



THE Mustard Seed

GROWING TO SUSTAINABILITY

Youth in Theology
and Ministry
Annual Report 2013



Saint John's
SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY • SEMINARY

ytm's WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS!

Dr. Jeffrey Kaster



I am amazed by the strength of YTM's web of relationships. Researchers have demonstrated that a strand of a spider web is

stronger than steel of the same weight. When I receive emails or phone calls from former YTM folks, I am reminded that the YTM connections rooted in Christ's love, kinship, compassion, and service are very strong and very meaningful and often include inspiring service. Recently I received an email from David Massey, who is in the Dominican Republic working with at-risk youth. I talked on the phone with Will Newkirk who is teaching inner city youth in Tulsa. Katie Vogl and Kathleen Dierberger are both doing parish ministry as part of their graduate theological education at Boston College and Notre Dame, respectively.

It's exciting to see this web of relationships in the newly hired YTM staff. Our staff has grown to include Jessie Johnson as the full time YTM Lilly Grant Coordinator, Roger Pieper as the Lilly Grant Graduate Assistant, Kenzie Meagher as the YTM Graduate Assistant, and Karen Pelletier as the CSB/SJU Student Worker. All four have significant connections to YTM—Karen participated in

YTM as a youth in 2010-11, Roger and Jessie both served as undergraduate counselors for three years, and Kenzie was mentored by three YTM MA Cohort members: Nathan Langer and Jessica Ellingson at the College of St. Scholastica, and Hannah Voss in her parish. It is so exciting to have these very skilled and committed young leaders working together to foster God's Reign.



Hatsal Youth Ministry Institute in South Korea

An international element of this web of relationships was woven in July. I was invited by Fr. Pius Cho, Director of the Hatsal Youth Ministry Institute, to teach at the South Korean National Youth Ministry Symposium in Seoul. YTM and Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary (SOT) are continuing a partnership with the Hatsal Institute. This January they will be sending a third student, Se-la Catherine Lee, for graduate theological study at the SOT. Se-la will work with YTM this summer. I learned so much from Korean Catholic Youth Ministry about beauty and prayer. I look forward to working with Se-la to bring this beauty to the 2014 YTM Summer Institute.

Amazing connections! Amazing service!
Amazing God!



Front row: Jessie Johnson, Kenzie Meagher, Karen Pelletier, Back Row: Jeff Kaster, Roger Pieper.

SUMMER INSTITUTE 2013 HIGHLIGHTS

From June 16th to the 29th, YTM held its 14th Summer Institute. Here are some of the highlights:

- 59 Youth and 11 Counselors
- Eucharist with Abbot John Klassen, OSB
- Trip to Catholic Social Services in St. Cloud
- Visit to Islamic Center of St. Cloud
- Annual Vocation Banquet featuring:
 - S. Michaela Hedican, OSB, Prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery
 - Crosier Br. Alex Juguilon, OSC
 - Mr. Peter Bierer, Youth Minister at Pax Christi Church, Eden Prairie, Minnesota
- 22 Religious from 17 communities attended the Vocation Banquet
- Summer II Presentations at 5 Vocation Partner Sites



THEOLOGY CLASSES

- Praying in Color
- Prophets
- Hidden Treasures in the Covenants
- Benedictine Monasticism
- Leadership in Church and Society
- Theology and Science

SUMMER I SERVICE SITES

- East Side Boys and Girls Club
- South Side Boys and Girls Club
- Mother of Mercy Campus of Care
- Common Ground Gardens
- Casa Guadalupe Day Camp



PRAYER SESSIONS

- Eucharist
- Taizé
- Centering Prayer
- Affirmation Prayer
- Reconciliation
- Hunger Banquet
- Body of Christ Prayer
- Foot Washing
- Lectio Divina
- Covenant Writing

92% OF 2013 YOUTH RATED
YTM OVERALL EXCELLENT

COMMUNITY & COMMITMENT

Kenzie Meagher



Ashley Becker

Ashley Becker is a junior from New Salem, North Dakota who was a Summer I participant in the YTM program in 2013. She heard about the YTM program through one of her mentors, Ken Roshau, who is the director of youth ministry for the Diocese of Bismarck.

ASHLEY'S STORY

Ashley says that her first summer at YTM will never leave her. The best part of YTM for Ashley was the sense of community she felt, which helped her to realize that she was not alone in her faith. "Through the dedication I saw in others I was able to see my own dedication to my faith emerge." Another aspect of the YTM program that touched Ashley was her service site. "At Casa Guadalupe I was able to see God through the goodness of others."

