

# **Healthy and Holy:**

## **Youth Apostles' Policy on the Prevention of Ministerial Misconduct**

### **Introduction – Inspired to Live Healthy and Holy Lives**

The Youth Apostles Institute believes that every child is a most precious gift of God the Father, made in his divine image and likeness. Young people deserve to be a major focus of the Church's mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world. It is therefore a sacred privilege and honor to serve God's children. Christ is indeed Youth Apostles' model and inspiration, for Jesus welcomed children with a heartfelt embrace and sacrificial love—witness the honored place they have in his kingdom (cf. Mk 10:12-16). Jesus also made it clear to his followers that the purity and holiness of children must be protected, for those who harm children have committed a most serious sin (cf. Mt 18:6).

Thus, it is Youth Apostles' goal to bring Christ to young people and to bring young people to Christ in and through the gifts of the Catholic Church and the community's ministry in that church. Indeed, the community desires to help young people live Christ-like lives. This can only be done by recognizing and respecting the inherent dignity of young people, offering them genuine Christ-like care that is free from self-interest, and nurturing their souls with the treasures of the Catholic faith.

This policy has been developed to

- express Youth Apostles' strong commitment to form its Full Members and Candidates in the virtue of chastity and to train them to build healthy relationships with young people;
- highlight the steps that will be taken to evaluate whether any Full Member, Candidate, or volunteer in a Youth Apostles-sponsored ministry program (hereafter "volunteer") may be at risk of jeopardizing the safety and well-being of the young people they serve;
- state the Institute's commitment to educate young people to recognize and report to appropriate authorities when they have reasonable cause to suspect the abuse of a minor; and
- affirm every Youth Apostle's commitment, when they have reasonable cause to suspect the abuse of a minor by a member of Youth Apostles or any other adult, to report that suspicion to the appropriate civil and diocesan authorities, and to handle allegations in a professional and timely manner.

## **Section I — Ministerial Misconduct: Definitions**

I.1. “Ministerial misconduct” is defined in this document to cover physical abuse or sexual abuse that takes place within a church ministry setting.

I.2. “Physical abuse” is defined as conduct toward a minor in which an adult willfully, that is by other than accidental means, creates or inflicts, or threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon that minor a physical or psychological injury. Careful attention will be paid to conform to local diocesan and civil laws and regulations.

I.3. “Sexual abuse” is defined as

- any conduct toward a minor in which any sexual act is committed, or allowed to be committed upon a child; or,
- behavior or actions of a sexual nature in which an adult willfully, that is by other than accidental means, creates or inflicts, or threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon a minor a physical or psychological injury.

I.4. Sexual abuse, including sexual exploitation, can include, but is not limited to

- sexual intercourse, or anal or oral sex;
- touching of the genitals or intimate parts of a child, or of the perpetrator by a child;
- intentional touching or exposure of one’s genitals or intimate parts in the presence and view of a child;
- showing sexually suggestive objects or pornography; and
- verbal behavior such as sexual propositions or tales of sexual exploits.

## **Section II — Style and Standards of Ministry**

II.1. The ultimate purpose of the Youth Apostles Institute is to inspire young people “to a Christ-like life based on the Lord’s sacrificial love” (*General Statutes of the Youth Apostles Institute* [hereafter GS], 1.9). As such, every Full Member must consistently and regularly minister to young people, in keeping with the vision of the General Statutes (cf. GS 1.30-1.33) (*Internal Guidelines of the Youth Apostles Institute*, 6.1).

II.2. Youth Apostles have a true calling from Christ to serve the young people of the Catholic Church. As a part of this call, they share in the responsibility to give the public a greater confidence that they, along with their volunteers, are committed to standards of excellence, life-long learning and faith formation, and quality professional service. Furthermore, Youth Apostles and volunteers must make the safety of the young people entrusted to them a top priority in their ministries.

II.3. The detailed Youth Apostles Code of Conduct for youth ministry may be found in Appendix A.

