

# SECTION ONE

## **A GOOD VISION AND A GOOD STRATEGY**



# A Good Vision for Youth Ministry



The U.S. bishops spell out for us their vision of Catholic youth ministry through their document *Renewing the Vision*. In a sense, they are saying to all parishes, Catholic schools, and diocesan youth ministry offices that this is our common understanding of youth ministry, and we are all called to implement strategies that will make this vision a reality. It is our starting point.

Although the document never formally describes parish-based youth ministry, in the spirit of *Renewing the Vision*, we could describe in this way:

Ongoing faith formation through which adolescents and their families live out their baptismal call within the life of their parish community.

According to the document, there are three main goals for youth ministry:

1. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
2. To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.
3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Finally, according to the document, there are eight components of comprehensive youth ministry:

**Evangelization:** Awakening others to the Good News of Jesus within every human situation and seeking to transform individuals and society by *being* the Good News. Answering the call of Jesus to “go and make disciples.”

**Community Life:** Creating an atmosphere in your parish that is welcoming, comfortable, safe, and predictable—one in which all teens know that their presence is welcomed, their energy is appreciated, and their contributions are valued.

**Leadership Development:** Calling forth, affirming, empowering, and training adults and young people to use their diverse gifts, talents, and abilities.

**Catechesis:** Echoing the Word of God and passing on the Catholic tradition (as a way of expressing the Christian faith) to others so that they can grow and mature in *their* faith.

**Prayer and Worship:** Honoring, praising, and

communicating with God. Offering God the gift of ourselves through the Mass, the sacraments, prayers, and prayer services.

**Justice and Service:** The call to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers.

**Pastoral Care:** The call to be a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus' care of all people, especially those who are hurting and in need.

**Advocacy:** Engaging the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community, and empowering young people and their families to speak for those who cannot speak.

The document clearly points out that it is a vision and a framework, not a model. It does not suggest how to do youth ministry, rather it simply spells out what it is.

When my home parish first began developing a new model of youth ministry that would best implement *Renewing the Vision*, I sat with the likes of John Roberto and Mike Moseley to pick their brains (two “giants” in the field of Catholic youth ministry in my estimation). One thing Mike Moseley said during our meeting is worth mentioning here: “As long as you stick with the eight components, you can’t go wrong.”

If a youth ministry can offer young people and their families an opportunity to experience all eight components in a meaningful way, the parish is effectively reaching the three goals as spelled out by the bishops.



# Forming a Good Strategy



Perhaps a golf analogy might help us begin. There are many different approaches to playing the game of golf, but the game itself is the same for everyone. Every approach is inadequate, since the only perfect way to play golf would be to shoot an eighteen (a hole in one on every hole). That will never happen, nor would anyone want that to happen (what makes golf enjoyable is the prospect of improving). So golfers must constantly search for different ways, different approaches to the same game. So it is with youth ministry. If *Renewing the Vision* spells out for us what it is, then we must find ways in which to do it in the least inadequate way. There is no perfect strategy, but there must be an approach that works with greater consistency than all other approaches.

I contend that the place to start is by taking a look at two distinct but not separate models of faith formation. When combined and applied to *Renewing the Vision*, they form one clear and effective strategy for Catholic youth ministry. The two models are: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA—also known as the catechumenate), and Family-Based Faith Formation. When these two models are combined under the scope of *Renewing the Vision*, they provide the foundation

for what this book is calling an *Initiation Model of Youth Ministry*.

## THE CATECHUMENATE PROCESS (RCIA)

(The following section is a summation of *The Rites of the Catholic Church Volume 1*, Forward and #1-35 of “Christian Initiation of Adults”)

Since the Second Vatican Council decreed the restoration, revision, and adaptation of the catechumenate, this ancient practice of the Church has become *the* process through which we welcome adult converts into the Church.

It begins with a period of inquiry in which those seeking a faith community are warmly welcomed by the parish and are invited to “Come and See” what our Christian faith and Roman Catholic religious tradition are all about. More specifically, they are invited to inquire about becoming fully initiated members of the Catholic Church. If these inquirers accept the invitation to continue, they immediately move into the next period of formal catechesis and become candidates (if they have already been validly baptized) or catechumens (if they are un-baptized). Note that there is no

academic calendar determining when one begins formal catechesis. They begin when they come forward, no matter what time of year.

