

Catholic Life Communities

Moderators' Handbook

Updated January 2002



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Part I

CLC-An Outline of What We Are

What are Catholic Life Communities?

CLCs are committed, parish-based, single-sex high school communities of faith for guys and girls, that promote their spiritual, emotional and social development in an atmosphere of Christian values and friendships.

How are CLCs established?

CLCs are organized and led by one or more adult Moderators, approved and supported by the Youth Apostles Institute and the Women's Apostolate to Youth. They function within a particular parish with the approval of the Pastor.

How do CLCs function?

The community meets weekly throughout the year. The meeting opens with a prayerful reflection. There is an inspirational talk or activity followed by group sharing. Time is also allotted for formation, business and fellowship. Once a month the meeting consists of a Mass where community commitments are made, if appropriate. Meetings last approximately one and one-half hours.

What important Christian values and virtues are emphasized in CLC?

Truth: Honesty, openness in communication, and mutual trust are integral parts of the CLC commitment. By following the truthfulness and radical openness of Christ, members are inspired to a deeper FAITH in God and a greater sense of accountability to one another.

Freedom: Responsible choices, achieved through a strong personal discipline, are the foundation of true freedom. This freedom enables members to make a commitment to Christ, and to live a life filled with HOPE, the same hope that is destroyed by impulsive and irresponsible choices.

Care: Care embodied in warmth and friendship fosters unconditional love and Christian charity. Inspired by Christ's sacrificial love, CLC members are challenged to outwardly show their support and LOVE for God and each other.

What are the most important elements of the CLC spirituality?

Eucharist: Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist, is the main source of spiritual strength. CLC strives to inspire its members to a deep love for the Eucharistic Christ. The Mass is the greatest expression of our union with God and one another; CLC stresses the importance of frequent and active participation in the Mass. In Mass we recognize our failures, ponder God's Word and become united in the Body of Christ.

Reconciliation: We are reunited in the Body of Christ through the healing power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is through this Sacrament that the members confess their sinfulness and accept the Lord's forgiveness. It is also through this Sacrament that they recognize their connection to the Church as a whole and, in particular, to the community members. This experience of God's mercy gives them the FREEDOM to CARE for one another in a Christ-like manner.

Prayer: A personal relationship with God needs to be based on prayer. It is through prayer that we can develop an intimate relationship with Christ. CLCs hold up for youth the beauty and value of prayer, giving instruction and encouragement on the practice of daily prayer.

Mary, Help and Model of Christians: Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, is the perfect example of a Christian. In addition to her response to God, her "radical yes," CLC members are encouraged to commit their lives to following the will of God. The commitments of CLC members facilitate this consecration of their lives to Christ. As humble servants, through which the Spirit's light shines, our purpose, like Mary, is to bring Christ into the world.

The Spiritual Exercises: Just as the body needs physical training to stay in shape, the soul needs spiritual training to grow closer to its Creator. Our retreats are based on The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. They are designed to help the members discern God's will in their lives. The Exercises promote openness to God, self and others, and lead to the responsible choices which increase our freedom.

What are the activities of CLC?

As Catholic communities of faith, CLCs are centered on the Eucharist. In addition to communal monthly Masses, the CLC members participate in other weekly Masses, go to Confession regularly, and develop a life of personal prayer and spiritual devotion.

The CLC members are drawn closer to Christ and to one another through our Annual Community Retreat, Full Member Workshop and Retreat, Election Workshop and Summer Fun Workshop. A number of more informal overnights and day workshops are also organized through the year.

Recognizing Christ's call to service and love of neighbor, the community helps the parish in whatever way it can. The members may serve as acolytes, lectors, and ushers; they

might assist in the religious education program, and volunteer to serve at parish activities. Mindful of the needs of the poor, they also volunteer to serve in special projects and service activities.

Friendship is one of the most important elements in CLC. Rooted in the unconditional love of Christ, the members accept and support their peers as brothers and sisters, through open sharing, mutual acceptance, and quality fun experiences. Social activities are organized to facilitate friendships. Fun workshops, outings, and other social events all serve as community builders.

How are CLCs governed?

Under the guidance of its adult Moderator(s), each CLC chooses its own Board of Directors. This Board meets regularly to discuss and plan community events and to reflect on the overall spirit and direction of the community. The members of the Board offer Christian example and leadership and inspire the members of the community to live their promises.

How is commitment achieved?

CLC members are instructed and encouraged to live a more intense religious, apostolic and moral life, beyond usual Sunday Church requirements. Their formation helps them develop a lifestyle where Christian values are adequately understood and lived. It is achieved by challenging members to heed God's call to live a Christ-like life and supporting them in their efforts. It is our hope that the Christian example and the commitments of the adult Moderator(s) may serve to inspire the members to make similar commitments to their faith. Practically, it is achieved through a series of commitments involving specific standards of Christian living.

Why is commitment emphasized in CLC?

Commitment is at the core of our community. It is a covenant between God and the CLC member, made publicly and witnessed by the whole community. This freely accepted commitment encourages a spirit of perseverance and fidelity to live the Christian life in the Catholic Church and within CLC.

What are CLC standards and promises?

They are levels of personal commitment made within the community to express the desire to follow Christ more closely. At each level, a Promise is made, which states the member's intention to live according to specific Christian standards. The promise is read in front of the community, if possible, during one of our monthly Masses. At that time the member receives a Cross that symbolizes the commitment made. These commitments are made only after serious consideration by both the member and the Board of Directors.

Part II

Formation Program for Catholic Life Communities

The following material must be covered thoroughly prior to a youth being approved to make a particular commitment. Moderators should make sure the youth has a good understanding of the specific topics applicable to his or her commitment. This material may be covered in general community meetings, small-group presentations, or during one-on-one sessions between the youth and either a Moderator or an approved officer.

Formation Requirements for CLC Members

- I. Understanding of CLC
 - A. Willingness to make God and CLC priorities
 - B. Attempt to like, love and respect other members
 - C. Understanding of Member commitment
 - D. Familiarity with CLC brochure
- II. Meaning of Community
 - A. Brotherly love; understand need for acceptance of others (no cut-downs or sarcasm)
 - B. Openness to other members and Moderator(s)
 - C. Christ's example of community
- III. Basics of the Faith
 - A. Seven sacraments as channels of God's grace (emphasize Eucharist and Penance)
 - B. Importance of Scripture
 - C. Structure of our Church (authority of the Pope, apostolic succession, etc.)
 - D. Importance of spirituality (Christ-centered life, God's presence in the community)
 - E. Importance of prayer and a willingness to deepen prayer life
- IV. Commandments
 - A. The Ten Commandments are the basis for our moral behavior
 - B. The need for universal rights and obligations
 - C. The Ten Commandments as God's law
- V. Member should know, understand and be willing to practice Specific Standards for CLC Members

Specific Standards for CLC Members

1. Weekly Sunday Mass participation with an effort to understand the Eucharist
2. Understand the Sacrament of Penance and the value of prayer and the Scriptures
3. Participation in CLC's Annual Retreat
4. Attendance at CLC meetings and participation in the spiritual, apostolic and social life of the community
5. Attitude of friendliness and truthfulness with a special effort to get to know CLC's Full Members and Candidates

6. Realization of the importance of school work
7. Christian attitude and spirit of cooperation at home
8. Christian example with friends in and out of school
9. A life of high moral values, including chastity, and abstention from tobacco products, alcohol, and all other drugs

