

DIRECTIVES FOR GROUP LEADERS & CHAPERONES

Ministering Effectively during the Weekend

The goal of the Steubenville Youth Conferences is to lead teens to a personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ and into deep, peaceful union with him in prayer. As a leader, there are things you can do to help your teens enter into that deep, peaceful prayer. You are ultimately the primary caregiver and responsible for ministering to your teens and their needs. **There will be Prayer Ministry stations located around the Conference Ballroom. Prayer ministers are there to be of assistance in an intercessory and hands on way to help the teens experience Christ's love and healing as much as possible.**

It is very important that this information be shared with **ALL MINISTERS, RELIGIOUS, CHAPERONES and ADULTS.** Even if they've been to many Steubenville conferences in the past, there's a very good chance they have never been given these specific directives.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE

Friday night – The opening session features praise & worship and aims to open the hearts of teens.

Saturday day – Sessions aim to lead teens to a “deeper” understanding of God.

Saturday night – This session includes Eucharistic Adoration and procession, praise and worship. During this time, teens are encouraged to bring all that they have learned and experienced over the weekend to Jesus himself—which can be very powerful. Teens might view or experience the love of God for the first time or in a very unique way when Jesus shows up, in person, through the Eucharist.

Sunday morning – The conference may conclude with personal testimonies and with a closing Eucharistic Liturgy. This year, there will be another time of Eucharistic Adoration as part of the morning session.

What to do as a chaperone/group leader:

1. **Take care of your teens' physical needs** – Teens need a good night sleep, healthy food (not just junk food) & plenty of water. Emotional reactions can be more extreme when physical needs are not met.
2. **Prepare your teens** – specific directions are on the opposite side of this sheet of paper regarding sessions.
2. **Remind your teens of the focus and goal of the sessions** – intimate, peaceful union with Jesus.
3. **Be a healthy role model of various forms of prayer** – standing, sitting, kneeling, silence, singing, hands folded or lifted up, etc.
4. **Keep your eyes open** - feel free to join in the worship of the evening but observe your teens. At times it may be appropriate to take a teen into the concourse if they need to talk, are disruptive, or having a difficult time.
5. **Spread out** - Make sure all adults spread out among your group so that every student is easily reachable. Avoid focusing too much attention on just one teen: the whole group needs your attention.
6. **Avoid disruptions** – don't climb over teens to get to one needing attention; dramatic movements getting to a teen can often be more disruptive than what is happening with the teen in the first place. Always aim to keep the focus on the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
6. **Pray over/with your teens** – teach your teens how to pray over/with one another as well; this may be new for many, including some of your adult chaperones. Help them be comfortable with something new.
7. **Affection or touch** – have healthy boundaries; physical touch should always be healthy and appropriate to the relationship you have with the teen.
8. **Follow-up** – give all of your teens an opportunity to process their experiences, and ensure that any teens with unique, unusual, or especially powerful responses have time with a group leader to discuss what happened.

Emotional/Unique Spiritual Manifestations

During the main sessions, especially in the evenings, some teens will have emotional or unique spiritual responses to the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. As a leader, it's important that you articulate to your teens the ultimate goal of these prayerful evenings - deep, peaceful union with Jesus.

What to do when teens experience the following:

Crying or moaning (could indicate distress for sins, hurt, family problems): If the crying is soft and they seem to be at peace, let them be. Some teens just need a light physical touch, on the back or shoulder to express reassurance and presence of support.

Giggling or laughter (could be contagious, nervous, or the joy of the Holy Spirit): If laughter occurs, try to intervene fairly soon to keep it from becoming distracting. If it seems to be a gift of joy from the Spirit, comfort the teen and tell them this is

a beautiful gift from God. Then, try to quiet them, encourage them to now receive God's peace and refocus on the Eucharist.

Resting in the Spirit (at peace with God). These individuals are so caught up in God's love that their physical body simply rests in His presence and gives up fighting in a physical sense. Usually this is a deep healing from the Lord. There is typically no need to remove a person who is resting in the Spirit from the room; this could even disrupt their experience of Christ (as well as others'). In the arena, they should sit in their chairs. They do not need to lie down in this state. They may or may not be able to respond to you. If they're distracting others or need to move, tell them. You should ask to make sure they're not physically ill. Others should be encouraged to give such a person breathing room, be at peace with what is occurring, and refocus their attention on Christ. It is imperative that chaperones not take the focus off of Jesus.

PREPARING YOUR TEENS FOR EVENING SESSIONS

Here are suggestions as to what to share to your teens so that they are not confused or freaked out during the evening sessions AND yet not encouraged to be overly emotional. A simple explanation of what might happen and how they should/should not respond is adequate. You could even read, verbatim, the following 4 points to them...

1. Explain Eucharistic Adoration – Simply put, we Catholics believe that the Eucharist is really Jesus - body, blood, soul, and divinity. Sometimes in our worship we place the Consecrated Host in a beautiful vessel called a monstrance and have a procession, so that Jesus can be physically present to us in a very special way.
2. Remember the goal of the evening sessions is to experience God in a peaceful and meaningful way. Do what you need to do to experience God in prayer – through vocal worship, sitting, standing, etc. Your goal is to personally, intimately connect with the Creator of the Universe, the Savior of the World.
3. Emotions are not the ultimate goal – some people may experience emotions in the presence of Christ. This is okay because we're emotional people and it's good to bring what we feel to Christ. However, whether you experience strong emotions or not, remember your focus is union with Jesus. Someone responding emotionally is not necessarily having a deeper or better experience. In fact, some of the deepest experiences of union with God are in peaceful silence. (If anyone has an emotional reaction that is a significant distraction to others around them, they will be removed from the room until they settle down; we do not believe that the Holy Spirit would lead anyone to distract others from the presence of Christ)
4. Don't worry about your friends - if someone around you is responding to Christ's presence emotionally, it is okay. If you think that someone around you might need assistance, let your chaperones take care of them. Trust their judgment and wisdom. If you feel called to do so, simply and briefly pray for any friends who might be struggling as you continue to worship. Most importantly, keep your focus on Christ.

At the conclusion of evening sessions, make certain to bring closure to the events of the night. Respond to all questions your teens might have about what happened. Remind them of God's love, the joy of the Spirit and the peace Christ ultimately wants all people to experience through His presence. For teens that responded emotionally to the night, it is important to have an individual follow-up concerning why they were emotional and what can be done for further healing if hurt still remains. You might also encourage them to receive ministry from the prayer ministers who can pray into the hurt or confusion.