## **FORMAL CATECHESIS**

The period of formal catechesis could take years (depending on the individual's readiness), but usually takes about one year. When the candidates and catechumens are ready, they move into the third period of purification and enlightenment during Lent. "Readiness" is ultimately at the discretion of the pastor, but it is the parish community itself who journeys with the candidates and catechumens and accepts them into the different periods that determines readiness. The parish community does not just support the candidates and catechumens, but is expected to engage themselves into the lives of those who are seeking membership. In other words, the parish community as a whole initiates.

At the Easter Vigil, the candidates celebrate confirmation and First Eucharist (however, accepting candidates for full communion at the Easter Vigil along with catechumens is being discouraged in many dioceses in order to help stress the vigil's emphasis on baptism). The catechumens celebrate all three sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist in that order). Once all are fully initiated, the neophytes (Greek word meaning "newly planted") then immediately enter into the final period of mystagogy (another Greek word meaning "grasping the mystery of God"), which extends throughout the Easter season and into the rest of their lives (all the fully initiated are constantly grasping the mystery of God ever more deeply).

(The preceding is a summary of *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 1, Forward and #1-35 of "Christian Initiation of Adults.")

The whole process is intertwined with the public work of the parish (i.e. liturgies, feast days, communal events, prayer services, outreach, retreats, etc.). In other words, the RCIA process

coincides with the total "life of the parish." As Andre Aubrey writes, "In effect, the catechumenate is not a school, but an *initiation*. The school has some students who learn a lesson, initiation has some disciples who discover a life" (Aubrey, p. 180).

## **BREAKING OPEN THE WORD**

In a typical RCIA process, the candidates and catechumens together with their sponsors and an RCIA team (consisting of parishioners), attend Sunday parish Mass for the Liturgy of the Word and are dismissed before the Liturgy of the Eucharist (except for candidates because they have already been invited to the table through baptism, in which case special arrangements would be made for the candidates to join the group after Mass). They gather together to break open the Word of Scripture and draw out from it our Catholic doctrine and tradition (all Catholic tradition is rooted in Scripture). This is called lectionary-based catechesis. It is catechesis that draws from the lectionary readings as it unfolds the story of who we are.

Throughout the whole process, there are different rites that are celebrated at weekend liturgies in order to mark the different stages of catechesis and conversion and in order to allow the parish community to be witnesses to the faith. The final rites being, of course, the rites of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist) are celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

## **FAMILY-BASED FAITH FORMATION**

This is an intergenerational process that encourages partnership between parish and home. It is a by-product of a new (or renewed) "whole church" paradigm in faith formation that is gaining momentum in the United States and Canada. In *Handbook for Success in Whole Community Catechesis*, Bill Huebsch explains in a sample bulletin announcement that "...in whole community catechesis, parents play a vital role alongside all the other members of the community....Added to that,

whole community catechesis places great emphasis on developing households of faith” (Huebsch, p. 128).

One strategy used in this paradigm is the creation of opportunities for parents to participate in catechetical gatherings with their children, thus empowering them as the primary catechists and allowing them to foster their own ongoing conversion. For example, as an option for families, a parish might offer a monthly family-based gathering on a Sunday morning after Mass for parents to attend with their children. At the large group gathering, parents and their children participate in activities revolving around a lesson plan on a certain topic that flows out of the day’s liturgy. The gathering can be structured in many different ways, but the overall emphasis is on “families learning together.”

## **GENERATIONS OF FAITH**

The Center for Ministry Development has offered us their *Generations of Faith* model, which is a superb resource for whole church faith formation and a comprehensive workbook for a family-based model. In the introduction to *Generations of Faith*, John Roberto describes how such a process continues outside the formal gathering:

The catechetical task is to provide individuals and families with the resources and tools they need to extend and expand their learning from a preparation program and the experience of the event to their lives and home. We create event-specific home materials that help families and individuals celebrate traditions and rituals, continue their learning, pray together, serve others and work for justice, and enrich their relationships and family life. Attention to home resources and tools is as important as the parish preparation program. (Roberto, Section I, Vision and Practice, p. 20)

Family-based faith formation is taking on many different forms in parishes throughout North America; however, what they all have in common is the belief that education is not just for children and that it takes a whole church to form faith. The classroom is only one area among many where people learn, and since the Church has always taught that parents are the primary faith givers family-based models are structured to empower parents and provide them with the tools they need to continue religious education in the home and in life.

