



Steubenville San Diego

2012 Group Leader's Guide:
Preparing for the Conference

ALL *for* GOD

TOTUS PRO DEO

Catholic Youth Ministries



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends

We are excited that you have chosen to bring the teens in your youth ministry program to the Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference. Thank you for your ministry to the youth of our church. Because of your “yes” to our Lord, the lives and eternities of these teens are being changed. Thank you for your willingness to undertake the work of organizing a group to come to San Diego. We know there will be challenges ahead, please remember that we are always here to assist and support you.

A quick word of advice - keep one eye on the big picture and one on the details. The big picture – it is worth it for the teens you are serving! While there are many details, they are manageable. By taking care of the details early you will be free to focus on your teens and really minister to them during the conference. We encourage you to find other adults to help you with organizing and managing the multiple tasks that need to be taken care of. Many hands will make the work lighter.

Take heart in this simple fact: God dearly loves you. The Father loves you perfectly, without reservation or condition. He delights in your desire to serve Him but it is not a prerequisite to experiencing His grace, peace or joy. May God bless you, inspire you, and comfort you in these next few months.

FIRST THINGS FIRST - PRAY ALWAYS

It is vital that you pray throughout your time of preparation. It is so easy for us to mistake being busy serving God for having a strong relationship with God. By saying yes to the role of being a Group Leader you are bringing teens to Christ. Seek His will, seek His help, and seek Him daily. Cover yourself with a mantle of grace and put on the armor of God. You are more than a conqueror in Christ, you are His beloved. Allow Him to guide you and inspire you through the joyful and the difficult times ahead. Stay in Christ through prayer, receiving the Sacraments, and offer your work as a daily spiritual sacrifice. Through this journey you will find new joy and new depth in Christ.

REMEMBER

We wrote this guide to help you think through the process of bringing the teens in your ministry to the Steubenville San Diego youth conference. It is meant as a guide and a starting place. Your Pastor and your Diocese will likely have specific guidelines and regulations that you need to follow in your parish youth ministry. Please adhere to them. If you have questions or concerns please contact us via phone or email.

IMPORTANT DATES

January 1, 2012	Registration Opens – www.regonline.com/ssdyc2012
March 15, 2012	Early Bird Registration Deadline – be sure your participant count is correct in your RegOnline account to qualify for this Early Bird discount. Only the number registered by this date will receive the early bird discount. You can continue to add to your group, but late additions will be at \$190.00
April 15, 2012	SALT (Young Adult – Service And Leadership Training) applications are due
April 30, 2012	Payment in Full for Early Bird Discount is due. All early bird participants paid in full will receive the discount
May 15, 2012	Payment of \$100.00 per person for all regular registrations is due– Parish is responsible for all registrations including any no shows or cancellations after this date
June 15, 2012	Payment in full for all registrations is due
	Chaperone Agreements are due
	Permission Slips are due
	Gender Breakout Count is due
	First Aid Spreadsheet is due
	Insurance Certificate is due
	Optional - Dorm Preference Requests are due
June 16, 2012	Optional - Meal Deal orders are due
	Optional - T-Shirt Preorder is due
June 16, 2012	Dorm assignments begin
July 8 -16, 2012	Early Check-in Available at All for God office
July 16-21, 2012	Hold a special youth Mass or meeting to prepare for Steubenville San Diego conference
July 24, 2012	SALT program starts
July 27, 2012	Steubenville San Diego check-in opens
July 27 – 29, 2012	Steubenville San Diego

Steubenville San Diego

Steubenville San Diego is a Catholic conference serving the needs of High School aged teens. It will be held July 27 through 29, 2012 on the campus of the University of San Diego (USD) in San Diego, California. Beautiful San Diego is known for its beaches, famous zoos, Sea World and it is home to the first California Mission founded by Blessed Padre Junipero Sierra.

We are excited to have our conference this year on a wonderful Catholic campus. Our main sessions will be held in the Jenny Craig Pavilion, a beautiful facility. The arena set up will hold 5,000 comfortably in concert style center. The breakout sessions will be nearby in the other campus facilities. Housing is in the dorms at USD and on the nearby campus of San Diego State University (SDSU). SDSU is short drive from USD. Meals will be provided. There is a lot of open space for those times of group sharing, games, volleyball or just hanging out.

The conference is a partnership between All for God Catholic Youth Ministries and Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. San Diego is one of 14 regional sites, and we are one of the largest! With an exciting line-up of speakers, musicians, and presenters, the Catholic Conference for High School Youth will challenge today's Catholic youth to stand firm in their faith and rely upon the awesome power of Jesus Christ who is their teacher, friend, and most importantly their Savior!

Who can come to the conference?

Steubenville San Diego is a conference for high school aged youth. These youth need adult leaders and chaperones to guide and minister to them. And we have added a young adult program to serve those teens transitioning out of high school and into a faith centered adult life.

In order to provide the best possible context for fellowship, sharing, ministry, and supervision, the Steubenville San Diego conference handles registration by parish based or Catholic High School affiliated groups. No single registrations will be accepted. **A group is defined as one adult leader with three or more youth participants.** We have established the following categories of participants attending the conference:

Group Leader: One person, usually the parish Youth Minister or Confirmation Director, attending the conference as a participant, organizing the trip and serving as a contact person to the Registration Office. Group Leader's name should appear on all communications. The Group Leader can be a parent or parish volunteer. All groups must have a sponsoring parish or Catholic High School.

Adult Chaperone: Adult(s) attending the conference to chaperone the youth. They must be 21 years of age or older, of solid character, and approved to work with youth in your diocese.

Youth: Conference participants include incoming freshmen (entering 9th grade) through graduating seniors (Class of 2013).

SALT: an optional program for young adults 18-20 who are out of High School. This program must be applied for and only a limited number of qualified participants will be accepted. Please see the website for details.

LOGISTICS

One of the best ways of handling the many facets of being a Group Leader is to develop a strategy and timeline for handling all the arrangements, tasks, and details that need to be completed. Perhaps you have 6 months, or maybe 3 months, or maybe a lot less. Whatever your circumstances, getting organized early and creating a master lists of tasks and deadlines will result in a better trip for your youth and a less stressful time for yourself. Start by making a copy of the table on page 5, hang it near your desk for quick reference and you won't have to worry about missing an important deadline.

