

KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS – AUSTRALIA

FORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 2018

YOUTH

“Let us encourage the generosity which is typical of the young and help them to work actively in building a better world. Youth do not solely need material things. Above all, they need to have those non-material values which are the spiritual heart of a people ... spirituality, generosity, solidarity, perseverance, fraternity, and joy.” (Pope Francis homily at WYD 2013)

FORMAT FOR THE SESSIONS.

Each Session should be limited to only 20 - 25 minutes.

Step 1. OPENING PRAYER

Opening Prayers are taken from the Order Prayers for Meetings of the Order.

Step 2. READINGS ON THE THEME

Taken from many acknowledged sources on the theme "Youth".

These can be read aloud entirely by one or by several Knights taking one each. It might be helpful if the readings were read, perhaps as part of daily prayer, before the scheduled meeting.

Step 3. A few moments of reflection on these readings in silence.

Step 4. SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Readings from Sacred Scripture should be read slowly and reflectively one by one allowing a brief pause between each reading.

Step 5. SILENT REFLECTION

Then follows 5 Minutes for silent reflection on both the Readings on the Theme and the Sacred Scripture. Knights might find it useful to underline or make notes on the texts during this time.

Step 6. SHARING

Knights are invited to share their thoughts and reflections with each other. No more than 10 Minutes should be allowed for this.

There are some discussion points in each Session – they are meant to be helpful – but there may be other points that emerge from the reflections and these should be given 'first place' in any sharing.

Step 7. CONCLUSION of Sharing – and of the Session -is signalled by the Prayer identified.

Step 8. The normal business of the Meeting continues at this point.

Step 9. CLOSING PRAYERS

From the Order Prayers for Meetings.

GENERAL POINTS

1. Choose a Formation Leader for the year so that someone is responsible for the facilitation of each Session. This means someone will 'do the homework' beforehand, allocate readers, and keep an eye on the time during each Session.
2. It is important that each member has his own sheet for the Session so that he can make any notes, underline things, etc.

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KSC 2018 FORMATION PROGRAMME

TOPIC CHOSEN – YOUTH

Introduction

This topic is critically important for a number of reasons. It also presents challenges for a number of reasons.

How do we define youth? A good start might be to refer to the vision developed by those engaged in youth ministry in the Church in Australia and part of that vision is described by the guiding text found in “Anointed and Sent”.

A special office for Youth Ministry has been established by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference with a dedicated team. Many Dioceses have also established offices for youth ministry – and these are all linked together. Included in the guiding statement are the following texts:

“Anointed and Sent: A Vision for Australian Catholic Youth Ministry

‘Anointed and Sent provides a vision for ministry with young people aged 12-30 in Australia. It calls the Church to accompany our maturing disciples throughout their school years and into adulthood, to find their vocation and place in the Church and world.

“This is a framework for current and future ministry. It focuses on ‘Why do we engage in ministry with young people?’, rather than seeking to provide what could only ever be a sample of the many different answers to the question, ‘How do we engage in ministry with young people?’

“Catholic Youth Ministry seeks to involve young people within the whole faith community, expressing and understanding who we are as Church, in our relationship with God. This vision statement is a call to the entire faith community to be in ministry with young people.

“Anointed and Sent provides Catholic youth ministry with three goals:

- *To foster the personal and spiritual growth of each young person*
- *To draw young people into responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community*
- *To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.”*

We have all become aware of many initiatives in recent years that have been embraced by the Church. Pope Saint John Paul II established the International World Youth Days held every two or three years (and we will remember the 2008 when Sydney hosted one of these) as a universal activity. Nationally many countries celebrate something similar every year and in Australia we have become used to the Australian Catholic Youth Festivals – the most recent in Sydney with the next one anticipated to be in Perth. Many Dioceses have established Youth Ministry Offices with enthusiastic staff to help develop and share resources and coordinate activities. So we can be confident that the importance of ministry to youth is now well established.

In a special way the Synod of Bishops Meeting scheduled for this year has been dedicated to Youth, Faith and Discernment. As part of the preparation an international survey was organised to seek input from young people for that Synod meeting. In Australia we have already embarked upon a Year of Youth for this year 2018.

In some senses, therefore, the breadth of the topic and the ongoing heightened activities take it beyond the usual scope of the formation programme.

It seems to me that there are at least two main elements that could be the focus of the programme. The first element is to reflect upon our own experience and this will give us an opportunity to share that wisdom. The second element is to reflect upon what we can do in our apostolate to engage in the insight of the Church to meet the three goals identified for ministry.

