurring in youth ministry leadership is the passing of the baton, from Gen Xers and Baby Boomers, who have primarily served the field for the past twenty years, to Millennials who now make up the majority. As this change occurs,

25. Julie Bourbon, Study asks: [*Why are young Catholics going, going, gone?*](#) January 22, 2018 article in the *National Catholic Reporter*.

26. Michelle Boorstein and Gary Gately, [*More than 300 accused priests listed in Pennsylvania report on Catholic Church sex abuse*](#), August 14, 2018 article in the *Washington Post*.

it will be critical for the fields of Catholic youth ministry and young adult ministry to come together to examine how we can effectively mentor these young leaders and support this transition so that the knowledge and experience that has been gained in the field since the advent of youth ministry in 1976 can be passed along and built upon as the field continues to evolve.



Appendix: Frequency of Diocesan Participation in the Study

What Diocese Are You From? (Please just list the name.)		
		Frequency
Valid	Albany	5
	Alexandria	1
	Allentown	2
	Altoona-Johnstown	1
	Amarillo	1
	Anchorage	4
	Arlington	4
	Atlanta	7
	Austin	16
	Baltimore	23
	Baton Rouge	2
	Beaumont	4
	Belleville	1
	Biloxi	3
	Bismarck	1
	Boise	6
	Boston	15
	Bridgeport	16
	Brooklyn	40
	Brownsville	4
	Buffalo	29
	Burlington	1
	Camden	2
	Charleston	8
	Charlotte	3
	Cheyenne	4
	Chicago	22
	Cincinnati	40
	Cleveland	22
	Colorado Springs	6
	Columbus	8
	Corpus Christi	1
	Covington	2
	Dallas	18
	Davenport	7

What Diocese Are You From? (Please just list the name.)		
Valid	Denver	8
	Des Moines	2
	Detroit	23
	Dodge City	1
	Dubuque	8
	Duluth	2
	Erie	3
	Evansville	2
	Fall River	2
	Fargo	4
	Fort Wayne-South Bend	2
	Fort Worth	12
	Fresno	7
	Galveston-Houston	19
	Gary	16
	Grand Island	5
	Grand Rapids	25
	Great Falls-Billings	1
	Green Bay	3
	Greensburg	23
	Harrisburg	1
	Hartford	4
	Helena	4
	Honolulu	23
	Houma-Thibodaux	1
	Indianapolis	13
	Jackson	1
	Jefferson City	4
	Joliet	9
	Kalamazoo	1
	Kansas City-St. Joseph	15
	Kansas City, Kansas	6
	Knoxville	13
	La Crosse	1
	Lafayette, Indiana	4
	Lafayette, LA	3
	Lake Charles	5
	Lansing	7

What Diocese Are You From? (Please just list the name.)		
Valid	Las Cruces	1
	Las Vegas	10
	Lexington	2
	Little Rock	2
	Los Angeles	44
	Louisville	33
	Lubbock	2
	Madison	5
	Manchester	6
	Metuchen	2
	Miami	2
	Military Services	3
	Milwaukee	13
	Mobile	11
	Monterey	12
	Nashville	5
	New Orleans	19
	New Ulm	1
	New York	19
	Newark	8
	Norwich	1
	Oakland	6
	Ogdensburg	3
	Oklahoma City	4
	Omaha	9
	Orange	10
	Orlando	13
	Owensboro	3
	Palm Beach	2
	Paterson	1
	Pensacola-Tallahassee	10
	Philadelphia	5
	Phoenix	4
	Pittsburgh	6
	Portland, Maine	3
	Portland, Oregon	16
	Providence	13
	Pueblo	1

What Diocese Are You From? (Please just list the name.)		
Valid	Raleigh	6
	Rapid City	1
	Reno	2
	Richmond	5
	Rochester	12
	Rockford	6
	Rockville Centre	13
	Sacramento	5
	Saginaw	4
	Saint Augustine	1
	Salina	1
	Salt Lake	1
	San Angelo	3
	San Antonio	13
	San Bernardino	6
	San Diego	19
	San Francisco	16
	San Jose	28
	Santa Fe	3
	Santa Rosa	2
	Savannah	3
	Scranton	3
	Seattle	11
	Shreveport	4
	Sioux City	2
	Sioux Falls	1
	Spokane	2
	Springfield-Cape Girardeau	3
	Springfield, IL	5
	Springfield, MA	9
	St Paul-Minneapolis	16
	St Petersburg	2
	St. Augustine	4
	St. Cloud	10
	St. Louis	3
	St. Petersburg	4
	Stamford	1
	Stockton	2

What Diocese Are You From? (Please just list the name.)		
Valid	Syracuse	2
	Toledo	4
	Trenton	7
	Tucson	6
	Tulsa	4
	Tyler	1
	Venice	2
	Washington	17
	Wichita	5
	Wilmington	4
	Winona	6
	Worcester	3
	Youngstown	8
	Total	1223