Now let's start with the logistical areas that need to be dealt with: **promotion, registration, the journey, housing and meals, finances and fundraising.** Additional sections will cover: **adult teams, preparing your teens, and small group setup.**

PROMOTION

Promotion is key to any event. Enthusiasm is contagious. How you chose to promote the conference, what you say and how you say it, will affect the response you get and the overall experience the young people will have. Your passion for what you are doing is one of your best assets. Make use of the many technology tools to communicate your plans: phone calls, websites, Facebook, Twitter, text messages, and emails can all greatly assist you in sharing your message. But don't forget: not everyone is comfortable with these media. Use the tried and true traditional ways of posters, calendars, flyers, and letters. The more ways you communicate the more people you will reach. There are three groups to whom you will be promoting the conference: your Pastor, the parents, and the youth.

Pastors

The support of your Pastor is necessary and immeasurably beneficial. Parents look to their parish priest, their shepherd, for guidance. Some Pastors will be naturally enthusiastic; some might need more information. By presenting him with your organizational strategy as soon as possible and keeping him updated, you'll keep his confidence and sustain his enthusiasm. Request the Pastor's help in promoting the conference through announcements at Mass and supportive conversations with parents and youth. Share the theme of the conference, highlight the caliber of the speaking team, and fill him in on the logistics of the conference site. Explain the financial side, the cost of the conference, what fundraising you are planning, and the payment schedule for parents to the church, and the church to the conference. Invite both the Pastor and Associate Pastor to come to the conference with you. And remember; be open and willing to hear his questions and concerns, as well as his advice. His experience can provide you with valuable insight. And if he needs more information than you have available, be sure to contact our office at 619-582-4571. We will be happy to help.

Parents

Promoting the conference to parents is key to having permission to share the event with their teens. You may already have your parents confidence, if not, convincing them to let you take their children away for a weekend may be challenging for some of the parents. Clearly share your plan to keep their children safe. Presenting the benefits of the conference and demonstrating your leadership abilities through responsible and organized planning will go far to alleviate their concerns. Here is a suggested plan to get you going on promoting to parents:

Letter: Start with a **preliminary letter** home to the parents, inviting them to an informational meeting regarding the conference. Briefly describe the weekend and share your goal of providing a wonderful weekend of life giving faith for their teen. Follow up this letter with a personal phone call and invitation to the meeting.

Informational Meeting: At the **informational meeting** show the Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference promotional video – available as a download at www.AllforGodcatholic.com. Ask parents whose teens have already attended a conference to be there and to help answer questions. Share the schedule from the brochure. Answer their concerns about logistics, how will you get the teens to and from the conference, what will they eat, where will they sleep. Outline financial and time commitments that will need to be fulfilled. Talk about any potential fundraising.

Clearly share the primary goal of the conference: To evangelize youth with the gospel message of Jesus Christ, to help them to deal with the many challenging aspects of their lives according to His teachings. Enlist parents to help promote and fund raise for the conference after the meeting.

If you can demonstrate the value of this weekend to the parents, your efforts in recruiting teens will be much easier.

Youth

Successfully promoting the conference to the youth requires creativity and enthusiasm. You are trying to convince teens who have dozens of summer options to give up a weekend of their lives to grow in their faith. Make this trip a big deal!

- Post the color brochures in prominent places during your meetings.
- Put together a promotional flier describing the unique experience of the youth conference.
- Promote a specific evening where you can show the promotional video to the teens, have testimonials from last year's participants, and answer any questions they might have. If this is your first trip, ask teens from a nearby parish to come and share. (Preview what they plan to say)
- Promote the conference and signups frequently at youth meetings
- Have an initial interest sign-up. There is a master flyer on our website at www.AllforGodCatholic.com
- Show a photo montage (use PowerPoint or other software) from your trip last year
- Make personal calls to invite each youth and answer any questions. Have your team help.
- Email, email, and email again: Suggested emails include
 - send YouTube video links to your teens. Search "Steubenville San Diego" on YouTube and select your favorites
 - the color brochure or postcard from our website
 - your own flyer
 - photos of your group from last year's conference
- Email and Facebook will help you reach teens that won't come to the special informational meeting.
- Reassure all teens that you have a plan to help them afford to go. Talk about fundraising and help them find financial sponsors in your church. Get their commitment to help.
- Raffle off and/or give prizes of partial or full scholarship to go to Steubenville San Diego. This gives "value and importance" to the trip.

Personal invitations work best with teens—just say, "I am going to the Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference. You would love it and I want you to come with me!" Be sure to invite and welcome all teens, especially those who may not have a strong faith life. Take extra care with those youth whose parents might force them to go. Whatever reason appears on the surface, it is important to remember God is calling them to the conference and will work in their lives. Your witness and love will help open a closed heart.

HOW DO YOU SIGN UP? REGISTRATION

All SSD conference participants must be pre-registered as groups from a parish or Catholic High School ministry. Interested families are encouraged to talk to their Pastor about organizing a trip for their teens and parish youth. So that we can have plenty of food and the right number of dorms, there will be no on-site registration. We encourage you to register as soon as possible as space is limited!

Registering for Steubenville San Diego is done online and it is very easy! You do not need to have a complete list of which teens are going, and you do not need money in hand before you begin. We know you are dealing with teens and families and the details will be in flux for a while. We do want you to register early, in fact as soon as your group makes the commitment to go to Steubenville San Diego! Registering early allows us to reserve the needed dorm space, to order food and program materials, and to send you important information and forms such as permission slips. As an added incentive we will give your group a discount if you register and pay early. Please start by conservatively estimating your total group size. And yes, you will be able to increase your group size. Please be sure your group count is correct by May 15th. We don't need to know the names or genders of the teens who are coming until June 15th, so relax and get your group registered.

Here's how: The youth minister, campus minister, or designated group leader will register the entire group. Each group will have access to their registration account and can manage their group registration 24/7. Simply start at our website www.AllforGodCatholic.com and click on the registration link. Enter your email address to create your group account. Then follow the step-by-step instructions. The whole process takes about 5 minutes. No payment is due at the time of registration. Your first payment – the deposit of \$40 per person – is due 2 weeks after you register. The remaining payment schedule is included on page 5.

