



# The Journey to Adulthood Background Readings

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nearly ten years ago, the community of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Durham, North Carolina, began to discuss a new and progressive approach to youth programs. They asked themselves how they might attract, instruct and nurture young people at the very time in their lives when they are most likely to drift away from the Church and from organized religion. They also asked what it means to be a child, an adolescent and an adult in our society and in the Christian community. Through diligent research, patient consideration, and hours and hours of meetings and discussions, St. Philip's began a very important journey of its own.

A work of this nature cannot spring from the heart and mind of one or two people. It is a true collaboration of two individuals with an entire parish, and we thank all those who listened, laughed, prayed, and shared their ideas and experiences so freely.

There are so many individuals to thank for their unique contributions to this process and this vision that it is difficult to know just where to begin. The *Journey to Adulthood* curriculum represents the love and the effort of so many members of our community. At every turn, the vision and the support of the community of St. Philip's has been outstanding, and we thank the entire parish for making this possible.

Our most heartfelt thanks must first be expressed to the Reverend C. Thomas Midyette III. As Rector of St. Philip's, his wisdom, wit and tenacity kept this program alive. It was Tom who was willing to welcome new liturgical forms and Tom who believed we could find and receive funding to develop the program. It was Tom who, above all, reminded us over and over again to be present, to be faithful and to be brave.

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We thank the parents in our community who were willing to believe in the program, to pray for us and to trust us enough to commit their kids to our care. In addition, they dropped kids off and picked kids up on time and delivered chips, soda and other goodies. Tom Metzloff, in particular, helped with the Resource Section.

Finally, we thank the young people themselves for their willingness to participate in our experiment. Our deepest thanks go to all of them for their love and faith, but most of all for their willingness to be honest with us, to trust us, to laugh with us, to challenge us and to teach us. It has truly been a blessed privilege to get to know each and every one of them.

*Amanda Millay Hughes  
David Crean*

*January 24, 1994*

# IN THE BEGINNING

The Reverend C. Thomas Midyette III<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

For the past several years, St. Philip's Episcopal Church has been involved in designing a program for young people as they pass through different passages in their lives. We believe that the Church should affirm, celebrate and speak to these passages because they reflect the spirit of creation and are a part of the dynamic by which the Holy Spirit touches our lives. While we often come to these changes in young people's lives from the viewpoint of the anthropologist, the physiologist and the psychologist, we attest to the theological dimension that accompanies each passage.

One problem that we face in confronting these developmental changes is that the Church for many years has spoken to these changes with neither theological insight nor pastoral care. While other disciplines have attempted to define what occurs during these life changes and thereby to educate individuals, it is the Church, with its wealth of knowledge and experience in Christian formation and the religious narrative tradition of the Bible, which ought to own its responsibility in providing care and developing a framework of belief to encompass these changes and to set them in the context of our common life.

I believe that the life of Jesus holds specific insights that are applicable to the dramatic changes that occur in the lives of young people as they move from childhood through puberty and adolescence to mature adulthood. The story of Jesus begins with his entrance to the temple at the age of twelve and his subsequent declaration to his parents of his independence.<sup>2</sup>

The beginning of our Lord's passage to becoming a young man parallels the beginning of the passage of young people in the Rite-13 program. Too often we run from the need for children to declare their own independence, and we do not offer them, within the context of the Church and the Christian community, an opportunity to say to us, as Jesus said to his parents, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"<sup>3</sup> There is no echo in our tradition of the solemn declaration of the young Jewish man at his Bar Mitzvah, "Today I am a man." And yet, when puberty occurs, it is time for us to begin the process of "being about our Father's business." This means that, at this age, the Church should be giving instruction to its young people in exactly what it means to be about the process of carrying out God's divine plan in creation. In other words, there is an agenda that the Church should be offering at this precarious time—the passage from childhood to womanhood and manhood.

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Thomas Midyette is the Rector of St. Paul's Church, Greenville, North Carolina. He was formerly Rector of Philip's Church, Durham, where the *Journey to Adulthood* program was developed with his encouragement and under his tutelage.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:42-52.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:49.

## Death and Resurrection

Another dimension that accompanies the Rite-13 experience is the realization that all changes involve a death and resurrection experience. There is a death, not to our childhood but to our childish behavior. While we carry our childhood with us into the realization of our manhood and womanhood, we must begin to make some changes. The first change is in our relationship with our parents. We need our parents to see us in a new light with new possibilities. We need also to see our parents in a new light so that together we might enter into a resurrection experience. It is like moving from the cocoon of childhood to the new life of adulthood. Not only does Jesus change his relationship with his parents,<sup>4</sup> but Jesus himself, through his own death and resurrection, is changed.<sup>5</sup> It is Jesus' willingness to give up his life for others that is seen clearly from the view of his resurrection. During Rite-13 through the *Journey to Adulthood*, we are asking our young people to participate in the death of self in order to find a new self.

I remember when I was in analysis how I worked so diligently to get rid of "Tommy" so that "Tom" could emerge. I had to learn to allow "Tommy" to die before I could see "Tom" who had abilities and caring that would fulfill not only my life but the lives of others around me. It is this kind of death and resurrection experience that we want our young people to experience. Each passage is therefore designed with a liturgical function that implies death and resurrection. The Rite-13 ceremony symbolizes a moving from control by parents to support by parents and friends. The *Journey to Adulthood* is ritualized by the Rite of Confirmation and the declaration by the individuals that they are now ready to accept the responsibilities of full Christian commitment and, at the same time, the affirmation of the community that stands willing to accept these young people as Christian adults.

Death and resurrection are threatening. The young people are threatened by the fear of giving up childhood because they are not clear about what will emerge; the community is threatened in the same way. It is our willingness to engage in a consistent, ongoing dialog with both the young adult and the Christian community which is the act of faith. If the community has faith, the young adult will feel secure enough to chance the changes. This is possible only when both parties are grounded in the life of Jesus. On this solid ground, relationships are changed. Both the community of faith and the young person involved in the process are carried to a new level of understanding—resurrection takes place.

The Church can offer this kind of process because of the model given to us in the life of Jesus. We can accept all that transpires, even though there is always some pain involved in growth. It is our willingness to accept the pain and the responsibility that becomes the hallmark of our faith: love. It is through our love for these young people and their love for us that a new being emerges. We are not talking just about the change from a child to an adult, but a change in the entire Body of Christ in which these young people are now full participants. The change that

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:48-51.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 24:36-39.

occurs is a change not only in the psychological person or the physiological person; in the change in which we are interested, as people of faith and love, a new spiritual being emerges—a new creation takes place.

As I have pointed out above, each change that occurs in our lives accompanies a death and resurrection experience. In the Rite-13 experience, we acknowledge that we are no longer children; we have become young men and women. Part of our childhood dies, and yet we rise again in a new existence with new challenges and new hopes. The beginning of puberty represents this death and resurrection experience. As we change our relationship with our parents, we begin trying new behaviors which may be frustrating to all concerned but which are also filled with the possibility of joy and expectation. The Church should celebrate this passage so that young people might begin to understand that what is happening to them is good and holy. If we are able, as a congregation, a community of faith, to acknowledge change as a gift from God, then we are better able to dispel their adolescent fears and to replace them with caring and guidance.

### **Rite-13**

This passage from childhood to manhood and womanhood is the first thing to celebrate. Parents must be willing to affirm the young man's or young woman's first steps toward independence with the sure and certain knowledge that their gender has been established as a gift from God. The Church should declare that this gift is not because of the parents' procreative ability, but is a gift beyond the parents' ability which reflects the image of who God is—both male and female.<sup>6</sup>

The Church should also affirm and celebrate that, like God, we now have creative powers—not just the power to reproduce sexually, but the power to think, to feel and to create new ideas, new thoughts and new hopes for the world. If the anthropologists, the physiologists and the psychologists have dealt with this change, they have dealt with it from a limited perspective. It is only the Church that can draw the dramatic relationship between a young man or a young woman and the source of creation itself. We become like Jesus and can say with Jesus that our destiny is about the business that God has ordained for us. In this light, the change is accompanied with the first realization of vocational (literally, *called into being*) responsibility which begins a great search for truth, for love, for understanding in our relationship to the world. This search is uniquely human. We reflect the nature of God in our struggle to live responsible lives. It is specifically to address this dynamic that we have begun the first passage with Rite-13.

Too often we treat these changes as something that children must *learn* in order to acquire. One neither acquires nor merits the creative energy of one's gender; this biological change occurs as a gift from God. This change, which we call puberty, is thus not something that one earns, but is a gift to be celebrated as such. Puberty is the gift of grace to participate fully as human beings, as co-creators, in God's world.

### **J2A—Journey to Adulthood**

The second phase of our development is to equip these adolescents for increasing levels of responsibility. This section of our curriculum deals with helping young people acquire the skills they need to become successful adults. Requirements in becoming an adult in the secular world are very clear—getting a driver's license, for example. However, the Church has been reluctant to speak to the discipline required in becoming a Christian adult. We must teach our young

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 1:27.



people those skills which are needed to carry out their Christian mission in their lives. The age of fourteen or fifteen to sixteen or seventeen is the time to help young men and women acquire a foundation for understanding their Christian discipleship. For this reason, we have delayed Confirmation so that it becomes the expression of a life-view and the Christian living skills that have been acquired over the preceding years. Confirmation thus becomes the celebration of adulthood. Unlike the Rite-13 ceremony—the celebration of the gift of womanhood or manhood—the Journey to Adulthood requires the acquisition of skills and responsibilities. While the potential of adulthood is a gift from God, the status of an adult in the community must be earned by diligence and faithfulness.

During the Journey to Adulthood, young people are taught skills in dealing with values clarification, negotiation, disappointments and conflict management. All of these issues, fraught with Christian influences—the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer and the parables, to cite only a few—speak to us about things we should learn as we become adults. During this two-year period, therefore, it is our hope that these young men and women will not only deal with the physiological changes and the anthropological and sociological issues, but also become adults in every Christian sense. We do not see Confirmation as the necessary ending ritual of this process. Rather, we hope that our young adults will have acquired the necessary skills in order to freely choose the love and discipline of our faith community and to express that choice in the public affirmation of Confirmation and the laying on of hands. It is in this context, then, that Confirmation becomes the celebratory event for this period of their lives and which thus, in our program, completes the Journey to Adulthood portion of the program.

### **YAC—Young Adults in the Church**

When Rite-13 and Confirmation have taken place, it is imperative that these young Christian adults begin their involvement with the Church and the world as *new* servants with a defined ministry which exercises their call which we first developed at Rite-13. The transformation which has taken place in three different stages through this six-year period has been a death of self with a concomitant regaining of self as we relate to others as adults. Again, we define this as a necessary experience of death and resurrection.

The third area, therefore, and the last two years of our program, deals with the exercise of that adulthood. When these young, sixteen- to eighteen-year-old adult Christians leave us as they go to college or make their way in life, they act out their mission as they have perceived it through their experience in Christian living. Being convinced that all of us are called by God to ministry, we realize this potential to which we were called at our Baptism. This period of time is spent not only dealing with adult issues that bless and plague our modern culture, but also seeking to find our destinies and our callings in life as Christians. This period of training allows the young adults to explore and to identify their own individual ministries. As they explore these new ministries, the whole community is challenged to review its own individual and corporate possibilities.

However, young adults face very special challenges. They must begin to make choices about colleges, jobs, relationships and conditions they confront in the world. No Christian can make these choices wisely without looking critically at her or his calling as expressed in the Baptismal Covenant. With God’s guidance and help, we enter our specific ministries in this adult world. As a faith community, we want to stand with our young people during these critical years of formation and decision. The Church must stand ever ready to help affirm and confirm vocational life choices. Even during these developmentally difficult years, the Church has a role to play. As a Christian faith community, we claim that all that we do and all that we will become

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is a direct result of the presence and guidance of Jesus Christ in our lives. It is in community that these life choices are made and realized.

