

YOUTH

SCRIPTURE

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

And behold, one came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. (Mt 19: 16-22)

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of young people in the Church. Bless them so that they may be able to commit themselves to Christ and His values. Show them the path of the Kingdom. Make them respond to your call to love and serve. May they receive the peace you offer. Make them messengers of the Gospel that they may reach out to the other young people.

Set their hearts on fire of your love that they may become salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt 5: 13, 14). Filled with the charisms of the Holy Spirit they may venture to dispel the darkness of the society. May all our plans for the young people be according to your mighty will and to the needs of the young people we wish to serve. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Youth all over the world are passing through very difficult times. The breakdown of families, the erosion of moral values, the overriding desire for money, pleasure and power have destroyed many a youth, who have become victims of alcohol, drugs, sex and other evils in society. The current spirit of competition has taken a heavy toll in the lives of the young, even to the extent of ending one's own life. They suffer from a deep sense of insecurity about their future. Loss of meaning in life, lack of interest in matters spiritual and inability to accept defeat and failure in life have greatly affected their day-to-day life. In this challenging context, the Church as a mother is called to reach out to the young people of our times, both in the Church and the world at large with compassionate love.

"The Indian Catholic Youth Movement" (ICYM) approved by the Standing Committee of CBCI on 14th September 1999, coordinates all the youth movements in India, which guides the youth ministry organizing similar structures in the Parish, Deanery and Diocesan level. Extending the membership to the age group of 15 to 30 years of unmarried youth, it is strongly founded on the Catholic values and principles. It also aims at making the youth committed to the mission of the Church and that of the country.

PART 1: TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

Young people exert a very important influence in modern society. The circumstances of their life, their thought patterns, their relations with their families,

have been completely transformed....The young should become the first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them, exercising the apostolate by themselves among themselves, taking account of their social environment. (Vatican Council II, Decree on the apostolate of Laity (AA12)

At the closing of Vatican Council II on December , 1965, Pope Paul VI, addressing young men and women said:

"it is to you, young men and women of the world that the council wishes to address its final message. For it is you who are to receive the torch from the hands of your elders and to live in the world at the period of the most gigantic transformations ever realized in its history. It is you who, receiving the best of the example of the teaching of your parents and your teachers, are to form the society of tomorrow. You will either save yourselves or you will perish with it. ...The Church looks to you with confidence and with love. Rich with a long past ever living in her, and marching on toward human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world. She possesses what constitutes the strength and the charm of youth, that is to say, the ability to rejoice with what is beginning, to give oneself unreservedly, to renew oneself and to set out again for new conquests."

Pope John Paul II to the young in 1978 said, "You are the future of the world, you are the hope of the Church, you are my hope."

In 1985, the holy father, in his apostolic letter *Dilecti Amici* said to the youth of the world on the occasion of international year of the youth:

In you there is hope, for you belong to the future, just as the future belongs to you. For hope is always linked to the future; it is the expectation of "future good things". As a Christian virtue, it is linked to the expectation of those eternal good things which God has promised to man in Jesus Christ.(3) And at the same time, this hope, as both a Christian and a human virtue, is the expectation of the good things which man will build, using the talents given him by Providence.

In this sense the future belongs to you young people, just as it once belonged to the generation of those who are now adults, and precisely together with them it has become the present reality. Responsibility for this present reality and for its shape and many different forms lies first of all with adults. To you belongs responsibility for what will one day become reality together with yourselves, but which still lies in the future.

The same Holy Father of happy memories further spelt out on August 6, 1993, in *Veritatis Splendor*, Article 12:

"Consequently, after making the important clarification: "There is only one who is good", Jesus tells the young man: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (*Mt 19:17*). In this way, a close connection is made between *eternal life and obedience to God's commandments*: God's commandments show man the path of life and they lead to it. From the very lips of Jesus, the new Moses, man is once again given the commandments of the

Decalogue. Jesus himself definitively confirms them and proposes them to us as the way and condition of salvation. *The commandments are linked to a promise.* In the Old Covenant the object of the promise was the possession of a land where the people would be able to live in freedom and in accordance with righteousness (cf. *Dt* 6:20-25). In the New Covenant the object of the promise is the "Kingdom of Heaven", as Jesus declares at the beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount" — a sermon which contains the fullest and most complete formulation of the New Law (cf. *Mt* 5-7), clearly linked to the Decalogue entrusted by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

This same reality of the Kingdom is referred to in the expression "eternal life", which is a participation in the very life of God. It is attained in its perfection only after death, but in faith it is even now a light of truth, a source of meaning for life, an inchoate share in the full following of Christ. Indeed, Jesus says to his disciples after speaking to the rich young man: "Every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life" (*Mt* 19:29).