The intention is to provide the first four sessions of the programme now. In these sessions some very basic principles are suggested for discussion and prayerful reflection. The following four sessions will be provided closer to the many activities that are to happen later in the year.

We cannot help but be encouraged by the response of some very dedicated and committed young people. Clearly they are abundantly blessed by the graces the Holy Spirit brings. We are also encouraged by the sure knowledge that our greatest ally and example in our devotion to be genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus – Mary – will accompany us with her prayerful intercession.

+Max L Davis
Bishop
National Chaplain

10th January 2018

KSC 2018 FORMATION PROGRAMME TOPIC CHOSEN – YOUTH

Session One **Theme - What is new?**

“I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your steps and enlighten you. For you and your families, and for all who help you to grow in goodness and in grace, may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of us all, be true Door of Mercy.” (Pope Francis – Solemnity of the Epiphany, Vatican, 6th January 2016)

Step 1: **OPENING PRAYER:** From the Order Prayers.

Step 2: **READING ON THE THEME:**
Thoughts about communication, community and reflection (Bishop Davis)

Young people are not just the ‘topic of the moment’. They have always been at the very forefront of our family and community life.

It is true that we have become more attuned in recent times to the presence of youth in our faith community – locally and internationally. Part of that has to do with so called modern means of **communication** – social media, facebook, twitter, etc, - and the ready access and prevalence of all sorts of instruments that provide instant communication. Our television, radio, mobile phones (with instant SMS, Apps, cameras, e-mail, etc, all built in), MP3 players, and so on, are all instruments that are common and everywhere. One consequence can be to present another string into a relationship that is very challenging to those already present in a formed and existing one. Someone has introduced a ‘stranger’ into the current dynamic and that new person (or group of persons) is not immediately available to the others present. We are all aware of the situations where those around us often seem more interested in what is happening elsewhere – mobile phones at the table, in the classroom, in meetings, on the roads, in trains, in buses and footpaths. Even the Pope had to ask people to please turn off their phones during Mass at St. Peter’s.

In the present age everyone travels regularly and far and for all sorts of reasons – employment, study, sport, participation in significant events, and holidays are but some of them. Sometimes this is in organised or family groups and sometimes alone. And that includes **young people** and their ‘away’ experience is immediately and instantly able to be **shared with others** who are not ‘away’ with them. And all too often the experiences and the sharing of them demand some instant response or provoke a reaction which is so instant that it leaves no time for reflection or even a context.

Yet young people do **reflect** – more importantly they need reflection to be healthy in every sense. In our own recent history Pope St. John Paul II demonstrated a wonderful connection with young people across the world. They responded then and still do with the phenomenon of the International World Youth Days which is also the basis for local Youth Festivals, Youth Days, etc. Who will forget the tremendous experience of the Sydney World Youth Day in 2008! There are many lessons to be learned from these experiences and not least of which is the importance of reflection. St. John Paul used often say that the ‘eternal questions’ that humans have asked like who is God, what is evil, why do people suffer, and what is the right way to live, are answered by knowing Jesus Christ. But we can only know Jesus Christ by reflecting on His life and teachings. This introduces the importance of Sacred Scripture and we remember that every person who attended World Youth Day in Sydney received two books (in their own language) – one was a copy of the Holy Gospel of St. Luke and the other the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Being privileged to be present at the time I still remember with great clarity and awe the Vigil before the Blessed Sacrament on the night before the closing Mass. There were at least 450,000 young people present at the Randwick Racecourse and when the Blessed Sacrament was brought to the Altar and placed before the gathering there was absolute and enduring silence – some movement certainly but the silence was profound! I have been in many of our Churches where the faithful cannot help but chatter both before and after Mass!

Step 3: *Allow a few moments reflective silence, then proclaim the Word of God*

Step 4: SACRED SCRIPTURE

Reading from the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2 verses 42 to 47.

“These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and miracles. And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.”

Step 5: Reflection (5 mins)

Step 6: Sharing (10 Mins)

In what ways does our experience of community differ from that of the early church as described in the Acts?

What are the common elements between the ‘apostolic’ community and our modern experience?

Can modern means of communication help in developing and fostering a sense of reflection?

Step 7: CONCLUSION

Pray together the community prayer – the Lord’s Prayer.