Formation Requirements for CLC Candidates

- I. Candidate should have a greater knowledge and deeper understanding of Member formation material
- II. Ultimate Values
 - A. Truth
 1. Need for openness—personal and community growth
 2. Trust v. distrust
 3. Jesus was TRUTH—no masks, no secrets
 4. Truth is consistent—no “little white lies”
 5. Leads to greater faith in Christ
 - B. Freedom
 1. Look at society’s “do what you want” version
 2. Freedom as ultimate expression of saying “yes” to God
 3. True freedom isn’t ability to say “yes” or “no” but it is ability to God’s will
 4. Leads to hope, which strengthens our relationship with the Father
 5. Understanding of inordinate attachments
 - C. Care
 1. The most visible sign of love for God and neighbor
 2. Stems from compassion—being one with the needs of others
 3. Flows out of our desire to sacrifice as Christ did
- III. Eucharist
 - A. Central to our spirituality and apostolic life
 - B. Meaning of Eucharist/Real Presence/Bread of Life
 - C. Brings Christ’s living presence among us
 - D. His most awesome gift—easy to be taken for granted
 - E. It is our nourishment, our substance
- IV. Apostolicity
 - A. Faith filled with action central to Jesus’ Gospel
 - B. Spirit of service
 1. Sacrifice for others
 2. Generosity of heart and time and talents
 3. Jesus’ humility is the key to our ministry
- V. Life of prayer
 - A. Kinds of prayer
 1. Standard, formula prayer (Our Father, Hail Mary...)
 2. Meditation, contemplation (quiet, 1-on-1 with God)
 3. Scripture reading and reflection
 4. Mass as prayer
 - B. Meaning of faith
 1. Horizontal and vertical relationship with the Father
 2. “Pray unceasingly” (1 Thess 5:17)

3. Discernment through prayer
 4. Getting to know a friend/developing a relationship
 5. Everyone is called to holiness
 - C. How to pray
 1. Where to pray
 2. When to pray
 3. Mechanics of prayer (formal v. informal prayer)
- VI. Commitment to high moral standards
- A. Honesty, cheating, stealing—ties to the value of truth
 - B. Sexuality
 1. Gift from God
 2. Call to chastity for all Christians (thoughts, words, and actions)
 3. Avoiding pornography
 - a. Television/video (including “soft porn”)
 - b. Print materials (magazines, books, etc.)
 - c. Music (lyrics, artists, etc.)
 - C. Drinking and other drugs
 1. Adverse affects to our body
 2. We are the Temple of the Lord
 3. Use of tobacco
 4. Escape through alcohol/drugs
 5. Addictions
- VII. Cardinal Virtues
- A. Prudence—moves us to choose in every instance the best means of achieving our supernatural aims
 - B. Justice—inclines the will to give others at all times what is their due
 - C. Fortitude—strengthens the soul to follow the morally good without allowing it to be overcome by fear (even the fear of death)
 - D. Temperance—moderates the attractions toward sensual pleasures and keeps within proper limits (relates to self-control)
 - E. Virtues as grace
 - F. Tools for spiritual growth/aid in attaining holiness
- VIII. Beatitudes
- A. Call as Christians involves more than obedience to laws, but a change of attitude (the Beatitudes are “the attitudes to be”)
 - B. Jesus’ message of difficulties we’ll face/way of life
 - C. Rewards promised us if we are loyal followers of Christ
- IX. Candidate should know, understand and be willing to practice Specific Standards for CLC Candidates

Specific Standards for CLC Candidates

1. Participation in Mass twice a week with the aim to deepen spiritual life and to understand and appreciate the Eucharist more fully
2. Understand, appreciate and practice: Prayer, Examination of Conscience, and the Sacrament of Penance
3. Participation in CLC’s Annual Retreat and workshops
4. Serious weekly participation in CLC meetings and other social activities
5. Involvement in parish and community-related apostolic activities

6. Brotherly attitude toward members of the community in a spirit of friendliness and truthfulness, with a special effort to be friendly toward the new and younger members of the community
7. Seriousness in studies
8. Christian attitude, spirit of support and cooperation at home
9. Christian example with friends in and out of school
10. A life of high moral values, including chastity, and abstention from tobacco products, alcohol, and all other drugs

Formation Requirements for CLC Full Members

- I. Full Member should have a greater knowledge and deeper understanding of Candidate formation material
- II. The Role of Mary
 - A. Role of Mary stressed very heavily
 - B. Need for Marian devotion
 - C. Understand and be able to explain her role as Mother of the Church
 - D. Belief in her intercessory ability
 - E. Inspired in her example of total giving
 - F. Understand the Annunciation, Immaculate Conception, and Assumption
 - G. Basic knowledge of what a Marian apparition is
 - H. Know how to pray the rosary and its meaning
- III. Christian Leadership
 - A. Importance of Christian leadership
 - B. Different ways and areas a Full Member can be a Christian leader:
 1. School
 2. Sports
 3. Family
 4. CLC
 5. Church
 - C. Willingness to practice a spirit of service
 - D. Leadership by example
 - E. Understand importance of laity in the Church
- IV. Moral Issues
 - A. Discuss and make informed Christian decisions on:

1. Capitol punishment	6. Abortion
2. Just War Theory	7. Euthanasia
3. Human Rights	8. Chastity
4. Prejudice	9. Premarital Sex
5. Use of drugs and alcohol	10. Contraception
 - B. Basic understanding of the Church's teachings relating to "life and love"
- V. Asceticism
 - A. Understand the benefits of a spirit of sacrifice and Christian discipline
 - B. Fasting as a way to work on discipline within ourselves
- VI. Spiritual Exercises
 - A. Understand importance and necessity of attending Full Member Retreat
 - B. Understand process and meaning of retreats

- VII. Mother Church
 - A. Understand basic hierarchy of Church
 - B. Jesus as invisible head of Church with Pope as visible head
 - C. Understand Communion of Saints
 - D. Understand metaphor of Church as Bride of Christ
 - E. Understand role of Church as teacher
 - F. Understand how CLCs are united to Church
 - G. Images of Church from Matthew's Gospel
 - Matthew 13—parables of the sower, yeast, mustard seed
 - H. Loyalty to Church and willingness to defend her

- VIII. Saints
 - A. Understand process of canonization
 - B. Familiarity with lives of Sts. Francis of Assisi, John Bosco, and Ignatius of Loyola
 - C. Familiarity with lives of Sts. Catherine of Siena, Theresa of Avila, Elizabeth Ann Seton
 - D. Study lives of saints; draw inspiration from a favorite saint and develop a devotion to him/her

- IX. Scripture
 - A. Importance of Scripture as Word of God, inspired by Holy Spirit and written by humans
 - B. Frequent Scripture reading
 - C. Get to know Christ's personality and actions through Scripture
 - D. Apply Scripture to lives

- X. God's Love for Us and Self-Esteem
 - A. True spirit of thankfulness achieved only with proper amount of self-esteem
 - B. Appreciate self-worth
 - C. Feel, have confidence in and appreciate God's love individually
 - D. Appreciation and recognition of the gifts God has given us

- XI. Spiritual Dialogue in Context of CLC
 - A. Willingness to discuss spiritual and moral issues with Moderator(s) and other "spiritual director(s)"
 - B. Willingness to discuss issues of spiritual nature with other members of CLC
 - C. Understanding of importance of spiritual direction