On the occasion of the Jubilee of the year 2000, once again, Holy Father John Paul II, in Article 58 of his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* reiterated to the Bishops, Clergy and Lay Faithful the following:

"The future of the world and the Church belongs to the *younger generation*, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first century of the new millennium. *Christ expects great things from young people*, as he did from the young man who asked him: "What good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" (*Mt* 19:16). I have referred to the remarkable answer which Jesus gave to him, in the recent Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, as I did earlier, in 1985, in my *Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World*. Young people, in every situation, in every region of the world, do not cease to put questions to Christ: *they meet him and they keep searching for him in order to question him further*. If they succeed in following the road which he points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own contribution to his presence in the next century and in the centuries to come, until the end of time: "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever."

The World Youth Days down the history was a sure sign to unite the young people all over the world. The first of its kind was declared by Pope John Paul II in 1986 following the international year of the Youth.

Addressing the young people at the World Youth Day in July 2011 at Madrid, Pope Benedict XVI reiterated the teachings of Vatican II.

"For four years the Church has been working to rejuvenate her image in order to respond better to the design of her Founder, the great Living One, and the Christ who is eternally young. At the time of this imposing re-examination of life, she now turns to you. It is for you, youth, especially for you that the Church now comes through her Council to enkindle your light, the light which illuminates the future, your future - The dignity, the liberty and the

rights of individuals. These individuals are you.....The Church looks to you with confidence and with love. Rich with the long past ever living in her and marching on towards human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world.”

FABC

The FABC V Bandung statement in 1990 while proposing the Challenge of the “New way of Being Church” acknowledged the right place of the young people in the Church. The focus was, “to strengthen the contact among those involved in youth ministry in Asia, to carry out the recommendations given in TABC Plenary Assemblies with regards to youth, allowing the voice of the young to be heard and creating more channels for their participation.”

5th Asian Youth Day 2009

The FABC-OLF-Youth Desk organized the 5th Asian Youth Day in, 2009, in the Philippines. Inspired by the Synod on the Word of God and the FABC Plenary theme on Living the Eucharist, this 8-day event:

- *Renewed Asian youth's faith in and love for the Word of God and the Eucharist*
- *Celebrated youthfully the Word and the Eucharist in their contexts, cultures and communities*
- *Enabled the young to become agents of transformation by living out the Word and the Eucharist in our realities in Asia*

The Summit of Asian Religious Youth Leaders

The first summit in 2005 was held in Indonesia with the theme of “Religious Youth For Peace: Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security”.

The 3-day conference aimed:

- to identify unique spiritual, moral and social assets of religious youth to prevent violence and advance shared security in Asia.
- to develop a joint statement from Asian perspectives that can inform the World Youth Assembly in August 2006.
- to work towards the building of a multi-religious instrument for religious youth leaders in Asia for collaborative action for peace and development.

CBCI

The International Youth year 1985 was the catalyst that generated forces of awareness in organizing the youth of India at both the parish and national level. As a preparation, significant meeting was held in June 1984 which delineated clear outlines for youth work in India. With the impetus given by this meeting and the initiative taken by the Commission for Laity and Justice, Peace and Development, a number of activities were held in 1985 at the diocesan, regional and national levels.

The significant event of 1985 was the International Meeting held by the TAIZE brothers at Madras in collaboration with the CBCI. It was the first time in the history of the Church in India that so many young people were gathered together. A natural outcome of this meeting was the renewal of youth activity everywhere. It was then, that a need was felt at both the diocesan and regional levels for a co-coordinating body. Hence there was an appeal to the CBCI for setting up the Youth Commission. In response to this felt need, the CBCI at the General Body Meeting held in Goa in 1986 established the Youth Commission and outlined the following challenges to youth ministry:

1. Faith Formation
2. Youth Friendly Church

3. Education
4. Youth to Youth Ministry
5. Youth and Family
6. Promoting and Ensuring the Holistic Health of the Youth
7. Environmental Consciousness and Action
8. Reaching Out to the Youth who do not come
9. Gender Sensitivity and Justice
10. Communal Harmony, Peace and National Integration
11. Employment Facilitation and Entrepreneurial Training
12. Moving Towards a Social Order Based on Justice, Equality and Human Rights through Youth Ministry