Step 8: Meeting proceeds

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS of the Order

KSC 2018 FORMATION PROGRAMME

TOPIC CHOSEN – YOUTH

Session Two Theme: Then and Now

"I like to speak with the youth, and I like to hear the youth. They always put me in difficulty. They tell me things that I haven't thought of, or that I've partly thought of. The restless youth, the creative youth, I like them!"

(Pope Francis In-flight interview from Poland, July 31, 2016.)

Step 1: OPENING PRAYER: Order Prayers

Step 2: READINGS ON THE THEME

The following is an excerpt from the book *'Youth the Hope of the Harvest'* by Father Edmund J. Elbert. Chapter 7 entitled 'What the kids are saying.'

"Religion and God. "Religion for me is something that takes place between myself and God. I go to church and pray but I always go when nobody's there. I just don't get anything out of church in any other way, like Sunday. I don't understand what's going on or what it's all about. I can talk to God better when I'm by myself, when I'm out in the fresh air, even when I'm just relaxing and looking at the sky. I feel I'm doing more and being more religious when I'm trying to help somebody out, like trying to get some friends to kick drugs. I know what that's like but I was lucky. You see I found the Lord."

Thoughts such as these represent pretty reasonably the view of many youngsters on the topic of religion and on their attitude toward God. In their search for a meaningful existence in a world many of them despise today's youth are revealing a remarkable interest and involvement in the religious and even mystical aspects of human existence. Their involvement is certainly not restricted by a concern over religion in terms of specific codes, cults, or creeds. Religion seems to obsess many of our young because of the undeniable influence it has had in shaping and reshaping of social institutions. The moral ethic that formalized religion, or as some refer to it, fossilized religion, imposes in one form or other seems to the young to be too oppressive and too outdated in its refusal to take into account the individual person of flesh and blood. Support for this opposition to the rigidities of moral principles as proposed by formalized religion frequently is sought in the representation of the physical sciences and especially in the modern emphasis of Freudian-based psychology. The current emphasis on freedom and personalism makes an enemy of the restrictive influence of moral accountability. The value-judgement norms of formalised religion appear to the young to inhibit the spirit of individuality and personal spontaneity. Their archaic statement often makes a mockery of their true meaning for the mind of modern young people."

(Father Elbert, a priest of the Brooklyn Diocese, has a doctorate in philosophical psychology from the Catholic University of America and, at the time of writing was on the professional staff at South Oaks Psychiatric Hospital. Many will resonate with Father Elbert's description but it should be noted that this book was written and published in 1972 – that is over 45 years ago!!!)

As part of the universal preparation for the Synod of Bishops Meeting on Youth this year, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference commissioned a national online survey of young people so as to provide some preliminary information to assist with the preparation for the Synod. Overall 15,000 Australian young people responded by completing or partially completing the survey. In the results one of the Tables gives us some very useful information about what some Australian Catholic young people consider to be the main issues they face – please note that those being surveyed were able to indicate more than one issue in the survey:

Main Issues	% of young people surveyed
Family Life	36
Friendships and Relationships	45
School or Study	56
Work or employment	32
Environment	12
Spirituality and religion	17
Body image	51
Drugs or alcohol	53
Multiculturalism and ethnicity	13
Sexuality	38
Mental Health	57
What to do with your life	32
Sport and health	8
Culture, the arts or music	5
Leadership in society	8
Social Justice	15
OTHER	3

Please note that the highest rated issue is Mental Health closely followed by School or Study and that the age group ranged from 16 to 29 years old!

Step 3: *Allow a few moments reflective silence.*

Step 4: SCRIPTURE READING

From the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2 verses 14 – 21

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed them in a loud voice: ‘Men of Judaea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, make no mistake about this, but listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you imagine; why, it is only the third hour of the day. On the contrary, this is what the prophet was saying: In the last days – it is the Lord who speaks – I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young people shall see visions, your old people dream dreams. Even on the slaves, men and women, shall I pour out my Spirit. I will show portents in the sky above and signs on the earth below. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes, that great and terrible Day. And all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

Step 5: REFLECTION (5 Mins)

Step 6: SHARING (10 Mins)

Discuss the ratings of issues from the recent survey. Do they conform to your experience?

Are there any common similarities between the assessment found in 1972 (from Fr. Elbert’s book) and the issues identified last year? What might be the causes?