Refunds - Due to the overwhelming demand and the need for advance planning we need definite commitments from our group leaders. Therefore please remember that all payments are non-refundable and non-transferable between groups. We encourage you to start with a conservative estimate and increase your group as the teens make firm commitments to you.

Updating your registration: Need to add a few teens, buy some t-shirts, or change the ratio of male and female chaperones, etcetera? Here's how

- 1) Just log in at www.regonline.com/ssdyc2012
- 2) Enter your email address then select "Already Registered"
- 3) Enter your password and then push "Continue"
- 4) "Finalize" (it is near the bottom of the page)
- 5) You are now on the Participants and Extras area and can add to your group size, buy t-shirts, and/or preorder snacks, etc. Once your numbers are correct push "Continue" and you will be on the checkout page.
- 6) Be sure to print out a new invoice and share it with your parish bookkeeper.

THE JOURNEY

TRANSPORTATION

Some groups have easy travel arrangements and others have to travel a long distance to attend Steubenville San Diego. Every year we have groups from all over the US including California, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Colorado, and even as far away Florida and New York. Securing safe, reliable, and fully insured transportation may take some effort. We hope the following suggestions will make the process easier.

Think about the distance you need to travel, the size of your group, special needs of any members of your group, and how you want to use the travel time when making your transportation plans.

VEHICLES:

Some groups travel by commercial airlines but most groups travel by vehicles. Options include charter buses, rental vans, or personal vehicles. If you plan on traveling by bus or rental vehicles, please reserve as early as possible. Summer is a difficult time to rent (you'll be competing with many different church and family groups).

Cost can be an issue when planning a long trip, so be sure to include this item in your budget planning. One way of reducing the costs to your teens and families is to ask individuals or a parish organization to sponsor some or all of the transportation costs. People will support this trip financially if you enthusiastically explain the benefits to the youth

For all vehicles, rental and/or personal, make sure they are safe and your drivers/owners carry adequate insurance. Review your diocesan policies on rental vehicles and on using parent and volunteer drivers. Be sure you communicate the diocesan and insurance requirements early to your potential drivers. This is not an issue you will want to confront on the morning of your trip. If you use rental or personal vehicles, be sure to budget fuel costs into the overall price of the trip.

For groups is 30+ in size, consider a charter bus service. Having everyone together in one vehicle builds community, is easier to manage, and gives you many trip programming options.

FOOD on the ROAD:

Through the use of online services or AAA you can map out the safest and shortest route to your conference. Plan meal stops. Do not assume that at noon you'll be near restaurants or a rest stop that can accommodate your group. If you plan to have the teens purchasing meals on the road be sure this has been communicated to the parents as an added cost so your teens are prepared. A great alternative is to ask a church service group to prepare meals and snacks for the road. With a little planning and enough ice chests this can be a way for your parish to support their youth and lower the costs for the participating families – a real win-win.

TRAVELING HINTS: Travel time to and from the conference can be very valuable for ministry and community building. We recommend limiting the use of all personal electronics during at least some of your trip. It is hard to build community when everyone has ear-buds on and is slipping into isolation mode. If you do limit personal electronics then be prepared with games, music, conversations starters,

or a group movie to watch. Offer the teens engaging and interactive activities and the personal electronics will not be an issue.

On the TRIP THERE,

Leave early and arrive at the conference early, the campus is beautiful and there is a lot to explore. On the trip to Steubenville San Diego, we suggest you have planned activities for some of the time but not all of it. Youth need down time and “just hanging out” time with friends. Try to keep things relatively light and fun. Many of your youth will be pumped about the conference, some will not be, while others may be nervous and scared and do not need the added pressure of deep conversation or probing questions. Play fun, non-threatening, get-to-know-you icebreakers- many of the youth group standards work well. Or have a list of conversation starters like – “What is the best animated Disney movie?” – “If you were stranded on an island what food would you want with you?” – “What super power do you wish you had and why?” Another option is to adapt familiar games for the road like “Would You Rather?” or “Pictionary” or “Charades”, etc. Group games are fun and can help create community bonds.

If you sense the group is open, then give them the opportunity to share in small groups about expectations, fears, and desires for the conference. What would you like God to do for you? In you? Take time to personally talk to each person. Encourage your chaperones to check in on their small group members.

On the WAY HOME

Use the traveling time to allow the teens to share their thoughts and feelings about the conference. “Open Mic” can last for an hour or more. Be sure to pray as a group during the trip; try a group guided meditation / reflection, a responsive prayer such as the Litany of Humility, or a Rosary. There are lots of great options on the web. Encourage your youth to bring a Rosary, have extras so you can provide them for teens who forgot or packed it in their bags. Have pocket guides to any group prayers such as “How to Pray the Rosary” or sheets with the reflection or Litany you are leading. Some of your teens do not have the prayers memorized, other times you are sharing something new they will want to pray at home with friends or family. Please remember, that for some of your youth communal praying of the Rosary, reflections, and litanies is new. Lead them gently into this special experience.

PHONE TREE:

For your trip, organize a phone tree. Any updates that you need shared with parents will be easy for you since you will only make one or two calls. And on the return trip, when you’re an hour away from home, call parents with the time the teens will be back. This will keep you from waiting an hour or more for the last teen to be picked up. The phone tree can also be used in the event of a breakdown or other delay.

HOUSING & MEALS

At the Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference housing is provided in campus dorms. We house groups on the campus of the University of San Diego and San Diego State University. We will provide you with a block of rooms that is appropriate for your registered group size. You, the Group Leader, will make the rooming assignments for your group. You know who gets along with whom, and who could benefit from getting to know a particular teen better. Chaperones are housed in separate bedrooms from teen participants. Follow the directions outlined in your registration packet to arrange housing. Do not

wait until the last minute. Those groups that register early, pay on time, and get their final information in early, will receive priority in room assignments.