Both the RCIA and family-based models of faith formation have proven over the years to be successful and life-giving; however, this success need not be limited to specific ministries. For example, lectionary-based catechesis is not limited to the RCIA process, but can be the norm for the faith formation of all ministerial processes. Family-based faith formation is proving to be more than just an option for young parents, but also a permanent expectation of all families.

In other words, these two models can and have been combined to form a new model, a new way if you will, of doing youth ministry, and it works! With *Renewing the Vision* as the framework, I believe that combining the RCIA (or catechumenate) and family-based strategies to adolescent faith formation is the most consistent (or if you prefer, least inadequate) means through which to reach the three goals of youth ministry in a post-modern Church. We are calling it an *Initiation Model of Youth Ministry*.



# An Initiation Model



One way in which the Encarta dictionary (easily accessed by my computer) defines the word “initiation” is “a usually secret or mysterious ceremony by which somebody is admitted to a group, organization, or religion.” I think that most Americans conjure this type of image when presented with the word “initiation.”

Initiation theology within our Church, however, is something very different. It speaks of an agenda that is not secret but very public. It is mysterious only in the sense that it tries to tap into the mystery of God. It is ongoing, open to all, person-centered, process-oriented, and follows the sequence of the Church calendar.

Robert Duggan describes in an article in *New Theology Review* how his parish tries to implement initiation theology in all that it does:

Preparation for the sacrament of baptism, confirmation, first Eucharist, first reconciliation, and marriage all follow a “catechumenal model” that is gradual, progressive, developmentally sensitive, and wherever possible family-centered and intergenerational. Commitment, conversion, intentional faith, and such

terms aptly describe the “hidden agenda” of all learning in these diverse contexts.... We strive to make it clear that learning about one’s faith is a lifelong process that does not end with confirmation, that our Catholic faith involves moral imperatives, that participation in worship has pedagogical dimensions and ethical implications, and that a praxis of service both within and beyond the Christian community is the natural correlate of one’s baptism into discipleship. (Duggan, “Parish as a Center...”, p. 18)

What distinguishes this book from most youth ministry strategy books is that it does not rely on a classroom model as the basis for the structure or curriculum, even when youth ministry is called on to prepare young people for confirmation.

## **THE PARISH IS THE STRUCTURE**

In an Initiation Model of Youth Ministry, the parish itself is the structure and the people are the witnessing faith-sharers. So technically, there is a curriculum or a “structure,” but it is not expressed or taught in the “traditional” way. The “structure”

is best described as “the life of the parish,” or as Maria Harris puts it: “the entire course of the Church’s life” (Harris, p. 63). This “life” is centered on Eucharist and committed to an ongoing and deepening relationship in the way of Christ.

This way to do youth ministry is really not new. In fact, the revised *General Directory for Catechesis* has already stated that the catechumenate “is the model of [the Church’s] catechizing activity” (#90). What an Initiation Model essentially does then is take the catechumenate model, as is called for by the *General Directory* and make appropriate adaptations in order to be consistent with *Renewing the Vision* (which recognizes the primacy of family). Therefore, the catechumenate model is not only applied to the catechesis of adolescents, but is applied to their evangelization, community life, pastoral care, justice and service, prayer and worship, leadership development, and advocacy.

Furthermore, the premise for an Initiation Model is firmly rooted in the teachings, beliefs, and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

**“The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life.”**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2179*

For young people to be initiated “into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life,” the parish community must be a place and a people through which this happens. In a sense, everyone who shows up at Mass on Sunday is responsible for showing one another, especially our young people, how to liturgically express our faith and our gratitude in and toward our God. If everyone walked into the church building with this in mind, imagine what our liturgies would be like!

**“Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view**

**to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.”**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #5*

Catechesis “in an organic and systematic way” implies that in order to initiate our young people “into the fullness of Christian life,” we are to impart Christian doctrine in a way that relates to people’s everyday lives and in a way that is an organized process designed to propel one forward. The liturgical cycle of our Church is both organic and systematic. It has a natural flow that is the ground for the life of the parish and is an organized process that takes us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The parish community is the primary place and people through which the liturgical cycle is experienced and through which our young people are initiated into true discipleship.