Step 7: CONCLUSION Pray together the “Hail Holy Queen”

Step 8: *The Meeting proceeds*

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS – the Order’s prayers

KSC 2018 FORMATION PROGRAMME TOPIC CHOSEN – YOUTH

Session Three: Theme: Listening

“Youth Ministry, as traditionally organized, has also suffered the impact of social changes. Young people often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems and hurts in the usual structures. As adults, we find it hard to listen patiently to them, to appreciate their concerns, demands, and to speak to them in a language they can understand.” (Pope Francis (2014). “The Joy of the Gospel”, p.33)

Step 1: Opening prayer: from the Order’s Prayers

Step 2: READINGS ON THE THEME

The following are excerpts from the Australian National Catholic Youth Survey 2017

‘Young peoples’ experience of being listened to

An important reason for undertaking the survey was to provide a forum for young people to voice their opinions, thoughts and concerns; that is, to listen to young people. Respondents were asked to rate their experience of being listened to by people from the Church, using a scale from 1 to 10, where '1' was 'Very negative' and '10' was 'Very positive'. The survey defined the term 'Church' as its people, practices and organisations, including schools. The following table shows a comparison of the mean scores between females and males, and between the different age cohorts. The scores for all Australian respondents are also shown.

Mean Scores (on a scale of 1 to 10) of respondents’ experience of being listened to by people from the Church	Mean score - nationally
Total	5.9
Female	6.0
Male	6.0
Age 16-18 years	5.8
Age 19-22 years	6.6
Age 23-29 years	6.5

The participants’ responses revealed that there were **three main factors that contributed to the positive experiences** of young people – the experience of talking to people who valued their story, the positive attitude of the clergy, and the welcoming and supportive attitude of parishioners.

The **three main factors that contributed to the negative experiences** of young people were a negative personal experience with a church member, an occasion where their comments were ignored by the group and the seemingly close-minded, biased attitudes of people.

When asked to indicate **ways in which the Church could help them** and their friends in today's world, many respondents believed that the Church could provide guidance, help and counselling for young people in dealing with personal problems and relationship issues. Some sample comments are interesting:

I think to help young people you need to engage in their interests, be able to talk to people without having to have a service every time. To allow people to focus on issues that they deem concerning, these often aren't terrorism and Jesus' miracles, these are 'What am I going to do with my life?' 'What's the point of school?', 'Am I good enough?'. While you may have experienced these things, and don't think they're important anymore, many young people are

still going through this and it is a central aspect to their lives. Listen and give advice appropriately, understanding an individual's context.

By listening to the youth of the Church to hear our ideas and the issues we're facing. Also providing opportunities for leadership within the faith community.

Build a community that crosses the generational boundaries. Provide events (can be as simple as morning tea after Mass). Allow the older members of the congregation to be role models for us.

Some respondents felt that **the Church ought to be more open and inclusive**, especially in terms of accepting different sexualities. Some samples of comments follow:

I believe the Church should emphasise how important it is to identify as whatever you like and not discriminate against someone on the basis of their sexuality. Whether someone is attracted to their own gender or the opposite sex shouldn't matter.

By being more modern. A lot of young people strongly disagree with the Church's social positions on issues such as abortion and gay marriage.

By keeping up with modern times to make themselves seem more open for young people to participate. The way the Church seems to be stuck in the past with archaic beliefs such as its stance against marriage equality makes young people feel like the Church is just old people that are out of touch with society.

We want marriage equality for our friends who are LGBTI. If priests were allowed to be married or if women could become priests you would have more people coming to Church as they would be seen as relatable.

Step 3: *Allow a few moments reflective silence.*

Step 4: **SCRIPTURE READING**

From the Letter to the Colossians 3.16,17

'Let the Word of Christ in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and whatever you say or do, let it be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him.'

Step 5: **REFLECTION** (5 Mins)

Step 6: **SHARING** (10 Mins)

Many will find some of the comments confronting. When we remember that the respondents were all volunteers, does this change the way in which we listen to what is being said? Does our reaction help them?

There is an obvious 'disconnect' between the views expressed and the Church's doctrinal foundation for mission. How can this be listened to so that we can respond positively?