### **Section III — Prevention and Evaluation**

III.1. Each Youth Apostle is called to a life of deep prayer and intimacy with Christ that centers upon the Eucharist. It is the community's hope that each Full Member and Candidate grows in holiness and enfleshes the core values of Youth Apostles—truth, freedom, and care—as expressed by the vision of the community's Statutes. This pursuit of holiness for each Full Member includes the commitment to ardently seek the removal of any obstacles that may diminish his response to God's call to holiness by attending the community's annual retreat, taking regular opportunities to share with Full Member brothers, receiving monthly spiritual direction, and regularly receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. This document serves as another reminder to all Youth Apostles to routinely bring to prayer and reflection before God their call to serve young people, carefully examine their ministerial relationships with young people, and pray for the grace necessary to respect and enhance the dignity of the young people they serve. It is intended that such spiritual disciplines will facilitate in each Youth Apostle the openness and accountability necessary to live a holy life, and encourage his selfless service to young people in the name of Christ.

III.2. Prior to his approval to become a Candidate or Full Member in Youth Apostles, an applicant will participate in an interview with a member of the General Council or a Council designee. The purpose of the interview will be to assess whether the applicant is a risk to minors. During the interview, the applicant must demonstrate

- his knowledge and acceptance of the Church's teaching on human sexuality, and a firm resolve to live according to it; and
- a healthy awareness of his underlying sexual desires, routine inclinations, and specific, present attractions.

III.3. Any applicant who fails to demonstrate the maturity thus described will not be approved for candidacy or full membership. If the General Council is unsure whether the applicant possesses said maturity, a second interview by a member of the General Council or a Council designee, who may be a professional from outside the community, will be required before the new commitment can be made. Information gathered during these interviews is confidential, and will not be shared with anyone but members of the General Council.

III.4. Additionally, every Full Member, Candidate, and volunteer will

1. complete and return to the Youth Apostles Director of Child Protection (see III.12.) a form acknowledging his receipt of, knowledge of, and assent to all

relevant civil, diocesan, and Youth Apostles policies and procedures regarding ministerial misconduct (see Appendix B); and

2. fully execute, under oath, a criminal history records request, directing that a copy of his criminal history record be released to the Director of Child Protection if one is not already on file with the applicable diocese. (The Director of Child Protection will independently certify that no Youth Apostle or volunteer is listed in the applicable state child protective services registry.)

III.5. Every Youth Apostle who holds a position of leadership in a parish or other youth ministry program will ensure that all volunteers under his supervision have complied with the steps outlined in III.4, above.

III.6. Youth Apostles professes a radical openness inspired by the gospel message, “the Truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). Confident in Jesus’ pledge to set them free, Full Members discuss their moral failures with their confessors and spiritual directors in their efforts to live virtuous lives. In addition, Full Members are encouraged to discuss these failures with other Full Members—particularly those concerned with their formation—while on the annual retreat and at workshops and the monthly meetings set aside for small group sharing. Likewise, Candidates are encouraged to be open with other Candidates and Full Members. They are expected to discuss their moral failures with those Full Members concerned with their formation.

III.7. When a Youth Apostle discovers that a brother Youth Apostle has developing or ongoing temptations or struggles in the area of chastity that may threaten the health or well-being of the young people that brother serves or the effectiveness of the ministry he is doing, that Youth Apostle should follow Christ’s words to his disciples in Matthew 18. “If your brother sins ..., go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.” The brother who unsuccessfully confronts his offending brother should report that information to the General Director or one of his Assistant Directors.

III.8. Youth Apostles firmly believes that honest, prudent, and routine discussions of one’s sinfulness help remove unhealthy attachments. The community believes that the New Testament command “to confess your sins to one another” (Jas 5:16) is an effective tool in part because one’s openness in revealing any such unhealthy attachments to his brothers in the community is routinely met with

- fraternal *challenge* to change one’s harmful thoughts and/or behaviors;
- communal *support* to see this change through; and
- strong *encouragement* to seek counseling or other support services if necessary.

III.9. Specifically, were the General Director to become aware that a Youth Apostle has a proven struggle with child pornography or recurrent thoughts or dreams of sexually or

physically abusive behavior with minors, or has an unhealthy attachment to or relationships with minors in their ministry, that Youth Apostle will be immediately removed from ministry and encouraged to undergo professional evaluation. Should that Youth Apostle undergo treatment and successfully complete it, the General Director, upon the advice of the Review Board (see Section VIII), shall consider whether it would be appropriate for him to return to active ministry. He may appeal a decision to remove him from ministry to the General Director and General Council. If the General Director, upon the advice of the General Council, upholds a decision to remove the Full Member or Candidate from ministry, he may submit a second appeal to the bishop.

