



Executive Summary

Youth in Theology and Ministry 2016-17

www.ytm-sju.org

History

The Youth in Theology and Ministry program (YTM) began in 2000 with a grant from the Lilly Endowment to encourage seminaries to engage high school youth in theology and promote vocations in Church ministry. The mission of the YTM program is “to apprentice Catholic leadership youth, counselors, and adult mentors to live as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.”

The YTM program has five goals:

- 1) To stimulate and nurture excitement about theological learning;
- 2) To encourage young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry;
- 3) To recruit a youth population to the YTM Summer Institute that represents the diversity of American Catholicism;
- 4) To foster the development of pastoral ministry skills among the counselors and adult mentors;
- 5) To become a laboratory for Catholic youth ministry and vocation research.

Youth Curriculum

The YTM youth curriculum takes a holistic approach to foster Christian discipleship and vocational discernment. The 13-month curriculum includes two 14-day summer institutes where high school youth come to Saint John's University and take morning college level theology with professors, do community service each afternoon, and practice a variety of Christian prayer forms each evening. Between the summers, youth complete a service-justice project back in their parish, with the help of an adult mentor. Embedded within the entire curriculum is a focus on vocational discernment, Catholic Social Teaching, and leadership development.

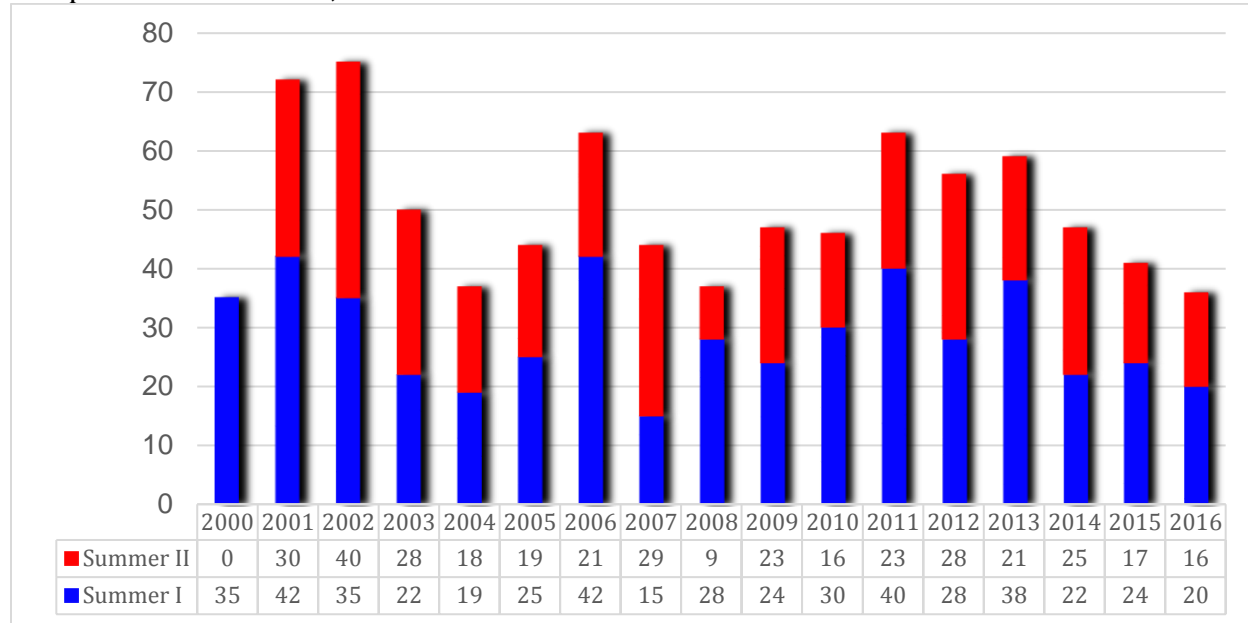
Adult Curriculum

YTM provides scholarships for lay ecclesial ministers working full-time with youth to assist in the funding of an MA in Pastoral Ministry at Saint John's School of Theology over four years. These adults serve as mentors for the youth. YTM also seeks to provide training in ministry for undergraduate and graduate theology students who are hired as counselors at the YTM Summer Institutes.

Populations of Youth, Counselors, and Adult Mentors

1) Youth Population

Overall, 492 high school youth have participated in the YTM curriculum since 2000. The mean population for the YTM Summer Institute is 50 youth. Thirty-six youth attended in 2016 of whom 17% were Hispanic or persons of color. Nearly 80% of those who start YTM complete the 13-month, two-summer curriculum.