**“One of the highest responsibilities of the people of God is to prepare the baptized for confirmation.”**

*Rite of Confirmation, Introduction #3*

How do the people of God prepare young people for confirmation? Answer: Through witness. The people of God (young and old) are given the opportunity to pass on our faith through the structure and community of their parish. In other words, in order for a young person to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church, he or she must experience the witness of the whole parish community, not just catechists and youth ministers.

**“The parish community has a special role in promoting participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community.”**

*Renewing the Vision, p. 13*

Whether preparing to be initiated or already fully initiated, participation in the faith community is always the expectation. But this expectation is only communicated to our young people when the parish community at large is an active one.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, much has already been written on the broader topic of “whole church” faith formation by educators like Maria Harris, Bill Huebsch, and John Roberto. Even though these authors do not go so far as to formally declare their work as by-products of initiation theology, I and others in pastoral ministry, like Robert Duggan, Thomas Ivory, and Thomas Zanzig do suggest that this is precisely where “whole church” faith formation finds its roots.

The initiatory strategy, which weds formal catechesis to ritual celebration, intensive interactions with an intergenerational faith community, opportunities of witness and service, and various other formative experiences, complements and integrates lectionary-based catechesis in a balanced and holistic manner. (Robert D. Duggan, “Lectionary-based Catechesis,” p. 20)

The period of the actual catechumenate can last for several years, and the New Rite of Christian Initiation envisions a multi-dimensional catechesis. This involves: 1) doctrinal formation accommodated to the liturgical year; 2) experience of Christian community, in which the catechumens are formed by living closely with others who are trying to live the Christian way of life; 3) participation in public worship, especially the Liturgy of the Word; and 4) apostolic involvement, working actively with others to spread the gospel and build up the Church by the testimony of their lives and the profession of their faith. Such catechesis obviously goes beyond the confines of a classroom or a discussion group and hold forth great possibilities for ministry by many members of the parish community. (Thomas P. Ivory, p. 228)

The focus and concern in initiation is as much on the life of the entire community

into which the candidate is being initiated as on the individual being initiated, if not more so...The heart of the initiation process is located not in a religious education classroom but in the life of the total faith community. (Thomas Zanzig, p. 28)

## WHAT'S AT WORK

Many parishes have already put “whole church” theory into practice and have recognized that initiation theology is really what is at work. It is not only applied when preparing for and celebrating the three sacraments of initiation, but is applied as a model for parish life as a whole. This is because initiation theology goes right to the heart of what it means to be a parish. The initiation parish acknowledges that everyone is on a faith journey at all points in life and that it is the role of every member of Christ's Body (the Church) to help one another grow more deeply into the mystery of God. It is based on “relationship” that is grounded on the practice of “listening before responding.”

## CENTERED ON EUCHARIST

This kind of operative theology, however, needs to have a source (a place *from* which to flow) and a summit (a place *toward* which to grow); and therefore the initiation parish begins and ends with Eucharist. *Everything that the initiation parish does is focused on gathering at table to be sent outside in mission, which leads one right back to gathering at table.* It is much like a dance. The real presence of Jesus is celebrated at Mass so that all can *be* the real presence of Jesus out in the world, which quite naturally leads one right back to Mass to celebrate the real presence of Jesus within the community.

Hence, an Initiation Model of Youth Ministry is centered on Eucharist. Everything that youth ministry does within this model flows *from* Mass and *toward* mission, and *back* to Mass, constantly repeating those three steps over and over again in the never-ending dance.

It has the same goals as spelled out in *Renewing the Vision*, and it creates opportunities for young people and their families to experience all eight components of youth ministry. *However, what makes this model of youth ministry unique is that everything is structured as a direct response to what we do and experience at Mass.* “We eat the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ” (St. Augustine).

There is not a catechetical gathering, a service opportunity, a leadership role, or a prayer service that is not in some way connected to the Sunday Eucharist. Any participation in youth ministry would be incomplete and out of context if one has not first fully, consciously, and actively celebrated Eucharist with the parish community.