- XII. Full Member should know, understand, and be willing to practice Specific Standards for CLC Full Members, in particular:
 - A. Full Member should examine conscience daily
 - B. Full Member should attempt to attend Mass daily
 - C. Full Member should receive Sacrament of Reconciliation monthly

Specific Standards for CLC Full Members

1. Appreciation of the Eucharist through participation in Mass twice a week with serious intent at daily participation
2. Reception of the Sacrament of Penance at least monthly
3. Life of prayer, reading of Scripture, Marian devotion, and spiritual dialogue with the Moderator(s) or other spiritual guide
4. Daily Examination of Conscience

5. Participation in the Full Member Workshop and Retreat, and other CLC retreats and workshops
6. Apostolic involvement and creativity in service to the Church and to the community
7. Brotherly attitude and a spirit of service toward all CLC members through a life of Christian love and truth
8. Permanence in CLC and serious weekly participation, even when upset with one of the members or Moderators
9. Seriousness in studies and an attempt at excellence within personal abilities
10. Responsibility to make every effort to build a positive family life, loving and helping parents and siblings
11. Christ-like example to friends in and out of school, especially at parties, while driving, and in other leisure activities
12. Willingness to declare your belief in premarital chastity, and to develop purity of intentions and healthy sexual control
13. Abstention from tobacco products, alcohol, and all other drugs

Part III

Talk Topics and Outlines

The weekly meetings of a CLC are the central activities in the life of the community. Care should be taken to ensure that these meetings are relevant, age-appropriate, and related to the spiritual life of the youth involved. Meeting time should include prayer, fellowship, business, and spiritual reflection. A sample meeting schedule is as follows:

- 15 minutes: greetings, catching up from last week
- 10 minutes: opening prayer and/or reflection on next week's Gospel
- 15 minutes: talk or reflection
- 45 minutes: small group discussions
- 10 minutes: closing prayer and announcements
followed by social time

The following talk topics should be covered in a general community meeting at least once a year and in depth. General outlines accompany the topics to give the Moderator suggestions as to the contents of a particular talk. These outlines are in no way exhaustive and should be used in the context of other ideas.

- I. Eucharist
 - A. Instituted at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:14- 23, 1 Cor 11:23-25)
 - B. Miracles of the Eucharist
 1. Saints surviving on the Eucharist alone
 2. Host transformed into human heart tissue
 3. Donkey falling on knees before host

4. Host and chalice at first appearance of angel to children at Fatima
5. Film that can be shown: This is My Body...(by Dick and Penny Lord)
- C. Strive to appreciate Eucharist
- D. Strive to appreciate the Mass
- E. Different parts of the Mass
- F. Eyes in our head can't see the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus; we have to learn to see with the eyes of our souls
- G. Action of thanksgiving (Eucharist means "thanksgiving")
- H. Central worship of the Church
- I. Center of our lives
- J. Crucial to Catholic identity
- K. Becoming the Body of Christ for others
- L. Role within CLC

II. Mary

- A. Mother of God; first Christian; ideal disciple
- B. Sacrifice she made by saying "yes" to the will of God
- C. Love of a mother for her son is same love Mary has for us
- D. Apparitions of Mary and their messages (ex. Fatima, Guadalupe, Medjugorje, Lourdes)
- E. Different saints and their devotion to Mary
- F. Ways of devotion to Mary
 1. Rosary
 2. Miraculous Medal
 3. Scapular
- G. Film that can be shown: Bernadette, Miracle of the Sun
- H. Intercessory prayers to Mary; Can a child refuse his mother? Can Jesus refuse our prayers presented to Him by His Mother?
- I. Feasts of Mary
 1. Annunciation (birth of our Lord announced by Gabriel, Luke 1:28-38)
 2. Assumption (Mary's body and soul assumed to heavenly glory, Pope Pius XII, 1950)
 3. Coronation (Mary crowned as Queen of Heaven)
 4. Immaculate Conception (Mary was conceived without sin, Pope Pius IX, 1854)
- J. Need to turn over our lives to God as Mary did
- K. Role within CLC

III. Reconciliation

- A. Different titles of Sacrament (Penance, Reconciliation, Confession) with explanations
- B. Not priest, but Jesus who forgives sins; priest is in the person of Christ
- C. Shouldn't be approached with fear, but joy
- D. Seal of confessional—how it impacts priest, penitent, and anyone who overhears another's confession
- E. No unforgivable sin—Judas would have been forgiven
- F. Explain actual process of confession
- G. St. John Vianney and Padre Pio and the role of the Sacrament in their lives and the miracles associated with them and the Sacrament
- H. Role within CLC

IV. Prayer

- A. Purpose of prayer (talking and listening to God)
- B. Is a friend really a friend if you don't desire and make the effort to spend time with him, talk to him and listen to him?
- C. Forms of prayer
 1. Vocal

- 2. Silent
 - D. Types of prayer (ACTS)
 - 1. Adoration (praising)
 - 2. Contrition (apologizing/confessing)
 - 3. Thanksgiving (thanking)
 - 4. Supplication (asking)
 - E. Most common prayer is petition; we often neglect the other types
 - F. God answers all prayers; sometimes says “no”
 - G. God takes care of our needs, not necessarily our wants
 - H. Intercessory: Mary, saints, Guardian Angel
 - I. Times to pray
 - J. Examination of conscience
 - K. Song as prayer (“He who sings prays twice”)
 - L. Our lives as a prayer
- V. Truth
- A. Importance of truth
 - B. Truth relates to trust; need for openness; no masks
 - C. Trust relates to openness
 - D. Lies kill; nothing destroys a community faster than lies
 - E. Trust exercise and games
 - F. John 8:32 and other Scripture passages
 - G. Truth leads to greater faith in Christ
- VI. Freedom
- A. Look at society’s “do what you want” version
 - B. Freedom as ultimate expression of saying “yes” to God
 - C. True freedom isn’t ability to say “yes” or “no,” but it is the ability to do God’s will
 - D. Leads to hope, which strengthens our relationship with the Father
 - E. Understanding of and ability to make responsible choices
 - F. Understanding of inordinate attachments
 - G. We are free until we sin
- VII. Care
- A. The most visible sign of love for God and neighbor
 - B. Stems from compassion (being one with the needs of others)
 - C. Flows out of our desire to sacrifice as Christ did
 - D. Importance of care in families and communities
 - E. Contrast Christian care with worldly definitions of love
 - F. “They will know we are Christians by our love...”
 - G. Relationship to truth and freedom
- VIII. Christian Values
- A. Moral scruples
 - B. Necessity to live moral life
 - C. Challenge ourselves and our brothers in community
 - D. The Church’s teaching on its own moral authority
- IX. Sexuality
- A. Emphasis on it as a gift from God
 - B. Procreative and unitive dimensions
 - C. Call to chastity for all Christians—that includes our thoughts, words and actions
 - D. Avoiding pornography