DORMS

Be sure everyone brings a sleeping bag and pillow. A full suggested packing list is on our website at www.AllforGodCatholic.com. Bring extra mats or air mattresses for additional comfort. While we provide a bed with a mattress for every adult chaperone, some teens will be sleeping on the floor. Please bring air mattresses so that everyone is comfortable. In general the teens really do not mind this and are very inventive in making it “fair”. We’ve heard of groups where the teen on the floor is absolved of all room cleaning chores. Some groups promote it as a way of being in touch with the poor and/or missionaries who do not have beds, and some just rotate who is on the floor. Your group chaperones must watch the hall to make sure everyone stays indoors and gets to sleep. It is very important that the chaperones stay awake and aware of their youth until they fall asleep. There should be no horseplay, throwing of objects, or rude speech within the sleeping quarters. You are responsible for your own group’s members within the dorms.

MEALS

Five meals are served at the conference, dinner Friday through breakfast on Sunday. Meals are served in a buffet style, with plenty of food available. Your teens and adults will be able to choose from several entrees and side dishes at each meal. We always include vegetarian options. Most participants who have common food intolerances such as dairy and gluten will find enough options to have a satisfying meal. If you have teens with food allergies please discuss this carefully with their parents/guardians so that you understand the limitations. Food allergies can be life threatening. Consider having a cooler of food for teens with actual allergies. This food should be provided by their family. We will be happy to provide you with additional food storage at the Jenny Craig Pavilion.

FINANCES AND FUNDRAISING

When you add up registration fees, housing, transportation, T-shirt costs, etc., it is not cheap to make this trip happen. And some of your families will be sending more than one teen. Developing a sound budget and fundraising plan, as well as being a good steward of resources, is an important element of having the conference be within everyone’s reach. Talk to your Pastor about these elements:

How much should you charge? Add up all your estimated costs and divide it by the number of people going. Be sure to include things like transportation, t-shirts, snack food, and the conference registration fees. Then think about other considerations such as: Are you asking adult chaperones to pay? Are you going to have a scholarship fund to ensure no one gets left behind? How much are you planning as the minimum amount you will fundraise? Is the parish underwriting any of the costs for teens? For Chaperones? Will you have emergency funds? These are additional calculations to factor in when deciding the amount you need to charge each person.

Sharing the costs: Consider a three part formula: Teens earn a 1/3, families pay a 1/3 and the parish supports the teens with a 1/3. Teens who earn part of this trip generally are more open to living out the experience to the fullest extent.

Timing: When do you need to collect money from the teens? When do you need to have your fundraisers? Review the payment schedule on page 5 with your Pastor or parish financial rep. Do you need to

collect all deposit money up front or will your parish pay for deposits and then get reimbursed when you collect fees? Answering these questions will avoid confusion with the bookkeeper and it will keep you from missing a deadline or losing spots due to non-payment.

Payment Plans: We recommend setting up a payment plan for your families. By dividing the total cost into 4 or 5 equal payments and setting up **monthly payments** your teens and families are less likely to change their plans back out at the last minute. If you apply any fundraising to the latter payments, families will have an incentive to participate in all of the fundraising you organize.

Month of Registration	Early Bird Final 4/30 Payment Plan (\$180)	Option A Payment Plan (\$190)	Option B Payment Plan (\$190)
January	1 st Payment of \$50		
February	2 nd Payment of \$50	1 st Payment of \$50	
March	3 rd Payment of \$50	2 nd Payment of \$50	1 st Payment of \$50
April	4 th Payment of \$50	3 rd Payment of \$50	2 nd Payment of \$50
May		4 th Payment of \$50	3 rd Payment of \$50
June			4 th Payment of \$50

Costs are per participant. Illustration is of 4 payments totaling \$200, including \$190 for Registration (\$180 for Early Bird) and additional funds used for costs of travel or T-shirts. Your total costs per person may vary.

Based on the above illustration, even those teens registering with you in late March can participate in the monthly payment schedule. And for later additions, just adjust the monthly payment amounts.

FUNDRAISING:

A word to the wise – there are hundreds of creative and great ideas on the internet. But the internet is also full of groups that will fundraise for you and then charge a hefty fee. Their methods can be at odds with Catholic teaching and morality. Use the internet as a resource; just be sure to consult with others and to have your Pastor’s permission before engaging in any type of fundraising. Now set a goal and map a strategy for reaching that goal.

The Word Among Us: This wonderful Catholic magazine is partnering with Steubenville San Diego. Their goal is to help your teens and to build the spirituality of the adults in your parish community. This is a win-win-win! Here is the offer: A subscription costs \$34.95 (\$3 per month and it includes the Mass readings!). For each new subscription your teens sell The Word Among Us will donate: \$10 toward their registration for Steubenville San Diego Conference and \$5 to your parish youth ministry. For every renewal, The Word Among Us will donate: \$5 to Steubenville San Diego and \$5 to the parish youth ministry. All monies earned by your parish towards Steubenville San Diego will be posted to your group’s account – so teens can help themselves and help others to afford this trip. Check out the details on our website.

Other Fund Raising Ideas:

Direct support options:

- Ask individuals / parish groups to help sponsor a young person's trip, all or part, any amount is helpful.
- Ask individuals / parish groups to underwrite specific needs such as the cost of the bus or van, food, t-shirts, etc.
- Many parish organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus, actively support youth outreach.
- Your Pastor may allow the youth to share during Mass why they want to go on this trip, a second collection can then be offered to benefit all the youth. Often as part of this type of parish support, the youth promise to come and share their testimony at Mass after they return from the conference.
- Does your parish or youth website have a donation button? This is a simple way to encourage individuals to donate and support the youth

Sales options:

- organize food sales such as pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, bake sales, taco and tamale sales, BBQ's and donut sales are all popular ideas
- get large ticket items (hotel stays, flat screen TV, etc) donated, or purchase at discounted rates, and then hold a raffle
- organize a parish/community garage sale or rummage sale
- Many businesses, like Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, Soup Plantation, KFC, etc. have great fundraising opportunities available. Check with the businesses in your community, and check your diocesan fundraising guidelines for guidelines on these shared profit opportunities.

Service options:

- Hold an "Electronics Recycling Event". Several companies will pay you to collect and turn in old computers, TV, monitors and cell phones. They provide safe disposal or recycling and your group gets cash.
- organize car washes, window washing services, yard service, or other traditional services to raise money.
- Organize parish events such as Family Dance, Vacation Bible School, Parent Nite Out, drop-in movie nights, etc. Either charge a fee or ask for donations

Include youth in all aspects of fundraising. Have them make appeals from the pulpit or to businesses. Do not be afraid to help them earn it. Do not get discouraged. When God call us He also provides the assistance to make it happen.