PART 2: LIGHT AND SHADOW SITUATION

2.1 Light Situation

- ❖ The Young Christian Students (YCS), Jesus Youth, Charismatic Youth, All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF), Christian Life Community (CLC), Youth United for Christ (YU4C) and Theology of Body (TOB) are actively involved in youth activities among school, college and working youth. All these groups have been working in collaboration with Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM) under the Diocesan Youth Commission
- ❖ The formation of ICYM in the Archdiocese in 2001, as an umbrella body for all youth movements in the Archdiocese with a full time Diocesan Youth Director and youth office.
- ❖ Formation of Deanery Youth coordination committees from 2004 onwards in Kolkata, Howrah Hooghly, 24 Parganas and Midnapore in order to empower the local youth and encourage local youth leaders.
- ❖ Formation of Employment cell to help the youth find employment.
- ❖ Regular career guidance program for the youth to help them choose their career and vocation in life.
- ❖ Formation of youth groups in the parishes and the formation of Deanery and Diocesan Executive Committees under the guidance of youth animators.
- ❖ The Calcutta Catholic Charismatic Renewal Society (CCCRS) movement has been active in the Archdiocese since 1999 and is a rich source of spiritual revival through Praise and Worship every Wednesday and adoration every Saturday. A large number of youth attend the Bible Convention organized every two years by CCRS.
- ❖ Catechism classes at the Parish level for students of KG to class 12 has helped in faith formation for the youth. Some parishes utilize the senior youth to take regular catechism classes on Sundays
- ❖ Annual Youth Fest organized by YCS, World CLC Day celebrated by the CLC, AICUF Day and the Deanery Youth Day organized by ICYM help in fellowship, faith formation and bring out the talents of the youth especially in the field of music, dance and drama.
- ❖ Annual Football and Basketball tournament for boys and girls organized by ICYM helps bring the youth together and fosters sportsman spirit among the youth.
- ❖ Most of the Catholic youth are given financial and structural support to complete their formal education in Catholic institutions.

2.2 Shadow Situation

- ❖ Youth lack direction, focus, and are not Christ and Church centered as they are more interested in media, internet, peer group activities and are burdened with studies and work pressure.
- ❖ Lack of inner motivation and spiritual nourishment.

- ❖ Vast majority of the youth are not interested in the Church and Church-activities.
- ❖ The spirituality of the youth at times seems to be superficial without much depth.
- ❖ Not deeply rooted in the Gospel Values.
- ❖ Performance approach dominates Formation approach.
- ❖ Don't go beyond the recreation.
- ❖ Lack of trained youth animators in each parish, one male and one female to help in youth formation and youth activities.
- ❖ Absence of a youth center in the city for the youth to gather for formation, fellowship and service.
- ❖ Lack of coordination among the various youth groups.
- ❖ Paucity of funds.
- ❖ Insufficient importance is given to youth ministry in Parishes.
- ❖ On the whole, the Church is not youth friendly with regard to its functioning.
- ❖ There is a prevalent negative attitude among the elders towards young people.

PART 3: SETTING GOALS

- ❖ To orient the youth movement in the Archdiocese based on the person and the message of Christ for the development of the human person through empowerment of the individuals.
- ❖ To make youth effective agents of integrated transformation in the socio-religious-cultural-political context of Bengal.
- ❖ To involve the youth and to ensure their cooperation for purposes of promoting National Integration and Communal Harmony.
- ❖ To facilitate the understanding of Catholic faith, life and vocation and to ensure commitment among the youth to continue the Mission of the Church.
- ❖ To create awareness among the public at large about the need, importance and relevance of the youth ministry.

PART 4: ACTION PLAN

The plan for youth is based on four areas:

1. Formation
2. Fellowship
3. Service
4. Structures and Personnel

(FAITH) FORMATION

- To form active Executive Body in the Parish, deanery and diocesan level with the active help and support of the Archbishop, Vicar General, the four deans and zonal coordinators, the Parish Priests and Youth Animators.
- To encourage the formation of YCS, CLC, AICUF and Jesus Youth and TOB units in all schools and colleges for the faith formation of high school and college going boys and girls.
- To make Sunday school classes compulsory for high school students and college going boys and girls so as to help in on going faith formation.

- To encourage the youth to attend CCCRS Praise and Worship on Wednesday and adoration on Saturday as well as to join the Bible School.
- To organize Youth Mass twice a year at the Deanery level and request the Archbishop and Priests involved in youth ministry to celebrate the youth mass.
- To organize Youth Mass once a month in the Parish level.
- To organize retreats and recollection at least once a year for the youth in different languages and age groups.
- To help young people to understand the meaning of the Church, as communion leading to deeper fellowship radiating the light of Christ.
- Similarly, to make them aware that the Eucharist is the basis/foundation of all genuine and lasting fellowship.
- To teach them the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation promotes fellowship through the healing of broken relationships.
- To organize and conduct formation programmes, symposia, seminars, conventions etc. at the ecclesial level – Parish, Deanery and Diocesan - for all round development of youth.