1. Television/video
 2. Print materials (magazines, books, etc.)
 3. Music (lyrics, artists, etc.)
 - E. Adolescent development, feelings of normalcy (brief biology review often helpful)
 - F. Experimental/unusual urges/disorders
 - G. Relationships/dating
 - H. Church's teaching on premarital sex and masturbation
 - I. Importance of purity and chaste relationships
 - J. Mutual support and openness regarding sexual issues
- X. Family Life
- A. Christian attitude and witness to the family
 - B. Conflicts between CLC and family (priorities)
 - C. Mutual support in any family conflicts
 - D. Responsibility to the family
 - E. Holy Family as a prime example (Jesus, Mary and Joseph)
- XI. Christian Leadership
- A. Characteristics of leaders (in general)
 - B. Characteristics of Christian leaders; lead as Christ did
 1. as a sign of God's friendship
 2. with the leadership style of a friend
 3. by His deeds, not just His words
 - C. Highlight the differences between the two leaders, worldly v. Christian
 - D. Focus on Christ as the ultimate Christian leader
 - E. Development of Christian leadership qualities
- XII. Brotherly Love
- A. Openness
 1. Positive communication
 2. Support & challenge
 - B. Peer Ministry
 1. Mutual support in the community
 2. Examples to one another
 - C. H.U.G.S.
 1. We are **H**uman, in need of warmth and care
 2. We are **U**nited, one in community
 3. We are **G**ifted, loved and graced by God
 4. We are **S**acred, filled with life
- XIII. Spirit and Life of Service
- A. Faith filled with action is central to Jesus' Gospel
 - B. James 2:14-26
 - C. Spirit of service
 1. Sacrifice for others
 2. Generosity of heart and time and talents
 3. Jesus' humility is the key to our work
- XIV. CLC—Identity and Meaning
- A. Eucharistic Christ at our center
 1. Bound together through the Eucharist
 2. Spiritual life crucial to growth
 - a. for individual
 - b. for community

- B. Ultimate values as basis for our moral life
 - 1. Truth
 - a. openness
 - b. Jesus as the ultimate Truth
 - c. leads to deeper faith
 - 2. Freedom
 - a. ability to make responsible choices
 - b. leads to hope
 - 3. Care
 - a. the most visible sign of love for God and neighbor
 - b. stems from compassion
 - c. flows out of desire to sacrifice as Christ did
 - C. Small communities of faith
 - 1. Positive peer pressure
 - 2. Mutual support
 - 3. Unconditional acceptance
- XV. Public Morality
- A. All issues in the public forum are “moral issues”
 - B. Life issues
 - 1. Abortion
 - 2. Euthanasia
 - 3. Criminal Justice/Capital Punishment
 - 4. War and Peace
 - 5. Social Justice/Prejudice/Human Rights
 - C. Cardinal Bernardin “Seamless Garment” metaphor
 - D. The political arena/public policy
 - E. God’s justice v. human justice
- XVI. Sacrifice of the Mass
- A. Central act of worship in the Catholic Church
 - B. Draws community to one another and to Christ
 - C. Liturgy of the Word (God speaks through Scripture and teaching)
 - D. Liturgy of the Eucharist (God feeds us physically and spiritually)
 - E. Moment of adoration of God
 - F. Eucharist is an act of thanksgiving (“Eucharist” means “thanksgiving”)
 - G. Provides atonement for our sins
 - H. Focus prayer during Mass
- XVII. Saints
- A. Look at saints in general/meaning and importance of saint in the Church and in our lives
 - B. Lives of particularly inspiring/relevant saints for youth:
 - 1. St. Francis of Assisi / St. Catherine of Siena
 - 2. St. Ignatius of Loyola / St. Theresa of Avila
 - 3. St. John Bosco / St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
 - 4. Early saints: Sts. John the Baptist, Joseph, Peter, Apostles
 - 5. More modern saints: Sts. Maria Goretti, Maximilian Kolbe, Dominic Savio, Thomas Aquinas, Therese of Lisieux, John Vianney, Kateri Tekikwitha, Edith Stein, Aloysius Gonzaga etc.
 - C. Great conversions (Sts. Paul, Augustine, etc.)
 - D. Encouraged to study lives of saints and choose one that inspires them
 - E. We are saints/a call to live a life of true sainthood
- XVIII. Communication in Relationships

- A. Openness and truth: keys to all healthy relationships
- B. Breaking the ice to discussion and sharing
- C. Sharing feelings and needs (deeply when prudent and necessary)
- D. Affirmation/confrontation
- E. Verbal and non-verbal communication

XIX. Scripture

- A. Christ's personality and actions as reflected in the Gospels
- B. Must know Christ in order to imitate Him
- C. Listen to the Word of God and ways to apply it to our lives
- D. Need to do extra reading of Bible outside of Mass setting
- E. Inspired by Holy Spirit, written by humans
- F. 2 Tim 3:16-17

XX. Christ in our lives

- A. God: vertical and horizontal dimension
- B. God's presence within community
 - 1. Through commitments to Church and one another
 - 2. Actions of giving to others
 - 3. Giving until it hurts
- C. Reaching God
 - 1. Through the Sacraments/Eucharistic devotion
 - 2. Working on our relationship/personal reflection
 - 3. Prayer life
- D. Reaching God through apostolic work
 - 1. Building a better Kingdom
 - 2. Contemplatives in action
 - 3. Changes of the heart
 - 4. Renewed perspective (Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37)

XXI. Self-Esteem

- A. Love
 - 1. Intimacy; moving from the house of fear to the house of love
 - 2. Our inability to give
 - 3. Our brokenness/pieces
 - 4. Unconditional care (Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-31)
- B. Self-esteem and Reconciliation
 - 1. Finding peace in God/our relationship
 - 2. Healing our relationship
 - 3. Building our goodness/esteem through penance
- C. Challenge of openness
 - 1. Moving on regardless of past
 - 2. Build a stronger "you" concept
- D. Appreciation of gifts God has given you
 - 1. "God doesn't make junk"

XXII. Scripture and Tradition/Church Authority

- A. Old Testament
 - 1. Written Word of God
 - 2. Before the birth of Jesus

3. God's saving actions/lives of the "chosen" people
 4. Preparing themselves for the coming of the Savior
 5. History of Abraham's call/Moses/Prophets
 6. The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed
- B. New Testament
1. Birth, life, teaching, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 2. How do these matter in our lives
 3. The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed
- C. Sacred Tradition
1. The presence of the Holy Spirit
 2. Teaching, life, worship—throughout generations
 3. Early Christians passed traditions down, had no New Testament
(2 Thess 2:15, 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 1:9)
- D. Sacred Scripture
1. Revelation
 2. Teaching authority of the Church
 3. Divine inspiration

XXIII. Ecumenism

- A. Understanding Protestant faiths
- B. Being able to explain Catholic faith, especially on misunderstood issues
(e.g. role of Mary, Scripture and Tradition, the Pope, saints, Eucharist)
- C. Vatican II calls all Catholics to work toward restoration of the unity of the Church

XXIV. Vocations

- A. Call of God in our lives
 1. Calls in Old Testament (Moses, Abraham, Jeremiah, Elijah...)
 2. Calls in New Testament (Levi, Peter, 12 Apostles, woman at the well, Great Commission...)
- B. Different vocations in Church (single, married, consecrated, religious vocations)
- C. Many parts, one body (Eph 4:1-14, 1 Cor 12:1-31)

Part IV

Meeting Ideas for Catholic Life Communities

The following are ideas for non-traditional meetings that can be used at Moderators' discretion. These ideas are ideally used to supplement the regular CLC meetings, on an infrequent basis.

1. Show a movie clip or an entire movie (usually over two weeks), then discuss with the community. Examples: Dead Man Walking (discussion about life issues)
Romero (discussion about the persecuted church and social justice)
Gattica (discussion about technology and life issues)
2. Pass around a discussion starting book, like The Book of Questions, or the youth ministry oriented Would You Rather..., or Sentence Starters and have the community members read a question or situation aloud, then share their thoughts and ideas (and questions)

related to each topic. (Note: Moderators should be familiar with these books before trying this activity.)