2) Counselor Population

111 counselors (typically CSB/SJU theology majors or minors or graduate students at the School of Theology) have been hired since 2000 to help lead the YTM Summer Institute. The 2016 counselors were Sam Broback, Molly Cullen, Kevin Ekstrom, Catherine Lee, Patrick Martin, Taylor Pickthorn, and Megan Weiss.

3) Adult Mentor Population

During the last ten years over 100 adult mentors in the YTM program have received theological education through the YTM adult mentor program. Nine adult mentors have completed an undergraduate Certificate in Youth Ministry (8 undergraduate theology credits and mentoring youth experience) and 59 adult mentors have completed an MA in theology through the YTM MA cohort.

4) Theologians

Ten theologians, primarily CSB/SJU theology faculty, taught YTM youth courses and/or gave theological presentations: Dr. Rebecca Berru Davis, Dr. Ben Durham, David Fremo, Jessie Johnson, Dr. Jeff Kaster, Catherine Lee, Patrick Martin, Donelle Poling, Kate Ritger, and Dr. Vincent Smiles.

Youth Outcome Assessment

2016 Youth Summer Institute Evaluations

Evaluation data from youth participants suggest that YTM’s curriculum is successfully achieving its goals.

	<i>Excellent</i>				<i>Poor</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
Theology classes	77%	20%	3%	0%	0%
Prayer practices	65%	31%	4%	0%	0%
Community service	79%	21%	0%	0%	0%
Leadership/Vocational Discernment	38%	50%	6%	6%	0%
Experience of community	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%
Overall Assessment of YTM	94%	6%	0%	0%	0%

YTM Research: Youth Pre-Post Testing 2008-2016

Starting in 2008, YTM began administering a pre-post survey in an attempt to gain insight into the change that occurred in the youth participants from participation in the YTM curriculum. These data provide evidence that YTM is fostering excitement for theological learning and promoting vocations in church ministry. The survey was administered prior to the start of the YTM Summer Institute I and administered again 13 months later on the last day of YTM Summer Institute II. The survey results only include youth who completed the 13-month YTM curriculum. Total surveyed: 166 (23 in 2008-09, 16 in 2009-10, 23 in 2010-11, 26 in 2011-12, 21 in 2012-13, 24 in 2013-14, 17 in 2014-15, and 16 in 2015-16).

	<u>Pre-Test Agree %</u>	<u>Post-Test Agree %</u>
▪ I have experienced a call to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his ways.	53%	69%
▪ I am considering theological study in college.	23%	61%
▪ I am considering working for the church in some capacity.	76%	88%
▪ I am considering priesthood or religious life.	46%	75%
▪ I am currently taking a leadership role in any specifically religious organization.	30%	48%

	<u>Pre-Test Extremely Important</u>	<u>Post-Test Extremely Important</u>
▪ How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping your major life decisions?	37%	49%



After the 2016 Summer Institute, we received the following email from Caitlyn Shipp, a youth from Pax Christi Catholic Community in Eden Prairie, MN, who had just completed her second summer at YTM.

Dear Dr. Kaster,

Thank you for another wonderful faith filled YTM experience. YTM has truly been a life changing experience I will never forget.

I was at a challenging place in my life the first summer I came to YTM. It has been my saving grace in many ways. I was carrying the brokenness of my heart and pains of the past that had not healed.

*God had started his plan for me and took me in a direction I never saw coming. He led me back to his love, starting with me transferring to Holy Family Catholic High School, where I experienced my first theology class and felt something in my gut that this was what God wanted me to do. During my preparation for Confirmation, [my youth minister] Peter Bierer suggested that I go to YTM. **It is the best decision I have ever made.***

*YTM was my heaven on earth. All I saw was God, everywhere and in everyone. I had never felt so loved and slowly my broken heart was stitched back together by the people I had only just met. When I left YTM, I cried because **I felt like I was leaving behind my family.***

*This summer God confirmed my wondering thought of becoming a professor of theology. The opportunity this year for my voice to be heard was the greatest blessing. **Now I am a senior in high school pursuing my deep gladness in a world that I believe desperately needs to hear God's saving compassion.** I gained confidence, lifelong friends, and a faith that cannot be shaken.*



***I can't thank you enough for what YTM has done for me.** You have changed my world and my life. My greatest prayer is to fulfill all I was created to be. I feel that God is calling me to pursue theology and become a professor, along with sharing my gifts of writing and art illuminating how my soul sees God. **I hope to change the world** and I feel that my first step is at the College of Saint Benedict.*

*Thank you,
Caitlyn Shipp*