This third course of study, I believe, will be the most exciting because it combines Christian commitment with everyday living. By structuring the long process from childhood to adulthood in the context of Christian community, we will have given to these young people a source of strength and comfort that will help them survive the joys and disappointments we all find in adulthood. This program has been designed so that we share, through these wonderful years, the grace and the embodiment of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It is our hope that the culmination of this kind of growth for the young people will be like God's self-revelation to Isaiah.<sup>7</sup> The young people become so aware of themselves and the world that they begin to see the presence of God in every aspect of their lives, to claim the Christian community as their birthright and to proclaim: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts: Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High."

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<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 6:1-3.

# THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR THE JOURNEY

David E. Crean, Ph.D.

## Introduction

One of the more frustrating aspects of the Gospels is their silence on Jesus' formative years. Some of the other Christian writings from the New Testament era (e.g., the Infancy Gospel of Thomas) contain supposed details of Jesus' childhood in Egypt—with stories centering on Jesus entertaining (or sometimes terrifying) his playmates with “elementary” miracles like restoring dead birds to life. But apart from a cryptic reference in Matthew's Gospel to Jesus spending much of his early childhood in Egypt, the sole reference to these early years is a vivid and tantalizing passage in Luke:

And when [Jesus] was twelve years old, [he and his parents] went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.<sup>8</sup>

From this passage, we can deduce that Jesus' childhood and youth were not significantly different from those that our own children experience. Who among us has not sought his or her child “in great anxiety” only to find him or her engaged in some absorbing activity? But there are also some theological insights that we can gain from this brief account. First, we can conclude that Jesus was in a process of developing from childhood to manhood and, in the process, developing as a whole person. Second, that this development process probably involved some rite of passage akin to today's Jewish Bar Mitzvah. Third, that Jesus was now claiming his human right to be actively engaged in the business of God's whole creation. And, finally, that Jesus made this proclamation in the context of the community of faith. While his public ministry was still some eighteen years in the future (and was accompanied by yet another public profession and ritual—his Baptism at the hands of John) he was, at the age of twelve, making a public proclamation of his manhood. We may also infer that, as a part of this process, Jesus was prepared to take on certain adult responsibilities in order to carry out this work.

We shall, accordingly, deal with the theological underpinnings of the journey from childhood through manhood and womanhood to adulthood by developing these themes:

- The goodness of the gift of creation and our partnership with God

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 2:42-52.

- The development of the whole person
- The liturgical celebration of rites of passage
- The task of the community in this important ministry

## The Gift of Creation

In the Catechism, the question is posed: “What does it mean to be created in the image of God?”—to which the person replies: “It means that we are free to make choices: to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God.”<sup>9</sup>

This is an important point. The whole point of the journey through the tumultuous times which we call puberty and adolescence is to take our part as a co-creator with God and to make the choices which this involves. We can use our creative power for divine or for demonic ends. Human creativity consists not only in writing poetry or composing music or painting pictures; a nuclear submarine or an AK-47 assault rifle is, in the final analysis, also the result of a creative act, albeit its ultimate end is destruction.

Another important insight, which we gain from the great theological narrative known to us as the first chapter of Genesis, is that creation is, in God’s opinion, good. Every single act of creation, with one significant exception—the separation of the waters from the waters on the second day—was designated by God as “good.” And at the completion of creation we are told, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”<sup>10</sup>

But there is more to the story than just the mere goodness of creation. God invited the men and women, created “in his image,” into a creative relationship. To accomplish this, God first handed over the good creation as a free gift to those he had created:

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>11</sup>

God then invited these human creatures into a co-creative partnership. Being involved in this partnership with God in having “dominion over” creation involves being a part of a blessing relationship as well. The command to become stewards of creation follows immediately upon a blessing, and this juxtaposition is neither coincidental nor accidental. Stewardship of creation involves being in a blessing relationship with creation as well as with the Creator, and a blessing relationship is a creative relationship; it involves the investment of oneself in that relationship and carries with it the responsibility of becoming a blessing in that relationship as God becomes a blessing for us in our relationship.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Book of Common Prayer, page 845.

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 1:31.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 1:26-28.

<sup>12</sup> For a further exposition of this important theme, see Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe, NM, Bear and Company, 1983), pages 44-56, and Monika K. Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pages 42-44.

Being in a blessing relationship with creation also necessarily involves being in a blessing relationship with oneself. Thomas Merton expresses this as follows: “My being is given to me not simply as an arbitrary and inscrutable affliction, but as a source of joy, growth, life, creativity, and fulfillment. But the decision to take existence only as an affliction is left to me.”<sup>13</sup>

One’s being and one’s creation, then, is a gift from a good and gracious Giver. In the General Thanksgiving, we acknowledge and affirm this when we proclaim: “We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life . . . .”<sup>14</sup> And, just as one’s being is a gift, so is one’s gender. In Rite-13, therefore, we embrace the attainment of manhood and womanhood and celebrate it, not as something that one has to earn, but as a gift—indeed, as a blessing. One may make the choice to take this gift as an affliction, just as one may choose to take any other part of one’s existence, including one’s sexuality, as an affliction (Hamlet’s cry: “The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right!” echoes through the ages). But it is not an affliction; it is a source of joy and creativity and fulfillment from the Creator.

It therefore becomes one of the principal goals of the whole pilgrimage, which we call Rite-13 and *Journey to Adulthood*, to see one’s being, one’s gender and all one’s talents as gifts to be celebrated. It also involves an understanding of the use of those gifts in a creative rather than a destructive manner.

## The Development of the Whole Person

The four components of the Rite-13 and Journey to Adulthood classes are Self, Spirituality, Society and Sexuality. These four components represent four important aspects of human development. These developmental features are summed up in Luke’s Gospel as follows:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years<sup>15</sup>, and in divine and human favor.<sup>16</sup>

Contextually, Luke uses this verse to apply to Jesus after his parents had found him in the temple and brought him back with them to Nazareth where, we are told, he lived obediently with them. From this verse one may derive all the aspects of the young person’s development from childhood to manhood or womanhood and, ultimately, to adulthood: wisdom (*sophia*) may be identified with mental development (Self); stature or age (*helikia*) refers to physical development (Sexuality); divine favor (*charis para Theo*) refers to spiritual development (Spirituality); and human favor (*charis para anthropois*) refers to social development (Society).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), page 221.

<sup>14</sup> Book of Common Prayer, page 58.

<sup>15</sup> It is instructive to examine two of the Greek words. The word *helikia*, translated here as “years,” and in the more familiar Revised Standard Version as “stature,” derives from *helix* meaning a comrade (i.e., one of the same age), and connotes maturity (in years or size), age or stature. The Greek word *charis* translated here as “favor” also means graciousness and is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as “gift” or “grace.”

<sup>16</sup> Luke 2:52.

<sup>17</sup> The original insight for this comes from the Right Reverend David Gitari, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Kinyara (formerly the Diocese of Mount Kenya East), speaking on the subject of development in Third World countries.

There is a temptation to act as though these convenient classifications existed in self-contained compartments. They do not. Rather, they interact with each other. One is not, for example, a complete, a whole, human being without being in some kind of relationship with God as well as with other people together with an understanding of what that relationship involves. To concentrate exclusively on one's relationship with God, to compartmentalize that relationship while simultaneously neglecting one's relationship with society, results in the formation of that narrow religiosity specifically condemned by Jesus.<sup>18</sup> The search for God solely through self-righteous and self-centered religious observation ends in a mawkish pietism which finally ends in not finding God. As Mahatma Gandhi rightly observed, one cannot find God except through service to others.

But there is a trap in the opposite direction. A concentration on society solely without the concomitant development of a healthy spirituality leads to an externalization of others. One cannot serve society effectively without the development of a healthy internal, spiritual life. In other words, to fail to develop a healthy spiritual relationship with God, which acknowledges one's dependence on God, leads to treating the people whom one seeks to serve as objects external to oneself. It leads, ultimately, to exploitation of and violence toward other people.

There is also a responsibility associated with this. Our whole being—physical, mental, spiritual, social, sexual—is a gift, or rather gifts. These gifts are to be used and developed to the glory of God in the service of others. The whole creation is a word spoken by God. As a part of creation, we too are words of God spoken to accomplish that which God purposes. Isaiah's famous passage which allies God's purpose with growth and fruitfulness provides, in this instance, an especially apt illustration:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus, in one of his most minatory teachings, uses the parable of the talents<sup>20</sup> to emphasize the right use of one's God-given gifts. The fact that one's resources appear to be meager is no excuse, in the eyes of Jesus, for not using and developing them. Accordingly, a good deal of time is thus spent identifying and examining one's gifts (including one's sexuality) that go to making up the whole person and determining how those gifts are used in relating to others and to building up the community of faith.

## Rites of Passage in Liturgy

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<sup>18</sup> Jesus' ministry was concerned in large part with the development of the whole person. He therefore excoriates the scribes and Pharisees, not because they were evil people, but because they concentrated on developing only a portion of their persona while neglecting other areas: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:23-24).

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 55:10-11.

<sup>20</sup> Luke 19:11-27.

Letting go and letting be does not come easily to a culture that encourages its members to “grab for all the gusto you can get.” And yet, letting go and letting be is one of the central themes of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The adjuration that “those who want to save their life will lose it” occurs no less than five times in the synoptic Gospels.<sup>21</sup> The young ruler is told to “sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor.”<sup>22</sup> (And we are further told that “when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.”) We thus have to deal with this paradox which lies at the very heart of Christianity.

Letting go and letting be does not come unaccompanied by pain. The insights of the great mystics attest to letting go and letting be, sinking, *kenosis* (emptiness), pain, as an essential part of the spiritual experience; a necessary part of the human condition. Modern culture, though, tries to abolish pain. While religion places Tantalus in hell, Madison Avenue would rather have us believe Tantalus is in heaven. We flee pain rather than embracing it. And yet, Jesus shows us that only by embracing pain, only by drinking of the cup prepared for us, can we transcend pain and thereby be free of pain.

Letting go and letting be—the death to self in order to be reborn into new life—is thus not an easy thing to affirm liturgically either, despite its being absolutely central to Christianity. The Prayer Book contains a wealth of liturgies to celebrate our passage through this life: Baptism, the rite of initiation into the Church; Confirmation, the rite of personal affirmation and acceptance of the Church’s doctrine and discipline (or, as the cynic puts it, the rite of initiation out of the Church); Marriage, the rite of union of a man and a woman; and the Burial of the Dead (once again, the cynic would ask how one buries the living). But nowhere does the Prayer Book affirm that *all* these rites of passage are, as has been alluded to in the Preface to this curriculum, death and resurrection experiences.

Death and resurrection at Baptism are dramatically illustrated in the Eastern Orthodox rite when the priest takes the child and, plunging it into the water says, I kill you in the name of the Trinity and” —lifting the child out of the water—“I raise you to new life in Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Prayer Book is there any acknowledgment of another experience that often mirrors the death and resurrection experience: divorce.<sup>23</sup> Nowhere is there any reference to the passage from childhood to adulthood, the letting go of childhood in order to become an adult.

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24-25; 17:33.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 18:18-23.

<sup>23</sup> Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong has addressed this issue in a paper entitled, “Can the Church Bless Divorce?” (*The Christian Century*, November 28, 1984, page 1126).

The Jewish tradition comes close to affirming the death and resurrection experience incumbent on the attainment of sexual maturity in the boast of the young Jewish man at his Bar Mitzvah: “Today, I am a man,” but there is, unfortunately, no equivalent in the Christian tradition. It is doubly unfortunate that in Christian liturgies up to this point there is nothing that comes even close. (Equally, there is no equivalent to the Jewish father’s tongue-in-cheek prayer: “Blessed art thou, Lord God, King of the Universe, who now relieves me of care for this child.”)