3. Invite one of the parish priests or religious to attend the meeting and hold a question and answer session, asking the guest “anything you’ve always wanted to ask, but were afraid to ask...”
4. Take the community into the chapel or worship space, and hold a prayer session or prayer service, where they can pray silently for a period of time or where the community can raise intentions aloud together.
5. Have the members bring their instruments. Have extra, simple-to-play instruments on hand for the non-musicians in the group. Hold a “jam session” where the community can play songs, Christian and/or worthwhile secular. Culminate with a praise and worship style portion.
6. Ask one of the parish priests to celebrate Mass with the community. Have the members do the readings, bring up the gifts, serve as acolytes, and write and/or read the intentions. Have one or two organize the music for the Mass. If applicable, ask the priest to target his homily in a particular way to the community as needed.
7. Take the community out for dessert, such as ice cream or slurpies. If possible, arrange ahead of time for the church van. Perhaps invite the Youth Minister and ask if the youth ministry program can “treat” the community.
8. Have a guest speaker, such as a former Moderator, former CLCer or another adult in the parish who works in the youth ministry program. Follow the same general outline for a meeting, but let the speaker plan the talk and the discussion.
9. Hold a community penance service. Invite a parish priest and a guest priest (who the students do not know) to hear confessions. Set the scene for a comfortable, reflective mood. Be sure to remind the students how to go to confession, and be sure to provide time for a good examination of conscience.
10. *For Lent:* Before the season of Lent starts, discuss with the community the ideas of sacrifice and the spirit of penance that the season brings. Be sure to mention to traditional disciplines the Church encourages us all to consider during Lent—prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Give the students time to break apart and spread out silently, to decide what they want to “give up” for Lent, as well as what kind of additional prayer and almsgiving they would like to do. Once they all return, encourage them to share their Lenten resolutions with each other. Also consider having the entire community brainstorm and decide on what will be done as a community in the three Lenten disciplines (e.g. the community will close every meeting with a Hail Mary, will “give up” playing foosball before the meeting, and will bring a canned good to every meeting which will be offered to the church’s food pantry).

11. Organize a service project in which the community can help a particular ministry in the church. Ask ministry chairpersons for ideas of things they need done which are feasible for a CLC meeting. Examples: cutting and creating red ribbon pins for the AIDS Walk, decorating the church hall for upcoming events, bringing and wrapping Christmas presents for local needy children, or washing and cleaning out the church van.
12. Break the community into “prayer partners” or “triads” in which the members spend time with just one or two other members, getting to know each other better, and sharing prayer requests with each other. Have these groups meet every few weeks, “checking in” with each other. Encourage them to pray for each other during the week, and perhaps even call or contact each other regularly.
13. Have a team development night, where the group works on team building exercises, such as the trust fall, trust walks, and the human knot. If appropriate, you can include some project to accomplish together, such as making a collage, painting a mural or building a cross. To ensure teamwork, limit some members of the group in their facilities, e.g. some may not talk, others are blindfolded, some are unable to use their arms or legs. For a silent night and a discussion on communication, let no one talk while working on the project or the exercises, then “debrief” by sharing how difficult it was to be silent, and how it was everyone communicated.
14. Devote a night solely to advertising and the media. Bring in a collection of ads, and/or have the students bring in several ads, then analyze them for content, especially sexuality, social pressure, and moral issues. Perhaps prepare a video of tv commercial clips, with discussion to support the strategies employed by the advertisers. Discuss the effects ads have on us related to body image, lifestyle and “coolness.”
15. Hold a Pro-Life night. Discuss the church’s teaching on life issues after watching a pro-life video such as Hard Truth, The Silent Scream or Ultrasound: A Window to the Womb. Many of these videos have User’s Guides, which have questions and ideas for group discussions. Be sure to give handouts with names and numbers of abortion alternatives, such as crisis pregnancy centers and post-abortion counseling facilities. Note—it is wise to warn your group ahead of time that you will be watching this kind of video!
16. Hold an open gym/game night, when students can play basketball or other sports in the gym or other spacious area. If weather permits, play kickball, wiffleball or ultimate frisbee outside. Be sure to have a board game option (complete with Moderator) for those students who would rather not or can not play active sports.
17. Divide the community into groups and direct them to prepare and act out a skit. Give each group a different Scripture passage and have them act it out as if it were to happen today. Examples include: the Good Samaritan, the woman at the well, the Prodigal Son, Adam and Eve’s fall, and the battle between David and Goliath. To add some humor, inform the group they must include some specific items in their skit, such as community

jokes or funny social references, or even a specific prop with which they have been provided. Provide elements of costumes if possible. Be sure to take pictures!

18. Divide the community by commitment level (Members, Candidates, and Full Members). Pass out their commitment promises and/or Specific Standards for their commitments. Have them review their commitments, to “check in” and see how they are living them out. Provide time for discussion and questions. Give time at the end for them to brainstorm ways to overcome any obstacles in living their promises. Be sure to check in for the next few weeks about these ideas.
19. Let students plan the meeting for a change. Perhaps have the Board give the Moderator(s) the “night off” by leading the meeting. The meeting agenda must be planned ahead and should not be a secret from the Moderator(s). If the traditional meeting model is followed, any of the Seniors, Full Members, and Board Members can give a talk or reflection and enlist colleagues to lead the discussions.
20. Break into discussion groups for the entire meeting, allowing everyone in the group a chance to share. Strategically plan the groups, being sure everyone can handle two hours with them. Perhaps divide by grade level or commitment level, to keep everyone on a similar level of sharing.

Part V

CLC Constitution

(revised and approved as of March 1, 1987)

I. NAME AND PURPOSE

The name is Catholic Life Community (CLC). Our purpose in establishing this community is three-fold: First, to help its members become active Catholics, to grow spiritually, and to achieve a better understanding of their faith. Second, to aid _____ Catholic Church, home of said community, in apostolic activities and other services it can provide to this parish, other represented parishes, and the general community at large. Third, to provide a place where the members can enjoy positive friendships, and enjoy themselves through social and recreational activities in a Christian atmosphere.

II. MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall consist of MEMBERS, CANDIDATE MEMBERS, and FULL MEMBERS. Requirements for membership are as follows:

A. MEMBERS

1. Be at least a rising high school freshman, although exceptions may be made for admission of junior high students through the decision of the CLC Board and the Moderators.
2. Be an active participant in CLC for a period of no less than three months.
3. Express the desire to become a Member to one of the members of the Board of Directors or to one of the Moderators.
4. Complete formation program required for new Members.
5. Agree to live by the Constitution and Specific Standards accepted by the community for Members.
6. Be willing to make a Member Promise in CLC.
7. Be willing to pay the established dues unless these have been waived by the Board of Directors due to special circumstances.
8. Be approved to become a Member by the Board of Directors.

B. CANDIDATE MEMBERS

1. Be at least in the fall semester of the freshman year of high school.
2. Be an active Member in CLC for a period of no less than three months.
3. Express the desire to become a Candidate Member to the Board of Directors or to one of the Moderators.
4. Complete formation program required for new Candidates.
5. Have participated in an Annual Retreat or other formation workshop.
6. Agree to live by the Constitution and Specific Standards accepted by the community for Candidate Members.
7. Be willing to make a Candidate Promise in CLC.
8. Be willing to pay the established dues unless these have been waived by the Board of Directors due to special circumstances.
9. Be approved to become a Candidate Member by the Board of Directors.

