

Recognizing *ALL* God's Gifts
by Lucero Young, St. Bonaventure Parish, Calgary

What if I told you there is a valuable but greatly under-used resource within the Church? That this resource, if used, has the ability to change the world? If God gave us such a valuable resource, why aren't we using it? This resource is the youth and young adult members of our community.

Oftentimes when there is a ministry position or task to be filled, youth are one of the last candidates considered. Perhaps we think they are not equipped for the position -- lacking the skills, abilities or time suited for the task. Or we don't believe they are interested or willing to serve. Although these concerns are understandable, I would like to gently challenge them.

Through Baptism, a person enters into the life and mission of the Church "to spread ... the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ (Lumen Gentium, 11). As Christ's body here on earth, we are called to continue his mission of "(proclaiming) the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words" (Lumen Gentium, 35). This mission is given to *all* Baptized, regardless of gender, culture or *age*.

We are each entrusted with unique gifts and talents for the benefit of the Church and her mission. When people choose not to use their gifts to serve God's purpose, the whole Body suffers. And when we do not *extend* a ministry opportunity to someone, again the Body suffers. It's important to fit a ministry opportunity to the gifts of the minister. For this reason, we should invite youth to serve in a way that is fitting to their gifts and abilities. It would be poor stewardship not to invite youth, or to place them in a position that does not utilize their gifts.

Young people have the ability to renew the life of the Church. Pope John Paul II expressed this sentiment in his homily to the young people at World Youth Day, 1993, in Denver: "The Church needs your energies, your enthusiasm, your ideals, in order to make the Gospel of life penetrate the fabric of society, transforming people's hearts and the structures of society in order to create a civilization of true justice and love."

Youth have gifts that we as a Church need. They have individual gifts, and they have gifts that accompany their youthfulness. Their energy, time, zeal, enthusiasm, passion, ideals, innocence, and heart for justice have the ability to encourage adults in the Church and hold us accountable when we falter. In turn, adults have wisdom, patience, and experience to share with our youth and to help them stay the course. Each group has gifts to offer, but if we don't recognize the value of our young people and the gifts that they bring, we miss a valuable part of the Body of Christ.

Stewardship Sightings

Although our parish is always working to include our youth, here are some ways our youth serve: ThinkFast, Alter Servers, Hospitality, Ushers, Choir, Eucharistic Ministers, Youth Group Leaders, Christmas Hampers, Youth Advisory Committee, Parish Council, Gift Bearers, Coming Alive Camp (Youth Summer Camp), and many other ways!