Today especially, the celebration of the transition from childhood to manhood or to womanhood is critically important. Whereas in pre-modern societies there was simply either childhood or adulthood, today’s modern culture has created an extended form of childhood, known as adolescence. Young women, as we learn from *Romeo and Juliet*, were once considered to be of marriageable age as soon as they attained menarche. Today, however, young men and women are not considered to be marriageable until they are “economically secure”—that is, about the age of twenty-five when they have presumably completed college and are working remuneratively. Young people reach puberty at eleven or twelve years of age, but have to wait at least another full decade before society will permit them to procreate. At puberty they have the biological ability to reproduce (and the urge to engage in sexual activity), but both Church and society say, in effect: “Two, four, six, eight—you’re too young to procreate.”<sup>24</sup>

This prolonged adolescence we have created, in which the young person is biologically an adult while at the same time is economically a child, presents not a paradox but a conflicting dualism. Parents care for their children economically through high school (and even through college, and sometimes graduate school), but through this period of extended adolescence (to all intents and purposes a prolonged childhood), they can’t work and—we hope—they don’t procreate. On the other hand, television, with gay abandon, tells these same young people that its products carry the promise of psychological, spiritual, social, and, above all, sexual fulfillment. The results of this dichotomy, this dualism, coupled with the materialism of modern society, have been disastrous. Violence among teenagers is endemic and so is teenage pregnancy.<sup>25</sup> The rhetorical question posed by Gustavo Gutierrez, “How do you preach a Gospel of hope in a land of death?” is well taken.

What is the Church to do? More specifically, what is the Church to do in an increasingly secular society which, to all intents and purposes, regards God as a hobby and has marginalized religion? As columnist Anna Quindlen notes: “. . . religion is that thing most consistently trivialized and shoved aside in the public arena, and treated like an embarrassing tic or even a

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<sup>24</sup> The Roman Catholic Church, as evidenced by its encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor* is becoming increasingly heavy-handed in its efforts to control various forms of sexual expression—homosexuality, sexual permissiveness, and premarital and extramarital sexual activity—as well as abortion and the use of all forms of artificial contraception.

<sup>25</sup> According to Marian Wright Edelman, Executive Director of the Children’s Defense Fund, one child out of five (and one out of every four preschool children) in this country is poor. Poverty claims nearly 10,000 children lives each year. Some 500,000 teenagers become mothers. Some four thousand (3,964) children nineteen years of age or younger die by firearms each year; nearly seven hundred (696) children under five are victims of homicide; over two thousand (2,302) teenagers commit suicide. Of children under eighteen years, some 150,000 are arrested for alcohol-related offenses each year; 90,000 for drug-related offenses; and 85,000 for the commission of violent crimes. Every day, some 135,000 children bring a gun to school, and in 1987, 415,000 violent crimes occurred in and around schools. *ABC News*, in its newscast of October 15, 1993, identified homicide as the second leading cause of death nationwide among fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds. No wonder a young Latino boy during riots in Los Angeles could say to a television reporter, “I just hope I can grow up and go to prison and not be dead.”



character failure, particularly when religious people seek to couple their beliefs with a vision of America.”<sup>26</sup>

The Church exists in large part, as Walter Brueggemann has suggested, to hold up an alternative vision to society; to confront, if you will, the “royal consciousness.”<sup>27</sup> If the “royal consciousness” is choosing to ignore religious beliefs, then the Church has to stand up and demand that these be addressed (after all, the “royal consciousness” does not have a particularly good batting average if the statistics cited above are to be believed).

The Church expresses this vision, in part, in its *liturgy* (literally, “the work of the people”). In liturgy, the Church provides a window to society through which the alternative future can be described. In the liturgy of the Eucharist, for example, the Church prefigures the heavenly banquet, the true fulfillment of human existence. In the liturgy of Baptism, the Church proclaims the death to sin and the resurrection to new life. Why, then, has the Church developed a liturgical affirmation of neither the attainment of manhood or womanhood nor the attainment of adulthood? If sacraments are “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace”<sup>28</sup> and if liturgy is basically sacramental in nature, has the time not come to create a new liturgy that celebrates the gift of manhood and womanhood?

Moreover, the rite of Confirmation has today become an essentially meaningless ritual. Confirmation is no longer the prerequisite to being able to receive communion, as it was thirty years ago. We are told that it is an initiation into full membership of the Church—and the affirmation of the confirmands is made before a bishop—but, saving some provisions in canon law, what does that mean? In all too many instances, the cynic’s pejorative characterization of Confirmation as the exit ritual from the Church proves remarkably accurate. We believe, if it is to have any validation, that it is time to rethink and re-imagine the rite of Confirmation. This, in addition to celebrating the attainment of manhood or womanhood, is what we seek to do in this program.

## The Task of the Community

Jesus proclaimed his achievement of manhood and independence from his parents in the context of the community of faith. We cannot do otherwise.

This raises the question: What is the role, the task, of the community of faith in the journey which ends finally in the earning of adult status? An African proverb states that it takes a whole village to raise one child. It is well to take this seriously and to examine its implications.

In the context of the Christian faith, the village becomes the community of faith—the parish or congregation. The whole congregation has the task of bringing the exciting and new thing into being. It has been said that the Holy Spirit raises up in a congregation all those gifts necessary

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<sup>26</sup> Anna Quindlen, “America’s Sleeping Sickness,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1993, section 4, page 17. Brett Webb-Mitchell makes a similar point: “. . . The health care system, dominated by Enlightenment views, the worship of reason and the self-righteous theories of the social sciences, has fortified the barrier between church and state.... These [public health care] institutions are often interested primarily in curing the mind and body, and they fail to give any regard to the spirit.” (Brett Webb-Mitchell, “Let the Children Come: Young People with Disabilities in Church,” *The Christian Century*, October 13, 1993, page 980.)

<sup>27</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

<sup>28</sup> Book of Common Prayer, page 857.

for the congregation to carry on its ministry.<sup>29</sup> As with the individual, the congregation's identification of these gifts, their development and their use in service to others is critical. This is especially so today when the secular world has abdicated practically all responsibility for developing a healthy spirituality among its young people. The concomitant rise in violent crime among these same young people is not accidental.

If it is to carry out the ministry we have outlined above, the community of faith needs to be especially sensitive to its calling to be engaged in servant ministry. There is no aspect of ministry on which Jesus is clearer; there is no aspect of ministry which has been more studiously neglected by a Church which simultaneously pays lip service to it. Two passages point up the importance that Jesus placed on this:

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<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to William Cox, retired Assistant Bishop of Oklahoma, for this particular insight.

Then [Jesus and the disciples] came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”<sup>30</sup>  
and:

A dispute also arose among [the disciples] as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But [Jesus] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”<sup>31</sup>

The role of the community, and especially the role taken by the group leaders, should reflect this non-hierarchical reality. Matthew Fox expresses this concept very well in contrasting climbing Jacob’s ladder with dancing Sarah’s circle:

A spirituality of dancing Sarah’s circle is one of laughter and joy. Sarah was able to be surprised, filled with unexpected wonder, and to laugh. This sharply distinguishes her symbol from that of male interpretations of Jacob’s dream, since . . . there is little laughter and joy among those who climb ladders. Ladder-climbing is ever so serious. Egos are so much involved.<sup>32</sup>

Fox contrasts the ladder and the circle by pointing out that the former is competitive, hierarchical, elitist, judgment-oriented and linear; the latter sharing, democratic, welcoming, nonjudgmental and curved. A ladder is finite; a circle capable of infinite expansion. This imagery of the expanding circle is especially important with respect to the various classes which comprise this program. It is not to be expected that the classes will remain static. Families leave the church and families join the church. The class must always be prepared to welcome the newcomer, the stranger. This is possible (but difficult) in the finite ladder model; it is built into the nonhierarchical, expansive circle model.

The role of the Christian community of faith is also defined by the Baptismal Covenant. This contains an exposition of the Christian life in the form of a series of five questions to each of which we respond: “I will, with God’s help.” These questions—or challenges, if you will—not only spell out the parameters of our Christian calling, but also call for a progressively deeper

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<sup>30</sup> Mark 9:33-37.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 22:24-27.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston Press, 1979) pages 44-45.

and deeper commitment on our part. It is as well to look at and reflect upon each of these and to see how we can respond:

- Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
- Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
- Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
- Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
- Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Finally, an important promise is made by the godparents of a child at its Baptism. The godparents affirm that they “will, through [their] prayers and witness, help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ.” The members of the congregation present affirm that they, witnessing these vows, “will do all in [their] power to support this person in his or her life in Christ.” In this particular context, it is instructive to reflect on the notable observation of the medieval German theologian and mystic, Meister Eckhart: “The seed of God is in us. Now, the seed of a pear tree grows into a pear tree and a hazel seed grows into a hazel tree; a seed of God grows into God.” This then becomes the final aim of the journey: to enable these young people, these seeds of God, if you will, to grow, as the Letter to the Ephesians puts it, “into the full stature of Christ.”

# DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERPINNINGS AND IMPERATIVES FOR *THE JOURNEY TO ADULTHOOD*

Amanda M. Hughes<sup>33</sup>

There are three areas of development in adolescence: physical, cognitive, and social. In order to be as effective as possible, the *Journey to Adulthood* program tries to take all three areas into account. They are inexorably connected, and when considered within the context not only of the individual self (as developmental psychologists are wont to do) but also of Christian formation, understanding these changes eases the strain of working with young people and encourages healthy and reasonable expectations.

Certainly the most obvious development takes place in the body. It doesn't take an expert to recognize that, almost overnight, young people's bodies go through dramatic changes. Puberty is defined by the experts as the period during which a child "changes from a sexually immature person to one who is capable of reproduction."<sup>34</sup> For females, this maturation occurs in the months surrounding menarche, the beginning of menstruation, when the reproductive system begins to cycle through ovulation and menses. For males, this critical change rests in the ability to ejaculate motile sperm. It is a mistake to think of puberty as a single event because, while clinicians mark the key moment as crucial, they also recognize the physical changes surrounding these events. They would have us recognize that, during puberty, the human body undergoes changes which are perhaps more profound than at any other time in the human life cycle.

The average age at which puberty begins is markedly younger today than it was one hundred years ago. Experts attribute this change to improvements in health care and nutrition. The average age for puberty is now about twelve to fourteen years for both boys and girls, but it is considered *normal* by all the experts for menstruation to begin as early as nine or as late as sixteen, while it is also normal for sperm production to begin as early as ten and even as late as nineteen. All in all, setting our Rite-13 ceremony on or near a youngster's thirteenth birthday gives us a high level of assurance that we are celebrating a pressing reality in the body of that person.

Of course, we know that these changes take place because of the production of hormones. The presence of sex hormones in the body produces changes not only in reproductive capacity

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<sup>33</sup> The material comprising this chapter is adapted from L. Allen Froufe, Robert G. Cooper and Ganie B. DeHart, *Child Development: Its Nature and Course*, 2nd Edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Froufe, *et al.*, page 487.

but also in other areas as well. The secondary sexual characteristics of breast and genital development, the growth of pubic (and, for males, facial) hair and the changes in overall body shape are accompanied by changes in skin and sweat glands, muscle formation, and lung capacity. In short, adolescents are taller, stronger, and have greater endurance. And, although this probably does not need to be said, it never hurts to remind ourselves of what's going on: they are changing from looking like children to looking like adults. In fact, during this time adolescents are a sort of hybrid breed—no longer children and not yet adults.

The changes brought about by puberty have both unseen/internal and manifest/external factors. It is a difficult transition time because not only is enormous change happening in the body and in the brain, but the outward manifestations of these changes also affect the ways in which other people interact with the young person. “Parents may perceive physically mature young people as being more personally responsible . . . .”<sup>35</sup> Suddenly, young people may find themselves sexually attractive and attracted to others. These outward, relational changes impact the way in which young people see themselves. Self-definition goes through a series of crises as the mirror shows the change, and parents, friends and teachers do too. It is difficult for young people to feel safe and settled in themselves when all the most salient parts of their experience are undergoing such profound transition.