III.10. When coupled with a commitment to notify proper authority—defined as any member of the General Council or the Youth Apostles Director of Child Protection—the spirit and practice of Gospel openness within the community of Youth Apostles promotes accountability, trust in God’s grace, and a desire for greater sanctity, and serves as the first line of defense against immoral and illegal actions toward young people.

III.11. Once each year, on the first fifth-Tuesday of the year, the community will review this policy. This meeting will include an overview of the appropriate diocesan policy and the community’s policy, placing special emphasis on how to recognize possible misconduct and the necessity of reporting all violations to civil and/or ecclesiastical authorities. The meeting will also serve to remind Youth Apostles of the need to share with proper authority, as outlined above, any tendencies toward immoral actions regarding ministry.

III.12. The General Director, in consultation with the General Council, will appoint a Director of Child Protection. This Full Member is responsible for the implementation of this policy, for overseeing all member education, and for ensuring the community’s adherence to this policy, all applicable diocesan policies, and civil laws including reporting requirements.

III.13. The General Director, in consultation with the General Council, will appoint an external review board that will function as a confidential consultative board to the General Director regarding this policy and incidents of sexual misconduct involving Youth Apostles Full Members, Candidates, or volunteers. The guidelines for this review board appear in Section VIII.

#### **Section IV — Education**

IV.1. Youth Apostles encourages young people and their families to become familiar with this policy and their local diocesan policy regarding misconduct toward minors. Therefore, Youth Apostles will help educate the young people in Youth Apostles ministry programs and their parents about their rights and obligations regarding

ministerial misconduct. Youth Apostles will make available copies of the attached “Ministry Style and Code of Conduct,” which details and explains the norms of our style of ministry to the parents of the young people they serve. The code of conduct includes advice on how to engage in prudent conversations and activities with young people and provide a supervised and safe environment on retreats and other overnight activities. It offers standards that help Full Members, Candidates, and volunteers set healthy boundaries and avoid inappropriate behaviors and relationships with minors.

IV.2. In addition, Full Members and Candidates will provide a summary of this policy to the young people and their parents that highlights each Youth Apostle’s commitment to ensure a safe and holy environment for them. The summary will include appropriate contact information. When requested, a full copy of this policy will be given to parents.

IV.3. Every Youth Apostle will attend applicable diocesan education seminars. Youth Apostles will provide, as part of our Candidate formation program and in addition to the membership’s mandatory annual review of ministerial misconduct policies, training in self-awareness, boundary issues, and the recognition of ministerial misconduct. As part of the implementation of this policy, all Youth Apostles will attend either the first annual presentation of these meetings or a make-up meeting sometime within one year of the policy’s adoption.

## **Section V — Response to an Allegation**

V.1. When an allegation is made against a Full Member, Candidate, or volunteer, or if it is discovered that a Full Member, Candidate, or volunteer abused a minor physically or sexually, Youth Apostles will abide by the following policy:

1. All Full Members, Candidates, and volunteers will comply and cooperate with applicable civil and ecclesiastical laws and policies that deal with allegations of inappropriate behavior in each diocese where a Youth Apostle ministers.
2. Recognizing that such allegations are of grave concern, the Youth Apostles Institute will deal with them immediately and in a manner that is both just and merciful.
3. Any Full Member or Candidate knowing of an act of ministerial misconduct must report that information to civil authorities and the appropriate authorities in the local diocese and the community.
4. The General Director of Youth Apostles will bring every such allegation to the Youth Apostles Review Board to receive its advice.
5. The General Director, upon advice from his General Council, shall appoint three positions: 1) an Advocate for the Victim, 2) an Advocate for the Accused, and 3) a spokesperson. The Advocate for the Victim will be a Full Member—ideally the Assistant Director for Clerics or Laity, barring any conflict of interest—charged with the sole purpose of caring for the pastoral needs of the victim. The Advocate for the Accused will be a Full Member charged with the sole purpose

of caring for the pastoral needs of the accused individual. The spokesperson will be a Full Member charged with addressing any public inquiries regarding the allegation.