### **STRUCTURED BACKWARDS**

Most youth ministry models, I believe, are structured backwards. Programs are created within the eight components that try to encourage young people and their families to go to Mass. But this approach, as I see it, is not working in the long run. For instance, many young people show up for confirmation class on a Sunday night without having celebrated Eucharist earlier that day. The class becomes in their minds, “the Sunday obligation.” Some parishes have tried to combat this problem by scheduling catechetical efforts directly after or before Mass. This is closer to being on the right track, but no matter what the parish does, taking a “Eucharist flowing from youth ministry” approach is a losing battle because the experience of worship on that day is disconnected from what is experienced at the gathering. Youth ministry, as all parish ministry, must flow from Eucharist, not vice versa.

For example, suppose St. Will’s Parish has scheduled a ninth and tenth grade youth ministry gathering on the evening of the Epiphany of the Lord. Concerned about Mass attendance, the parish decides to end the gathering with a closing Sunday liturgy. The topic for the evening is “The Beatitudes.” So as one can imagine, the gathering is full of reflections and discussions and presentations

on the Sermon on the Mount. But when the closing liturgy begins, all hear about the Magi following the star and the infant Christ who has come to save all peoples. The Mass becomes a “sidebar” for the whole evening. It is billed as a closing celebration for a youth ministry event but has no real connection to that event. This is backward.

If St. Will’s Parish wants to cover the topic of the beatitudes, it would be better suited if the topic flowed out of Eucharist. For example, the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) and the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) are both Sundays when the beatitudes are proclaimed. With this example, the people can now at least connect the message at Mass with something they have already discussed. All components of youth ministry are clearly connected to the experience at Mass and can now flow back into it.

### **BACK TO EUCHARIST**

In an Initiation Model, the celebration of Eucharist encourages or sends forth young people and their families to participate in programs within youth ministry (mission), which directs them in turn to dance their way back into Eucharist. It looks to the ancient initiation processes and rituals of the Church as a guide toward authentic Christian conversion (conversion is not limited to the unbaptized, but is ongoing for all Christians, even the fully initiated ones). “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church’s power flows. It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1074).

The lectionary is the current on which all Catholics flow. The Jesus story is revealed to us through the three-year cycle, and so *our* story is revealed; therefore, an initiation model uses a lectionary-based approach to all eight components of youth ministry, especially catechesis. This approach allows adolescents and their families to travel with the rest of the parish through the liturgical seasons and connects them to the

universal Church. They come to know Jesus as the story of revelation is unfolded for them and broken open with them week after week.

Like the RCIA process, this model of youth ministry includes the whole parish, calling all parishioners to initiate one another and engage themselves in the lives of the young people. It acknowledges that the three goals of youth ministry cannot be met by simply attending all of the required catechism classes or by attending a weekly youth group social. Conversion is the aim, and a single-faceted youth ministry will not cut it.

### **AN ONGOING PROCESS**

There is no “one size fits all” in this model. Not everyone experiences Christian conversion at the same time or in the same way. Full participation in the life of the parish is the journey for all parishioners, young and old. Conversion is an ongoing process and is lifelong, thus too big for a “youth program” or a “confirmation program.” Through intergenerational and age-appropriate opportunities within the eight components, young people may journey at their own pace within the natural flow of the Church calendar, moving cyclically with the invitation of growing deeper and deeper in the mystery of God. The parish community is entrusted, as it has been for centuries, to be the instrument through which this takes place. Whether senior high youth are preparing for confirmation or have already been confirmed, the conversion process will always be ongoing and different for all, and therefore requires a comprehensive youth ministry strategy that can adapt.

### **PRIMACY OF FAMILY**

However, let us not forget that it is primarily the responsibility of parents within the parish community to foster conversion within the life of their children.