FELLOWSHIP

- To organize a youth fest or gathering on the theme for the year at the deanery or diocesan level and encourage the youth to participate and get to know each other.
- To organize talent hunt, football and basketball tournament, Christmas carol singing competition to bring the youth together and develop their talents.
- To organize youth pilgrimage once a year to Bandel, Krishnanagar, Vailankanni, & Goa.
- Vocation Sunday
- Career Guidance
- Deanery Youth Representative meeting
- Youth Mass at Sacred Heart Church
- Deanery Youth Day
- Deanery Executive meetings
- ICYM Sports Fest
- Youth Leadership Training
- Carol Evening

SERVICE

- To encourage the youth to serve the local Parish community by visiting the sick, the aged, the ailing, the dying, the orphans, widows and destitute at least once or twice a year especially during Christmas and Easter.
- To encourage the youth to serve in their families by taking care of the elderly, children and sick members of the family.
- To help the parish priest and local church in various activities such as Parish census, cleaning and decorating the Church before and after mass on Sundays and feast days, volunteering as altar servers and choir members.
- To serve the society, local community and country by becoming an agent of social change and transformation.
- To conduct charitable services for rural youth, tribal youth, migrated and poor needy people.
- To enable the youth to be effective instruments of transformation in the parish, deanery and the Archdiocese.
- Identifying migrant Youth.

STRUCTURES AND PERSONNEL

- Though there are several structures and personnel already in place such as youth office, diocesan youth director, animators and Dexco (Diocesan Executive Committee) team, what we need at this point of time is a youth centre in the Archdiocese, a full time lady youth animator and youth office staff.
- Training of animators and resource persons for youth ministry in all four languages: English, Hindi, Bengali and Santhali.
- Use of media to attract the youth and draw them closer to Christ, the church the community and also help them find suitable employment.
- To have more vocational training for youth and encourage them to apply for competitive examinations by providing training for IAS, IPS, WBCS and other competitive examinations.
- To foster partnership with persons in position of authority and responsibility in government and private sectors as well as NGO's so that they can guide and inspire the youth.
- To encourage the youth to return to the church by encouraging them to join SCC and BCC groups along with their family members.
- To collaborate with other youth organizations and movements at the secular level locally in the parish, deanery and Diocese to achieve the objectives of the Youth Commission.

PART 5: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ❖ Suggest five ways of building a youth friendly church.
- ❖ What do you understand by holistic health of the youth? How can we educate the youth about holistic health with special emphasis on substance abuse and the ill effects of addiction especially pornography?
- ❖ Suggest five ways of using the power of the media for the integral growth of the youth?
- ❖ Suggest five ways of improving coordination among the various youth groups in the Archdiocese – Aicuf, CLC, YCS, Jesus Youth, Charismatic Youth, and Theology of the Body, Campus Crusaders and ICYM.
- ❖ Suggest ways and means of making the youth agents of change in the church and society?

CONCLUSION

The Church has constantly voiced the need of the young. The Second Vatican Council has given a new dynamism to the Youth Ministry in the Church as a journey into the Kingdom. Youth Ministry is placed in the three-fold mission of the whole Church, i.e., "to proclaim the good news of salvation, to offer itself as a group of people transformed by the Spirit into a community of faith, hope and love; and to bring God's justice and love to others through service in its individual, social and political dimensions". To this end in mind, the Youth Ministry in the Archdiocese provides a platform that helps the community draw from the goodness, capacities, energy and passion of youth to build a better community and society. The ordained ministers and the animators of the young people accompany the young on their growth to realize these potentials.

The Archdiocesan Pastoral plan attempts to respond adequately and meaningfully to the emerging needs and challenges of the youth. The youth need love, care, concern, and compassion of the elders, priests and religious to realize their dreams and potentials. It is hoped that through the implementation of the Pastoral Plan, the youth in the Archdiocese will experience a deep sense of meaning and purpose in their lives and become true witnesses of the Risen Lord.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, your love for the young is boundless. Direct the hearts of the young towards Gospel values. Give them the thirst to long for you as young as they are. Amidst the uncertainties of this world, may they set their hearts on the true wealth. O Blessed Mother, come to the aid of the young people, teach them to be obedient and loving as Jesus your Son was obedient to you during His earthly life. Make our young people enthusiastic about life, joyful in hope and persistent in their endeavor. By your maternal care, plead for your children to Jesus your Son that they may realize their dreams. Amen.