

## CAMPUS MINISTRY IN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

“In addition to the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of Theology class, Catholic schools provide ongoing opportunities to deepen student’s relationship with Jesus, internalize their understanding of God, and support the process of making faith their own. Retreat, days of recollection and the mission of the campus ministry office provide students with a sense of relevance of their Catholic faith. Regular liturgy, seasonal prayer experiences, and daily morning prayer are each avenues for deepening faith.

“The school should never replace the parish as the primary faith community. It is the task of campus ministry to support and direct students and families to participation in parish life. It is important to connect students with their parish so that they will grow from and contribute to the parish beyond their high school years. Campus ministry coordinators need to encourage students to volunteer within their parish, be involved in their parish youth ministry programs, and worship within their faith community.

“Campus leaders should communicate with parish pastoral leaders, especially youth ministers and directors of religious education. Pastors and parish youth ministry leaders should be invited to visit the school and attend liturgies, assemblies and other events.

“Catholic schools provide unique opportunities to create a respectful and challenging environment that nurtures faith. Schools catechize in the religion classroom, but also in their settings of community based on Catholic values. A Catholic school often offers opportunities for young people to be involved in activities that foster their spiritual growth through campus ministry, school liturgies, and retreat programs. Catholic schools engage young people in the Church’s mission in the world as they lead their students in service to others” *A Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry*, pages 199-209).

“The Catholic school’s effectiveness as a community of faith and a center for evangelization and catechesis depends to a large extent on its teachers of religion. Who they are, what they say, and what they do should be integrated harmoniously if they are genuine educators of faith. The religion teacher is the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved. But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the

personal witness given by the teacher; the witness is what brings the content of the lessons of life" (*National Directory for Catechesis*, page 232).

Campus ministry, like any ministry, has its fundamental roots in the mission and ministries of the Catholic Church. Like youth ministry, campus ministry at Catholic high schools works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each person within the faith community-in this case it is the Catholic high school. It is ministry to, for, by and with young people, as well as ministry to the entire community-faculty, staff, students, parents, families, administration and others. Campus ministry not only addresses the problems and struggles of young people, but also encourages and enables them to actively participate in resolving them. Campus ministry seeks to draw responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Church within the context of the school community. Campus ministry also provides opportunities for members of the school community to deepen their understanding and commitment to Jesus Christ and his universal message. Through the dedication of teachers and staff, students are called to actively live a Christian lifestyle.

Campus ministry functions on many different levels. Campus ministry includes and builds upon the process of evangelization. It reaches out, invites, welcomes and includes young people into the faith life of the school community. Through the use of retreats, trips, service projects, civic involvement, and ministry of presence, campus ministry makes that message visible to the entire student body.

Campus ministry is a dimension of the total religious education of the school. It works in creating an environment in which the student can become more fully human and more fully Christian. Campus ministry helps individuals realize their significance in relation to school, family, Church and the world community. It also calls upon and encourages members of the school community to share their gifts and to minister to others' needs by responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic Church.

The ministerial goals of Campus Ministry and that of the school's education philosophy compliment each other. Campus Ministry helps to bridge the gap between what is taught in the classroom and what is lived in the world. Therefore, active students are trained to deal with specific pastoral issues. Students are trained in the area of faith development, catechesis, drug and alcohol issues, social justice, and sexual morality. While all this material may be

covered in the classroom, campus ministry exposes and supplements it. The two should work hand-in-hand. Moreover, in the areas of accountability, decision-making, dignity of the human person and conflict resolution, trained and empowered student leaders empower other students to make good, moral choices and form a positive self-concept. Therefore, campus ministry exists to safeguard and enhance the general goals and objectives of the religion department and the school community.