PREPARING YOUR TEENS

This summer, over 30,000 Catholics will experience the power and presence of Jesus Christ at a Franciscan Youth Conference. We expect over 4,000 teens and youth leaders to have this experience at the Steubenville San Diego youth conference. And each experience will be amazing in its own way. Some teens will find forgiveness while others will experience healing. Many will have God's unchanging love for them confirmed in their hearts. With such a wide array of experiences, how can you prepare every youth that is coming with you?

First, put your teens in God's hands. He loves them so much more than you do. His love and plan for them are perfect. We need to, in prayer, present our youth to Christ and let Him do what he does best.

TEEN MEETINGS

We recommend having two or more meetings to pray with your group and to let them know about the different components that go into participating in Steubenville San Diego. If possible bring in a teen speaker who has been to a Steubenville San Diego conference to share their experience. Be sure to share the official promotional video. You can also find some wonderful videos posted by groups that attended last year's conference on YouTube. Use these meetings to build excitement and holy anticipation. A great way to send teens forth could incorporate a Parish Penance Service geared specifically towards youth.

Be sure to cover all of the logistical components. Teens want to know how are they getting there, where will they sleep, what will they eat, who they will meet, and of course will it be worth their time to go. Share with them the cost and your fundraising strategies. Encourage their ideas to make the conference more affordable. If your Pastor has agreed to let teens speak at Mass, use these meetings to recruit your speakers and plan what they will say. If you are offering a scholarship fund or payment plan, let the teens know. Many are hesitant to ask and will simply say they have other plans rather than risk the embarrassment of saying they can not afford to go.

Talk with your teens about what they will experience at the conference. They will be sharing their faith with over 4000 other Catholic teens and youth leaders. The arena at the University of San Diego will have professional sound, lighting and video production equipment. The music will be bold and youthful. The speakers are some of the best in the country – they love teens and love God – and it shows in what they present. There will be expressive praise and worship, lively liturgies, small group time and Eucharistic Adoration. The goal is to help them become excited about the conference and open to new experiences of growing in their faith.

Don't overstate the experience they will have. Specifically do not gear them up for the most emotionally charged weekend of their lives. We do not know how Christ will touch each teen. Most teens are already overly emotional and many live behind a thin veneer that covers deep fears, doubts, and confusion. Teens may worry if they do not become emotional "enough", that somehow the Christ loves them less. When Jesus entered the upper room after rising from the dead, His first gift was His peace. Jesus' gift to many young people during the conference is peace and a deep sense that things are going to be all right.

Encourage young people to be open. Each part of the weekend is only an ingredient in the greater good. It is like baking brownies. Eating flour or raw eggs might not seem all that appealing, but add sugar cocoa and few other ingredients and let it bake and you have delicious brownies. In the same way, singing songs might seem awkward, the idea of listening to a talk sound boring, but when you combine it with all the other parts of the weekend you have something much richer. Ask your youth to trust you and to be open to all of the weekend so that they can receive the richness of God.

Take time to pray at these meetings. Take time to build community. Play games, share food and stories. Speak with excitement and anticipation. "Something wonderful will happen; let's discover it together" is a great promise to share with teens. Remember that even though your adult ministry team will be there to help pray with the teens, the truth is that during Adoration many of your teens will also be seeking their friends for comfort and to pray with them. Someone who is new to the group or feels like an

outsider will not enjoy the richness of that experience. Help the teens to reach out to new comers and let everyone feel they belong.

And don't lose sight of those boring details - Use these meetings to take care of paperwork. Collect release forms, medical forms and payments. You should be able to accomplish everything in two meetings. Prepare your teens before you leave for the conference and the experience will be richer and more meaningful for the teens and your adult ministry team.

SENDING FORTH MASS & MEETING

Many of our groups have a special youth meeting and/or Mass before leaving for San Diego – creating a pilgrimage mind set in their teens. The meeting can include ice breakers and community building activities as well as time for teaching and reflecting on themes like trusting in God and the power of God. Ask your priest to share with the teens and to offer the sacrament of Reconciliation. A community Mass that includes encouragement in the homily, special prayers in the Prayers of the Faithful, and a blessing of the participants, allows the entire parish community to participate in sending their youth on this special weekend. We suggest talking to your Pastor about scheduling one or both of these for July 2012.

SMALL GROUPS:

PLAN NOW FOR EFFECTIVE USE OF THIS VALUABLE TIME

The Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference is a great Catholic evangelistic tool designed to lead young people to Christ and jumpstart the faith of those who already know Christ. However, true evangelization, true Catholic evangelization takes place in community. A powerful weekend of praise, talks, music, liturgy, prayer and adoration has a deeper and sustainable meaning when shared within a loving and accepting community. Each year we offer time for your youth group to have small group reflection and sharing. And remember meals and dorm time can also be small group time!

THE PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUPS

There are many books and websites have written information on small group dynamics. For the purposes of this manual we will focus on three main reasons why small group time is important to the conference experience: 1) they empower youth ministers, 2) they help teens process the weekend, and 3) they give a bonding experience that will help your efforts to build community.

Empowering you and the other adult ministers is important. Teens might think a speaker is cool or that the entertainment is funny but the real heroes of the conference are you and the other adults on your ministry team. Long after the conference you will be there to listen to, laugh with, pray with, teach, cry with and love the teens. That's true ministry and evangelization. You have the opportunity to start that process (especially with your new freshmen) during the conference. Although they might think the conference was awesome, what will stay with them is the love and encouragement they received from you and your team during the weekend and the year ahead.

Helping teens process the experience throughout the weekend is vital. Young people are often deeply involved in their feelings, using them as the main input in choosing their directions in activities and life. However this leaves them vulnerable to constantly changing directions, the confusion between temporary happiness and true joy. And feelings are a poor substitute for a strong core identity. Many young people will have a powerful experience of Jesus during the weekend. It may be very emotional.

Unless we process the weekend with them, moving from feelings into faith, youth can walk away from the weekend saying, “Wow that was a great weekend!” But it doesn’t cause them to change their lives or to grow deeper with Christ. It becomes just another good memory - just another feeling they have experienced. We need to help young people cross over from being feelings-driven to being faith-driven and confirm the reality of our God who created us, loves us and guides us, is the center of it all. Small group time is a great place to start this process.