These obvious, salient changes brought about by puberty often overshadow the cognitive changes. A rapidly changing body is easier to see than the equally rapid development of the mind. Developmentalists agree that the adolescent years are marked by rapid maturation of reasoning and problem-solving skills. One of the most crucial of these skills is the ability to apply logical skills to things possible, that is, to things which might exist, as well as to things which actually do exist. Abstract reasoning and hypothetical problem-solving are two new and powerful capacities in the inner life of an adolescent. While these abilities are employed at school in logic and algebraic applications, they are also applied to relationships and beliefs and ideas. Add to these new capacities the capacity for “metacognition,” that is, thinking about thinking, and the young person has formed a far more powerful mental net than was available to him or her during childhood.

This newly formed, and forming, mental net allows the adolescent to struggle with the marvelous concepts of morality, freedom, justice, identity, and religion. The possibility of a perfect, loving God can be entertained by a teenager, as can the possibility of a perfect self, perfect parents, and perfect romance. Teenagers grapple with these concepts and construct elaborate, idealized images which they use to frame and measure their inner and outer experiences. As annoying as this idealism can be to parents as they struggle to survive the teenage years, nonetheless these idealizations are essential to a healthy world view and to a healthy young adult. These capacities allow young people to consider holiness, faithfulness and spirituality in ways which children cannot. The *Journey to Adulthood* program attempts to validate the physical changes recognized in the Rite-13 ceremony, and to engage these increased mental capacities throughout the curriculum that comprises Rite-13, *Journey to Adulthood* (J2A) and Young Adults in the Church (YAC).

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<sup>35</sup> Froufe, *et al.*, page 496.

These changes produce a few other noteworthy developments in young people. First, a new form of egocentricity appears. Teenagers are often labeled as thoughtless, selfish, and ridiculously private or closed-down to parents. These characteristics grow out of the new ability to construct, in great detail, an imaginary audience. A young person during this time of life often devotes an enormous amount of time and energy to the imagined responses of others. They become concerned with the opinions of their friends and families. They worry about how others perceive them—how others perceive their mental abilities, their physical prowess, their clothes, their ideas. Sometimes this concern is demonstrated by seemingly endless hours in front of the mirror, sometimes by an increased need for private time (being alone in the bedroom, usually with the music blasting away, allows the teenager a chance to relax after the strain of keeping up with the anticipation of negative responses, both real and imagined), and sometimes this concern comes out as overly rude, boisterous behavior. Some developmentalists argue that this rudeness, this loud and boisterous behavior, is simply a demonstration of the young person’s conviction that everyone is looking at them with critical hearts, so being boorish won’t make any difference!

Another aspect of these changes is the formation of what has often been called the personal fable. This fable asserts that the young person is absolutely unique, suffering through life with thoughts and feelings which no one else has ever experienced. The young person is convinced that these feelings are “beyond the capacity of anyone else to know and understand, especially adults.”<sup>36</sup> This belief is formed out of the new concepts at play in his or her thought life, which are too personal, private, and thereby frightening, to discuss openly. “Lacking a broader perspective for viewing their new thoughts and feelings, they come to the conclusion that all these thoughts and feelings are unique to them.”<sup>37</sup>

In the *Journey to Adulthood* program, the leaders should take very special care of the moments when young people begin to share their inner thoughts and dreams. This is holy ground; ground on which one says, “I am what I am.” It is an enormous risk for a young person to open the personal fable. It is a sacred trust for young people and leaders to respect that risk by attentive listening and respecting the young person’s confidentiality. It is equally a part of that trust to gently share a glimpse of our common struggle, our common experience of life and love and self.

This exchange of truthfulness is one of the many social changes which takes place in adolescents. The whole process of adolescence is hallmarked by growth. Some adolescents experience this growth as tumultuous—that is, full of conflicts and crisis. Some experience it as surgent—that is, sometimes very difficult but mostly reasonably easy and manageable. And some (about one-fourth of adolescents) experience it as continuous—that is, characterized by a steady progression, a sense of self-assurance and mutual respect between friend and friend or between child and parents. These variations are a result of the temperament of the individual combined with the dynamics in the family system. Learning to risk emotional intimacy may come more easily to some young people than to others, but all deserve the chance to try.

At the same time that young people are building bridges of trust with others in their peer group and with other adults, they must still struggle with what one psychologist has called being “marginal persons.” In our culture, adolescence is a protracted time during which they are no longer “children” and are not yet “adults.” “This ‘no-man’s-land’ can give rise to a sense of

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<sup>36</sup>Froufe, *et al.*, page 505.

<sup>37</sup>Froufe, *et al.*, page 505.

ambiguity, impatience and frustration.”<sup>38</sup> Our culture not only withholds adult responsibilities and authority from young people, but it does not even offer markers to assure the young person of progress.

The *Journey to Adulthood* program aims to structure this protracted period by celebrating, training, and empowering the young person to accomplish the fundamental task of adolescence: establishing a personal identity. This program tries to recognize five critical tasks in adolescent social development. These tasks are loosely defined as:

- Establishing a personal identity which is not only perceived by the individual but also validated by the recognition and confirmation of others.
- Evolving a new understanding of the self as cohesive and continuous, recognizing that various parts of the self are part of a whole, and that different ways of behaving with different people are sensible rather than inconsistent.
- Achieving new closeness and trust with peers.
- Acquiring a new status in the family. Family ties are not severed; connections with parents take on a different form.

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<sup>38</sup> Froufe, *et al.*, page 516.



- Moving toward a more autonomous stance with respect to the world at large. Anticipating future roles, values, and career choices are but a few of the decisions teenagers must begin to make by themselves and then translate into daily practice.<sup>39</sup>

In summary, the fundamental task of adolescence is to become separate, adult individuals, while continuing to maintain connection with others. Young people must “elaborate and evolve a distinctive self system while elaborating a new social system. . .”<sup>40</sup> The new social system will include parents and friends, of course, but also employers and romantic partners. The task is enormous and full of opportunities for trial and error with concomitant joys and sorrows, victories and achievements.

Perhaps the most heartwarming part of the social development of adolescents rests in their new capacity for true mutual understanding. As they discover their “unique feelings,” as they share them with one another and with trusted adults, they begin to recognize that others also have “unique feelings.” They begin to enjoy the sharing of stories. They develop a capacity for intimacy. It is expressed in loyalty and fidelity among friends.<sup>41</sup> Developmentalists disagree about which came first: identity or emotional intimacy. But they do agree that both are necessary. It is virtually impossible to establish a healthy sense of self outside the context of emotionally intimate relationships. Human beings are fundamentally social and, as such, require opportunities to disclose their deepest self and to have it affirmed while, at the same time, affirming the deepest self of another.

As a final point of clarification, adolescents establish and move through several types of social networks. In early adolescence, conformity to the norms of the group is extremely important. Group norms mandate that even the group be popular. By late adolescence, group consciousness has faded noticeably. Over these years two new group structures emerge. The first

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<sup>39</sup> Froufe, *et al.*, page 518 (adapted).

<sup>40</sup> Froufe, *et al.*, page 518.

<sup>41</sup> One of our J2A groups designed its own T-shirt. On the back it said: “IT’S A GROUP THING, YOU WOULDN’T UNDERSTAND.” While I might have felt uncomfortable with the apparent exclusivity, I also respected the young people’s emerging understanding of loyalty and fidelity. Also, when things got a little crazy, or hostile or just plain nasty, one of the members of the group would chime out: “Hey, wait a minute . . . it’s a group thing!” thereby affirming a basis of understanding, inclusion and respect.

type, cliques, are close-knit groups of a few friends who are intimately involved with each other. These friendships tend to be fairly exclusive, not welcoming newcomers easily. The second type, crowds, are often comprised of several cliques which interact with each other. In early adolescence, cliques tend to be same-sex units. Over time these same-sex cliques join together to form a heterosexual crowd. According to the experts, these crowds allow the young people to form cross-gender friendships in the context of familiar cliques. Eventually the oldest members of the crowd will make the transition to form intimate, dating relationships.

This progression has, in our experience, been a clear development in the *Journey to Adulthood* program. We encourage cross-gender friendships and make every effort to model that possibility through the friendship of male and female leaders while we celebrate all kinds of friendships and associations. No one in youth work can presume to enforce the “right kind” of friendships. Some members of the group may never feel completely at ease with members of the other gender. Many, on the other hand, will take great joy in have a male friend or a female friend. And, finally, some will seem to jump right into crushes and romances long before the group seems ready for it. All of the possible combinations will emerge during the course of the six or seven years of the program.

In closing, it would be foolish to explore all of these developmental issues without addressing the question of sexual activity and intimacy in adolescents. According to one study:

- in 1950, 7% of white females had engaged in sexual intercourse by the age of sixteen.
- by 1971, the equivalent figure had risen to 33%, and by 1980 to 44%.
- by 1988, two-thirds of a high school graduating class had become sexually active.
- the number of sexually active males was consistently higher for each year studied (e.g., 60% by age eighteen in 1983).<sup>42</sup>

Youth leaders, not so much for the Rite-13 group but certainly for J2A and YAC, *must* assume that some members of the group are sexually active. They must also assume that some members of the group may be struggling with questions of sexual orientation. It is unfair, and perhaps even cruel, to deny or try to escape these facts. As they are confronted with these issues and try to wrestle with them, leaders must search their own consciences and, as or when necessary, seek pastoral guidance. Young people quite desperately need, especially in the age of AIDS (and other sexually transmitted diseases), to be informed about techniques of safe sex, birth control, homosexuality and the struggle for acceptance, intimacy, identity, and fidelity. This curriculum addresses many of these questions in the context of exploring Self and Sexuality. However, since leaders will bring their own biases and concerns to the curriculum, we strongly urge reflection, study, and pastoral assistance as these issues arise in the youth groups.

When all the developmental underpinnings are considered as part of the mystery and the grace which God has given us in our life energy, it becomes a bit easier to focus our attention on the immediate needs. Our young people, in the midst of rapid change, exploration, and experimentation, require a framework wherein their unique experiences are valued in the context of a faith heritage and a community rooted in that faith. Every effort must be made to welcome

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<sup>42</sup> J. Brooks-Gunn and F. Furstenburg, “Adolescent Sexual Behavior”, *American Psychologist*, 44, 249-257 (1989).

the emerging adult, to speak gently to the fading child, and by our presence and our prayers, to celebrate this most glorious time of transition.

# THE GENESIS OF THE PROGRAM

## Stories Behind the Journey

Amanda J. Smith<sup>43</sup>

### **Introduction**

The St. Philip's youth program is a lot like other successful church youth programs, but it also has something distinctive to offer. We are convinced that an important part of the psychic and spiritual work to be done by teens is to understand what it means to be made in the image of God, both male and female. Therefore, an understanding of sex and gender and how they shape us undergirds much of what we do. These elements grew out of a theory I developed in my work on gender issues. Because it may be easier to understand the program if you understand how it came about, here's how it happened.

### **Building Partnership between Women and Men**

My husband and I joined St. Philip's in 1974, shortly after we moved to Durham. At about the same time, I took a job with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction directing a program to open vocational education programs to both sexes. In 1978, my North Carolina experience led me to become an independent consultant on building partnership between the sexes, in which respect I have worked with education, industry, community organizations and churches in forty-odd states and five countries.

At first the idea of more girls in carpentry and more boys in home economics seemed simple enough, but it inspired great resistance. To my surprise, this resistance was seldom based on the question of whether women or men were capable of doing the work. Rather, I faced a level of hostility between the sexes that astonished me, and a barrage of worried wisecracks about lost femininity, homosexuality and whether it was possible for women and men to work together without falling into bed.

The first major lesson I learned was that those of us working in gender issues needed to shift our goal beyond "equal opportunity for both sexes" to "partnership between the sexes." Focusing only on equality nearly always turned into a quarrel over which sex had the greatest

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<sup>43</sup> Amanda J. Mackay Smith is a member of St. Philip's and, to a large extent, the progenitor of the *Journey to Adulthood* program. She has been training men and women to work better together since 1970. She serves as a consultant in this area, and may be contacted at 1900 Winkler Road, Durham, NC 27712 (919-471-4337). Another resource person with particular interest in the area of rites of passage is the Rev. William O. Roberts, Jr., who may be contacted at 21 Mansfield Terrace, Middletown, CT 06457 (860-347-3935). We recommend that congregations with concerns in these areas get in touch with these persons.

troubles, in order to decide which sex deserved help. All too often the result was that both sexes competed for status as victims instead of seeking a better world for both. Focusing primarily on equality increased the hostility between the sexes, rather than diminishing it.