The initiation of children into the sacramental life is ordinarily the responsibility and concern of Christian

parents. They are to form and gradually increase a spirit of faith in the children and, at times with the help of catechism classes, prepare them for the fruitful reception of the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist. The role of the parents is also expressed by their active participation in the celebration of the sacraments. (*The Rite of Confirmation*, Introduction #3)

The home is the domestic church, the “first and vital cell of society,” the primary educator of faith and virtues. Since the family is the first place where ministry to adolescents usually occurs, the Church is at the service of parents to help them enliven within their children a knowledge and love for the Catholic faith. (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 21)

### **PRACTICE CHANGES**

There was a time when I was perplexed by how the religious practice of most young people changes dramatically when they enter college or young adulthood. Take Laura as an example. She had a profound conversion during her sophomore year of high school when she participated in the Antioch Retreat. Suffice it to say that the retreat accomplished for her what it was structured to do: make disciples. Ever since that retreat, Laura involved herself in youth ministry as much as possible. She came to Mass every week (even though her parents did not). She even became one of youth ministry’s strongest peer leaders as a junior and senior. On the surface, it seemed that the three goals of youth ministry were definitely being met, at least in Laura’s case. But when she went away to college, she, like most people her age, took a vacation from her religion. Four years of college went by and then four more years of post-college went by, and Laura did not set foot in church. She still had faith in God and always looked back on her time in youth ministry with much fondness, but she had no desire to express her faith through

the Roman Catholic tradition anymore. What happened?

Answer: As an adolescent, Laura had a connection with her religious tradition, but it was not nourished by those in her family. Her primary faith-givers never experienced for themselves a lasting connection to their religious tradition and, perhaps for many reasons, did not involve themselves in their parish, even when Laura did. The youth ministry that Laura experienced was excellent except for one thing: it never invited parents to do anything more than drop their teens off and pick them up. Eventually I came to realize that even the best youth ministry in the world couldn't keep Laura connected in the long run because her parents were connected to the parish in name only.

## **A DOOMED PROCESS**

Any parish model that is structured without giving parents the opportunity to live out their role as the primary faith-givers is doomed to create teens who only temporarily involve themselves in the life of the Church. Of course, there are always those who somehow make it and become active members of the Church even without parent witness, but we all know that those are the exceptions.

The National Study of Youth and Religion recently published *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton. In the survey, the authors confirm what many of us already know: the immediate and long-term religious beliefs and practices of teenagers are heavily influenced by their parents. The religious practice (or lack thereof) of their parents will more times than not become their own religious practice during and after adolescence.

## **SUPPORTING PARENTS**

An Initiation Model recognizes that “faith is caught, not taught.” Parents are and will always be on the front lines of passing on our tradition.

They are the primary “catchers of faith,” but too often in youth ministry, parents are not given the tools or the opportunities to share their faith with their teens. Sometimes we in church leadership even take the attitude that we are not responsible for creating opportunities for parents to share their faith with their children because we falsely believe that they should figure that out on their own.

Often it seems that a parish youth ministry is structured in a way that is almost reluctant to include parents in the process. Most of the time, this reluctance is out of fear of adult relationships or that young people will not be responsive if their parents are present and vice versa.

This model transcends those fears and supports parents as they live out the promises they made at their child's baptism. It provides parents with a venue and the tools to share their faith with their teens in a meaningful way.

Overall, we will do well in youth ministry if we immerse ourselves in initiation theology and look to family-based models and to the early Church as an example of what “whole church” faith formation is all about.

We can clearly see what great emphasis there was on the community aspect of initiation. The community sponsored the candidates, instructed them, prayed for them, and assembled to greet them and welcome them after baptism. The community, in a word, was quite active. It was reaching out and giving the first centuries' equivalent of “welcome,” and it was not only a welcome in the sense that one is now a part of the community, but welcome also in the sense that the community would be there in the ongoing process of becoming a Christian. Baptism was only the beginning. (William J. Bausch, *A New Look at the Sacraments*, p. 61)

Thomas Zanzig's *Confirmed in a Faithful Community* is a good seminal work on applying initiation theology to senior high youth ministry. Later in this book, we will use and build upon some of the structure and terminology that Zanzig suggests. Although Zanzig cautions that "we must accept the fact that our task is to gently and patiently lead our parishes step-by-step toward a deeper understanding and actual practice of this vision of initiation" (Zanzig, p. 29), we will not be so cautious in this book. The time has come for an Initiation Model to be foundational to all areas of parish life, including youth ministry. As a result, we, the Church, will be able to foster environments where family experience and parish experience only strengthen the connection to our religious tradition. The early Christians knew this and practiced this. So shall we.