A powerful spiritual experience will often create questions. Your team needs to be there to hear their concerns, to help answer questions, to help the teens give voice to what they are experiencing, and to keep young people focus on Christ.

Finally, community building is accomplished through the sharing of experiences and lives. Small group time takes the shared experience and facilitates heart-to-heart communication between your youth and adults. It presents youth with a new mode of relating. They see that it is OK to open up, to be genuine, and to share who they really are. They see that there are people who will listen, who care, and who accept them. Small grouping is the necessary personal, human touch, on what can otherwise be perceived as only an event.

ORGANIZING SMALL GROUPS

There are different opinions regarding how small groups should be organized. Should you have co-ed groups or separate groups for boys and girls? Should you mix freshmen with upper classmen? Should you keep friends together or use the small group as a tool for building new relationships? The following are suggestions based on years of experience.

We recommend that you use several formats during the weekend for small groups. Right after the sessions a mixed gender format works well. In the dorms and at meals it would be men’s and women’s small groups. Using various small groups gives freedom for teens to hear how their brothers and sisters in Christ are processing the conference. It also gives a format for issues to be addressed that might not come up in mixed company.

There are definitely benefits and drawbacks for mixing younger and older students. Older students can serve as role models for the younger students. However, the issues they are dealing with and their level of spiritual growth and maturity is often very different from your younger teens.

As you think about these variables remember it is always best to place the youth where you and your team know they will best be served. The bottom line is you know your own group and its particular needs, as well as the policies of our Pastor and your diocese.

GUIDELINES FOR SMALL GROUPS

When recruiting your adult ministry team, it is important that the people you work with can keep personal matters in confidence. Do not recruit someone who gossips. You need to be able to provide a setting where teens can share in confidence. **It is vital that you set a confidentiality policy.** Your Diocese and Pastor should guide you in forming your policy of confidentiality. The policy needs to encompass the needs of the group members, your Pastor’s expectations, your parent’s expectations, and be in accordance with the law. This policy needs to be clearly thought through and then communicated with the adult chaperones and the youth to prevent unwanted embarrassment or mistrust.

For example: a group policy regarding confidentiality might state that unless a youth shares about some type of abuse, or wanting to hurt themselves or others, what is shared will remain completely confidential within the small group or between the adult and the youth. What about sexual behavior? Is all pre-marital sexual behavior destructive? What about on-going sexual behavior between peers where the young person has no desire for change? Will you need to bring the parents into those situations? Do you need the other adult team members to bring all situations like this to the youth minister? In youth ministry the ideal situation is to help foster communication between child and parent. This is just one example of an issue that you need to think through with your Pastor and diocese and address within your confidentiality policy.

Remember to share with your adult ministry team members that if they are unsure about what to do, they should contact you. The next step is to contact your Pastor. He can help you decide if a young person needs help and how to make that happen.

In every case if a young person reveals that they are the victim of abuse or they want to hurt themselves or others, this information must be shared with your Pastor and with trained professionals who can provide appropriate intervention.

Please remember that your policy of confidentiality must be in accordance with the law, your diocese and Pastor. If an adult chaperone does not wish to follow your policy they are not a suitable chaperone. Remember the care of these young people is a sacred trust from God our Father.

RECRUITING AND TRAINING YOUR ADULT MINISTRY TEAM

The Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference is a profound spiritual, and sometimes emotional, experience that leads young people to deeper conversion. Having adults who are properly trained to help facilitate and process the experience is a key component to the outcome of your teen's experience. This point cannot be emphasized enough. In addition, we are making every effort to provide a safe environment for the young people we serve. Therefore, we ask for your utmost diligence and discernment in the recruiting and training of adult chaperones. This is not the time for a few "warm bodies", but for adults who want to bring teens closer to Christ. The following are some criteria and guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare your team of adults.

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN – SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

If you work with youth in any capacity at your parish, you are probably very familiar with the phrases "Protecting God's Children" and "Safe Environments." The tragic scandals that have dominated headlines the past few years serve as a continual reminder of the sacred responsibility we have when serving youth. We need to do our very best to keep young people safe. Franciscan University Youth Outreach and the Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference support the U.S. Bishops' efforts to make this happen.

First, every adult chaperone has to be at least 21 years old. Second, your diocese must approve every chaperone that will be on your adult ministry team in accordance to the standards set forth by your Bishop's Decree on Child Protection. Each diocese has guidelines and training that need to be completed and followed. Find out what they are and implement them now with your adult chaperones. Adults who have not been approved by their diocese cannot participate as a chaperone. There will be a

form in your registration packet that will need to be filled out and signed before you come on site that declares all of your adults have been trained and approved to work with youth. There absolutely will be NO EXCEPTIONS to this policy. If you are unclear about your particular diocesan requirements, call your diocesan office and find out what the policy is right away. Finally, every speaker, musician, or entertainer hired by Franciscan University and the Steubenville San Diego Youth Conference to serve at the youth conference will be background checked by a professional company. If you have any other questions regarding our policies call the registration office of Steubenville San Diego or Franciscan University's Youth Outreach Office.

Some people might be offended when questioned about their backgrounds or if they are required to be trained in the proper ways to relate to young people. These situations require understanding yet firmness. Resistance to the policies and procedures might be an indication that this adult might not be an appropriate choice to be a chaperone. Remember, your first responsibility is to the youth. Better to hurt feelings than to allow a hurt teen.

RECRUITING ADULT MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS

What does the ideal chaperone look like? What is the ideal personality of an adult leader? The short answer is, there is no one right answer. Great adult ministers come in all ages, shapes, sizes, backgrounds and personalities. Don't be too quick to reject a potential leader because they do not fit your preconceived notions. Please consider the following:

First, they should love God. Are they active in their faith development? Are they pursuing a relationship with Christ? This is key because they will be an example for your youth throughout the trip. How can they help a young person grow in their faith if they are not trying to do so in their own lives? Your chaperones should be mentors and guides in matters of faith. They should lead by example, not just tell the young people what to do.