Focusing primarily on partnership meant we could help all students learn to work well with both sexes, rather than focusing on just those few who would choose nontraditional vocations. It meant we could encourage them to learn from each other rather than competing for status as victims. We still sought equality, but as a necessary ingredient of partnership instead of the overall goal.

The goal of partnership greatly reduced the boys-against-the-girls hostility we had experienced in the early years. However, it was soon obvious that even when men and women had every encouragement to work together, they still shied away from each other. They refused to try nontraditional trades. When they did work together, sexual harassment kept them at odds.

Further, many teens were in deep trouble. When fourteen-year-old females are bragging about being pregnant (“I’m a woman now!”), or males are proving their manhood by toting guns and killing each other, trying to interest them in nontraditional work seems pretty trivial.

Then slowly, through many workshops, conferences and late night conversations, I began to see a pattern which tied all these problems together. The wisecracks about sex on the job and lost femininity were not just irritating distractions, they accurately reflected two barriers to male-female partnership which were so deep and so pervasive that they were nearly invisible. These barriers keep women and men apart, push them away from work they could do well and push them into self-destructive behavior.

### **The First Barrier to Partnership**

The first barrier is the assumption that all relationships between women and men must be sexual. From babyhood, boys and girls are teased out of being friends by well-meaning grown-ups chanting, “Johnny’s got a girlfriend!” To avoid the teasing they must avoid each other. In high school, a young woman who wants to sign up for diesel mechanics may well be met with, “You just want to be where the boys are!” instead of being asked serious questions about her interest or competence. At the adult level, men and women who try to work together are subject to sexual rumors. And finally, this assumption is the springboard for sexual harassment, when co-workers do not know how to relate to each other except sexually.

### **The Second Barrier to Partnership**

The second barrier is the assumed necessity to prove manhood and womanhood. The second barrier deals not with sexuality but with sex identity, our sense of ourselves as male or female. This barrier is the logical but odd idea that we must earn, and then prove, our womanhood or manhood. It was this fear that inspired the questions, “If my boy plays with a doll, won’t he be homosexual?” “Are you saying we’re all going to look alike?”

Look alike? I began to realize that people could not entertain the notion of females in welding or males in child care until they settled much deeper questions of sex identity. If encouraging a girl to be a welder meant she was going to “lose her femininity,” neither students, teachers nor employers were about to do it. It wasn’t technical competence that was holding them back, it was their definitions of masculinity and femininity.

These same ideas of womanhood and manhood were what pushed many teens into pregnancy and knife fights. Beliefs about manhood and womanhood also provided the other main ingredient for sexual harassment: if workers identify their job with their gender, then the

presence of a newcomer is not just a threat to their job, it's a threat to their personal identity structure. The newcomer has got to go! What better way to drive her—or him—off than through sexuality?

The more I looked into it, the more convinced I became that “proving gender” is a terrible troublemaker. Why, then, is this logically ridiculous idea (feeling you must prove your sex, an attribute you were born with) so widespread? I became convinced the answer was that proving gender is human society's basic method of social control.

Don't bother to blame your parents; this process has been around since we lived in caves. We control people by confiscating what *they* want until they do what *we* want. A modern parent controls a child by saying, “No ice cream till you eat your green beans.” But for really tough jobs, ice cream is not enough. Then we turn to the big stuff: sex. If the tribe needed someone to kill lions, it accomplished that by confiscating manhood: “No manhood till you kill your lion”. If it needed warm clothes: “No womanhood till you learn to chew sealskin into jackets,” or whatever job the tribe needed done. “Gender” is this artificial connection between what we are (our sex) and what we do (work, play, fight), and a prime purpose of it is to help us manipulate each other.

Once I was aware of how this manipulation worked, I saw it everywhere. One day our son Luke, who was then four, was playing with his friend Amelia, who was two.

“I want my X-wing fighter,” Luke announced.

“No!” said Amelia.

“Give me my X-wing fighter!” Luke insisted.

“*NO!*” said Amelia.

Luke thought a minute. “X-wing fighters are for boys,” he said. And Amelia, a strong-willed two-year-old, *handed it over!* (Mama was too fascinated to intervene.)

People can be manipulated this way because sex is essential to the continuation of the species. At a subconscious level, the fear of losing our sex is the fear of death. If this manipulation were only used towards useful ends like lion-killing and jacket-chewing and green-bean-eating, we might argue that it is so useful that we are willing to accept it even if it does force potentially great jacket-chewers into becoming third-rate lion-killers. The trouble is, the concept of proving manhood/womanhood is used towards destructive ends, too—that's where the gang fights and teen pregnancy come in.

An overall theory was taking shape. My workshops now focused on teaching women and men to work together. To accomplish that, we must overcome the two basic barriers to partnership: first, males and females must be taught and encouraged to be friends, and they must learn to defend friendship when sexual teasing crops up.

Second, they must learn that their manhood/womanhood is deeply and unshakably their own, and that they never have to prove it. They can do any work, express any emotion, be sexually active or celibate, be hetero- or homosexual, and “still be a man” or “still be a woman.”

And they must learn how the manipulation works, so they can resist it. A teenager being pressured into sex she doesn't want could answer: “I don't have to get into bed with *you* to prove I'm a woman. I'm already a woman, thank you, and I figured you could tell by looking!”

## **The Journey from Womanhood and Manhood to Adulthood**

However, I was still missing a major part of the puzzle. In talking about the two barriers to partnership, I placed a lot of emphasis on adolescence, especially the need for a rite of passage that would give form to the passage from childhood to woman/manhood. It intrigued me that

Jews have a low rate of juvenile delinquency, and that they are also the only major ethnic group in this country that still has a functioning puberty rite, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. By contrast, the main rite of passage that our American majority culture offers is getting a driver's license, and that is too little, too expensive and too late to do the job right.

We needed, then, to develop a puberty rite for other American youth which would grant them full status as men and women at age thirteen. Big thirteenth birthday parties, new grown-up clothes, important presents, and making a point of *calling* our young people men and woman could all contribute to its impact.

But rituals must not be just empty words, so I reasoned that we must also give responsibilities which would lend substance to the name of manhood/womanhood. Such responsibilities might include: voting (thirteen-year-olds could hardly do worse than adults had done); driving a car (they would be responsible drivers when they no longer needed to drive too fast to prove their manhood); getting married (it is ridiculous to deny this right when people are capable of having babies); and so on.

It didn't work. People thought the birthday party idea was fine, but could not accept giving these responsibilities to thirteen-year-olds. I sympathized, but I felt granting woman/manhood was so important that we had to do it, even though it felt strange. Then one day, at a teachers' workshop in a beige-tiled high school cafeteria in Lincoln, Nebraska, a man raised his hand. Rather than arguing with me as so many others had done, he posed a new question.

"I understand what you're trying to do," he said, "and I respect it. But as I look back on my own adolescence, I can't get away from the idea that I did have to prove something. If it wasn't manhood, *what was it?*"

"Well," I answered, thinking fast, "How about adulthood? Suppose we say that you get manhood for free, but you have to earn your adulthood?"

"Yes," he said slowly, "I think that would do it," and three hundred people heaved a collective sigh of relief! Distinguishing between manhood/womanhood and adulthood was the key.

Then I discovered that only Western societies confuse the two, when my cousin Camilla Hewitt gave me a book called *The Human Cycle* by anthropologist Colin Turnbull.<sup>44</sup> Turnbull lays out in elegant simplicity five stages of human development: childhood; adolescence, which *ends with puberty*; youth; adulthood and old age.

Reading Turnbull, I realized that our society has actually lost an entire stage of human development, the period Turnbull calls "youth."<sup>45</sup> Instead, we lump it together with pre-puberty, and call both together "adolescence." Skipping over the stage of "youth" means that we think becoming a man or woman is the same as becoming an adult. That's why we deny the status of woman/manhood to our young people even though they have passed puberty and can have babies of their own.

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<sup>44</sup> See Resource Section.

<sup>45</sup> My experience in working with American youth is that they don't much like the word "youth," though they accept it in the phrase "youth group." I've had better luck with "apprenticeship period" which clearly emphasizes that they are in training to be adults.

At last I had it right: focus on partnership; encourage friendship; teach that sex identity is a given and that no one has to prove their gender at any age; celebrate the arrival of manhood/womanhood and the achievement of adulthood as two separate events. The first is a gift, the second we earn by proving we can carry out adult responsibilities.

## Turning to the Church

Where could such a program, encompassing serious rites of passage, take place? Within families? Yes, but families would not provide recognition by the community. At school? Schools could make much of middle school graduation, saying that the graduates had become men and women and would now go forth to high school to earn their adulthood. But, as the success of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah indicates, the most suitable arena for a rite of passage is a faith community.

The Church is one of the few remaining multigenerational institutions in the United States, which means it can provide “elders” to function as friends and leaders for young people when they must move out beyond their parents. It can provide peers to share the journey. The Church can deal comfortably with moral and spiritual issues because its membership is self-selected and has an agreed-upon set of values. Furthermore, the Church already has rituals that mark other life changes, most notably birth, marriage and death.

So I went to the Rector of St. Philip’s, Tom Midyette, a man of courage and imagination who likes new ventures. He understood the potential of these ideas immediately. We discussed the need for rites of passage, and lamented the fact that Confirmation, instead of functioning as the adult confirmation of faith that it claims to be, instead seems to have become an “exit rite”—the last thing that young people do to please their parents before they leave the Church.

With Tom’s support, we formed a committee of parishioners to begin developing a program. We brainstormed ideas and researched psychology, anthropology and theology on the subject of rites of passage for teenagers. In short order, we discovered the Reverend William Roberts’ *Initiation to Adulthood*<sup>46</sup> which consists of two parts: the first, a history of both Christian and non-Christian rites of passage; the second, an account of the youth program he developed for his own church. What luck to have so much of our work already done for us! Bill Roberts came and spent a weekend to share his experience, including stretching forty parishioners aged fifteen to seventy-five out on the floor of the parish parlor for his ritual of creation.

From Roberts we got the basic structure of our program: three two-year segments. From Roberts we also took the four basic areas of study: Society, Self, Sexuality, and Spirituality.

To his foundation we added our own understanding that manhood/womanhood is distinct from adulthood, and must be recognized earlier. Therefore, our eleven- to-thirteen-year-old segment carries more weight than his Pre-Initiation Group, and has its own important rituals. We also added a greater focus on gender, specifically the need for male-female friendships and the need to teach our young people how to defend themselves against a world that would try to use their womanhood and manhood to manipulate them.

We called our three groups the Manhood-Womanhood group, which was soon shortened to Rite-13; the Initiation to Adulthood group, which we changed to Journey to Adulthood to avoid the hazing connotations of the word “initiation”; and the Young Adults in the Church (some said the real reason for this title was for the acronym YAC, because they yack all the time).

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<sup>46</sup> See Resource Section.



## Planning Rituals

Roberts placed great emphasis on ritual, and we agreed. In effect, we split the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in two, so that we would celebrate the gift of manhood and womanhood at thirteen, but postpone adulthood until sixteen.

We decided therefore to write two liturgies. The first is called the “Celebration of the Gift of Manhood or Womanhood,” informally known as Rite-13. It is celebrated conveniently soon after each young person’s thirteenth birthday. Depending on where the birthdays fall on the calendar, Rite-13 may be celebrated for one person or several at once.

The second comes at the end of J2A, and is performed for the whole group at once. Accompanying it is Confirmation, for those who choose it.

We believe one reason Confirmation has served as an “exit rite” is that it has been customary to confirm people at age twelve. Unfortunately, twelve is the age for establishing autonomy from parents. If you confirm twelve-year-olds and tell them they are now adults in the Church who can make their own theological decisions, the main decision they can imagine making is whether to go to church or not. As parents promote going to church, autonomy means leaving.

