

The Principle of Subsidiarity at Work: Determining Direct Ministry Efforts

At present time there are approximately 150 parishes and 17 Catholic High Schools. With approximately 20,000 junior high/high school age youth in the archdiocese, the diocesan office must often employ the 'principle of subsidiarity' to help define its mission. Practically that means that the Archdiocese does not take on the responsibilities and tasks that a local parish/school is capable of doing. Parishes should have the freedom to choose the types and forms of ministry that they offer to their youth, based on their unique needs, the gifts of the parish community, and how the parish is being called to serve. Diocesan offices should take on ministry efforts that local communities cannot achieve on their own. For this reason, training and formation of leaders takes on a high priority of the diocesan youth office, followed by resourcing, consultation, direct ministry.

Youth Ministry has seen a strong period of growth in the past fifteen years. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of non-diocesan programs and resources available to parishes in their efforts to minister to adolescents. All these programs have a unique way of serving the young church and all can be highly effective in those efforts. Each has a very particular focus and charism that meets the needs of young people at different points of their life.

Each parish knows its young people best and therefore the parish ministers are in the best position to know which program(s) will be most beneficial to each individual young person's spiritual journey. For many of these programs to have their fullest impact on a young person, it is vital that the parish faith community already be in relationship with the young person, welcome him or her back from the program experience, and continue on a regular basis to support his or her faith journey through on-going ministry efforts. All programs should ultimately help young people become full participants in the life and mission of their faith community and not draw the young person away on a regular basis from their parish community.

When trying to make decisions about direct ministry efforts, the Archdiocese considers the following information:

1. *Subsidiarity*

If the parish or school is able to provide this ministry locally, it should not be taken over by the diocese.

2. *Program Requirements:*

- i) Some programs allow a limited number of participants from a particular parish/school. Archdiocese coordination would have a negative effect on parish and school participation.
- ii) Some programs require diocesan involvement for parishes and schools to participate.
- iii) Some programs are set-up for parish and school coordination. Archdiocesan coordination is not necessary for participation, (but Archdiocesan support can be expected in helping a parish develop the tools necessary to coordinate on their own).

3. *Choice within Programs:*

Many national programs have multiple dates and locations for their events. Sponsoring the program as an Archdiocese limits parish and school choice about date and location.

4. *Universal Church:*

Some programs provide young people with an experience of the Diocesan, National, or International Church. These programs can often be beneficial to young people in growing in their understanding of the Universal Catholic Church.

5. *Program Goal:*

Some programs are specifically designed for young people at a particular place on their faith journey. If the criteria for participation, or the focus of the program content, is too specific, it is best left to the parish to determine if the program is desired.

6. *Time:*

Many programs take place during the summer months when the Archdiocesan office with it's limited personnel is focused on Archdiocesan sponsored programs. Focus on programs that are best left up to parishes can have a negative impact on existing local programs.