

## Outreaching to our Hispanic Youth

As the demographics of the Archdiocese of Atlanta are changing so must our approaches to Youth Ministry. The challenge for Youth Ministers is to look around their parish and ask: Does my program serve the needs of **ALL** youth in my parish. According to, *“Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens - Pastoral Reflections and Strategies Inspired by the National Study of Youth and Religion,”* one of the greatest challenges for youth ministers is to find ways to welcome and empower all young people, developing leaders that reflect the ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and/or racial characteristics of the community’s families.

Below are 8 pastoral recommendations based on the National Study of Youth and Religion in regards to outreaching to Hispanic young people:

1. Reach out to parents – NSYR survey outlines the important role of parents in the religious education of their teens
2. Create worship experiences that involve the teens – intentionally offer services that address the spiritual hungers and culture of the teens
3. Provide Bible studies and retreats – These activities must reflect the social, economic and cultural needs – Youth Ministers must look for ways to remove the religious obstacles that limit Hispanic youth participation.
4. Provide a clear and complete doctrinal foundation for young believers – The task of passing the faith to the current generation of Hispanic teens is immense because in most cases the foundation have not yet been laid, or even worst have been build on moralistic therapeutic deism.
5. Directly challenge the false tenets of moralistic therapeutic deism – Help teens and their families conduct an inventory of their own faith, eliminating beliefs and attitudes that reflect MTD over traditional Christian teaching
6. Empower teens to share their faith with others – Create an environment where ALL teens feel comfortable to share
7. Be present and a role model – Youth minister and adults working with teens must be present to both the Hispanic teens and their families. Go to the Hispanic Mass, go to Hispanic parish functions, get to know the teens and their families. Relationship and role model are key to trust and future participation
8. Pray for the teens in the community – Pray for ALL teens, not just those who participate.

It is easy to look at the list above and say that is what is needed for all teens and no one should disagree. As Youth Ministers we need to look at our ministry and ask are we reaching out to ALL youth and making our programs a place that ALL feel welcome.

(All documentation and information for this article came from the book *“Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens”* published by Instituto Fe Y Vida. [www.feyvida.org](http://www.feyvida.org))