If we postpone Confirmation to approximately sixteen, then calling it an adult confirmation of faith makes sense in terms of the youth’s own experience. And although there are many reasons why young people may leave the Church at this age, such as getting Sunday morning jobs at McDonald’s, at least it would not be an age when they felt developmentally *compelled* to leave.

In the fall of 1987, our first program for eleven- to thirteen-year-olds was led by our Assistant Rector, the Reverend Victoria Jamieson-Drake, and her husband David, a graduate student at the Duke Divinity School. It was Vickie’s, David’s and my job to create the liturgy to celebrate the Gift of Manhood and Womanhood. Considering the importance of liturgy in the Anglican tradition, it seemed the ultimate in hubris to think we could write a new one, but there was nothing to do but begin.

Vickie and David and I immersed ourselves in the project, spending hours on the telephone hammering out phrases. I remember staring at the red clay banks of the road one afternoon as I walked out to meet our son Silas’ school bus. Three key words came to me as the essence of what we wanted for our young people: courage, wisdom, and joy. I went home and wrote them in.

## The Rite-13 Group

Our first Celebration of Manhood and Womanhood, affectionately known as Rite-13, was celebrated for Heather Corry. The ceremony started with a prayer to give thanks for the gift of womanhood. (The service is exactly the same for young men, with the words “woman” changed to “man.”) Heather was charged with the knowledge that as a woman she had been given the power of creation, and that because she was made in the image of God, she had a choice as to how to use that power. She was asked if she was aware of the challenge that this gift implied, and she answered “I am.” She led the congregation in portions of Psalm 139 which declares that she has been “marvelously made;” but unlike the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, she did not have to preach a sermon.

Rites of passage for children are also rites of passage for parents, but parents are often given little help in making these transitions, so the ceremony included a prayer for Heather's parents as they began to let go of their child, praying that they would all be carried safely through the journey and one day stand together as adults and friends.

To reinforce strong group formation among the young people, the other members of the group were challenged to be loyal to her. They swore, "We will."

To underscore that Heather was now a young woman and recognized as such by the community, the congregation was charged to share the wisdom of their years with her as she became a woman, and they affirmed, "We will."

Finally the priest laid hands upon her head, praying that Almighty God would fill her with courage, wisdom, and joy, and that Jesus Christ would be with her as her "strong companion and never-failing friend."

We held our collective breath to see what the congregation's reaction would be. A few people huffed ("I don't see what's so great about starting your period," said one older woman), but most found the experience unexpectedly moving. The most common comment was, "I wish we'd had something like this when I (or my child) was that age." Over the following months, we polished and shortened the service, and the congregation began to take ownership of these strange new ideas.

We also began to hammer out a curriculum based on Roberts' categories of Society, Self, Sexuality, and Spirituality. The ideas about male/female friendship and proving gender were discussed directly, and were also reinforced by supportive remarks and activities.

It worked. For example, Liz Newman, one of our Rite-13 leaders, held grand Superbowl parties in her home for the group. The first year the males and females sat on opposite sides of the room and watched the game. The second year they mixed unself-consciously, talking to each other and ignoring the game. This change did not come about entirely by accident. Liz had encouraged the group to think about the tendency for the sexes to separate, and one of the young men had given it a name: "sexual sectionalism." Over the year they had become skilled at noticing—"Uh oh, sexual sectionalism!"—and taking action.

To our satisfaction, the ideas about proving gender were also on target with this age group. For example, I was asked to come and talk to a Rite-13 group that had only had one person celebrate his Rite-13, and the ideas were not clear to them yet. This young man was something of a cut-up, and as I entered the room some of the others were teasing him, laughing at the idea that he, with his rambunctious ways, was supposed to be called a man.

I joined in by saying simply, "Yes, Harry is a man, but he's not an adult yet."

"Oh," they picked up immediately, "he's a man but not an adult. OK!" The tension went out of them, and the teasing stopped.

Later we talked about how society tries to restrict us by saying that certain activities are only for one sex. Elaine, an enthusiastic baseball player, put in, "Girls can play baseball!" This remark inspired Harry to start naming all the girls he knew who could not and did not want to play baseball.

Elaine was frustrated, so I suggested that Harry was right, there are a lot of girls who do not play baseball, and that what we needed to do was turn her sentence around. Instead of saying "Girls can play baseball," we need to say, "You can play baseball and *still be a girl.*"

Elaine turned those new words over in her mind and smiled. "That works," she said.

As I watched her sit back and relax, I saw Harry relax, too. This was a statement he couldn't argue with. More important, it answered his subconscious and unrecognized question, which was not "Can Elaine really play baseball?" but "Will she stop being a girl if she does?"

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We went on to develop a list of things people said males or females couldn't do, and then practiced the magic phrase with each: You can take care of a baby and still be a man; you can be an astronaut and still be a woman; you can cry and still be a man; you can get mad and yell and still be a woman . . . .

All our Rite-13 leaders occasionally despaired over the unfocused energy and volatility of thirteen-year-olds. One Sunday afternoon, Liz Newman left the room for a moment and returned to discover the kids had hidden her baby. She frantically searched the room ("This is *not* funny, guys"), and eventually opened a curtain to find our grinning son Luke sitting on the window sill with the baby quite safe in his arms.

Despite the high jinks, the value of the program to the young people was made clear to us in individual stories. One mother reported that she had casually told her daughter she wouldn't be going to youth group one Sunday afternoon because there was no one to drive her. Half an hour later, she discovered her daughter in tears.

"I had no idea it was so important to her," the mother told me later. "If I had known, I would have gotten her there even if I had to call a neighbor to take her!"

Another parent told us that her son often stopped to reread the illuminated copy of Psalm 139 which had been presented to him during his Rite-13, and which his parents had framed and hung on the wall. She also overheard him on the phone bragging about the program to his friends—not a bad sign coming from a thirteen-year-old male. Stories like this kept us going.

We did face a difficulty, however. For a variety of reasons, we completed three Rite-13 Programs before we were able to conduct a J2A program. This meant that for several years the shape of the entire program was not clear to the congregation, or even to the leaders. Having no J2A program meant that people still tended to confuse manhood/womanhood with adulthood. Leaders sometimes tended to make Rite-13 discussions too heavy, a problem that we felt was caused by the fact that we had no older group in place, and therefore unconsciously found ourselves trying to reproduce Roberts' "Initiation to Adulthood" program for a group too young for it.

## **J2A—Journey to Adulthood**

By September 1991, we at last had a J2A group which was big enough to hold together. The lay leaders were Amanda Hughes, an exceptionally gifted youth leader, and David Vryhof, a seminary student. (Amanda and I occasionally signed notes to each other TO, which stood for The Other Amanda.) At this time we also received a grant from the Episcopal Church Foundation to develop a written curriculum for the program, which she would write.

The J2A program flourished. Having defined Man/Womanhood in terms of the *gift* of creative energy, we now could begin to stress Adulthood as meaning responsibility which must be *earned*. It was the task of this program to give young people the skills they needed to achieve the ability to take care of themselves and their community—active listening, negotiation, assertion, information management, partnership, and leadership. The group was already close-knit after two years together in Rite-13, enthusiastic and ready for the challenges that were implied in the concept of earning adulthood.

As part of the concept of a *journey* to adulthood, the group took the train to Washington, DC. They stayed at the Center for Creative Non-Violence and helped make dinner for 1,300 homeless people as part of their public service.

I enjoyed laying out an Urban Orienteering Challenge (another idea we got from Bill Roberts). In groups of three, with a silent adult companion whose only job was to see that they

got home in one piece, they took the subway, buses, taxis and even walked(!) to find Chinatown, Dupont Circle, the National Cathedral, the Vietnam Memorial, and Boogies, an “in” restaurant and clothing store. Their faces glowed with the satisfaction of challenge well-met as they trickled back to the shelter to tell their stories.

Having shown they could journey together, they had earned something very special indeed: a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On a visit in the spring of 1992, Tom Midyette had discovered a youth program run by St. George’s College in Jerusalem which retraced the steps of the historical Jesus. Now the young folks buckled down to a serious adult skill—fund-raising! They baby-sat, which included Friday Night Out children’s programs in the parish hall, sold pizzas, did yard work and helped build a porch on a parishioner’s house—all fine exercises in women and men working together.

So, in June of 1993, after 10 years of hard work and many rewards, we presented a group of self-assured young people to the parish as young adults. Most of them also chose to be confirmed. The congregation showed its support in the most tangible of ways: by presenting the group with the plane tickets to Jerusalem.

The trip was filled with epiphanies, both personal and spiritual. As we listened to their stories, watched their slide show, read the article one of them wrote for the diocesan newspaper, we became convinced that some sort of pilgrimage in the final summer should become an integral part of the program.

## Measuring Success

Now we had a completed program, and could look back to see what we had accomplished. The simplest measure was the fact that the young people kept coming. Where once we had haphazard and struggling EYC programs with only a few enrolled, we now have three youth programs flourishing, and the problem is where to put them all.

We have had the satisfaction of breaking new ground, building a tangible program around ideas that were startling to many, but which, when they were explained, elicited responses like Elaine’s, “That works.” We hope this program holds promise for young people beyond our parish, especially for those with far fewer resources, and faced with far greater challenges.

But, as always, the value comes down to the individual stories. Some were private. One mother had a particularly rewarding experience. Like many teenagers, her son had dropped a curtain between himself and his parents during the years from twelve to sixteen. Then, around seventeen, he began to be more open to them. One day, during the portion of a Rite-13 ceremony which prayed that parents and child would all go safely through the journey to emerge one day as adults and friends, the son and mother exchanged a glance.

Later, she mentioned it to him. “I think maybe you and I have gotten there,” she said.

He smiled. “Yes,” he said, “I think we have.”

Others involved the whole group. In October of ‘93, I led the YAC on a caving expedition in Louisbourg, West Virginia. Though I knew many of the young people well as individuals, this was my first experience with them as a group. (As a parent, I could not be a Rite-13 or J2A leader.)

This weekend was their first major event since the Jerusalem trip. The travelers and those who had stayed at home needed to re-knit themselves into a group and to begin to map out their YAC program, which as young adults they were to plan themselves. All this was to be accomplished while making themselves at home in a parishioner’s century-old, spectacular but seldom-used family homestead, and carrying out a *strenuous* exploration of the cave.

They handled an unfamiliar situation with equanimity, even the welcoming mouse in the bathroom, and pitched right in to clean counters, assign beds and move chairs into a circle round the fireplace, with both males and females doing all the jobs.

Late at night, we heard voices and discovered about half the group holding a compline service, reading from Prayer Books we didn't even know they'd brought along.

Exploring the cave meant crawling through narrow spaces and over jagged rocks, using a rope to scale a slippery wall, sliding down mucky flow stone. They tackled it with grit and gusto. Even our two claustrophobes were willing to start—and they never turned back. Whenever anyone had difficulty, another was there to help and encourage. I saw no signs of macho bravado in the young men nor coyness in the young women, and both sexes ventured into the solo pit, re-emerging with ear-to-ear grins shining through the mud. When they gathered to talk it all over, one young woman summed up the experience: “What I liked best was . . . we took care of each other.”

I had to think it wasn't a bad foundation from which to face the world.

### **In Conclusion**

Seeing one's theories put into practice is a humbling experience. My gratitude is unbounded to Tom and to the entire parish for being willing to take a flyer on something not only new but radically different from “how we've always done it.” I was amazed and touched by the courage and generosity of the group leaders. And the pleasure of working with Amanda Hughes, who not only “got it” immediately, but who also brought so much talent and experience to the project, has been a blessing, indeed. Now I look forward to seeing how these ideas play out in other parishes, as we work together to build a program that can touch as many lives as possible.