6. The Youth Apostles Institute will not extend preferential treatment to its Full Members, Candidates, or volunteers in such matters.
7. The General Director, in accord with applicable diocesan policies and procedures, shall remove an individual from all ministerial assignments until appropriate civil, diocesan, and Youth Apostles authorities have made their respective rulings on the situation. Ordinarily, a Full Member or Candidate will undergo a thorough mental health evaluation by professionals in the field. Details regarding the protection of the rights of the accused will be found in Section VII of this policy.
8. The General Director, with the advice of the General Council, will determine whether an accused Youth Apostle's participation in the community will continue or be suspended or terminated based upon the facts elicited by the civil and diocesan investigations, any subsequent legal action, and the advice of the Youth Apostles Review Board.
9. Any reassignment to ministry will give preferential consideration to professional advice (e.g., that of the Youth Apostles Review Board). The reassignment would maximize the accused individual's ministerial skills while avoiding situations that could be problematic. The necessity for ongoing supervision will also be considered when making reassignments. No Youth Apostle or volunteer who, after a formal civil or ecclesiastical investigation, has been found to have sexually abused a minor will be allowed to work with minors in a Youth Apostles ministry ever again. A lifetime consecrated member may be allowed to remain a member of the community, but may not work with minors or live in a community house that hosts youth activities.
10. Refusal on the part of the accused to cooperate in the investigation will be grounds for dismissal. Refusal to participate in any recommended program of treatment will hinder the possibility of one's return to ministry and full participation in the vision of community life expressed in Youth Apostles' General Statutes.
11. The community will treat all complaints to the Youth Apostles Institute as confidential. Youth Apostles will neither confirm nor deny that a complaint has been made until such time as the complaint becomes public record as a result of charges being filed. At that time, the appointed spokesperson will convey relevant information to the media and the public that does not infringe on the privacy of the victim or the integrity of civil or ecclesiastical investigations.

## **Section VI — Pastoral Care for the Victim**

VI.1. Christian charity requires that great compassion be extended to victims of ministerial misconduct. The spiritual and emotional well-being of young people is the community's top priority; should any minor become a victim of ministerial misconduct

by a Youth Apostle or volunteer, their healing and reconciliation would become a solemn obligation for the community. Upon notification of an alleged act of ministerial misconduct, the Advocate for the Victim, in coordination with the applicable diocesan victim outreach coordinator, will reach out to victims—and in cases in which the victim is still a minor, the victim’s parents—in order to demonstrate this commitment and offer appropriate assistance.

VI.2. The Advocate for the Victim will develop an outreach plan for the victim and the victim’s family. As part of that plan, the General Director will offer to meet with the victim and the family and listen with patience and compassion to their experience and their concerns.

VI.3. Every effort will be made to protect the identity of minors in these circumstances. Pastoral outreach will be directed to the local faith community when appropriate.

## **Section VII — Protecting the Rights of the Accused**

VII.1. In the event of an allegation of ministerial misconduct against a Full Member, Candidate, or volunteer, the Director of Child Protection will communicate the allegation to the accused in writing within 48 hours barring conflict with civil statute. When appropriate and feasible, the Director of Child Protection will communicate the allegation in person.

VII.2. The Director of Child Protection will advise the accused to retain appropriate civil and/or canonical representation. If the accused is a lifetime consecrated member, Youth Apostles will assume responsibility for his legal fees and other expenses related to the investigation and, if necessary, the legal process and/or any treatment recommended or required.

VII.3. The Director of Child Protection will also advise the accused of his or her rights and obligations concerning the allegation (see below), and direct the accused to have no contact with the alleged victim, the alleged victim’s immediate family, or the person who reported the allegation to the community or any other authority.

VII.4. The Director of Child Protection will further inform the accused of the name, roles, and responsibilities of the Advocate for the Accused, appointed by the General Director (see V.1.5.).

VII.5. As indicated in Section V of this policy, the General Director, in accord with applicable diocesan policies and procedures, will remove an individual from all ministerial assignments until appropriate civil, diocesan, and Youth Apostles authorities have made their respective rulings on the situation.

