Report to Worship Commission:
Recommendations from Youth and Young Adults

Last fall an ad hoc committee of the Worship Commission was established to address the #1 liturgical issue raised in last year's liturgical survey. The committee met to discuss what works well and what could be done better to encourage the involvement of young people at Mass, from fulfilling specific liturgical roles, to being active participants in the Mass. While many of the ideas are not new — strong, vibrant liturgy will appeal to all ages, including young people — there are some aspects to keep in mind when working with youth and young adults. These recommendations could be topics for discussion at parish liturgy meetings as well as pastoral and deanery council meetings. The following are some key points and suggestions that were presented to the Worship Commission:

• A key concern is that some pastors do not allow youth to be liturgical ministers. The perception from some is that if youth do these roles, adults won't participate. This continues to be a problem and the whole community loses because of it.
• Help instill pride in the faith so that young people are more likely to want to go to Mass. Building Catholic identity — especially understanding and growing in love for the Eucharist and what it means to live out what happens during Mass — may keep young people coming.
• Something the celebrant, liturgical ministers, and everyone in the congregation can do is show that they want to be at Mass so that young people don't just see it as a mandate to be there. We all could do a better job of showing the joy that comes with Mass. Why would we want to attend if it is some sort of chore?
• Young people are new to the idea that they can participate in liturgical roles. It helps to personally invite them to fill roles.
• Make certain that youth are given the chance to fill out "Time and Talent" sheets, and that the different roles are explained to them — what the role means and who can fulfill that role. While this does not exclude the need for a personal invitation, it helps the youth see they are part of the parish and their gifts are needed.
• Youth (and others in the pew) benefit and enjoy a variety of music. It is not that they are against traditional music, but they also enjoy hearing the more contemporary songs. New songs are published every year by GIA and OCP — do parishes use them?
• It helps when young people can relate to the homily. When preaching, put specific youth examples in the homily, together with examples that would make sense to adults. This needs to go beyond just saying something should be done "at work and at school." It helps to talk about universal emotions and everyday life situations. For example, everyone understands the power of jealousy or what it is like to be in a fight with a friend.
• Community is important to young people. They like to come to Mass where the faithful serve as a true community — where all other distinctions (prestige, wealth, social status) can fall away and all worship as one Body of Christ.
• When possible, the priest can meet with small groups of youth (perhaps a retreat team, religious education class, or confirmation group) to get homily ideas. This isn't an expectation every week, but could be valuable to do a few times a year. This helps the youth recognize they are an important part of the congregation.
• Youth can relate to Catholic sacramentals and symbols. Appeal to the senses and let the symbols speak. (Use of incense, for example, appeals to young people.)
• Adults need to guard against having a double standard for young people. Sometimes it is said that, "young people are not responsible and do not show up." Yet, adults don't always show up and fulfill their assignments, either. In fact, some youth are far more responsible than some adults.
• Have youth and adults ministering together — this group does not advocate concepts such as having a "Youth Mass" each week geared only to young people. It is a positive thing for the whole parish community to be represented in liturgical ministry. While it is odd to be at a confirmation liturgy where there are no young people ministering, it is also odd to see no one over the age of 16 ministering on a regular basis. People identify with what they see, and the whole parish benefits from seeing a blending of the parish community.

Members of the ad hoc committee: Jill Blanshan, Deacon Cary Brock, Sarah Cushing, Mike DiMarco, Diane Flaherty, Theresa Harvey, Megan Moore, Sarah Nilles, Jon Relph, Anastasia Nicklaus Schmelzer, and Katie Wilson