# RAISING CHRISTIAN CHILDREN IN A PAGAN CULTURE

Ellen T. Charry<sup>47</sup>

## Christians and the Dominant Culture

Christians have always had to reflect on their relationship to the dominant culture. St. Paul urged his fledgling converts to reject vestiges of paganism and cling instead to the identity given them by being baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. In this he was followed by the Church Fathers, who carefully sifted the culture to see what would faithfully and fittingly correspond with Christian claims and what would corrupt them.

Raising children in our culture has forcefully reminded me of how crucial this act of discernment and resistance is. It has also persuaded me that the intentional formation of young Christians is the most important ministry contemporary churches can undertake. Modern liberal education, stemming from Rousseau, assumes that children flourish when given the freedom to select among many options in developing their own unique gifts and talents. This approach can succeed with Christian children, but probably only in a culture that is sympathetic to Christian practices and beliefs. That is no longer our situation. Becoming a Christian today is, as it was in the earliest centuries, an intentional choice made in the face of other options. While children do need freedom, they also need to be deliberately shaped by Christian practices so that they may have a genuine chance to understand and respond to the gospel.

In the Middle Ages ascetical disciplines strengthened character, cultivated independence from physical and emotional needs, and encouraged self-control. Self-development rather than self-control is the goal. Accepting guidance from any source but the self—and especially looking for guidance from God—is looked upon as a sign of weakness, or simply as an eccentricity. Yet while youngsters think they are creating themselves, they are in reality being formed by television; by the sports, entertainment and advertising industries; by the shopping malls and by the streets. The market forces behind these institutions are not interested in children's moral, social and intellectual development.

Intentional Christian nurture is necessary because our culture shapes children for a world shorn of God. Christians see power in the crucified Jesus; popular culture defines power as winning in athletic or commercial combat. A Christian learns about hope from the resurrection; our culture sees hope in a new-car showroom. The church is again called to rescue people out of paganism.

Against the dehumanizing currents in popular culture, the church stands for a decision to find one's dignity in Jesus Christ. A disciplined Christian life expresses itself in every interaction with other people and with creation. Each person and object is a gift from God, protected by the love of Jesus Christ. We must face Jesus Christ every time we touch another person's mind,

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<sup>47</sup> Ellen T. Charry is a professor of theology at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. This article originally appeared in the February 16, 1994 issue of *The Christian Century*.

feelings or body. Unless our children know Jesus, what will protect them from hurting themselves and others?

The church is perhaps the only institution with the beliefs, literature, liturgy, practices, social structure and authority (diminished though it be) necessary to rescue children from the violence and other deforming features of late 20th-century life. But it cannot accomplish this by simply laying the faith before young people and inviting them to choose it. Nor can it impose Christian identity by force and indoctrination. It can only prepare the setting for the Holy Spirit slowly to nurture children into Christian faith and practice. Churches need to think creatively about how to assist the Spirit in this process of formation.

## **The Role of Parents**

The church is well positioned for forming Christian children. First of all, it is one of the few institutions with access to the whole family. Both parents and children can be brought into the church's social and intellectual orbit, where they can publicly interact with one another and find support for their life together. Furthermore, the pulpit offers perhaps the only remaining locus of personal and public edification and exhortation.

Of course, religious education must begin at home and at an early age. Well-intentioned parents may encounter an immediate obstacle: they themselves do not feel comfortable speaking about God. Parents who are unable to articulate their faith will find it difficult to raise Christian children. These adults may gain some credibility with their children by entering with them into a process of study, prayer and reflection. Otherwise, children will quickly discern the shallowness of their parents' faith. Perhaps nothing makes a stronger impression on children than to be invited to study scripture with parents who are studying not to indoctrinate the child but for their own spiritual nourishment. To prescribe a program of scripture study for children alone, when parents do not participate, can seem like punishment, and can be the source of yet another power struggle between parents and children. Indeed, parents who rigidly impose their Christian beliefs in an attempt to exert authority over their children will be seen as more concerned with their own power than with the children's life with God. We should trust that adolescents will recognize and respect reasoned religious convictions.

## **Parenting and Prayer**

Parents need to ask some hard questions about their own faith and their relationship with their children. Some may hope that their children will be instructed in the faith during the 45 minutes a week of church school, but this scant instruction cannot compete with the powerful influences that bombard the child the rest of the week. Furthermore, church school teachers are often untrained and poorly educated in the faith. And though church may provide an important social milieu for youngsters, the content of the faith may never be clearly articulated there.

Parents need to talk to one another, other parents and church staff, and plan how to raise their children. Christian education should be the province of men as well as women. Children need fathers who can talk to them about God, about humility as honor, about Jesus' self-sacrifice on the cross, and about dignity as servanthood. Fathers may be eager to get their sons onto the ball field or artillery range, but they must learn to be even more eager to get down on their knees with children and teach them to pray.

Prayer is crucial. It teaches children to reflect on their own lives and on the world around them. It provides breathing space from the overstimulation of society. Attending to how to pray and for whom to pray trains children to focus on the welfare of others and on world events.

Prayer books are wonderful resources; they contain prayers for travelers, for those far away, for the sick, for those living alone, for government leaders, for an end to civil strife, for proper use of natural resources. We should also teach children to pray for virtues like compassion, courage, cheerfulness and charity.

While there are good books of prayers for children, the newspaper is probably our best source for learning to pray for others. Helping children to select a focus for prayer from a newspaper article and then to write their own prayers is excellent training—in prayer and also in thinking and writing. Some children might want to keep a scrapbook of their prayers and the articles that inspired them, so that they can look back and recall the people and events for which they have prayed.

Of course, one also learns to pray by being prayed for. Parents would do well to bless their children, perhaps when they leave for school in the morning, and to pray for them when they are facing special stresses, and at times of celebration. This means that parents must be comfortable with praying aloud and spontaneously—a daunting thought for those accustomed to having the minister do the praying.

## **The Role of Godparents**

The activity of godparenting—which, like family prayer and study has been all but abandoned in many contexts—has enormous potential for forming Christian children. (Grandparents can also exercise a godparenting role.) The resources for godparents are limited only by one's imagination. I suggest the following guidelines:

- Place your concern for the child's spiritual and moral development in the context of a wider involvement in her whole life. Building a genuine relationship with a child takes effort, time and energy. It requires a regular structure so that your presence in the child's life is reliable. Visits to and trips with children expand their world and build trust. If distance makes this context impossible, phone calls can underscore the importance of the relationship.
- Consult with the child's parents so that your godparenting supports their theology and educational approach. Parents can tell you about the child's intellectual and social maturity level so that your exchanges will be appropriate. Do not be daunted by distance.
- Letters are a wonderful way to express your faith thoughtfully. A pattern of writing regularly gives the child something to look forward to. I write to my goddaughter about God and Jesus, prayer, moral discernment, sin, death (when her grandfather died) and the need for times of quiet and reflection to listen for God. Sometimes I write about the liturgical season, a special feast or biblical characters and stories; sometimes I suggest projects in preparation for a holiday. She keeps my letters in a folder and rereads them when she says her evening prayers and reads her Bible. Inviting a child to send back pictures of her favorite biblical stories or characters and eventually to write return letters brings the relationship to a level of mutuality that dignifies the child.

Any suggestions for Christian parenting and godparenting may come to naught if congregations do not take Christian formation seriously.

Churches need to realize that all baptized Christians are responsible for forming one another in Christ. True, parents and teachers are very important. But every time one participates in the covenant of baptism one renews one's own baptismal covenant and promises (in the words of the Book of Common Prayer) to "do all in [one's] power to support these persons in their life in Christ." This public vow is the proper start for the formation of Christians.



This task requires the energy of every parish member. Even skilled parents cannot raise children alone; the authority of popular culture is too strong. They need the support and advice of the church. Also, children need to learn to relate to a variety of people—both other children and adults, both friends and strangers—in order to develop a proper range of social skills. They need to see themselves as part of a community larger than their immediate families, and to have their growing knowledge and love of God nurtured by people other than their parents. This is especially true as adolescents explore the world beyond the family, and the authority of the peer group and the general culture increases.

### **The Role of the Congregation**

Congregations need, first of all, to support the work of parents and godparents. Groups might be set up for sharing ideas, materials and experiences in these areas. Capable, experienced parents might mentor new parents. Groups of families might join for prayer, study and support. A fathering group might encourage men to become more involved in children's religious development.

Though it is important to minister to single people, this should not be done at the expense of meeting the increasing needs of families, especially single mothers with children. Some childless singles might be enriched by supporting youngsters. Some congregations may want to set up foster godparenting programs that pair adults with children with whom they share common interests, or with children who have special needs or stress from illness, divorce, relocation or a death in the family, or to whom they can teach a skill. Adults might be asked to speak with youth about tensions between Christian faith and the world of business, the professions or competitive sports, or simply to witness to their faith. Local service projects might be undertaken involving children and adults. Whatever the project, careful screening, training and ongoing support for those undertaking such ministries is crucial.

Beyond this, churches must attend to youth ministry and ways of incorporating children into the liturgy. In some churches Christian education is a stepchild of congregational programming. Christian educators are rarely honored and often underappreciated. (I once taught a ten-week Bible class for church-school teachers in a congregation that was raising \$100,000 for a new organ but had no budget for teacher-training materials.) Some may want to consider establishing training requirements for church-school teachers, and rethink the voluntary status of much of Christian education.

Enlisting congregational energy, especially from men, for the raising of children is crucial. Attracting more men to Sunday school teaching and youth ministry would help. Inviting adults to relate to other people's children is difficult but important, especially for adolescents, since other adults may have more credibility with adolescents than do adults in the family. Adolescence is the time when most children disappear, not only from the church, but from adult company. Teenagers can easily withdraw into or be abandoned to the adolescent subculture and become distrustful of adults. Many feel awkward, embarrassed and bored around adults, and older adults may feel just as uncomfortable around teenagers. This stand-off can lead to adolescents' isolation. Young people do need space to develop their own identities, and pressuring them to interact with adults when they are socially clumsy can be humiliating to them. Yet warm, trusting relationships with adults are required if moral and spiritual guidance is to be reclaimed.

Many congregations already successfully integrate children into worship through children's sermons, a children's procession, folk or family services, special youth days and pageants.

Churches might also consider celebrating liturgically children's growth and development. Christian children should come to see their growth not simply as a celebration of self but as a celebration of their growth in Christ within the church. Baptismal birthdays might be celebrated through prayers offered by the whole congregation, reminding children and adults that they are bound together as the body of Christ. This would also remind the adults of their vows to the children.

These suggestions for forming Christian children merely scratch the surface of what needs to be done. We need churches to turn their full attention toward children, not simply to applaud them, but to lead them gently and steadily toward God. Other forces in our culture are extremely strong and they may well win our children's hearts eventually. How can churches do anything less now than to surround children with the light of Jesus Christ and the company of seasoned pilgrims?

# MALE-FEMALE TEAM LEADERS NEED TO BALANCE POWER

Amanda J. Smith<sup>48</sup>

“It’s not enough to be equal; you have to look equal,” Ricardo and Maria told me emphatically. They are team leaders in a manufacturing company, and they think the best way for their subordinates to learn about male-female partnership is to see it in action. They therefore work hard at using their own relationship as a “demonstration project” to model shared authority and mutual respect.

Many parents, teachers and youth leaders are also trying to teach equality by example. The biggest surprise they find is that they can’t operate just on instinct and good intentions. “We have to monitor ourselves constantly, to keep things balanced,” is a remark I’ve heard often.

There are three areas that give trouble in modeling partnership: sexuality, power and sex stereotypes.

- **Sexuality.** Be prepared for the assumption that your relationship is sexual; it’s one of the prime barriers to partnership. “Our kids knew that we’re both married, but they still asked if we were going together,” a team of fifth-grade teachers told me. “We used their questions to talk about how much they hate it when people tease them for being friends and why women and men must learn to work together.”

It’s crucial to play it straight and stay completely professional. Pseudo-sexy jokes and gallantry, even when it’s all in fun, introduce a false sexual note and undercut you as friends and partners.

