



19 May 2010

Dear Fathers,

Recently Life Teen, Inc. has partnered with MCYM/Club Beyond (MCYM/CB) to recruit Catholics to serve as ecumenical contract youth ministry leaders on military installations. This has given rise to requests for a clarification on the relationship between MCYM/CB and the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA.

Life Teen, Inc. is an international Catholic youth ministry which believes that Eucharist-based ministry has the power to transform teens, transform parishes, and transform culture. They develop quarterly resources for a Core Team approach to Catholic youth ministry, host conferences, and summer camps. Life Teen is based in Mesa, AZ. Currently, there are several military Catholic Faith Communities using Life Teen resources effectively.

While there is an ecumenical and community-wide partnership that exists between us, this Archdiocese cannot give broad and unqualified support to MCYM/CB, for there are significant differences in approach between MCYM/CB youth ministry and a comprehensive Catholic youth ministry.

MCYM/CB is an ecumenical organization that uses Protestant models of “Young Life” and “Youth for Christ” as its approach to youth ministry. It strives to introduce young people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and its focus is on outreach to those not attending chapel. Life Teen youth ministry leaders will be working within this model to provide a wider outreach to youth on military installations.

Catholic youth ministry, on the other hand, builds on Church teaching that baptism has already placed the young person in relationship with Christ. This relationship grows over time as the young believer pursues a personal and spiritual journey, through active participation in the life of the Church. Central to this life in Christ is the regular participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrament of Penance. This spiritual journey must be complemented and nourished through a biblically based instruction on the teachings and traditions of the Church.

Catholic life at every stage of life, for young and old matures and blossoms in the midst of an active Catholic Community of Faith that celebrates the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.¹

So while MCYM/CB might provide an introduction to the person of Jesus it cannot replace a solid, well-rounded Catholic youth ministry in the military setting, involving sacramental, catechetical and communal participation.

Catholic youth often attend MCYM/CB meetings because they have friends of other denominations that attend or because they are invited by MCYM/CB leaders. The weekly meetings tend to focus on high energy games, music, and normally a 10-15 minute witness talk about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Social action programs are planned for various periods of time. Surely, in response to the prayer of Jesus “that all may be one” Catholic parents and youth ministry leaders should be responsive to appropriate ecumenical activities for our young people. However, these must always be complementary to a comprehensive Catholic youth ministry that incorporates solid Catholic religious education.

In addition to promoting mutually held beliefs and practices, Protestant-Catholic joint opportunities should educate all young people in those differences that divide Catholics and the various families of Protestant belief. We would hope that Protestant youth ministry leaders would see it their serious responsibility to encourage Catholic youth to participate fully in the life of our Church. Likewise, in those instances where Catholic leaders minister to Protestant youth.

Full involvement of the chaplains, Catholic and Protestant, is critical in working with MCYM/CB administration, youth ministry leaders and parents. There are places where MCYM/CB and Catholic chaplains are successful in this collaboration. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. I am grateful that MCYM/CB leadership has recognized some past misunderstandings and is making serious efforts better to educate all their youth ministry leaders in the principles of ecumenical cooperation. I am aware that MCYM/CB is hiring Catholic young adults to serve as ecumenical youth workers.² On the installation level, all final decisions on the content of the religious education and ministry to Catholic youth remain with the Catholic chaplain or his designee.

We invite – and indeed, would expect that – MCYM/CB youth workers and ministry leaders become familiar with and follow the comprehensive approach to Catholic youth ministry:

- *Renewing The Vision: A Framework For Catholic Youth Ministry*, NCCB/USCC, 1997
- *Growing in Competency: A Self-Assessment Tool for Youth Ministry Leaders*, NFCYM, 2004
- *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, NALM, NFCYM, NCCL, NPM, 2006.

¹ Catholic youth ministry is based on the experience of Christ and the Church through the Sacraments and is focused on the eight components outlined in the 1997 U.S. Bishops’ document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. Those components include: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship.

² The Archdiocese is aware that MCYM/CB seeks to recruit Catholic youth workers to serve in ecumenical youth ministry as one way to support Catholic Youth Ministry. When these Catholic youth workers collaborate with the Catholic chaplain the comprehensive approach to Catholic youth ministry is enhanced. It should be noted, however, that the Archdiocese does not screen Catholic applicants that choose to work for MCYM/CB.

I also request that they become familiar with *A Vision for forming Catholic Youth Ministry in the U.S. Military* and *Building A Comprehensive Catholic Youth Ministry in the U.S. Military (Groundbreaking)* both of which are posted on the archdiocesan website, <http://www.milarch.org>.³

Hopefully comprehensive Catholic youth ministry will grow and develop in military settings. I realize that with limited resources there are appropriate times to collaborate on community-wide events. I also look for every opportunity to help Catholic youth and parents to grow in their Catholic faith.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ (Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA

³ The Archdiocese has worked with MCYM/CB and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry to facilitate four European Catholic Youth Conferences that have gathered anywhere from 100-250 Catholic youth and adult leaders. This community-wide collaboration is highlighted in the *Renewing The Vision*.