VII.6. In addition to the rights and obligations already accorded to the accused under civil law and diocesan policy, the rights and obligations of the accused *vis-à-vis* the community in a Youth Apostles review include:

- the right to know the nature of the allegation and the identity of the person who is alleged to have been harmed;
- the right to a fair, objective, and thorough examination of the allegation by competent and unbiased persons (i.e., the Youth Apostles Review Board);
- the right to have one's good name, rights, and privacy protected;
- the right to due notice of proceedings;
- the right to be heard in one's own defense and not to be required to implicate one's self;
- the right to offer evidence;
- the right to know the results of the investigation;
- the right to examine written records of proceedings and decisions;
- the right to appeal, in accord with this policy and the attached "Ministry Style and Code of Conduct";
- as stated above, the obligation during the investigation not to have contact with the alleged victim, the alleged victim's family, or the person who reported the allegation to Youth Apostles or other authorities;
- the obligation not to interfere with the investigative process;
- the obligation to provide accurate information;
- the obligation to observe any restrictions lawfully imposed.

VII.7. The accused cannot be required to declare whether the allegation or any elements of it are true or false or otherwise incriminate himself or herself. The accused may not be formally interrogated unless he or she specifically agrees.

VII.8. In the event that the General Director determines, after full consultation with the Youth Apostles Review Board, the Director of Child Protection, and the General Council, that an allegation is false, or that it cannot be substantiated, every effort will be made to return the individual to active ministry with young people.

VII.9. In the event that the review leads to a decision to dismiss the accused from the community, he may appeal the decision to the General Director and the General Council within ten (10) business days of written notification. If the General Director, upon the advice of the General Council, upholds the decision to dismiss him from the community, he may submit a second appeal to the bishop.

VII.10. Further principles and procedures for the community's response to an allegation of ministerial misconduct, and for the conduct and resolution of a Youth Apostles Review Board review may be found in Sections V and VIII of this policy.

## **Section VIII — Guidelines for the Youth Apostles Review Board**

VIII.1. The functions of the Review Board will include:

- Advising the General Director in his assessment of allegations of ministerial misconduct by a Full Member, Candidate, or volunteer;
- Advising the General Director in his determination of the accused Full Member, Candidate, or volunteer's suitability for ministry and/or helping him develop a pastoral plan for the accused; and
- Reviewing annually, in consultation with the Director of Child Protection, applicable civil statutes, diocesan policies, and this policy.

VIII.2. The functions of the Review Board may include:

- Offering advice on all aspects of the cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively.

VIII.3. The Review Board will be composed of three persons of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. Review Board members will be laypersons who are not Full Members or Candidates of the Youth Apostles Institute. At least one member will be the parent of a minor, and at least one person will have particular legal, medical, psychological, or social work experience dealing with the sexual abuse of minors. The members will be appointed for a term of three years, which can be renewed. The General Director will further appoint one of the three Review Board members to serve as chairperson. The Director of Child Protection (see III.12.) will serve as a non-voting consultant to the Review Board.

VIII.4. Procedural Guidelines—Response to an Allegation

1. The General Director may convene the Youth Apostles Review Board after an allegation of ministerial misconduct by a Youth Apostle or volunteer has been received in order for the Review Board to examine the allegation. It will not be the responsibility of the Board to conduct an investigation independent of any civil and diocesan investigations.
2. After the completion of any civil and diocesan investigations, the General Director will reconvene the Review Board to seek its advice on the suitability of the Youth Apostle or volunteer for ministry, and of a Youth Apostle for participation in the community, and will recommend a pastoral plan for an offending individual.
3. The deliberation of the Review Board will be strictly confidential and no detailed minutes will be taken or maintained. Summary notes, indicating the purpose of the meeting, the individuals in attendance, the decisions made, and the next steps to be taken will be recorded and retained in the office of the Director of Child Protection. All documents given to the Review Board will be collected at the conclusion of each meeting and returned to the Director of Child Protection.

### VIII.5. Procedural Guidelines—Annual Policy Review

1. The General Director will convene the Review Board once each year for the purposes of policy review.
2. The Director of Child Protection will present a report to the Review Board outlining current educational programs, the status of the community's compliance, changes to pertinent civil statutes and diocesan policies, and practical feedback from the community on the attached code of conduct.
3. The Review Board will recommend ways in which the Youth Apostles policy may be strengthened, improved, or modified; assist in developing appropriate mechanisms to ensure the community's compliance with this policy; and assess the effectiveness of the pastoral care of victims by Youth Apostles.

VIII.6. The Review Board shall present a public report of the status of the Youth Apostles Child Protection efforts in the Youth Apostles Institute newsletter, *The Apostle*.