Second, they need to love youth. Specifically, they need to be willing to lay down their lives in both big and little ways during the conference trip. These trips are very demanding. Loving youth means staying up later than everyone else to make sure the youth are asleep. It means waking early to help save seats in the arena. It means focusing on the youth instead of themselves during adoration. It will mean serving youth even when they are rowdy, rude, self-centered, and obnoxious. It means being joyful and attentive to the teens and all the adults on your team.

Third, they need to love the Catholic faith. All adults must share with teens from the teachings of the church, not from their own opinion.

If these three qualities exist – love for God, love of youth, love and obedience to the Catholic faith, – you have discovered a solid-gold treasure. Recruit that adult! With a little training, this person will make the difference between a good experience and a great experience for your youth!

Before you begin recruiting, ask God to reveal the adults He wants to be a part of your trip. Remember the great love God has for you and the youth. He wants to help with every detail!

Here are few ideas to use after you get up off your knees:

Enlist others to help in your search. These would include past chaperones, new chaperones, your Pastor, associates, deacons, religious, friends, and parents, etc. Who might be open to a role in the lives of more teens?

Ask your Pastor and Associate Pastor again.

Approach your parish Young Adult group.

Talk to your RCIA director.

Review the Confirmation sponsors of the last few years, are there potential chaperones?

Approach the teachers in your Catholic High School.

Ask people personally. **Most people are waiting for a personal invitation.**

Have a prepared outline of the commitment a chaperone would have to make. No one likes to find out that there is more to a commitment than originally outlined.

Follow-up with the adults who express an interest in being a chaperone. Build a relationship with open and frequent communication. Invite the adult to participate in other youth ministry activities so they can begin to know so of the teens in your ministry. The conference weekend is rigorous, with little sleep and lots of activity. Remember this when recruiting chaperones. There will be little downtime; chaperones are there for the teens, and need to be attentive to their role at all times.

Recruiting does not happen overnight, so start early. Waiting until the last minute to find adult chaperones can result in the complete termination of your plans to attend the conference. At a minimum, it can cause stress and anxiety.

How many adults do I need? The required ratio at Steubenville San Diego between adults and youths is one adult for every six youth. This is always split on gender lines. Example: If you are bringing 26 youth to a conference, 22 girls and four boys, you will need four female adult chaperones and one male chaperone. Groups do not share chaperones; you must bring a sufficient number of chaperones to meet your group's needs.

Please remember this is a teen conference, not a young adult conference. Please do not bring excessive chaperones as a way of ministering to your young adult community. We encourage you to abide by the guidelines for the benefit of the teens. We encourage you to help the young adults in your community find and participate in young adult ministry.

Our conference also depends on chaperones to maintain order. Chaperones need to be an example of obedience and cooperation with the policies as well as with conference staff and volunteers. Chaperones are responsible for monitoring sleeping areas and to preserving a safe environment. Your chaperones also serve as small group discussion facilitators. Without enough leaders, the size of small groups can become unmanageable. You will need enough adults to serve as shepherds who are aware of special needs, and pray for and with the youth, especially during Saturday night's Adoration.

What is the suggested timeline? Here is our suggested timeline to use when recruiting and training adults. Keep in mind; you may have to adjust this for your particular circumstances.

Now: Begin to plant seeds about needing help for the summer conference. Be prepared to answer questions about time commitments, responsibilities, etc. Keep contact information on all who seem interested. Set up your training schedule for adult leaders.

4-6 months prior: Determine approximate numbers of youth who will attend the conference, and decide on the minimum number of adults needed. Make a list of possible volunteers and begin recruiting by phone. Schedule an open information meeting and show the promo video.

2 months prior: Make sure you have all the necessary paperwork for the conference site. Make sure your diocese has approved your volunteers. Execute the training sessions for your adult chaperones. Hold two or three meetings where your adult ministry team and the youth can pray and get to know each other.

TRAINING AND PREPARING ADULT MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS

Although we call them chaperones or adult volunteers, they are truly an integral part of a ministry team. They are really shepherds in the best sense of the word. This role might seem daunting to some adults. Nevertheless, with training, prayer, and your support, they will succeed. You should seek to instill a servant's heart and attitude in your team. In addition there are some very practical, necessary roles they will need to fill. At all times they will be leaders. We also ask that they be good disciplinarians and shepherds. They will facilitate small groups, pray with teens, and lead discussions. They should be available at all times to care for the needs of the youth, whether it is helping a youth locate a lost sleeping bag or lending an ear to a teen who needs to talk. Team members need to help the youth process what they are experiencing throughout the weekend and support them when the conference is over.

After you assemble your ministry team, and they have received the required training of your diocese, you should schedule two to four training sessions to pray with them and pass on some basic wisdom and knowledge. You will need to cover the logistical details of the trip, the spiritual nature of the conference, how to lead a small group and how to pray with and mentor a teen. Be sure to review teen culture and spirituality. Your adults need to be able to recognize when a teen needs professional help. Each meeting should include time to pray and bond as a team. We highly recommend that in the week before the conference you schedule a team meeting that includes the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Wonderful graces flow from the sacrament and by attending to their own spiritual needs in advance, they are freer to minister to teens at the conference. On a practical note there is limited time available to go to Reconciliation at the conference. If the adult team prepares at the parish level then more time is available for teens during Steubenville San Diego.

Do not take shortcuts when training and preparing your adult ministry team. As they become more familiar with the conference details and their responsibilities, nervousness will decrease and confidence will increase. The success of your conference experience depends on the teamwork of all involved in facilitating the event.

FOR ADULTS – A BRIEF REVIEW OF TEEN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

For those of you who are professional youth ministers this section will probably be a review of familiar material. For your newer chaperones and volunteers it might come as a bit of a shock. The reality is that through the media and other social factors, a distinct youth culture with its own set of rules and ideas about life, values, morality, and relationships emerges each decade or so. What adults experienced in the past is not the current norm. Here are several trends and thoughts that permeate youth culture. Be sure to research and ask questions of experts so that you are equipped to deal with issues that might come up during the conference weekend or within your ministry.