C. FULL MEMBERS

1. Be at least a high school sophomore.
2. Be an active Candidate in CLC for a period of no less than three months.
3. Express the desire to become a Full Member to the Board of Directors or to one of the Moderators.
4. Complete formation program required for Candidates who wish to become Full Members.
5. Be willing to renew their Baptismal promises; also be a confirmed Catholic in dioceses whose age requirement for Confirmation is 14 years or younger.
6. Have participated in a Full Member Retreat or workshop during the year in which they were approved and each year thereafter.
7. Have participated in the Annual Retreat and/or other formation workshops.

8. Agree to live by the Constitution and Specific Standards accepted by the community for Full Members.
9. Be willing to make a Full Member Promise in CLC.
10. Be willing to pay the established dues unless these have been waived by the Board of Directors due to special circumstances.
11. Be approved to become a Full Member by the Board of Directors.

III. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors shall consist of:

1. President
2. Vice President
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer

A. ELECTION PROCEDURES

These officers shall be elected by the Community to serve for a period of one year. Each shall be elected on a separate secret ballot. No officer may be re-elected for two consecutive terms in the same office. Election is by vote on the part of the Candidates and Full Members. Active Members may, at the discretion of the Board, attend and vote at an Election Workshop or any other meeting where elections for the Board of Directors take place. There will be no absentee ballots and only those participating at the workshop may vote. A Full Member, absent with the consent of the Board of Directors, may be elected to office. Only Full Members may be elected to the offices of President and Vice President. Candidates and Full Members may be elected to the offices of Secretary and Treasurer.

There will be no debates or campaigns for offices in CLC. At the Election Workshop there will be no nominations. Each member present will pray and cast a secret ballot. An election after the first ballot requires a two-thirds majority vote. If majority is not reached after the first ballot, the top three candidates will be selected, asked if they will serve, voted on, and elected by two-thirds majority on the second ballot. If majority is not reached, in the third ballot simple majority will suffice. If majority is not achieved after the fourth ballot is complete, the process will start from the beginning with additional discussion and prayer time allowed, always following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

The Board of Directors shall also include the following non-elected positions:

5. Immediate past President(s)
6. Moderator(s)

The Board of Directors shall have the power to appoint additional members to the Board of Directors with equal voting power. As leaders of the community they are entrusted with the faith of its members to make decisions which will help the community and its members grow in the Christian spirit.

The Board is to meet no less than once every five weeks. At these meetings the Board will deliberate on and approve of activities, rules, and regulations for the community. In general, they are to discuss the progress of the community and to make appropriate plans. The Board will, furthermore, be charged with the responsibility of considering and approving individuals to become Members, Candidate Members and Full Members. The Board of Directors may also propose amendments to this Constitution after a two-thirds approval by the Full Members and active Candidates. This proposal shall be forwarded to the Director of Youth Apostles and the Women's Apostolate to Youth for their consideration and final approval by their Councils.

B. SPECIFIC DUTIES OF BOARD MEMBERS

Moderator(s) – act as advisor(s) to the Board of Directors to assure that the community and its leaders maintain themselves within the Catholic Life Community spirit proposed by the Constitution and Specific Standards of the community.

President – presides at meetings; conducts the affairs of the meetings; heads the Board of Directors; is ex-officio member of all appointed committees; oversees the unity and Christian spirit of the members; provides leadership and Christian example to the members; maintains close contact with the Moderator(s).

Vice President – assists the President in all duties and has all the powers of the President in case of absence or resignation; is coordinator of apostolic activities; provides leadership and Christian example.

Secretary – takes notes of all Board meetings and general meetings; schedules Board meetings; keeps attendance records; carries out special requests of the President; provides leadership and Christian example.

Treasurer – handles all financial affairs pertaining to the community under the guidance of the Moderator(s); chairs fundraising projects; provides leadership and Christian example.

IV. MONTHLY DUES

Dues shall be determined by the Board of Directors of each community. The money collected from these will be used to cover some of the expenses of the community and its projects.

If dues are not paid the Treasurer will notify the member. If, after three (3) months no dues have been collected from the member involved, the President will be notified and the necessary action shall be taken. Dues may be waived by the Board of Directors under special circumstances.

V. MEETINGS

Meetings of the community will be held weekly at the designated place, day and time. Meetings are one and one half hours. These meetings are open to all members and others interested in learning about CLC meetings through participation. In general, the format of the meetings should include the following items:

1. Fellowship
2. Opening prayer, scriptural reading, spiritual reflection
3. Activity (Liturgy, talk, group discussion)
4. Formation program
5. Community business
6. Closing prayer
7. Fellowship

Members and Candidates will meet on a regular basis for instruction. The subject matter of instructions will center around Christian spiritual and moral development, apostolic development, and personal and community growth. Other areas of discussion may be clarification of Church Doctrine, the vocation of the student life, and the practical application of Christian principles of everyday life.

VI. COMMITTEES

Committees shall be appointed either at general meeting or by special action on the part of the Board of Directors when necessary. All committees shall be subject to review by the Board. They shall report on the progress of their task on a regular basis.

VII. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution shall be sent to the President. The President will then present the proposal to the Board of Directors in their next meeting. If there are no major objections to the proposed amendment, then the President shall present it in a general meeting to be voted upon by the Full Members and the active Candidates. A two-thirds approval vote is required for amendment to pass, prior to final approval by the Youth Apostles Institute and the Women's Apostolate to Youth.

Part VI

Goals and Schedule for CLC Election Workshop

Goals:

- To reflect on the meaning of Christian service and Christian leadership.
- To appreciate the work of the Officers and the entire community throughout the previous year, especially the commitment of the senior Full Members.
- To select the Officers of the community for one year in a prayerful, non-political fashion.
- To teach about the role of the Holy Spirit in a Christian selection and to remind them about the prayerful way in which a “Conclave” is conducted.
- To teach a spirit of openness, not biased according to friendships or popularity
- To avoid political campaigns, personal appeals to a position, or endorsements. To avoid the terms “winner” and “loser.” Also, to minimize the negative feelings of those not selected and to stress everyone’s importance in a community which is the “Body of Christ.”
- To redefine and discuss the specific goals and the needs of the group for the following year.
- To provide the group with an opportunity to pray, to share with one another, and to have fun.

Overall Schedule:

1. Prayer and reflection on Christian service:

Jesus was a man for others
Jesus washing the Apostle’s feet
Jesus dying on the Cross
Jesus sending His disciples to spread the faith
Our role in Jesus’ plan & our role in the Church

2. Comments about Officers and senior Full Members by the Moderator(s)

Bring out all the positive virtues, attitudes and activities they have been involved in. Try to be as specific as possible, sticking closely to the truth and avoiding comments which don’t reflect what the group has experienced. Sometimes a member may want to contribute a specific comment. The Moderator(s) must be careful, since a negative criticism could easily be expressed even with the best of intentions. The Moderator(s) must be ready to intervene, bringing the group to a positive tone, yet avoiding to put down the member who made the negative comment. It is beneficial to stress the perseverance of the senior Full Members to their commitment. It is especially good to praise a member who has not been an officer, yet has been very faithful to his

commitment, and whose presence in CLC has been consistent. Other less consistent seniors may need to be rescued with comments as to their positive commitments outside CLC which have been prevented their presence in the community. Knowledge of each person by the Moderator(s) is crucial in making effective and constructive comments.