### **Conclusion**

Youth Apostles is dedicated to the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of young people. The community recognizes the great trust parents put in it when a Youth Apostle ministers to their children; it will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that their trust is not betrayed. Youth Apostles strongly affirms its obligation to report all ministerial misconduct to appropriate civil and diocesan authorities, and to comply with the local diocesan policies. It also recognizes the grave responsibility it has to educate and form its Full Members, Candidates, and volunteers and the young people they serve. Should a young person in Youth Apostles' care ever be abused, the community's foremost concern will be for their healing and reconciliation. It is the community's commitment to ensure a safe environment for all young people, and to help them faithfully live their call to holiness.



## Ministry Style and Code of Conduct

### STYLE AND STANDARDS OF MINISTRY

A.1. “We believe that our Catholic youth, often lukewarm or alienated in their faith, are in great need of apostolic service. Therefore, our members’ primary ministry efforts should be devoted to Catholic apostolic endeavors. Faced with the many needs of today’s youth—churched and un-churched, impoverished spiritually, morally, and emotionally, regardless of their material wealth—we wish to respond by inviting all young people into a loving relationship with Christ in the Catholic Church. Our hearts are always stirred by the call of Christ, who ordered his disciples to ‘Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such little ones belongs the Kingdom of God’” (Mk 10:14) (*Internal Guidelines of the Youth Apostles Institute* [hereafter IG], 6.6).

A.2. “Christ’s compassionate love for others impels us to reach out and actively touch the lives of young people. Jesus was always moved by the needs of others. ‘Moved with compassion. Jesus touched their eyes and immediately they could see; and they became his followers’ (Mt. 20:34)” (*General Statutes of the Youth Apostles Institute* [hereafter GS], 1.10).

A.3. “We understand love to encompass a deep sense of care; a loving concern for others which stems from a warm heart and which is expressed in a smile and an embrace. Young people are hungry for attention, love, and a sense of belonging. By ministering to youth with this sense of care, we bring them the love of Christ, who is the source of all love and consolation, and we draw them to the Church, which is their home” (GS, 1.11).

A.4. “We recognize the importance of meaningful, creative programming in order to have organized and effective ministries. At the same time, we believe that the most powerful tools to bring youth to Christ are significant relationships with committed Christian adults and peers. Our ministry, therefore, emphasizes a relational or ‘incarnational’ style. We wish to be both models and friends to the youth we serve, making Christ known to them through our example of radical truth, Christian freedom, and self-sacrificing love” (IG, 6.10).

A.5. Much as Jesus Christ called his apostles “friends,” so do we in our ministry call young people our friends. Through these relationships, we hope to show them how God is working in our lives as well as theirs. We are most effective when we listen to their concerns, always respectful of their emotional well-being yet ever mindful of their spiritual and moral well-being. Thus we desire to draw them closer to Christ.

A.6. “We, as a community, draw inspiration for all our apostolic endeavors with youth from the example of St. John Bosco. Like him, we must always be mindful of maintaining a sense of equality with the youth: following the rules established for all; participating equally in all activities; supervising by spending time with the youth; and not claiming adult privileges whenever possible. More importantly, we pray that his burning love for Christ and Christ’s young people may be reflected in our own devotion and apostolic zeal” (IG, 6.24).

A.7. We believe firmly that we must be with our young people if we are to minister effectively: *with them* on retreats, *with them* at meetings, *with them* at sporting events, *with them* in times of need, *with them* in times of great joy. It is by being present to God at work in them that we are best able to affirm them in their efforts to mature in the spiritual life. At the same time, we are aware of the current climate in our world and seek to ensure the well-being of these young people. As such, we take appropriate measures to train our Full Members, Candidates, and volunteers to act appropriately in ministerial situations, always placing the needs of young people before our own.

#### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR YOUTH APOSTLES

A.8. All Full Members and Candidates of the Youth Apostles Institute and all volunteers working in Youth Apostles-sponsored ministry programs will observe the following Code of Conduct. Throughout the Code, unless otherwise noted, “Youth Apostles” will be understood to refer to Full Members and Candidates of the Institute and volunteers working in a Youth Apostles-sponsored ministry program.

