**Office for Evangelization**

**Catholic Diocese of Richmond**

**Diocesan Youth Conference 2024**

*February 9-11, 2024*

This communication contains initial information concerning the Diocesan Youth Conference for 2024.

Please read all the information contained in this communication to ensure you have a full understanding of the event.

**What is the Diocesan Youth Conference?**

The Diocesan Youth Conference (DYC) is an annual weekend event that gathers high school youth from Diocese of Richmond parishes in one central location. DYC is a highly energetic and engaging opportunity for our high school teenagers to gather as a larger Church community and celebrate the richness of our Catholic faith.

**What are some highlights of the Diocesan Youth Conference for 2024?**

* **\*NEW\* A Third Keynote.** This year, we will have one keynote on Friday night, one keynote on Saturday, and a third keynote on Sunday morning prior to Mass.
* **\*NEW\* Saturday Afternoon Schedule.** From afternoon men’s and women’s sessions to new free time options like a rock wall and vendors, Saturday afternoon will keep repeat attendees on their toes.
* **Sacraments.** Mass will be celebrated on both Saturday and Sunday with all attendees. In addition, opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available.
* **Breakout Sessions.** We will offer 2 rounds of breakout sessions for adults and teens focused on a variety of topics – there is something for everyone!
* **Diocesan Youth Choir.** We invite interested youth to participate in the Diocesan Youth Choir for Sunday Mass at DYC. Participants need to indicate if they would like to participate on their registration; these participants and their youth ministers will be notified about rehearsals during the weekend.
* **Rise Against Hunger.** Saturday afternoon includes a meal-packing service project event with Rise Against Hunger, giving teens a way to put their Catholic faith into action during the conference. These meals are sent to our brothers and sisters in need in the international community.

**Who should attend the Diocesan Youth Conference?**

The Conference is open to youth who are in 8th through 12th grade for the 2023-2024 academic year. No college-aged students may attend the Youth Conference; these individuals should be encouraged to attend the College Summit. *We ask all youth ministers to use appropriate pastoral judgment to determine if their 8th graders are mature enough to socially and spiritually be fully present to the conference.*

**Where and when is the Diocesan Youth Conference?**

The Diocesan Youth Conference will be held on Friday, February 9 through Sunday, February 11, 2024 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, Virginia.

Most youth and adult participants will be housed in the Richmond Marriott Downtown hotel located at 500 East Broad Street in Richmond. However, depending on registration numbers, some parishes might be assigned to overflow hotels near the Greater Richmond Convention Center. All hotels are within walking distance.

**I’ve heard that college students will be participating in the Diocesan Youth Conference? Is that true?**

Yes and no. The “Campus Ministry Summit” will be happening concurrently with DYC this year at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. While most activities will remain separate, both the high school youth and college students will gather together for Friday night entertainment and for our Saturday morning Mass. All college students will have hotel accommodations in an off-site location. All registrations for the Summit are independent from the Diocesan Youth Conference.

**A college student in our parish is attending the College Summit, can they travel with our parish to Richmond?**

No. While the College Summit and DYC are both happening in Richmond, the start and end times, as well as the start location for each event, is very different. We are unable to accommodate transportation around Richmond for College Summit participants who travel with your parish. In addition, we cannot allow college-aged students to attend the Diocesan Youth Conference, including staying in hotel rooms with youth or adult participants from the Youth Conference. College students who want to attend the College Summit should reach out to their local campus minister or to our office to find out about registration.

**What is the theme this year?**

The theme this year is **Take Courage**, based primarily on two miracle stories in the Gospels: when Jesus cures Bartimaeus of his blindness in Mark 10:49 (“*Take courage; get up, he is calling you.*”) and when Peter walks on water in Matthew 14:27 (“*Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.*”).

**Call and Response of Jesus’s Love**

Throughout Scripture we hear stories of Jesus doing the miraculous. He heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, restores hearing, and casts out demons. However, the people involved in Jesus’s miracles aren’t passive. There is a commitment on their part to the gift that Jesus offers to them. He often asks what they want or what they are looking for before he heals. Many times people call to him in hope and he responds to them with a call of love, a call to action.

**Take Courage – Receive Grace**

Responding to Jesus’ call to action isn’t simple or easy. Twice in Scripture, as he is about to perform a miracle (or is in the midst of one), he directs people to “take courage”. He then heals the blind man and leads Peter to walk on water. They aren’t stealing courage but rather receiving it from Jesus. The amazing things that are about to happen occur because of the courage and faith that Jesus has blessed them with. Jesus works in their lives, and in ours, because they have the courage to speak out in faith or to step out in hope.

