

Integrating Youth and Young Adults into Liturgy

by Tom Tomaszek

The beginning of the new school year is an excellent time to review and renew your parish or campus' outreach to the younger generations. Keep in mind that efforts you make to integrate youth and young adults into the community's worship are investments that return ten-fold now as well as in future years. Young people who take on visible leadership roles by serving as lectors, greeters, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, song leaders, instrumentalists, catechists for children's liturgy of the Word, or sacristan assistants are often the same adults who return just a few years later to serve as parish council members, heads of commissions, trustees, *and* major contributors. Are you investing time into tomorrow's *present* as well as *future* leaders?

In addition to the youth and young adults who take on leadership roles, a vibrant faith community respects its diversity of ages. Children, teens, and young adults are baptized members of the Body of Christ and have a right and duty to become full, conscious and active participants in our worship life as the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* reminds us (SSC #14). I regularly remind youth that they have rights *and* responsibilities. They are responsible to use their God-given talents in service to others. The liturgy is a great place to be mentored in using those talents wisely.

A CHECKLIST

Here is a quick checklist of practical considerations to help you assess your efforts to integrate youth and young adults into the community's worship life. They are organized into [three of] the four principle areas suggested by the national document, *From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents* (OCP #10777).

PREACHING

- Do homilies regularly use examples and stories to which youth can relate?
- Do homilies help all ages understand and engage in the scriptures of the day?
- Are homilies delivered clearly, slowly and with conviction?
- Does the homilist challenge the faithful to live the Gospel in daily life?

SYMBOLS and VISUALS

- Are young people encouraged to give proper reverence to the sacred body and blood?
- Are youth apprenticed as sacristans and artisans as well as altar servers?
- Are the entrance, Gospel and communion processions visibly-engaging and prayerful?
- Are the liturgical seasons visible through color, light and symbol? Are children and youth catechized to know the liturgical seasons and symbols?

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Do weekly prayers of the faithful include concerns of youth?
- Are youth and young adults apprenticed in *all* parish ministries including the liturgical?
- Are young people welcomed and engaged after Mass by ushers, greeters, and the ministers?
- Does your parish celebrate World Youth Day each year (30th Sunday in Ordinary time)?

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