- **Power.** People are so eager to assume that one of you dominates the other that you will need to make your ability to share responsibilities very obvious. Brainstorm together so your team can see you listen carefully to each other. Be ready to endorse your partner’s ideas and be generous about giving each other credit.

But you don’t have to agree about everything. Let your team see you argue and negotiate. Trade off who wins. People need to know that men and women can disagree and still work well together.

Monitor your use of “air space.” One of you may be uneasy with silence, feeling it’s a vacuum that must be filled. The talker will seem to dominate things even though he or she only means to keep the ball rolling.

- **Sex stereotypes.** People often label chores as men’s work and women’s work so keep careful track of who does what. Let the group hear trade-offs: “You took notes last time; I’ll do it this time.”

Some other jobs to keep balanced: bringing refreshments, carrying boxes, operating equipment, driving, making phone calls, chairing meetings.

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<sup>48</sup> This article originally appeared in the June 25, 1993 issue of the Albuquerque, N.M., *Tribune*. Copyright © 1993, by Amanda J. Smith. Reprinted by permission.

Use non-sexist language and invite your team to monitor you. Have fun thinking up new, inclusive phrases like “work hours” or “staff hours” instead of “man-hours.”

Keep your sense of humor. Friendly banter and a sense of the ridiculous are an asset for any team. However, look out for boys-against-the-girls humor or any gender-based teasing that will make people self-conscious.

Is all this worth the effort? Yes! Some people don’t believe a male-female partnership is possible. Some people don’t believe any kind of partnership is possible. You can prove it by providing a model that shows shared authority and mutual respect are not only possible but a great way to run things.

# BECOMING A WOMAN IS A GIFT; BECOMING AN ADULT IS EARNED

Amanda J. Smith<sup>49</sup>

All over this country I've been told the same story: A 14-year-old comes to the guidance office to report she is pregnant. The counselor is all sympathy: "Oh, you poor child!" The 14-year-old, however, is not looking for sympathy, and she's not about to be called a poor child. Instead she raises her head proudly and announces, "I'm a woman now!"

About one million teens become pregnant each year. There are many reasons they get pregnant, but one of them is the (often unconscious) need to prove womanhood.

All humans must claim their womanhood or manhood when their bodies change. Unfortunately, our society denies them this recognition, because we confuse becoming a woman (capable of reproducing the species) with becoming an adult (capable of taking responsibility for oneself).

As one cannot become an adult in this culture at 14, we tell our young people they are still children. Their inevitable response is a destructive tug-of-war in which they set out to prove what we insist on denying: that they are indeed women.

How do they try to prove it? When I ask teenagers, their answers are simple and direct: clothes, makeup, dating, having sex, bragging about having sex.

This last point is interesting. We are familiar with young men telling lies in the locker-room, trying to prove manhood by saying they've had sex. Women tell locker-room lies too.

Some brag about sex. Some say they have had abortions when they have not—a quick way to gain the status of having been pregnant. Some go further: A counselor in Tennessee told me of one teen who borrowed urine from a pregnant friend and had it analyzed as her own so she could have a doctor's certificate stating she was pregnant.

And many don't lie: The most convincing way of all to prove womanhood is to have a baby. What is the way out of this thicket?

**One:** We must teach our young people the difference between becoming a woman and becoming an adult. The key is that womanhood is a gift that comes automatically when your body changes—you don't have to do anything to earn it or prove it. You can choose any job, express any emotion, say "no" to sex or have five children—no matter what, you're still a woman.

Adulthood, on the other hand, and the independence it brings, does have to be earned. You earn it by learning to take responsibility, and you prove it by passing a driving test, by bringing home a paycheck, by following through on promises. Adulthood is not to be taken for granted. It is an achievement to take pride in.

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<sup>49</sup> This article originally appeared in the January 29, 1993 issue of the Albuquerque, N.M., *Tribune*. Copyright © 1993, by Amanda J. Smith. Reprinted by permission.

**Two:** We must help young women see how others may use their need to prove their womanhood to manipulate them. Eighth-graders know exactly what it means if a man says, “Come on, honey, prove you’re a woman. “ They tell me readily, “It means he wants her to have sex with him.” “Yes,” I agree, “but he only says it when she doesn’t want to.”

A young woman who knows she can do whatever she chooses and still be a woman can laugh at manipulation. “I don’t need to have sex with you to prove I’m a woman,” she can retort. “I know I’m a woman and I figured you could tell by looking!”

When young women no longer feel compelled to prove their womanhood, they will be far more likely to wait until they are adults to have babies. Until then, the teen pregnancy rate will continue to soar.

# JESUS WAS A FEMINIST

Leonard Swidler<sup>50</sup>

In a belated though progressive move, the American Catholic bishops have convened a committee to study the status of women in the church and society. A similar action on the world level was recommended by the Synod of Bishops just ended in Rome. In its latest regressive move, the American Episcopalian [*sic*] bishops returned the question of the ordination of women to still another study committee.

These committees, and others, are dealing with one of the most fundamental revolutions in the history of human society—feminism. In such study Christians, and those affected by Christians, need to know what Jesus' attitude toward women was. The answer is clear: Jesus was a feminist, that is, a person who promotes the equality of women with men, who treats women primarily as human persons and willingly contravenes social customs in so acting.

The Gospels give no evidence of Jesus ever treating women as inferior to men. When the restricted state of women in the Palestinian Judaism of that time is recalled, even this mere absence of a male superiority is extraordinary.

Women, for example, normally were not allowed to study the Scriptures (Torah); one first-century rabbi, Eliezer, put the point sharply: "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman. Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness." Women were not counted toward a quorum (*minyón*) for worship. Women could not bear witness. A good man would not speak to a woman in public; a rabbi would not address even his wife or daughter on the street. A woman was unclean at the time of her period, as was anyone or anything she touched.

Jesus, however, publicly, repeatedly rejected these oppressive customs. Though a rabbi, Jesus often addressed women, even women of ill repute, in public, and he spoke to them as primarily human persons, not as "sex objects," as for example, the thrice-married Samaritan

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<sup>50</sup> This article was originally published in *The New York Times*, December 18, 1971, page 29. Leonard Swidler was at that time editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* and professor of Catholic thought at Temple University.

woman, the woman “taken in adultery,” and Mary Magdalene.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, he regularly taught women the Torah.

Jesus also very deliberately rejected the Jewish prohibition against women bearing witness. For example, his first appearance after his resurrection was to a woman, whom he then commissioned to bear witness to the Eleven.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> John 4:5-27, John 8:2-11, Luke 8:1-3.

<sup>52</sup> Mark 16:9.



Likewise, Jesus went out of his way to reject the ancient blood taboo publicly, as with the woman who had a twelve-year issue of blood.<sup>53</sup> Jesus was not content to cure her quietly, which was his custom, but deliberately called everyone's attention to the fact that she had touched him, showing that he did not shrink from the ritual uncleanness incurred, and, by immediate implication, that he rejected the "uncleanness" of a woman who had a flow of blood, menstrual or continual.

Also contrary to the current attitude, Jesus clearly thought that the "intellectual life" was proper for women, that the role of women was not limited to being "in the home." This was made clear during his visit to the home of Martha and Mary.<sup>54</sup> Martha took the typical woman's role: "Martha was distracted with much serving." Mary, however, took the supposedly "male" role: she "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." Martha apparently thought Mary was out of place in choosing the role of the "intellectual," but Jesus' response was a refusal to force all women into the stereotype; he treated Mary first of all as a person (whose highest faculty is the intellect, the spirit) who was allowed to set her own priorities, and in this instance had "chosen the better part." Jesus applauded her: "it is not to be taken from her."

Another rejection of limiting the woman's horizon to *Kinder* and *Küche* occurred when a woman in a crowd complimented Jesus by referring to his mother.<sup>55</sup> But her image of a woman was sexually reductionist in the extreme: female genitals and breasts. "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!" Jesus clearly felt it necessary to reject this "baby-machine" image and insist again on personhood being primary for all: "But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.'"

Jesus strove to communicate the notion of the equal dignity of women in many different ways. Once, in response to a challenge, he related three parables in a row, all of which contained an image of God.<sup>56</sup> The first story was of the shepherd who left the 99 sheep to seek the lost one—the shepherd is God. The third was of the prodigal son—the father is God. The second story was of the woman who sought the lost coin—the woman is God!

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<sup>53</sup> Mark 5:25-34.

<sup>54</sup> Luke 10:38-42.

<sup>55</sup> Luke 11:27-28.

<sup>56</sup> Luke 15:3-7, 15:8-10, 15:11-24.

It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus vigorously promoted the dignity and equality of women in the midst of a very male-dominated society: Jesus was a feminist, and a very radical one. Can his followers attempt to be anything less?

# WELCOME TO ADULTHOOD

David V. Chartrand<sup>57</sup>

Most of you graduates are no doubt salivating about the new experiences that await you as college freshmen. Like being able to eat pizza every day for breakfast. I am not here to titillate you with such notions.

What I wish to alert you to are the sights and sounds that *won't* be there when you are left on campus to fend for yourselves.

You'll know right off that this isn't high school anymore when you wake up and realize there is no one telling you:

- To get out of bed.
- To get back in bed.
- To turn off the television.
- To avoid strangers.
- To go to bed *and I swear I am not kidding this time.*
- To quit picking your nose.
- To wipe your nose.
- But not on your sleeve.
- To help with the dishes.
- To comb your hair, cut it or get it out of your eyes.
- To make your bed.
- To stand up straight.
- To speak up.
- To clean the "pig sty" in your room.
- To come here *right now* before I count to three.
- To look at your mother when she talks to you.
- To NOT look at your mother that way.
- To eat your dinner.
- To take out the trash.
- To settle down.
- To grow up.
- To stop growing up so fast.
- To get in the bathtub.
- To get out of the bathtub.
- To WALK.
- To hurry up.
- To check your shoes for mud.
- To go ask your father.
- To dress warm.
- To say thank you.
- To say you're sorry.
- To look both ways.
- To wipe your hands.
- But not on your clean shirt.
- To kiss your mother goodbye.
- Because *I said so.*

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<sup>57</sup> Mr. Chartrand is a columnist for the Olathe, Kansas, *Daily News*, where this article first appeared (it was later reprinted in the *Wall Street Journal*). He adds the following note: Following is the text of the commencement speech I plan to deliver sometime soon, just as soon as some high school invites me to be its commencement speaker.

See what you're going to miss?

You're going to miss having teachers who know everyone in your family, who shop and worship in your neighborhood. Believe me, to the university professors you'll be just another face. You'll have to siphon from the well of their knowledge, as they will not force you to drink from it.

Never again will anyone remind you to do your homework on a Sunday night. You can party all weekend. It's your life. Waste it only if you dare.

You are about to jump into the deep end of the pool of life, to sink or swim on your own. Let no one throw you in too soon. There is no shame in waiting. If you aren't ready for this much responsibility and independence, then take some time off first. Read, travel. College will still be there when you get back—when you'll be more equipped to take what it has to dish out.

Campus life will not so much build your character as reveal it. Brace yourself now for the relativism you will find on campus. Professors and dorm buddies will suggest to you that the rights and wrongs you learned at home are just circumstantial grays, that to reach a moral conclusion is to impose it on others. Stick to your guns. These people are not your friends.

Watch out for religious cults that prey on frightened and lonely college freshmen. There's no harm in sharing your prayers and dreams with them, but when they demand your mind and possessions, it's time to wise up and walk away.

If you must choose between what Mom and Dad told you is right and wrong and what your college philosophy professor tells you, my money is with Mom and Dad. They have a bigger investment in you.

One last thing: Be not surprised by the tears streaking your parents' faces in September as they drop you off at the dormitory. They are not sad. They weep because they are having an hallucinogenic experience. All they know is yesterday you were little frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails. They have no earthly idea when you turned into this cocky young adult. It is a surreal, mind-altering experience that will be much clearer to you when your own kids leave for college.

You, too, will cry now and then as you realize how much your family means to you, and how well they prepared you for this moment. Remember always who you are; stand up for what you have become. But, for crying out loud, stand up *straight*. Before I count to three.