"After this experience I was able to recognize what I could do for others and the Church." Upon returning to New Salem, Ashley got more involved in her parish. She and a friend directed the vacation bible school program this past summer and Ashley has started to teach CCD to 4th grade students –using what she learned from the program to teach them about Christ.

For Ashley's service project she is going to go to parishes within the Diocese of Bismarck to promote the SEARCH program, a retreat for young people which was also highly formational for her. "I want to use mini testimonies in order to engage other youth in their faith. My hope is to inspire more teens to grow and mature in their faith through my service project."

Ashley would highly recommend the YTM experience to other youth because of the prayer experiences, supportive community, and the opportunity to gain a renewed relationship with God.



YTM HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPACTFUL EXPERIENCE, SPIRITUALLY, THAT I HAVE EVER HAD. *Dean Nation*



THE CALL TO CARE

Do you know what it feels like for someone to believe in you and show you that your future is important? I do, because of my life changing experience with YTM as a youth and counselor. As a youth, I met incredible college students who cared deeply about the growth of youth in their understanding of vocation, discipleship, and leadership. The fact that college students believed that it was their responsibility to nurture the future of the Church was inspiring and I knew I wanted to be that cool when I grew up.

Sure enough, four summers later I found myself as a counselor at YTM. However, my perspective changed: the high school youth were hands-down the coolest people there. They became my inspiration through their dynamic growth and embracing their call to serve the world with love and justice. The youth of YTM have changed my life and they will continue to change the lives of all they encounter.



Alyssa Terry

As a counselor, I am blessed to have the opportunity to dive deeper into my vocational understanding of how I am called as a disciple of Christ to be a leader in the Church. Through hands-on experience, I have further developed my skills to be a leader in the Church. I have also been enriched by the examples of the staff and Vocation Partners who faithfully live out their vocation.

I give to YTM because it helps everyone involved to nurture a deeper understanding and call to vocation. YTM reveals that there are people who care enough about the future of the world to invest in those who will one day be its leaders—and empower these leaders in today's world as well. Through my gift, I am part of this community that cares about these youth, their futures, the future of the Church, and the future of the world.

**83% OF YOUTH RATED THE
COUNSELORS' HELPFULNESS
AS EXCELLENT**



LIGHTING THE FIRE

WHY SACRED HEART MONASTERY SUPPORTS YTM

Kenzie Meagher

Sacred Heart Monastery in Richardton, North Dakota was founded 103 years ago as the first community of Benedictine women in the state. When asked why the community decided to be a vocation partner for the YTM program, Sister Renée Branigan, Vocation Director, said, “It was initially a tough sell, but I insisted. I learned more in the days I spent at the institute relating to students and counselors than I did at vocations conferences.” Conversations that she had with participants and counselors are what sold her in terms of partnering with the YTM program. Sister Renée was pleased with the theology during morning prayer and was impressed that young people would go out in service and put into practice what they learned. “During the YTM program there are testimonials from people in religious communities about how God works in their life and in community. That is the way to set fire to people’s hearts. It is also the nature of the YTM program to light fires in youth. If you don’t set fire to the heart it won’t go anyplace. By getting kids together to be on

fire about the Church, that is when it gets fanned and grows. It is important for young people to entertain the idea of commitment to the church in any form – they won’t need an answer right now. If youth are contemplating their commitment to the Church, they have an open heart and are open to answer God’s call – in whatever way that is. The program is not a place to recruit for vocation; rather, kids are encouraged to open their hearts to God and to follow where He leads. Where are you



Sr. Renée Branigan

**AFTER ATTENDING
YTM, THE NUMBER OF
YOUTH WHO CONSIDERED
PRIESTHOOD OR RELIGIOUS
LIFE INCREASED BY 117%**

going to find this percentage of young people that are open to serving God?”

Sister Renée stated that their investment of success is not who they can recruit but who they can encourage while coming away from

the program encouraged as a community. “The program is solid and is covering the appropriate bases for young people where there is not a lot of encouragement. There is a need to cultivate the whole spectrum

of participating in the Church. By supporting YTM we are building the kingdom of God. Our support of the program is ultimately about fostering the reign of God.”



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**YTM HOMECOMING
WEEKEND**

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

AUGUST 1-3, 2014

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