3. Election proper with breaks afterwards

The Board of Directors shall consist of:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Election Procedures (from CLC Constitution):

These officers shall be elected by the Community to serve for a period of one year. Each shall be elected on a separate secret ballot. No officer may be re-elected for two consecutive terms in the same office. Election is by vote on the part of the Candidates and Full Members. Active Members may, at the discretion of the Board, attend and vote at an Election Workshop or any other meeting where elections for the Board of Directors take place. There will be no absentee ballots and only those participating at the workshop may vote. A Full Member, absent with the consent of the Board of Directors, may be elected to office. Only Full Members may be elected to the offices of President and Vice President. Candidates and Full Members may be elected to the offices of Secretary and Treasurer.

There will be no debates or campaigns for offices in CLC. At the Election Workshop there will be no nominations. Each member present will pray and cast a secret ballot. An election after the first ballot requires a two-thirds majority vote. If majority is not reached after the first ballot, the top three candidates will be selected, asked if they will serve, voted on, and elected by two-thirds majority on the second ballot. If majority is not reached, in the third ballot simple majority will suffice. If majority is not achieved after the fourth ballot is complete, the process will start from the beginning with additional discussion and prayer time allowed, always following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

N.B. Sometimes it is better to hold the elections on Saturday morning, especially if the group is very tired. The one advantage of early elections is that some members may be less influenced by the last minute leadership of a member who has not been dedicated throughout the year.

4. Goals for the year, community sharing, and times for prayer, sacramental participation, and play should be included during the rest of the weekend.

Part VII

Developing A Youth Community

(originally published in Reaching Youth Effectively
by Eduardo Azcarate and Beatriz Hernandez-Rynne, 1981;
rewritten August 2001)

“Circumstances invite us to make special mention of the young. Their increasing number and growing presence in society and likewise the problems assailing them should awaken in everyone the desire to offer them with zeal and intelligence the gospel ideal as something to be known and lived. And on the other hand, young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution, and we ourselves have often manifested our full confidence in them.”

-Pope Paul VI

A. Adult Moderators

Adult leaders are the key to the development of a youth community. Their example, as well as their sensitivity, empathy, authenticity, warmth, and the ability to love and counsel youth are all essential traits they must possess to do this kind of youth ministry. Moreover, adult Moderators must meet the needs of young people, listen to them, learn ways to address basic issues of growth, and promote Christian values.

Moderators must spend time in personal and small group discussions. Closeness needs to be kept alive through open communication. Individual and group discussions need to focus both on lending support and developing mutual Christian love for all community members.

The effectiveness of the adult Moderator helps resolve the fears of opening up and the struggles involved in personal change that some kids experience. It is through the guidance of the Moderator that young people begin to realize the need for community support, the advantages of community love and the joy of experiencing the Church as a group of friends witnessing together the same Christ.

To bring youngsters closer to Christ is a most beautiful and rewarding apostolate. The best way to accomplish this is through a community of love. Much depends on a Moderator, of whom much is asked and demanded. But the Spirit always gives the strength that is needed.

B. Discovering Potential Members

The first practical question in the formation of a youth community is how to find potential members. Community certainly won't work if it is compulsory. Forcing adolescents against their will to participate in a group may be achieved one time but then he or she will quit. If one starts with an attitude of resentment toward a group, the affiliation will not be a lasting one. It will also be very difficult to engage youth if the invitation is made impersonally. Parish announcements and individual letters to people

the adult Moderator does not know usually do not work out well. The following are suggestions for beginning a youth community:

1. Teaching is an ideal setting. From day to day, the teacher begins to develop a personal relationship with the youngsters. Volunteering an hour a day, or an hour a week, to teach a class, perhaps a religious education class, can give the adult exposure to a number of youngsters. With the idea of community in mind and with some effort, a group may begin to emerge. The adult may suggest a get-together to discuss some particular issue, and openly point out in class or at the get-together the reasons for a community. The need for openness, for support, and for positive friendship can be stressed. Ideally, with some active listening on the part of the adult, he or she may begin to hear the need for a group as suggested by one of the remarks of the group and agreeing to additional meetings could constitute the first stage of the community.
2. A weekend retreat or workshop for a class, school or parish could be organized. Youngsters experience a joyful closeness when they go away together. Some of their defensive reactions are dropped and they tend to be more accepting of one another. They realize better the meaning of friendship and mutual support, they understand what “church” can be, and how reflection and fun can exist together. In this kind of atmosphere they may begin to realize the need for life in community and the need for a Christian life.

A weekend retreat should be put together keeping in mind the need for reflection, reconciliation, awareness of Christian values and the need for mutual support within a Christian community. Every weekend of this nature should in some way reflect the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which contain the elements for discernment and conversion. However, the spirit of the Exercises has to be adapted to the needs of each particular youth group.

The retreat will hopefully open up the mind of young people to the idea that faith is to be lived in a group and that faith does not survive without the loving support of others. The weekend can then be followed up with meetings that can constitute the beginnings of a new youth community.

Overnight experiences bring people close together and we encourage many such activities for the healthy survival of a group. However, sometimes it is not possible to do so and in those cases a one-day workshop built in a fashion similar to a retreat, but without the same length or depth, can also prove to be a valuable tool in getting a group off the ground.

3. Service. Involving youth in apostolic activities can make a group attractive to other youngsters. Youth enjoy being active and working together. Working within a parish structure can facilitate the number of activities available. (examples include helping in the CCD or other religious education program as teacher-aides, assisting the parish as audio-visual coordinators, baby-sitting at Masses, participating in parish clean-up, helping with clothing and food drives, and helping fund-raisers, such as carnivals, Christmas tree sales, etc.) Service activities not only help bring the youngsters together, but bring home the meaning

of sacrifice for the Christian life. The adult Moderator must verbalize for the group the relevance of these activities and the meaning they add to one's Christian growth. It should be understood in terms of practical charity; as strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between those who work together, and through their mutual efforts becoming closer to Christ and their own community of faith.

4. Recreational Activities. Youngsters develop an intense community spirit through sports, trips, dances, and other informal social activities. The life of a family must extend itself beyond a once-a-week meeting. Fellowship can only develop when all the needs of a community are met, including the recreational ones. This element, however, in the absence of others or overdone, could distort the purpose of a community or change the community into a group or a club. When done with prudence so that the same spiritual and moral standards are followed in every aspect of community development, recreational activities can bring new members to a community.

C. Discovering Natural Leaders

At the beginning of a youth community, it is helpful to seek out leadership among potential members. Adolescents who have the gift of leadership can facilitate the development of the group. Adults working with youth should never aim at "screening" anyone, but it is important to discover youngsters who can be very helpful to our work and who can provide the kind of image the community is trying to promote. The Moderator should recognize negative leadership and avoid it, in order to prepare against unnecessary labels or criticisms of the group being formed.

In general, the youth communities benefit from leaders who are open, honest, and, above all, truthful. These youngsters are typically able to express themselves to other youth and to the adult Moderator, thus exhibiting the traits sought to foster in the community as a whole.

Some of the youth have natural leadership qualities, but tend to think they don't need a community. Moderators can challenge these youngsters by pointing out what they have to offer the community and what they will receive in return. If converted, these youth are tremendously helpful and reliable.