Step 7: **CONCLUSION**

We pray together; **Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen**

Step 8: *The meeting proceeds*

Step 9: **CLOSING PRAYERS – FROM THE ORDER'S PRAYERS**

KSC 2018 FORMATION PROGRAMME TOPIC CHOSEN – YOUTH

Session Four: **Theme:** **Encouragement**

“This grace-filled moment also concerns you, dear young people. I encourage you to take an active part in this celebration and to realize that each of you is a child of God (cf. 1 Jn 3:1). I would like to invite you, one by one, calling you by name, as Jesus does each day. For you know that your names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20), in the heart of the Father, that Merciful Heart which is the source of all reconciliation and kindness.” (Pope Francis, 6 January 2016, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord)

Step 1: **Opening prayer:** from the Order’S Prayers

Step 2: **READING ON THE THEME**

The following are some excerpts from Archbishop Fisher (Sydney) address to the assembled youth (about 15000 of them) gathered for the opening in Sydney of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in December 2017:

“To those who say young people today are only interested in themselves, their gadgets and experiences, not big ideals, commitments or sacrifices I say: look at this room, look at the sheer goodness here, the hope, the dreams. Your presence here shows you aspire to more than the shallow versions of fulfilment offered in the culture. You already have a bigger picture. Now hear Pope Francis' challenge to you at the last World Youth Day to 'Open new horizons for spreading joy'. Let me repeat that charge. To every young woman and man here this morning I say: open your eyes and hearts and minds to new horizons. Horizons are limits to our vision. But imagine seeing the world with Christ's eyes. From high, high on the Mount of the Beatitudes, high on the cross, high enough to ascend into heaven. Let Christ expand your horizons and He'll expand your heart accordingly. By God's grace, and with the support of family, friends and Church, you can do great things!

Why are you afraid Mazza (Mary), the angel said (cf. Lk 1:30). What are you guys worried about? The Church has been listening to you lately through the online survey and in other ways. We've heard many of you say you're concerned about mental health issues, including depression; about personal problems, including sexual, ethnic and spiritual identity; about your educational, employment and housing future; about forming and sustaining good relationships; about the direction of our politics, culture and Church on issues of life and love, justice and mercy; about avoiding loneliness and finding a community of real support; and about being a person of faith in an increasingly secular environment...

Well, the Church is here for you and cares passionately about those very things too. The bishops have organized this big festival for you, to open new horizons for you, to listen to you, above all to demonstrate the Church's closeness to you. ... On behalf of those bishops I say to all the young people here today or watching from afar: the Church in Australia loves you. We long for your presence and energy in our parishes, our worship, our service to the world. We need your ideas for the future of our Church, to make it the best church it can be, for your generation and beyond. The presence of all the bishops here today says very tangibly: the Church is here for you!”

Step 3: *Allow a few moments reflective silence.*

Step 4: SCRIPTURE READING

From the Letter to the Romans - Chapter 12, verses 6 – 9, 12 – 17

'Then since the gifts that we have differ according to the grace that was given to each of us: if it is a gift of prophecy, we should prophesy as much as our faith tells us; if it is a gift of practical service, let us devote ourselves to serving; if it is teaching, to teaching; if it is encouraging, to encouraging. When you give, you should give generously from the heart; if you are put in charge, you must be conscientious; if you do works of mercy, let it be because you enjoy doing them.

Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; share with any of God's holy people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable. Bless your persecutors; never curse them, bless them.

Rejoice with others when they rejoice, and be sad with those in sorrow. Give the same consideration to all others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms.'

Step 5: REFLECTION (5 Mins)

Step 6: SHARING (10 Mins)

The fact that so many young people gathered in Sydney is remarkable. The fact that they really only represent a small minority of the Catholic youth of Australia is also significant. Do we encourage them even though they are such a minority? Why?

In addition to the 'why' we might like to share in the 'how' from our own experiences and observations? What practical steps can we take?

Step 7: CONCLUSION We pray together;

**Come Holy Spirit of this Great Southland
Inspire our entire faith community,
As we prayerfully discern new horizons for spreading joy
in the lives and communities of the People of God.**

**Come Holy Spirit of Youth
Fill the hearts of young people with the hope and love of Jesus Christ.
Enliven our community with the creativity, energy and joy of youth.
Guide us together, as we strive to offer God's mercy
to those who feel abandoned or outcast.**

**Come Holy Spirit of Faith
Empower our community to be courageous.
Unite your people as witnesses of love.
Walk with us, as we blaze new trails of discipleship,
Accompanying young people as we renew the Church together.**

**Come Holy Spirit of Vocation
Stir within young people an awareness of God's call.
Reveal to us the graces of young people.
Guide us all, in finding our place and raising our voices
To build a civilization of love.**

Amen

**Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, friend of the young, pray for us.**

Step 8: *The meeting proceeds*

Step 9: CLOSING PRAYERS – FROM THE ORDER'S PRAYERS