**Courageous Faith and Courageous Evangelization**

The courage we receive from Jesus strengthens our faith and leads us to doing miraculous things. To live a life of faith in daily lives takes tremendous courage. Courage to be faithful at school, work, with friends. This courage is founded in Jesus’ call of love and it guides as we seek to love others. Jesus calls us to courageously go out into the world and spread the good news. We see through these stories how we are to bring his love to the sick and the poor but also to the lukewarm. Those that stand on the edge of a boat waiting to step forth in faith. Upon taking courage from Jesus, we are then able to cast aside the things that blind us and the limits that we put on ourselves. We’re able to step forth in faith, keeping our eyes on him.

**What is the registration fee?**

The registration fee per participant is listed below:

**Base Registration Fees:**

* Youth Participants: $210 (based on 4 youth per room)

$260 (based on 3 youth per room)

$310 (based on 2 youth per room)

* Adult Participants: $235 (based on 2 adults per room)

$360 (based on 1 adult per room)

**Discounts:**

* Early Bird Discount: $50 off registration fees if entered online by November 30, 2023 at 11:59pm

**Additional Fees:**

* Optional Sunday Box Lunch: $8/participant
* Substitution Fee: $50/substitution\*

*\*The last day to request a substitution is Monday, January 15 at 12:00noon. Please note, correct t-shirt sizes for substitutions cannot be guaranteed. All substitutions made after January 9 must be the same sex as the participant they are replacing.*

* Cancellation Fee: $100 for cancellations made by 12:00noon on January 8, 2023

 *No refunds for cancellations made after January 8, 2023, regardless of reason.*

**Please note the following:**

* **Registration closes on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 12:00noon.**
* Any registrations not fully completed in the online system by November 30, 2023 at 11:59pm will not qualify for the early bird rate. This includes any names that are not correctly entered, or anything entered as “TBD”.
* The Diocese occasionally has limited needs-based funding for individuals and parishes who need financial support. Please contact our office for more information.

**What does this registration fee cover?**

The registration fee will cover lodging on Friday and Saturday evenings. Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as Sunday breakfast are included. A late-night snack on Friday and Saturday as well as a conference T-shirt are also included in the registration fee.

**What is the lodging situation?**

Typically, each hotel room has 2 queen-size beds. Each room will be assigned 2 adults OR 4 youth of the same gender unless your parish opts for smaller numbers of participants per room. The Office for Evangelization will combine parishes with odd numbers to maximize the room allocations.

**All participants are required to stay at a hotel assigned by the Office for Evangelization for security reasons.**

**There is NO day-only option available.**

**What are the requirements for adult chaperones?**

For this event, 1 adult is required for every 8 youth who are participating in the Diocesan Youth Conference. Adult chaperones must be at least 21 years of age. Each adult chaperone must be in compliance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies, which includes completing the following:

* Screening One Volunteer Form (every 5 years)
* VIRTUS training (once)

**How do I register?**

All youth and adults must register through their parish Youth Minister OR Catholic school coordinator. The registration process includes:

1. **Registration Form:** Print out and distribute the registration form from [www.evangelizerichmond.org](http://www.evangelizerichmond.org). A copy should be maintained by the Youth Minister in case of emergency. **DO NOT SEND THESE TO THE OFFICE FOR EVANGELIZATION.**
2. **Register Participants via the Online Registration System:** If you are the parish Youth Minister, contact the Office for Evangelization to get the event-specific password for the online registration system.
3. **Send payments to the Office for Evangelization** *(if you did not pay via credit card on the online registration system)*:Be sure to include your parish/school name along with a list of participants for whom the payment applies. All outstanding registration fees will be invoiced to the parish.

**Is there a limit to what size group a parish can register this year?**

Over the summer, parishes were asked to submit a forecast form for this event; the number of spots they requested on that form has been reserved for them.

**If your parish submitted a forecast form and wants to bring additional people**, you can enter them onto the waitlist on our registration site after you have used all of your reserved spots. On Tuesday, January 9, parishes with youth on the waitlist will receive communication from our office as to the status; if offered a spot, parishes will have through Thursday, January 11 to accept it and to submit final rooming lists.

**If your parish did not submit a forecast form**, please contact our office at evangelization@richmonddiocese.org.

**Questions?**

Contact us via email (evangelization@richmonddiocese.org) or phone (804-622-5159).