Good youngsters with leadership qualities must also be sought among those who feel oppressed, insecure, or think of themselves as outcasts because of their academics or their goodness. Many of these youth hold a treasure and are invaluable to the work of the Church. They have to be discovered and recruited by the adults, who must realize that these types of personalities require extra time and attention until they are able to realize their worth. Once they do, their work is incredibly effective.

Christian leadership must also be discovered in students who enjoy being serviceable and who easily recognize the needs of others because of their sensitivity. They add an important dimension to the community. They can always be observed working and volunteering to do extra jobs on retreats and other activities. They even sometimes beg to be picked to do work that requires sacrifice.

It is ideal to start out with some youngsters who have undergone a personal conversion to a Christian way of life. They balance others in the group, and remind everyone in the group, including the Moderators, that the community must be forgiving, loving, and understanding of human failure and weakness. Their leadership is particularly important, and even though they might come across to others as “radical” or “pushy,” they facilitate the Christian spirit within a group.

D. Parental Support

It is the obligation of the Moderators to always be supportive and understanding of families. It is imperative to never pressure an adolescent against family rules and ideals. One should attempt to point out the positive reasons to be found in parental decisions and encourage youngsters to reconcile themselves to parents, accepting their authority. The Church begins within the family and parents are special instruments of God in the formation of their children. Each family has its own style and idiosyncrasies, and Moderators must respect that. Interfering with parents should never be the role of the Moderator. Criticizing parents serves no purpose, except to ultimately alienate the adolescents who, though at times may criticize their own parents, do love them and care for them. The Moderator’s role may be most helpful to the youth if he or she listens sympathetically and tries to direct his or her own thinking on what may be happening in the family.

Exceptions are made in those instances in which parents ask Moderators’ advice and want to involve them in what is happening in the family. The Moderator should prudently state his or her opinions when only when asked, but remind parents that the ultimate decision is in their hands.

Another exception is in those clear instances in which the conduct of parents is not in line with Church teaching, especially in the area of religious participation, alcohol abuse and matters of sexuality. Moderators must make it a point to always “love the sinner, and despise the sin,” but make the Church teaching clear, presented as pastorally as possible. Even in these cases, Moderators must encourage the unconditional acceptance of parents, a nonjudgmental approach, and an attitude of forgiveness if the situation calls for it. Fortunately, these are rare exceptions, as most parents are gracious, cooperative and willing to help in any way they can.

Involving parents too heavily in the community can present problems. Youngsters want the group to be their own. If parents get too excited or involved in the community and its formation, the youngsters often feel that the commitment is their parents’ and not their own. This can result in the youngster becoming critical and perhaps even stopping his or her participation.

Sometimes parents object a bit to the many activities, apostolates, late hours and other time-consuming aspects of the community. If the parent prevents this kind of involvement, it usually results in the youngster finding it hard to integrate into the group, feeling left out and perhaps quitting. If the youngster struggles for his or her independence through the community, it can strengthen his or her commitment to the group.

One particular problem is that some parents punish poor school performance or bad behavior at home by not allowing their son or daughter to come to a youth community meeting or a special retreat or workshop. When this is done, it often confuses the youngster, and, in many cases, produces resentment against their family, and generally, the abandonment of their commitment.

At the beginning stages of a youth community, parental support is at its most tenuous. Watch carefully for those youngsters who are known to participate as a result of parental pressure. Lovingly, but firmly, make the youngsters aware of the difference between free participation and the wish to please their parents. Work on obtaining an independent acceptance of the community on behalf of the youth; also ask other more experienced or older members to talk with them and share their own previous indecisiveness and confusion. This kind of support indirectly alleviates the fears some adolescents secretly have of identifying with a group outside of their own family and stretching beyond their immediate support group.

E. Continued Participation

It has been observed that youth, in most cases, come to community in pre-formed groups. They need each other's support, however their alliance to one another is fragile, and friendships change through time. If their reason for belonging to the group is based on one single friendship, when that friendship is threatened, so is their membership. It is the work of the Moderator to observe these relations and facilitate a broad base of support for members, so that in the end, their alliance to the group will be the more sturdy relationship.

It is helpful to explain to the youth in the community that adolescent relationships change easily, and that, through community support and continued participation in the group, the tensions that come with these changes can be dealt with more effectively. Community offers sturdiness and parameters to pre-formed friendships and presents to the members many new friendships, based in faith and morals.

A common reason for lack of participation or withdrawal from a youth community is a lost sense of identity, a feeling of not belonging, and a lack of fellowship. Moderators should be aware of this and make every effort to include and reach out to everyone coming to meetings. Encourage older, more established youth to converse with newer, shyer youth. Someone who participates actively then stops for a while may undergo these same feelings mentioned above. The first time the member returns, the Moderator should casually point out that these feelings are not unusual, and that the youth should feel free to discuss them, not judging the group nor deciding to leave again as a result of this one meeting.

It takes a while to rediscover a community sense of identity, to feel close to others, and to be able to open up to others. If, in addition, the reason for the lack of participation is related to deteriorated moral standards, returning to the group can produce guilt or increased anxiety. The member should be embraced and welcomed warmly. Moderators should not put the youth "on the spot" during this first meeting, but should reach out in a particularly sensitive way, offering time to talk one-on-one, perhaps outside of the

meeting. Without the proper adult guidance, this kind of situation is can result in more negative feelings toward the community, or the Church in general.

Another sensitive situation is the “burn out syndrome.” Young people who have given their entire dedication to the community for a long period of time, can feel, after a while, that they are not appreciated, that they have been “used,” or that they are not liked enough. They may then feel estranged from the group, develop the feeling that they don’t belong, and end up quitting the group. These members need the most adult support. Praise for their work must be done privately and publicly, and time must be spent with them on a one-on-one basis. They should be encouraged to share their feelings with the community, particularly with someone who has felt the same feelings before. This can help alleviate the bad feelings and prevent their pulling away from the group.

Yet another major reason for lack of continued participation is a loss of excitement regarding the community. Youth enjoy being active, and youth communities run the risk of stagnation, boredom, and even going through the moods the youth go through. Interestingly, many times there is a loss of excitement after a big event; instead of an increase in spirit, there is many times a depressive flavor and a feeling that it is all over. Use these times to reflect with the group on true values and how real happiness can only be found in God. However, it is important to always be one step ahead of the group and plan the year’s activities in such a way that as soon as one event is being finished, the next one is already in its planning stages.

F. Parish Affiliation

A youth community should, under ideal circumstances, be part of a parish. This is not only a sound idea theologically, but it is also practical and beneficial for both the community and the parish. Identifying the community with a parish lends it identity and stability. Weekly meetings can be held at the parish, and it can be the meeting place of arrival and departure for other activities. In addition, workshops, fundraisers, etc., can be held at the parish.

The Moderators’ job can become easier with the support of the clergy at the parish, especially if one of the parish priests “adopts” the community and can administer the Sacraments on a regular basis as a friend, not just as a priest. Parish support also facilitates parental support, as most families prefer their child to be active in the parish regarding religious involvement. The youth can also be of great help to the parish, serving in various roles in the youth ministry program or with the liturgy itself.

There can also be complications to parish affiliation. A small community of faith does not meet the needs of all the youth in the parish; on the other hand, it may attract some of the more spiritual youth of the parish. Moderators must be sensitive to the tensions of other adults working with youth in the parish, explaining to them the advantages of commitment and small group work, while clarifying the limitations of that work. If there is another youth group in the parish, certain activities can be shared through the year in the same fashion adult organizations in a parish do it, without loss of identity and unnecessary tensions.