

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS FALL 2026

Preparing Student Leaders to Build Something Great Together

As a new school year approaches, we as youth and young adult ministers are given an opportunity and privilege to welcome a new generation of student leaders. We may begin the year thinking about schedules, retreats, service projects, meetings, and events—but beneath all of these plans is something much more important: forming young people who recognize that God has entrusted them with unique gifts meant to be shared, to help build up a community where others can truly encounter Christ.

Student leadership in ministry is about so much more than finding students who are outgoing, responsible, or naturally good at organizing events. Our task as youth and young adult ministers is to help young people discover that they have something unique to contribute to the mission of the Church, and each one of these gifts matters.

In his first encyclical, *Magnificas Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV begins with a powerful reminder that we each have a responsibility for the world we are working together to create. He says,

“Each generation inherits the task of shaping its own era, of guiding history to become a place where the dignity of every person is safeguarded, justice is promoted and fraternity is made possible.”

These words are a profound reminder to us that our student leaders have influence, and each of them are already at work helping to shape the communities in which they live.

Magnifica Humanitas reminds us that every person is unique and irreplaceable. Pope Leo speaks of each human being as ***“a free and intelligent subject with a conscience, capable of seeking God, serving one another, caring for our common home.”*** This vision challenges us to look at our student leaders not simply as volunteers who can fill positions, but as young people with God-given dignity, gifts, creativity, and responsibility.

The Gospel does not call us to build the Kingdom of God alone. We need one another. As youth and young adult ministers, we are not simply creating a team of students who can accomplish our ministry goals. We are forming a community in which students learn to recognize, affirm, and depend upon one another's gifts.

We must help our students to recognize these gifts both within themselves and each other, so that we can all work together to become co-creators of a community where others can encounter Christ. Let us consider some of the ways in which we can do just that in our own youth and young adult ministries.

FORMING STUDENT LEADERS:

Helping Student Leaders Understand their Baptismal Call

As youth and young adult ministers, we must help our students to understand their baptismal call. Every Christian is called to share in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king, reminding us that leadership in the Church is not reserved just for ordained ministers; every baptized person has a role in building up the Body of Christ. For young adult leaders, living this baptismal call means recognizing that leadership is a vocation, not simply a position, and we are called to use our gifts and talents in each of the following ways:

PRIESTLY ROLE - We are all capable of using our unique gifts and talents to make our lives a sacrifice. ***How can we intentionally live a life of sacrifice that models the life of Jesus so that we may provide an example for our student leaders?***

PROPHETIC ROLE - We are all called to witness to the truth and commit to giving testimony to the world. ***How can our own witness to the truth help our student leaders to understand the way we are each called to bring hope to the world?***

KINGLY ROLE - As leaders, we are called to build up a world where others flourish and to see ourselves as being about the transformation of the world. ***How can we help our student leaders to see this by giving them responsibilities and helping them to build up their own gifts and talents?***

Inspired by "Rooted in Christ - Cultivating the Spiritual Life," a talk given by Dr. Susan Timoney at the CCMA LAUNCH 2026 Conference

Being Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples

By helping students to understand their baptismal call, we can also help them to understand how they are each called to be missionary disciples. We are all apostles who are "sent forth" to authentically witness to how Christ is at work in each of our lives. As youth and young adult ministers, we are called to model this for our student leaders and accompany them along the way using the following **Best Practices of Accompaniment**:

1. **Listening** - Pay close attention to student leaders and listen deeply to their concerns.
2. **Discernment** - Guide students in listening to the Holy Spirit at work in their lives.
3. **Patience** - Remember that God is always at work, and His timing is perfect!
4. **Empathy** - Be compassionate and meet students where they are at.
5. **Openness** - Be open to the many ways in which the Holy Spirit is at work.

Inspired by "Living as Missionary Disciples on Campus," a talk given by Father Frank Donio, SAC at the CCMA LAUNCH 2026 Conference