“BAD” IS NORMAL

Jersey Shore, Real World, Skins and other “reality TV” stars and shows continue to promote the idea that alcohol, sex and violent behavior is the norm and will get you what you want. The bottom line is “bad” is popular, it gets you noticed, it gives you sexual appeal. Guys should use women. Girls have to be extremely sexual, not afraid to dress provocatively and they can use sex to manipulate. These “reality” stars also role model gossiping, back-stabbing, and demeaning other girls as a way of getting rid of rivals. In real life these behaviors destroy relationships leaving teen girls isolated and even more vulnerable to having abusive male relationships. Many popular music artists flaunt their sexuality, their crudeness, and their self-centeredness. It can seem to teens that the more immorality you flaunt, the more popular you become.

SELF-RULES

What is true? What is right? The answer that young people get from the culture is, “Whatever you feel.” It’s the philosophy that they receive from music, television, and movies, even in school. It is a great problem facing ministers who are trying to evangelize young people. Our culture continues to proclaim that the idea that God or the Bible or the Church should not have any say in how teens live their lives. In one recent survey, 83 percent of young people stated that circumstances determined morality. Only 6 percent believed that moral truth is absolute. We need to share Christ as the ultimate and only absolute truth. Many young people have no problem accepting Jesus as the great life raft. He’s there to rescue them if they screw up but they hope they won’t need Him. Many see Jesus as just another voice in the mix—not as the God of the universe who loves and guides them in truth. Materialism, hedonism and selfishness are central elements of the culture that surround our teens.

SEX and HOOKUPS

Premarital sex may not be the worst sin you can commit, but sexual sin is definitely the most popular among youth. While teen pregnancy rates have declined in recent years, along with the percentage of young people who are having intercourse, there has been a significant increase in other sexual behaviors. There has been an increase in the number of kids who are experimenting with oral sex and homosexuality. Young men are being inundated with, and becoming addicted to, internet pornography. Casual weekend “hook ups” – often fueled with alcohol - happen at an alarming rate. Some young men are now actively using alcohol and drugs to prevent teen girls from saying no to their sexual advances. Sexually transmitted diseases are still on the rise. These less visible activities are just as damaging as teenage pregnancy. They are destructive to the souls of young people. Young people are being led to believe that sex is recreational; people are to be used for pleasure. Is it any wonder that our young adults then struggle to form committed relationships based on true love?

THE MEDIA

We know that advertising agencies, music and movie producers see teens as their greatest marketplace. The media world of young people, where virtue is almost absent and character counts for nothing, spews forth very effective messages that neither challenge nor affirm young people. The greatest good these media hawks are willing to proclaim is “go green”. Odd how closely the environmental message ties into money. The marketplace manipulates the fears, doubts, confusions of teens; it exploits their desire for something real. Trends and fads rule in place of virtue and character. Now, not everything out there is bad, but a lot of it is. Even religiously active young people who are directly connected with their Church spend only a few hours a week deepening their relationship with Christ. When you consider the

sheer number of hours they watch TV, surf the internet, or spend connected to their I-pods; faith and church community are a small percentage of the total.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

With all the materialism and hedonism bombarding our young people, is it possible that any of them are pursuing spirituality at all? The answer is yes, but for many it is not in the traditional sense. New age and eastern religious concepts are promoted in their media; horoscopes can be found on almost every popular teen-oriented website. For them, all options are equal. There is not one true religion. One idea is as good as another. The only thing you need to do is be good, try not to hurt others and you'll go to heaven. The number of lies disguised like truth and the obliteration of real truth has made the spiritual journey of many youth riddled with emptiness. For Catholic teens, you should be aware that two thirds of Catholic youth would describe themselves as religious but only 40% of them attend Mass every Sunday. Most pray and even read the Bible, but struggle to apply the teachings of Christ and His church into their everyday life.

DIVORCE

Over half the youth in America will witness the break-up of their parent's marriage. Half of those youth will witness the break-up of a second marriage. The emotional, psychological and spiritual fallout of divorce is staggering. Lower self-esteem, psychological disorders, social interaction difficulties, increased drug use, increased sexual activity and depression have all been linked to divorce. The world always highlights the situations of teens who seem to have adapted to divorce. Many youth do not fare well at all. Be aware of the youth in your group who are experiencing divorce in their families.

SUICIDE, SELF MUTILATION, DEPRESSION

Suicide remains a great and tragic problem among young people. It is the third leading cause of death in young people ages 15 -24. Many succeed in killing themselves each year, while thousands struggle through failed attempts and suicidal thoughts. Another frightening trend among young people is self-mutilation. They may use knives, pins, scissors and other sharp objects to make themselves bleed, some will burn and hit themselves. It is not uncommon for these suffering teens to report actually feeling better after this behavior. Their internal pain manifests itself with surface mutilation. Depression currently affects five percent of all teens. This is a serious but treatable medical condition. We can help all of these youth find healing. By listening and observing we can be the bridge for these teens and their families **to receive appropriate medical and psychological help. This important professional help is critical for teens who are depressed, self mutilate or who are sharing suicidal thoughts. Seek help for these teens immediately.** For all teens, remember they often lack the life experience to understand that even though things appear to be at their worst they can get better. We need to hold out the hope of Jesus Christ. We need to help young people see that Christ is with them always and will never leave them.

CAN WE CHANGE THIS?

The point of sharing this information is to help you understand what our teens are up against in the current culture. We need to aggressively and compassionately seek out young people and share the gospel with them in love. Your efforts in getting young people to Steubenville San Diego can literally change the direction of their lives. Large conferences have been shown to have a profound faith impact in young people. This impact needs to be nourished in a faith community, your parish youth ministry

group. Remember research continues to show that faith can have a profound and positive impact in how teens live out the day to day of their lives.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT – LOVING TEENS TO CHRIST

First and foremost remember is that we have the King of the Universe on our side! He holds all the answers to the deepest questions young people have. He alone can satisfy the deepest longing of their hearts. There is a place in their hearts where truth and hope live. There is a hole in their heart that only Christ can fill. We are ambassadors of the Prince of Peace and the Lord of Lords. We have been given the good news of the Gospel. We need to love young people into an encounter with Christ. We need to be patient with them and encourage them. We need to engage our youth and show them the way. It's not difficult. It's not confusing. It's not beyond our ability. We simply need to join together and win this generation for Jesus and the Church. **Give them faith, hope and love in Christ and be amazed at the powerful transformation God can make.**