A.9. “All our involvement and activities with young people must stress, by word and example, the significance of Jesus Christ in our lives and theirs. At the same time, we realize that ‘a healthy human foundation must be constructed . . . in order to build a saint’” (GS, 1.31). “Thus, Youth Apostles seek to foster the personal growth of the youth we serve whenever possible. Recognizing that none of our young people exist apart from the families and communities that give them life, we also commit ourselves and our apostolic endeavors to the support and formation of parents, teachers, and youth workers—always with the ultimate aim of furthering the spiritual growth of young people” (IG, 6.5).

A.10. We believe it is essential for us to minister to the whole person, inviting each young person into a deeper life with God in the Church in every way possible. To do this type of ministry, we realize we must communicate our vision clearly to all involved in the lives of those in our care. Consequently, formation is necessary not only for our Full Members and Candidates, but also for our volunteers, the parents of the young people we serve, and the young people themselves.

A.11. Full Members and Candidates must be mindful that our primary ministry to youth is carried out through our example. Therefore, Full Members and Candidates

must continually be mindful of proper language, attire, and use of alcoholic beverages. They must abstain from [alcohol] completely, before and during those situations when they are working with young people (cf. IG, 1.11, 6.22).

A.12. We know from experience how powerful personal example is for us, and it is perhaps only more so for the young people in our ministries. Because of this dynamic, we take clear precautions when we minister to provide the best and most genuine Christian modeling for young people, including but not limited to our language, dress, and abstinence from alcohol.

A.13. “In general, two or more Youth Apostles should participate together in every apostolic endeavor of our community. This witnesses to the importance of community in our vision of the Christian life, while also broadening the range of knowledge and skills available to each youth community served by our members” (IG, 6.11).

A.14. By ministering together, we convey to the young people in our care our conviction that true growth and holiness flourish best in the context of community. Likewise, ministering together allows us to keep one another accountable and facilitates better supervision of our young people at meetings, day events, and overnight retreats.

A.15. Youth Apostles will observe the following points of conduct with regard to their ministry to young people:

**1. Youth Apostles will exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity reflective of the teachings of the Gospel. They will**

- model and promote through their own lives the way to love God and neighbor as they love themselves;
- have a responsibility to stay attuned to their spiritual lives and nurture their ongoing prayer lives;
- witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to their states in life, whether celibate, married, or single; and
- strive to keep physically and emotionally healthy, guarding against substance abuse and nurturing appropriate relationships

**Youth Apostles will not**

- use, possess, or be under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs at any time when in ministry with young people;
- administer medication of any kind without parental permission; or
- use profanity.

**2. Youth Apostles will at all times conduct themselves in a professional manner that will include the development and maintenance of a level of professional competence commensurate with youth ministry. They will**

- be accountable to the pastor or his representative in the parish or other setting in which they minister;
- be aware of and comply with all parish and/or diocesan policies;
- be responsible to maintain high levels of professional competence by attending seminars, training, and workshops in areas relevant to youth ministry (n.b., this will not usually be expected of our volunteers);
- be knowledgeable about the behaviors that constitute sexual abuse and harassment, and the physical and psychological symptoms that indicate the possibility of such abuse; and
- maintain a professional work environment free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.

Youth Apostles who provide guidance will not step beyond their competence in these situations. They will be prepared to refer to professionals when the need arises, and in such cases, will notify the pastor.

**3. Youth Apostles will witness God’s love for every person by sensitivity, reverence, and respect for each individual with and to whom they minister. They will**

- honor the equality of all people, avoiding all forms of discrimination and respecting the dignity of each person;
- reach out to all young people in a spirit of humility, reverence, and respect (Youth Apostles will make every effort to learn the names of young people and call them by name); and
- sit with young people at activities and participate alongside them.

**4. Youth Apostles will be conscious of the unique influence they have in relationships due to the trust they are given and the visibility of their witness and leadership. They will**

- avoid ministerial relationships that could impair their professional judgment, create conflicts of interest, or lead to an exploitation of the relationship for personal gain; and
- establish and maintain ministerial relationships characterized by openness, honesty, and integrity, avoiding any abuse of ministerial authority.

**a. Youth Apostles assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear and appropriate physical and emotional boundaries in all ministerial relationships. Those who provide guidance must avoid developing inappropriate relationships with young people. Youth Apostles will**

- maintain the confidentiality of information received (exceptions include the mandatory civil or ecclesiastical reporting of physical and

sexual abuse or when physical harm could come to the person or to a third party (e.g., expressed thoughts of suicide)); and

- strive to listen to the needs and concerns of young people while maintaining support for the rights and roles of their parents.

### **Conversely, Youth Apostles**

- must refrain from making any statements that are false, degrading, defaming, invasive, or harmful to another's reputation;
- are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way with young people; and
- should, in light of their normal practice of ministering in pairs, exercise extreme prudence when it becomes necessary to be alone with a minor. (When private conversations are necessary, meetings will take place at times and locations that create accountability, such as in the parish office when other personnel are on duty, in public places, and in rooms with windowed or open doors. Length and number of sessions must be limited. When it is necessary to drive a young person alone to or from an event, parents must be notified whenever possible.)

- b. Youth Apostles are convinced that no matter how many material things young people may possess, they remain hungry for something deeper, something intangible, that can only be satisfied in a relationship with God fostered in the context of Christian community. Youth Apostles look to the example of Jesus Christ in the gospel, calling out to young people and seeking their presence in his life. To help young people develop relationships with God in community, Youth Apostles emphasize a deep sense of care and warmth as expressed through appropriate physical touch.**

**Therefore, Youth Apostles will not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect any young person. Accordingly, they will observe the following guidelines:**

- In ministerial relationships, Youth Apostles will not initiate sexual behavior, and must refuse it even when another—whether a minor or an adult—invites or initiates it.
- Physical contact with minors should occur only when it is completely non-sexual. When it is necessary to touch a minor (e.g., offer a hug or a similar physical expression of affirmation or consolation) during a confession or private consultation, Youth Apostles must be prudent and intentional in their actions. Whenever possible, such one-on-one interactions should take place in environments easily observable by others.

- Appropriate affection between Youth Apostles and minors is important for a young person’s development. It is a positive part of Church life and ministry. Forms of affection regarded as appropriate for youth ministry programs will be covered in the annual Youth Apostles Institute training sessions.
  - Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, those forms of affection that are inappropriate will also be thoroughly addressed in the annual training sessions.
  - Youth Apostles will not humiliate, ridicule, or degrade young people.
- c. Youth Apostles have a responsibility to create a safe environment for all young people and those adults who assist with youth ministry. They will**
- abide by their diocese’s policies and those of the Youth Apostles Institute on the protection of young people and the prevention of sexual misconduct and child abuse;
  - exhibit no tolerance for abusive behavior of any kind;
  - require appropriate ratios of young people to chaperones for all activities. A ratio of seven young people to one chaperone is ideal. Overnight activities with young people “should always involve three or more young people, and two or more adults; co-ed overnight activities must involve at least one female chaperone” (GS 6.21); and
  - exercise prudence in one-on-one day outings with young people. (A meal or a movie together is appropriate. Outings that extend beyond the span of two meals should be avoided. Parental permission must be obtained and a clear itinerary for the outing will receive parental approval in advance.)
- d. Youth Apostles have a duty to report their own ethical and professional misconduct and the misconduct of others. They must**
- be aware of and clearly understand this code of conduct and determine whether their behaviors comply;
  - strive to hold one another accountable to this code;
  - be aware of applicable state laws regarding child abuse and reporting requirements; and
  - report any allegations of child abuse or misconduct to the applicable ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

(The section entitled “Code of Conduct for Youth Apostles” is adapted from the “Code of Conduct for Coordinators of Youth Ministry,” Catholic Diocese of Arlington, 2003.)

**Healthy and Holy: Youth Apostles Policy on Ministerial Misconduct**

*Member Acknowledgement Form*

I understand the applicable civil laws regarding the physical and sexual abuse of minors and agree to abide by civil reporting requirements regarding abuse.

I have received, reviewed, and understand the diocesan policies on the protection of minors and the prevention of ministerial misconduct and/or child abuse. I have attended the applicable educational seminars that explain those policies. I agree to abide by all these policies.

I have received, reviewed, and understand “Healthy and Holy: Youth Apostles Policy on Ministerial Misconduct.” I have attended the educational seminar explaining this policy. I agree to attend the annual policy review and educational seminar on ministerial misconduct, boundary issues, and self-awareness.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

